

# **The Bolsheviks and War**

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**Lessons for today's anti-war  
movement**

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## Introduction

For those who wish to study more about the struggle against the first imperialist world war, there are the classics written by Lenin at the time, including his *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and *Socialism and War*. These works are generally available in bookstores, particularly those specializing in Marxist literature.

However, more difficult to find are the documents of the socialist movement of that time, documents with great historical value. Included in these appendices, therefore, are some key documents of this period.

The Seventh International Socialist Congress was held in Stuttgart, Germany, on August 18-24, 1907 (Appendix Document No. 1). The first and most important item on the agenda was "Militarism and International Conflicts."

Lenin said in reference to the last two paragraphs of this resolution: "I remember well that the final drafting of this amendment was preceded by lengthy direct negotiations between our group and [August] Bebel [of the German Social-Democratic Party]. The first draft spoke of revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary action in a much more direct manner. We showed it to Bebel, and he said, 'I cannot accept this, for otherwise the legal authorities will dissolve our organizations, and we are not going to risk this as long as there is not anything serious confronting us.'

"Upon consultation with professional jurists and repeated redrafting of the text, so as to express the same thought in a lawful form, the final formula was devised, which Bebel consented to have adopted." The resolution was passed unanimously.

The Eighth International Socialist Congress was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, from August 28 to September 3, 1910. The resolution of the Congress on International Arbitration and Disarmament confirmed the resolution of the Stuttgart Congress on war. The last

two paragraphs of the Stuttgart resolution were reproduced in full in the Copenhagen resolution.

The Extraordinary Basel Congress was held on November 24 and 25, 1912 (Appendix Document No. II). It was called to protest the Balkan war and the threat of a general European war. The manifesto of the Basel Congress combined the resolutions of the congresses of Stuttgart and Copenhagen.

The last session of the International Socialist Bureau was held at Brussels on July 29, 1914. The following resolution was adopted: "The International Socialist Bureau, at its meeting held today, July 29, upon listening to the reports of the representatives of all countries that may be involved in a world war on the political situation in those countries, has resolved unanimously that it shall be the duty of the workers of all nations concerned not only to continue but to further intensify their demonstrations against the war, for peace, and for the settlement of the Austro-Serbian conflict by international arbitration. The German and the French workers shall exert the most energetic pressure upon the governments of their respective countries in order that Germany shall restrain the war ardor of Austria, and that France shall obtain from Russia noninterference in the conflict. The British and Italian workers shall, on their part, support those efforts with all their energy. The extraordinary congress which is being called to meet at Paris will be a vigorous expression of this will for peace of the international proletariat."

The Berne International Socialist Women's Conference was held on March 26-28, 1915 (Appendix Document No. III). The conference was called at the initiative of representatives of women's organizations that agreed with the Bolsheviks' position on the war. It was supported by Clara Zetkin, Secretary of the International Bureau of Socialist Women, who issued an appeal to the women of all countries to "struggle for peace." The question on the agenda was that of "international action of Socialist women for peace. Notwithstanding

that the Bolshevik resolution (see appendices) was rejected for a more pacifist-oriented one, the conference was of great significance as the first genuinely international gathering after the outbreak of the war.

The pamphlet *Socialism and War* was written by Lenin, in collaboration with Zinoviev in August 1915. The pamphlet had been designed for the Zimmerwald Conference of September 1915, but owing to technical causes its appearance was delayed and it was published after the conference was over. (Appendix Document No IV).

The conference was initiated by the Swiss and Italian Socialist parties and was attended by their representatives as well as delegates from other anti-war parties and groups. The Bolsheviks organized the left delegates (who became known as the "Zimmerwald Left") and submitted the draft of a manifesto and the draft of a resolution on the war and the tasks of Social-Democracy (Appendix Documents No. VI, VII, and VIII). The majority declined the propositions of the Left. The conference also adopted a resolution of "sympathy with the war victims and the persecuted" (Appendix Document No. V). The Zimmerwald Left formed the basic nucleus of the Communist International founded in 1919.

The American Socialist Party, although not a Marxist party, had large numbers of revolutionary workers. It adopted a militant anti-war manifesto with a call for revolutionary action at its convention in St. Louis in April 1917 (Appendix Document No. IX).

The "Decree on Peace" by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies was the first declaration of policy by the victorious revolutionary government (Appendix Document No. X). It was written by Lenin and delivered on October 26 (November 8 by the Western calendar), 1917.

Gary Wilson





## **Chapter 1**

### **Social Democracy and the approaching war: The Stuttgart and Basel congresses**

It is astonishing that today years after the October Revolution in Russia so many profound lessons are still as relevant as they were the day after the victory of the revolution.

Take the question, for instance, of the struggle against war. Its urgency proclaims itself every day in the headlines of the world press.

There have now been two world wars; two predatory wars in Asia, in Korea and Vietnam; many wars in the Middle East; a whole series of decades-long interventions both overt and covert in Africa and Latin America, an invasion of Cuba followed by a missile crisis in the Caribbean that threatened a world holocaust; and a continuing war between the African people and the settler regimes.

Such is the glorious record of the imperialist free enterprise system in this century, a century of the most stupendous technological and scientific discoveries and inventions. Such splendid achievements would assure peace and happiness for suffering humanity were it not for the incubus of monopoly capitalism. In addition, the Damocles sword\* of nuclear war, which has hung over the planet ever since Hiroshima and Nagasaki is more threatening than ever.

One might well say that the war danger in general and the nuclear peril in particular are history's punishment to humanity for the failure of the leadership of working-class parties to assimilate the great anti-war lessons of the October Socialist Revolution.

Many believe that the Russian Revolution would have been impossible without World War I. Indeed the unprecedented carnage

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\* Damocles sword: Legend has it that Dionysius the Elder (430-367 B.C.), a cruel and oppressive ruler, had a sword suspended by a single hair from the ceiling of a banquet hall over the head of Damocles. This was meant to punish the courtier for his servility and excessive obsequiousness and to demonstrate the precariousness of high rank.

was so devastating and destructive in terms of human casualties and property loss that it seemed the continuation of the conflict would swallow up all of capitalist civilization as it existed at the time.

The war not only contributed heavily to making the Russian Revolution possible. It also provoked a revolutionary situation in almost every leading capitalist country in the world. It brought about revolutionary struggles in Germany, Italy, and Hungary and caused a tremendous revolutionary upsurge in France. Mutinies in the armed forces followed. It also caused a rapid leftward swing of the working class in Britain. The great General Strike of 1926<sup>1</sup> was really a continuation of the consequences of the imperialist war. Yet despite the unsurpassed suffering of the masses as a result of the havoc wrought by the war, nowhere else in Europe did a proletarian revolution succeed.

The war in and of itself could not have brought the Bolsheviks to power. The war merely accelerated all of the social, political, and economic processes which existed during peacetime. While the imperialist war interrupted the progress of the working-class movement in Russia, as elsewhere on the continent of Europe, once the war was on in earnest, once the carnage and suffering took an ever-increasing toll, the very same processes which had been either submerged or driven underground began to surface and speed up.

The class struggle, even when it appears to be most dormant, nevertheless exists. It can be muffled, stifled, mutilated but the objective process of capitalist exploitation is remorseless and relentless. And in time of imperialist war, it accelerates and intensifies. War, therefore, is not some utterly external factor which suddenly collapses over the heads of the masses. It is an outgrowth of peacetime tendencies inherent in the mode of capitalist production.

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<sup>1</sup> General Strike of 1926: For nine days, from May 4 through May 12, 1926, the British working class staged a general strike called by the Trades Union Congress that completely paralyzed the country and showed the great potential strength of the workers. The strike originated in solidarity with striking coal miners.

The reason the war was a central factor contributing to the victory of the October Revolution but failed to have the same effect in France, Italy, or even Germany must be traced to the position taken toward the approaching conflict by the great socialist parties of Western Europe in the peacetime period immediately before the war.

It is often mistakenly thought that the outbreak of World War I caught the leadership of the socialist parties completely off guard. And it is certainly true that the masses as a whole were taken off guard in light of the official leadership's default. Large sections of the working class and lower-ranking and middle officials of the social democratic parties were also taken by surprise. But certainly the official leadership of the Second International<sup>2</sup>, if it was taken by surprise, should not have been. It had no cause to be.

The years preceding the outbreak of the war were characterized by considerable anti-war agitation on the part of the socialist parties of Germany, France, and other European countries. There were also a variety of bourgeois pacifist organizations, such as exist in many parts of the West today. However, socialist and working-class agitation against the war predominated. In a general way the antiwar struggle, unlike today, was carried on as an inseparable part of the struggle against capitalism.

It was of course limited by the times which were considered a period of so-called peaceful capitalist development, at least in the developed capitalist countries. The anti-war struggle was also limited by local conditions and the state of the socialist movement in its large metropolitan strongholds, Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Marseilles and, in a different way, London, where it was developing agitation against militarism. But it is important to know that there was a strong, working-class peace movement and that anti-war agitation

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<sup>2</sup> Second International: The Second International of the Social Democratic movement was founded in 1889, but collapsed in 1914 when most of its member parties sided with their own bourgeois governments on the outbreak of the first imperialist world war.

was one of the political aspects of the socialist and working-class struggle. Any talk about the leadership of the Second International being surprised or overwhelmed by a totally unexpected outbreak of war is false.

The Socialist International, as it existed at the time, held frequent international congresses. There were at least three socialist congresses -- at Stuttgart, 1907; Copenhagen, 1910; and Basel, 1912 -- in which the approach of war was very seriously discussed and acted upon with firmness and resolution. These congresses are of singular significance. They mark the apex of the growth of the socialist and working-class movement in Europe. They demonstrate the highest point of class consciousness and internationalism which the working-class movement had known up to that time (with the exception, of course, of the revolutionary upsurges in 1848 and 1871).

The first of these congresses was held in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1907. Five years later, in 1912, another congress in Basel, Switzerland, discussed and reaffirmed the antiwar position taken at Stuttgart. It is extremely illuminating to examine the Basel resolution in detail. It has been quoted many times in the polemics of Lenin against Karl Kautsky, then the leader and outstanding theoretician of the Second International.

It is to be noted that the Basel meeting was not regarded as just another congress. It was entitled an Extraordinary International Socialist Congress, precisely because of the imminence of the war danger. It was held on November 24-5, 1912, and the Basel Manifesto was subsequently published in the *Vorwärts*, the organ of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. (See Appendix for complete document.)

"If a war threatens to break out," said the resolution, "it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved,

supported by the coordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of the war. ...

"In case war should break out anyway," the resolution continues, "it is their duty to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule."(Emphases in the original.)

"The congress urged the proletariat to devote the utmost force and energy to planned and concerted action. On the one hand," the resolution continues, "the universal craze for armaments has aggravated the high cost of living, thereby intensifying class antagonisms and creating in the working class an implacable spirit of revolt; the workers want to put a stop to this system of panic and waste."

It warns "the ruling classes of all states not to increase by belligerent actions the misery of the masses brought on by the capitalist method of production. Let the governments remember that with the present condition of Europe and the mood of the working class, they cannot unleash a war without danger to themselves. Let them remember that the Franco-Prussian War<sup>3</sup> was followed by the revolutionary outbreak of the

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<sup>3</sup> Franco-Prussian War: The Franco-Prussian war, 1870-71, resulted in the annexation by Germany of the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

Commune,<sup>4</sup> that the Russo-Japanese War<sup>5</sup> set into motion the revolutionary energies of the peoples of the Russian Empire, that the competition in military and naval armaments gave the class conflicts in England and on the continent an unheard-of sharpness, and unleashed an enormous wave of strikes.

"It would be insanity for the governments not to realize that the very idea of the monstrosity of a world war would inevitably call forth the indignation and the revolt of the working class. The proletarians consider it a crime to fire at each other for the profits of the capitalists, the ambitions of dynasties, or the greater glory of secret diplomatic treaties."

It ends with a clarion call to the workers: "To the capitalist world of exploitation and mass murder oppose in this way the proletarian world of peace and fraternity of peoples!"

It is to be noted that this resolution, and the earlier one passed at the Stuttgart congress, did not confine themselves to mobilizing the masses to end the war only after the war was on. And they didn't separate the economic struggle from the political struggle. On the contrary, the resolutions directed themselves to the working class and warned that if war were to break out, then the working class must utilize the economic and political crisis not

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4 Commune: The war spurred on a revolutionary uprising by the people of Paris in September 1870. The armed population established a new form of state, the Commune, which was seen by Marx and later Lenin as the model for a state run by the working people. The Commune lasted nearly five months, but was crushed by the combined weight of the French and German armies. The French bourgeoisie was willing to collaborate with its bitter rivals the Germans in mowing down the workers of Paris.

5 Russo-Japanese War: The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5, was a disaster for the czarist regime, costing billions of rubles and hundreds of thousands of casualties. Russia lost Manchuria, which it had captured earlier from China, and saw its entire fleet destroyed by Japan. The war greatly intensified the struggle against czarism, and led directly to the first Russian Revolution of 1905.

merely to end the war but to arouse all the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist rule.

The Basel resolution was remarkable because it brought up to date the strategical approach and tactical orientation of the working class in a new period of capitalist development. In the earlier so-called progressive period of capitalist development, Marxists had viewed it as permissible to side with one's own capitalist country if it were acting to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution in the struggle against feudalism, if it were carrying out a struggle essential to the development of a unified capitalist state to attain autonomy within its own borders.

That was during the epoch of the bourgeois national revolutions. It was when the bourgeoisie constituted itself within the framework of a national state, without which it could not fully develop. It was therefore a period when the Marxist criterion for support of a bourgeois war and participation in it was whether or not it promoted a progressive and necessary tendency of the bourgeoisie in the development of a national, that is, a centralized state.

The Stuttgart and Basel resolutions recognized by implication, if not by explicitly saying so, that it was now the epoch of imperialist wars, that the previous progressive period of capitalism had ended. The capitalist class could no longer carry on a war on a relatively progressive basis, and the workers therefore ought not to support it.

These resolutions were also the highest theoretical exposition of the Marxist approach to capitalist wars at the time. Indeed, the very idea of formulating the question of war as it was done at these two socialist congresses was in itself an expression of the high degree of class-consciousness and international working-class solidarity that the socialist movement had achieved at the time.

As we noted earlier, Basel was a congress specially convened to consider the war danger. The resolution gave expression to the fullest extent possible to the yearnings of the working class for

peace as well as to their readiness to struggle. Efforts to downplay the significance of the resolution as merely a ceremonial act are the post-war lies of right-wing social democrats and bourgeois historians.

The congress was attended by the most important leaders in the world movement. It met at the time of the war crisis in the Balkan countries which, as the resolution pointed out, had the potential of engulfing all of Europe. And it specifically warned the British, French, and German governments that the Socialist International knew what they were up to. On no account can it be said that the resolution was just one of those things passed at socialist congresses. It wasn't. It was a question, however, whether the leadership of the Socialist International had the will, determination, and readiness to follow up the mandate given by the International and would utilize the crisis created by the war to overturn the capitalist system.

There was another school of thought within social democracy which, decades after the resolution on imperialist war, minimized the significance of the legacy of Stuttgart and Basel. According to this interpretation the resolutions were framed by the leftists. The insidious thought behind this is that a small group of fanatics positioned themselves in the resolutions committee and put over a line really contrary to the "moderate, reasonable, and pragmatic" positions of the European socialist leaders.

It is true, of course, that the key amendments to the resolutions were written by Lenin (on behalf of the Bolsheviks), Julius Martov, who was in the left-wing of the Mensheviks,<sup>6</sup> and Rosa Luxemburg, especially the one about using the crisis created by imperialist war to struggle for the abolition of capitalism. They were

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<sup>6</sup> Mensheviks: In 1903, the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party split into two factions, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, and the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks were for an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie in the struggle to establish democracy in Russia. In February 1917, after the overthrow of czarism, the Mensheviks joined the bourgeois Provisional Government. They opposed the second (workers) revolution led by the Bolsheviks in October 1917.



seen as representatives of the Russian Revolution of 1905<sup>7</sup> and of the great strike struggles that were developing in Russia around the time of the Basel congress. The Russian revolutionaries had tremendous prestige among the workers on the European continent, very much like the heroic Vietnamese, Cuban, Palestinian and other oppressed peoples of today who carry out revolutionary struggles against imperialism. Russia at the time was, on the one hand, a backward country oppressing its peoples at home, but also an oppressor abroad in concert with the other imperialist powers. The prestige of the revolution, as represented by the Russian and Polish delegations, was something the opportunists had to reckon with. At the same time, the fact is that no one really challenged the validity of the resolutions.

It should be added that in an effort to go even further to the left than the resolution, the great socialist orator Jean Jaures from France, in an ultra-leftist maneuver, tried to amend the key paragraph (relating to the utilization of the economic and political crisis created by the war to overthrow capitalist class rule) by calling the workers to insurrection. This, however, was properly defeated. It was typical of Jaures at the time that he cast himself in the role of being more left than the leadership, yet at the same time was a proponent of ministerialism, the practice of accepting posts in a bourgeois cabinet. The Amsterdam congress of 1904 had condemned this opportunist practice. Jaures frowned at this manifestation of adhering to orthodox Marxist principles and impugned the motives of the German Social Democratic leaders,

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7 Revolution of 1905: The 1905 Revolution grew from a series of militant strikes and demonstrations to armed uprisings that gripped the entire country. It began in January 1905 and reached its peak in December of that year. The democratic movement against czarist autocracy embraced sections of the bourgeoisie as well as the workers and peasants. But the events of 1905-7 showed that the bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out a decisive struggle against czarism, and would in fact side with the reaction against the increasingly militant workers and peasants. The first workers' councils, or Soviets, were formed in 1905. They were to reappear again in 1917 and become the vehicle for the workers, peasants, and soldiers to exercise state power. While the 1905 Revolution forced some political concessions from czarism, such as the formation of a Duma or parliament with limited powers, the regime instituted severe repression as soon as the revolution began to subside.

especially Karl Kautsky, who along with the other leaders of the Socialist International at the time still opposed such practices.

"It is all well and good for you, German comrades," said Jaures, "to speak against accepting cabinet posts in the bourgeois government. Is it because you are unable to get such posts, since no German government would offer any at all?"

Whatever the motivation, the fact remains that all the German Social Democratic leaders, along with most of the French, Italian, Belgian, Dutch, Swedish, and Japanese when they were able to attend, took the position of the congress as embodied in the resolutions. But there was a world of difference between how these resolutions were applied by the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and nearly all the other Second International socialist parties, on the other, including the Mensheviks.

The Bolsheviks, especially Lenin, took most seriously the last, exceptionally significant, sentence of the Basel resolution. In the event of an imperialist war, the workers' party would in accordance with the International's resolution strive to utilize the economic and political crisis of the bourgeoisie and the war it created to overthrow it. Lenin's conception in particular gave the workers the opportunity to intensify the class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

War, according to Lenin, was merely a continuation of the politics of the bourgeoisie by other means. Of course, Kautsky himself knew this very well, as did other leaders. Yet a profound gulf separated the Bolsheviks from the other socialist parties, except for the left wings emerging within the latter. Only the Bolsheviks had pursued a resolute irreconcilable class struggle against the bourgeoisie and at the same time had fought relentlessly against any softening, watering down, diversion, or distortion of the anti-war thesis in the working-class movement with vigor and perseverance.

This in essence was what the struggle against opportunism was all about. Opportunism means the sacrifice of the larger issues

affecting the working class in the interest of illusory, minor, everyday gains. Opportunism in varying degrees is a common phenomenon in all the labor movements of the world. But it took on an exceptional character in Western Europe in this period when the working-class movement grew in breadth, as Lenin put it, yet at the same time accumulated practices and distortions of socialist tactics in the class struggle that militated against firm adherence to principle. It was in the struggle against opportunism that the Bolsheviks grew strong.

This was not so in the other European parties. It is true that in 1899 Kautsky and others had taken up the theoretical cudgels to defend Marxism from the revisionism of Eduard Bernstein. But by and large that was a long way from a steady, consistent struggle against opportunism and all its manifestations in the trade unions, among the trade union leaders, in the parliamentary fraction of the German Social Democratic Party within the Reichstag, and on the many other fronts. The trend toward opportunism in practice was permitted to grow automatically as though it were an inevitable and necessary accompaniment to socialism -- merely a demonstration of the variety of thought and diversity of tendencies which all contributed progressively to making social democracy a mighty movement of the working class and its allies.

It was in the fight against opportunism and the struggle to pursue a rigidly working-class approach that Leninist doctrine over the years created a qualitatively different party in Russia than that which existed in Western Europe.

## Chapter 2

### Zimmerwald: The internationalists regroup

A whole new world intervened between the historic Basel anti-war conference of the Socialist International held in November 1912 and the Zimmerwald conference held in Switzerland on September 4, 1915. The revolutionary call contained in the Basel Manifesto to utilize the war in order to overturn capitalist slavery was drowned in the blood of millions of people and was replaced by disgusting chauvinist calls to patriotism to struggle on behalf of each capitalist government against the brothers and sisters of the working class in other countries.

All over Europe the wildest fanaticism aroused by imperialist predatory interests seemed to have silenced the revolutionary voice and blunted the will and determination of the working class. For every individual revolutionary antiwar fighter, there seemed to be hundreds, thousands espousing the cause of imperialism. The most hypocritical and shameless surrender of the official social democratic leadership left the millions ideologically and politically defenseless in the face of the assault of the chauvinists.

The collapse of the Socialist International<sup>8</sup> and the frightening betrayal which was suddenly thrust upon the heads of millions of workers was probably the most staggering blow that could possibly have been delivered to the masses. They were utterly unprepared for this historic debacle. It is no wonder that confusion and demoralization in the initial stages helped the forces of chauvinism tie the working classes of Europe to the chariot wheels of the imperialist war.

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<sup>8</sup> Collapse of Socialist International: When war was declared, nearly all the parliamentary representatives of the various Social Democratic parties cast their votes for war credits, allowing their respective bourgeois governments to allocate funds for the conflict. This destroyed the international solidarity of the working class in Europe and enabled the capitalists to pit worker against worker in the bloody struggle. The Russian Social Democratic deputies were among the few who voted against the war.

The whole question of the monstrous betrayal by social democracy has to be reexamined today in the light of contemporary conditions which seem so fundamentally different from what obtained in 1914.

It took literally millions of lives, after the first salvo of the war on August 4, 1914, to finally achieve another anti-war conference following the one at Basel. This time in the midst of the war, in the midst of chaos, disruption, arrests of hundreds and thousands of opponents of the war, and the difficulty of communication, a conference was finally convoked at Zimmerwald. The mere convening of the conference, the fact that it was held, was in itself an important event. At last, those who were against the war, or at least said they were, were coming together in one place to discuss what to do about it.

The most prominent socialist leader in Europe who opposed the war was an elected representative to the German Reichstag, the well-known revolutionary socialist Karl Liebknecht. But there were other social democratic representatives who also voted against war credits, or the defense budget as it is called today, in their respective parliaments: Monatte in France and, rarely alluded to and often forgotten, the leaders of the Serbian Social Democratic Party (Ljattchevitch and Katzlerovitch) who took the same heroic position as Liebknecht in the Serbian Skuptchina (parliament).

The Zimmerwald conference was formally called by the Swiss and Italian parties of the International. Switzerland was, of course, neutral. Italian imperialism had just recently entered the war, but only against Austria and Hungary, not as yet against Germany. Bulgaria and Rumania were not yet in it, but were dragged in later. Sweden also remained neutral. The Netherlands managed to stay out while garnering huge super-profits in what is now Indonesia.

All told there were about 40 delegates from 11 countries at Zimmerwald, which in itself was a significant factor in demonstrating

that the working class movement was on the road to recovering its revolutionary spirit and active opposition to the war.

What came out of the Zimmerwald conference was an historic resolution. It had a lot more significance than the Basel conference, which had been held during peacetime. The Zimmerwald resolution (see Appendix for complete document) said that

"The war which has produced this chaos is the outcome of imperialism, of the attempt, on the part of the capitalist classes of each nation, to foster their greed for profit by the exploitation of human labor and of the natural treasures of the entire globe."

It is, continued the resolution later on, "the capitalists of all countries who are coining the red gold of war-profits out of the blood shed by the people. ... [They] assert that the war is for defense of the fatherland, for democracy and the liberation of oppressed nations! They lie. In actual reality, they are burying the freedom of their own people together with the independence of the other nations. ... The ruling powers of capitalist society who held the fate of the nations in their hands ... bear the full weight of responsibility for this war. ..." (Emphasis in the original.)

This includes, said the resolution, "the monarchic as well as the republican governments, the secret diplomacy, the mighty business organizations, the bourgeois parties, the capitalist press, the Church. ..."

It reminded the workers of the Stuttgart and Basel resolutions and called upon the proletarians of all countries to unite and fight against the war. It did not, however, do much to show how this should be implemented more concretely. It did not openly condemn the leadership of the Second International for their betrayal. And it

did not join Lenin and the Bolsheviks in calling for the defeat of the capitalist governments, to turn the imperialist war into civil war. Nevertheless, Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered the Zimmerwald conference an important step in the struggle against the imperialist war. As far as it went, the resolution was correct in all respects and called upon the working class to put up a resolute struggle against the imperialist war. But it didn't go far enough.

The most important question during war time is what to do to stop the war. The Bolshevik answer was as clear as crystal. Fight against the war by all necessary means with the general aim of converting the war of capitalist governments against each other into a war of the workers against the capitalists.

The Bolsheviks nevertheless voted for the resolution, which was unanimously endorsed. They then introduced a resolution of their own (see Appendix for complete document) which contained the necessary additions, roundly condemning the leadership of the Second International who were "rotten with opportunism at the beginning of the World War and betrayed the proletariat to imperialism and gave up the principles of socialism and thereby the real struggle for the everyday interests of the proletariat." This resolution was defeated.

By the time of the Zimmerwald conference the Bolsheviks had made considerable headway with revolutionary anti-war agitation not only in Russia but on the European continent as a whole. Among the left-wing groupings, the so-called Zimmerwaldians, Lenin on behalf of the Bolsheviks had very early in the war elaborated a clear-cut program. This was a distinct advantage not only against the right wing but also against the centrist groupings which, however strongly they might have opposed the war, were nonetheless weak in promoting what had to be done.

In the first place, the Bolshevik representatives in the czarist Duma (the Russian "parliament") took a clear-cut anti-war position in

contrast to the Mensheviks in the same Duma. As a result of their opposition to the war, the Bolshevik representatives were sent to Siberia and imprisoned. They were thus in the same revolutionary anti-war bloc with Liebknecht, who was imprisoned for his anti-war stand and his vote against war credits.

The prestige of the Bolshevik grouping was growing enormously and at the same time the struggle in Russia was taking on a broader character, in some places violent in form. The Bolsheviks, however, did not rest their prestige on the heroic struggle which the Russian proletariat was putting up and which they represented so strongly. The Bolshevik delegation to Zimmerwald came with strong, invincible ideological armor. This is especially clear if one examines the basic pamphlet that Lenin had written (together with Zinoviev) in the summer of 1915 called *Socialism and War*.<sup>9</sup> Having such a powerful ideological weapon in their hands made it easier to rally not only some of the leading figures in the struggle, but to appeal directly to the other social democratic organizations in Europe and even in Britain.

Thus *Socialism and War* soon appeared not only in French and German but also in Norwegian. This is all the more remarkable because it had to be transported illegally and distributed to the principal cities -- Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen, and others. It is noteworthy that Liebknecht's group distributed Lenin's pamphlet.

Thus it was very clear that the Bolsheviks had consolidated a revolutionary internationalist position which already had political influence that went beyond the small circle of the left Zimmerwaldians, reaching into the lower echelon of the social democratic organizations and, through them, the workers.

Lenin's pamphlet espoused the position of defeatism, a clear-cut call to convert the imperialist war into a war against the bourgeoisie and thus drew a very sharp line between the two

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<sup>9</sup> V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and War," in his *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), Vol. 21, pp. 295-338.



conflicting tendencies at the Zimmerwald conference. While it is true that in Europe at the time the word "Zimmerwald" itself was a synonym for opposition to the war, it was the emergence of the left-wing, of a clear and principled anti-imperialist stand, which made Zimmerwald a really historic development.

The ideological and political struggle, which had originally been a struggle conducted by the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks, now revealed itself to be an international struggle. Opportunism as a social phenomenon had become evident in the international socialist movement. The war had merely brought the whole struggle between the two tendencies in the international movement to the surface. It took on a different character in different countries, but what was common to them all was that the right-wing revealed itself as opportunist, while the left-wing, especially during and after the war, was for reviving and resuscitating revolutionary working class struggle and orthodox Marxism.

Lenin's position on defeatism was further refined in the Zimmerwald article "The Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War."<sup>10</sup> He aptly summed up his formula for struggle against the war in this sentence: "The defeat of one's own capitalist government is the lesser evil in the struggle against the war." In this way Lenin was updating the formula proposed at the Stuttgart and Basel congresses that called for utilizing the difficulties created by the imperialist war to overthrow the capitalist class.

"During a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but desire the defeat of its government," says Lenin. "This is axiomatic, and disputed only by conscious partisans or helpless satellites of the social-chauvinists. The opponents of the defeat slogan are simply afraid of themselves when they refuse to recognize the very obvious fact of the inseparable link between revolutionary agitation against the government and helping bring about its defeat."

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<sup>10</sup> V.I. Lenin, "The Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War, op. cit., pp. 275-280.

Further on, he says, "To repudiate the defeat slogan means allowing one's revolutionary ardor to degenerate into an empty phrase, or sheer hypocrisy."

If the French, German, Russian, and Italian workers, as well as the Americans and Japanese, Lenin reckoned, had all in the course of this imperialist war devoted their energies to defeating the war effort of their respective capitalist countries, it would have been a collective act of international proletarian solidarity on the part of each of them. Those who were promoting the defeatist strategy of Lenin were in reality also promoting international solidarity as against the artificial divisions which the world imperialist bourgeoisie had created in the interest of imperialist superprofits.

Other socialist organizations that said they were for stopping the war were for peace. But only the Bolsheviks, the Serbian and Bulgarian social democratic parties, Eugene V. Debs and the left-wing of the U.S. Socialist Party, and the Liebknecht grouping in the German SDP actively opposed the war. The others all said the continuation of the war was necessary in order to stop the aggression of the other imperialist powers. In this way French workers were ordered to kill German workers, and German workers were ordered to kill French workers, until aggression was stopped and imperialist peace achieved -- after the exhaustion of imperialist war.

Thus, one of the fundamental and most significant differences between the Bolsheviks and nearly all other socialist organizations was not merely over how to stop the war. It was a different class approach.

With the other socialists, the class struggle stopped with the outbreak of the war and national unity became the order of the day. The defense budget took preeminence just as it does today in all of the capitalist countries. Cuts in the living standard of the workers became necessary to overcome the crisis created by war

expenditures. The workers would have to wait for an improvement after the war -- if they were still alive.

With the Bolsheviks, the class struggle did not stop with the outbreak of war but took on a more intensified and vigorous form and had to be prosecuted to the end.

When the first Russian revolution, which overthrew the czar, broke out in February 1917,<sup>11</sup> there was no thought among the Menshevik leaders of really stopping the war or overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie. But Lenin's way was to continue the class struggle so as to make sure the government would not participate on behalf of the bourgeoisie in the continuation of the war.

On each and every question, no matter how small, the issue always revolved around the attitude to the bourgeoisie. How to win the peasants away from the landlords and enlist them on the side of the proletariat. How to win sections of the petty bourgeoisie. How to rally them all under the banner of the working class and separate them out from the bourgeoisie, while isolating the latter. All throughout the peaceful period preceding the war, during the war, and during the course of the whole revolution, a red thread runs through all of Leninist strategy and tactics. The struggle against war in peacetime as in wartime is a struggle against the bourgeoisie. It is inseparable from the struggle against capitalism. To defeat the efforts of the warmakers, it is necessary to defeat the ruling class, making no fundamental distinction between the ruling class at war and the ruling class during peacetime.

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<sup>11</sup> First Russian Revolution: In February 1917 mass strikes begun by women textile workers mushroomed into gigantic political demonstrations in Moscow and Petrograd. In less than a week the soldiers' garrisons in those cities went over to the Revolution and Soviets of workers, soldiers, and peasants deputies were in command. The czarist regime crumbled and was replaced by the Provisional Government, which was dominated by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. The new government remained in the war and conditions of the masses continued to worsen. In October 1917, the Provisional Government, by then under the leadership of A.F. Kerensky, was overthrown by the working class, led by the Bolshevik party, under the slogan "All Power to the Soviets."

## Chapter 3

### Lenin's response to the war

The outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914 was, of course, a crushing blow to the entire working class. But the conduct of the official leadership of the Socialist International in its surrender to the bourgeoisie was almost indescribable.

Such a betrayal as occurred in the period following August 1914 was unparalleled in the annals of the class struggle. It was the abandonment of a whole international class -- the workers of the world.

How the outbreak of the war found Lenin is a frequent subject of historians who concern themselves with that particular period. We will not take up here in any detail the views of the outright reactionaries, who are mainly concerned with vilifying the revolution and distorting the historic significance of Lenin's role in it. Suffice it to mention only Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who despite his rabidly reactionary yearnings for the good old days of czarist autocracy, has been raised to heroic proportions by being awarded a Nobel literature prize for his falsification of Russian history, particularly the revolutionary period. Solzhenitsyn has done his worst to portray Lenin as being lost at the outbreak of the war wholly out of touch with the situation in czarist Russia, and even surprised at the outbreak of the February Revolution.

Then there are the so-called friendly social critics of the left. They deal with the same period but do little to shed light on the most delicate and sensitive area which the bourgeoisie in general is most interested in demolishing -- the relationship between building the party and the revolution. Isaac Deutscher is a leading representative of this type.

"In previous years," writes Deutscher, "international Socialist congresses had addressed strong anti-militaristic appeals to the working classes of the world, but few of the leaders really believed in

the imminence of war. In the two years before its outbreak Lenin, immersed in factional affairs, wrote scarcely anything which suggests his awareness of the danger. When the war did break out, he was taken aback by the behavior of European socialism.

"On reading in Swiss newspapers that the parliamentarians of German socialism came out in support of the Kaiser's war, he refused to believe his eyes and at first treated the report as a kite flown by the German General Staff to fool the working class into acceptance. So great and simple had been his belief in the strength of Socialist internationalism. For a brief spell he was so downcast that he thought of leaving politics altogether. But then he recovered and decided to 'wage war on war.' He was no pacifist. His answer to war was revolution."<sup>12</sup>

It would have been impossible for any revolutionary Marxist who had spent a lifetime in stubborn struggle against the czarist autocracy and the bourgeoisie as a whole to view the downfall of the Second International with equanimity. That would be unrealistic.

It is another matter entirely to paint Lenin as having been so downcast at the collapse of the International that he would think of leaving politics. Lenin scarcely needs any defense in the revolutionary working class movement today. But this version of Lenin needs to be corrected. Not only that, a whole number of misconceptions are here encapsulated into a single paragraph.

First of all, the international congresses, by which Deutscher must have meant Stuttgart and Basel, did not merely address strong anti-militarist appeals to the workers. The resolutions of these congresses, which in many ways are a model for today, were directed at the overthrow of the capitalist system, and said precisely that.

While they may have become nothing more than ceremonial and harmless resolutions to the majority of the officialdom -- that is,

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<sup>12</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 125.

the central staff of the Second International where the German and French social democrats predominated -- these resolutions enabled Lenin and the Bolsheviks to continue the struggle and demonstrate the legitimacy of the left wing. They immediately began to lay the basis for a new international that would be heir to the revolutionary traditions of the Second International and in particular to its anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist legacy and the legacy of revolutionary Marxism as a whole.

As we pointed out earlier, Lenin was one of the collaborators in amending the Basel resolution, along with Rosa Luxemburg and Martov. There are many anti-war resolutions today that are strongly worded, anti-militarist and address themselves to the workers, but they are usually not related to the struggle against capitalism, nor do they admonish the workers to overthrow the system of capitalist exploitation in the event of war, as did the Stuttgart and Basel resolutions.

The Basel and Stuttgart resolutions were by no means a dead letter with the Bolsheviks, even at the most difficult and critical moments when confusion reigned supreme all over the working class world and affected the revolutionaries as a whole.

It is no accident that a bare few days after the outbreak of the war, one Bolshevik deputy in the czarist Duma (the so-called parliament) was accosted at his home one evening by a crowd of bourgeois journalists from all the St. Petersburg newspapers. They began to question him on the Bolshevik attitude toward the war. (Of course, the bourgeois press didn't print the Bolsheviks' statement. They were busy whipping up the chauvinist hysteria.)

Here is what the Bolshevik deputy had to say:

The working class will oppose the war with all its force. The war is against the interests of the workers. On the contrary, its edge is turned against the working class all over the world. The Basel Congress of the Socialist International in the name of the world proletariat,

passed a resolution declaring that, in case of the declaration of war, our duty was to wage a determined struggle against it.

We, the real representatives of the working class, will fight for the slogan, 'War against war!' Every member of our fraction will fight against the war with all the means at his disposal.<sup>13</sup>

This demonstrates more than anything that the Bolsheviks by no means looked upon the Basel and Stuttgart resolutions as ceremonial. They stood stoutly on the ground of internationalism and were not afraid to quote a "foreign" organization as an authority. Such was the kind of international solidarity which characterized the Bolsheviks. There is all of Lenin in it.

Deutscher, in describing Lenin's shock on seeing a copy of the Vorwärts which carried the news of the German Social Democratic Party's support of the war presents a false picture of Lenin. His shock over the betrayal had nothing to do with Lenin's "great and simple belief" in socialist internationalism. Lenin's internationalism on the contrary was of the deepest and profoundest kind.

He knew all the leaders of the Second International. He had amassed the richest experience of any of them in inner-party as well as inter-party struggles, in carrying out a relentless war against conciliators, liquidators, and ultraleftists. In fact, Lenin's factional experience, even at that time, would have made it quite impossible for him to view the proletarian internationalism of the Second International in isolation from the opportunism in the International. He was well aware of the opportunism of the right wing. He knew Kautsky personally by then and did not exactly regard him as the embodiment of proletarian internationalism. Ever since the Bolsheviks had become the majority grouping of the Russian Social Democratic Party, Kautsky had tried to act as conciliator between the

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13 A. Badayev, *The Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd., 1929), p. 198.

Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. But it was already long out of bounds to conciliate the irreconcilable.

It is of course true that Lenin's belief in the strength of socialist internationalism was great. But it is not true, as Deutscher says, that it was simple, which conveys the impression of naivete.

That characterization might, with certain qualifications, be correct for Eugene Debs, for whom Lenin had great respect as a militant and revolutionary socialist and also as an internationalist. Debs ceaselessly agitated on the basis that there was only one war he would participate in, a war of the working class against the capitalist class. For his militant opposition to the imperialist war, he was tried, convicted and jailed. But Debs' internationalism was indeed simple. While he was supportive of all the struggles against capitalism and imperialism, he was aloof from the Second International and also attempted to stand above the factionalism in his own party. He was more of a revolutionary agitator during that period than an active participant in the struggle of political tendencies. He had a keen insight into the basic antagonism between the working class and the capitalist class, but he had not made a comprehensive study of Marxism.

Lenin's entire career as a revolutionary Marxist shows that he was not merely supportive of the anti-imperialist struggle and of international solidarity measures taken by the Second International. Lenin was a leading figure in shaping the boldest and most revolutionary conceptions of internationalism, which he pushed in the various congresses of the Second International.

Lenin was a leading activist on the highest level of the Second International, as anyone can easily see who has read his evaluation of the international socialist congress in Stuttgart, as well as his comments on the Basel congress. Reading these today, many decades after they were written, one can only be astonished at the very clear perception he had of the political currents in the



international socialist movement. He not only analyzed the character of the rightwing and of the opportunists and revisionists, but he also showed an awareness of the centrism of Kautsky. Furthermore, it is well known that Lenin attempted to form a left bloc within the Second International in which he tried to fuse the most determined and revolutionary elements within it. He approached Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin for the purposes of forming such a caucus.

Lenin showed as long ago as 1907, and earlier too, that he had a keen appreciation of the growing strength of the opportunist current as regarded the colonial question in the deliberations of the international congress.

"The great importance of the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart," said Lenin in his evaluation, "lies in the fact that it marked the final consolidation of the Second International and the transformation of international congresses into business-like meetings which exercise very considerable influence on the nature and direction of socialist activities throughout the world."<sup>14</sup>

In a slightly earlier commentary on Stuttgart, he had written, "Besides providing an impressive demonstration of international unity in the proletarian struggle, the Congress played an outstanding part in defining the tactics of the socialist party."<sup>15</sup> The congress was "striking proof that socialism is being welded into a single international force."

He then went on to analyze the existence of an opportunist current and explained how the congress defeated the Dutch delegates' opportunist formulation of the colonial question. He indicated that a very dangerous trend was being introduced, although it was defeated at the congress.<sup>16</sup>

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14 V.I. Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart" in his *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962), Vol. 13, p. 82.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

He also attacked Herve<sup>17</sup> for taking a seemingly more militant but in reality semi-anarchist view in the struggle against the war. And, of course, he showed that it was his and Rosa Luxemburg's amendments to Bebel's<sup>18</sup> resolution which put in the key paragraph, which called for utilizing the crisis created by the war to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Kautsky is mentioned in this very illuminating article only once, Lenin characterized Kautsky's approach as correct but cautious.

By the time another socialist congress was called the International Socialist Bureau and its constituent parties had all carried out huge demonstrations<sup>17</sup> against the war build-up and had issued much agitation and propaganda material. By that time, Lenin's relations with the leaders of the Second International were pretty well formulated. The centrists leaned in the direction of being conciliatory to the Mensheviks. In fact Kautsky himself was showing increasing signs of leaning toward the Mensheviks. Efforts at conciliation between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks showed all too clearly that they feared Lenin's "Blanquism"<sup>19</sup> and "sectarianism." Although Lenin regarded Kautsky by the standards of that era as a leader of the Second International, he by no means had a naive attitude toward him or the others.

His clear conception of the principal social trends in the Second International precluded any addiction to the kind of abstract or simple internationalism alluded to by Deutscher. He was only too well aware that socialist internationalism as an objective factor in the struggle of the worldwide working class was one thing. The question of leadership, which was one of his principal contributions in the

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17 Herve: Gustave Herve was a Socialist leader and writer who argued that the workers have no country and therefore can have no interest in any kind of war. He advocated a general strike and an armed insurrection in the event of a declaration of war.

18 Bebel: August Bebel (1840-1913) was one of the early leaders of the Social Democratic movement in Germany, having joined the First International of Marx and Engels in 1867.

19 Blanquism: Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) participated in many uprisings of the Paris proletariat. His view that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be achieved by a revolutionary *coup d'etat* carefully and secretly prepared for became known as "Blanquism."

struggle, was another matter. Being supportive of socialist internationalism, having strong convictions about it, all this of course was important and indispensable. But the struggle to make socialist internationalism more than an abstract, general guide was precisely where Leninism distinguished itself from the social democracy of the time. Lenin's internationalism was rooted in his acute perception of the class struggle and the bourgeois social tendencies which manifested themselves in left political groupings and had to be continually combated.

Certainly the war did not come as a bolt from the blue. But the fact that none of the leaders, even among the most revolutionary in the Second International, were able to predict the betrayal demonstrated that opportunism as a social trend in the world movement had advanced like a disease far more rapidly and had engulfed and captured the leadership to a greater degree than any of the revolutionaries could have anticipated.

Naivete in relationships, both in the party and in the International, was not a trait of Lenin's. Even Lenin's worst enemies knew he was above all a realist.

He knew that the bourgeoisie was capable of any crime, any frame-up. It was more in keeping with previous historical experience to believe that the Kaiser would carry out a frame-up of the German party than that the Socialist International would utterly capitulate. It is in this context that one should see Lenin's reaction to the Vorwarts article -- in the context of such monstrous bourgeois frame-ups as the Dreyfus affair,<sup>20</sup> the sinking of the Lusitania,<sup>21</sup> and czarist

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20 Dreyfus affair: Capt. Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a Jewish officer on the French General Staff who was framed on treason charges and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devils Island in 1895. The Church and pro-monarchist elements in France waged a vicious anti-Semitic campaign around the "Dreyfus affair," which became a focus of the struggle between reaction and the socialist movement. Dreyfus was finally exonerated in 1906, ten years after evidence proving his innocence had been uncovered.

21 Sinking of the Lusitania: The British liner Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland on May 7, 1915. Almost 1,200 passengers and crew were killed, including more than 100 Americans. This event became a rallying cry for the pro-war faction, in the U.S. When the U.S. finally entered the war against Germany in 1917, it was under the slogan

attempts to frame the Jewish people with the so-called Protocols of Zion.<sup>22</sup> A modern example would be the Gulf of Tonkin hoax.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, there is no documentary evidence whatever known to us which would justify the assertion that Lenin was so downcast he was thinking of leaving politics altogether. For one thing, he literally had no time to think about it. But one must examine a chronology of Lenin's political behavior in the period immediately after the declaration of war. When the war broke out, Lenin and Krupskaya<sup>24</sup> were in Krakow (now part of Poland), which at the time was under Austrian domination. At the outbreak of the war, Krakow was a beehive of activity for the Bolshevik exiles. Lenin was up to his ears with work in connection with the revolutionary resurgence in Russia, where the strike movement was taking on greater and greater momentum.

No sooner had the war broken out than Lenin was arrested at the instigation of the czarist authorities. He was released after pressure on the Austrian government through social democratic friends and contacts. Within days of his release, Lenin began working feverishly on a thesis against the war.

It is also putting Lenin totally out of focus in this period to say that in the two years before the war, he was immersed in factional

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"Remember the Lusitania! " Germany claimed that the ship had been carrying contraband war material. It wasn't until 1960 that the U.S. and Britain opened secret archives showing that the ship's manifest made public after the tragedy had been a forgery and that the Lusitania was carrying 60 tons of shells and bullets when it was hit. The large loss of life had been due to the ship sinking in only ten minutes.

22 Protocols of Zion: The "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" was a forged document that purported to describe a plot by "international Jewry" to seize control of the world. It first appeared in the late 19th century, and was later revived by Hitler to justify his genocidal anti-Semitic purges.

23 Gulf of Tonkin hoax: The U.S. began the bombing of North Vietnam in August 5, 1964, after what it claimed had been two attacks on U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese P-T boats. This pretext was then ratified by the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, passed in the Senate on August 7, 1964, which in the absence of any declaration of war became the legal "justification" for the massive escalation by the U.S. government of the war in Vietnam. It was finally revealed seven years later with the publication of the Pentagon Papers that the U.S. had been planning to bomb the North for six months and engineered the "attacks" as a pretext.

24 Krupskaya: Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya was Lenin's wife and close political collaborator for 30 years.

affairs and wrote scarcely anything suggesting his awareness of the danger. Deutscher misses a point which should be obvious to him as a historian of the revolution and of the period in general. The factional struggle to which he refers, the intransigent struggle to build the Bolshevik party on a firm working-class basis, the struggle against the rightwing of the Social Democratic Party of Russia -- the Mensheviks, the liquidators, the conciliators to bourgeois ideology -- all of this was in essence also a struggle against imperialist war if it were to break out. But when it would break out, or if it would break out, was not an issue in the party or the international as a whole.

During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 the Russian Social Democratic Party as a whole, including both the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions, had opposed the war. It should be noted that the Japanese social democrats, too, were opposed to the war. The party and the International also took a correct position on the war in the Balkans.

Lenin wrote what was necessary for the prosecution of the revolutionary class struggle of the period. It was the building and consolidation of the party in that crucial period which was so indispensable to the success of the revolution.

Lenin was a polemicist. He took up those arguments which needed to be answered. For instance, he had several years earlier written his celebrated *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*,<sup>25</sup> in which he vigorously defended the purity of Marxist methodology against the attempt to adulterate dialectical materialism with bourgeois idealism. Lenin did not write this very important defense of materialism against the neo-Kantians and disciples of Mach<sup>26</sup> just because he had a general interest in defending philosophical

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25 V.I. Lenin, "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy," op. cit., Vol. 14, pp. 17-361.

26 Neo-Kantians and disciples of Mach: The neo-Kantians were a reactionary trend in bourgeois philosophy that opposed Marxism and preached subjective idealism under the slogan of a return to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Ernst Mach (1838-1916) was an Austrian physicist and philosopher whose followers attacked dialectical materialism, supposedly from the standpoint of natural science.

materialism against the conciliators with agnosticism, a form of idealism. No, he did so because it had become an issue in the party. Lenin characterized the grouping in the Bolshevik party led by A. Bogdanov and A.V. Lunacharsky as god-seekers conciliating with religion, which had grown in the period of reaction. To reduce this theoretical work down to being immersed in factional affairs in Deutscher's words is totally inadequate.

There could be no more cogent evidence of where Lenin stood at the outbreak of the war than what can only be described as an eyewitness account of him during the days and weeks immediately following the start of the onslaught. We refer to the "Recollections of G. L. Shklovsky" originally published in 1925.<sup>27</sup>

"I may testify," says Shklovsky, "that the fundamental slogans of Lenin's tactic in the imperialist war had been formulated by him in Austria during the first few days of the war, for he brought them to Berne completely formulated.

"And further! I have every reason for stating that this tactic had matured in Lenin's head probably on the first day of the war."

This gave Lenin precious little time for the kind of pessimism and dejection which Deutscher attributes to him.

"My arrest on the third or fourth day of the war may serve as a proof of this statement. ... My arrest was caused by a telegram from Vladimir Ilich [Lenin] addressed to me which was intercepted by the Swiss military authorities. In this telegram Lenin suggested that I should get in touch with our comrades in Paris for the purpose of organizing the issue of war leaflets and

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<sup>27</sup> G.L. Shklovsky's recollections are extensively quoted in O.H. Gankin and H.H. Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1940), pp. 143-46.

proclamations. This indicates that there was not a moment of doubt or vacillation on the part of Vladimir Ilich and that on the first day of the war he was already thinking of a war against war, i.e., of turning the imperialist war into a civil war."

There is no reason whatever to cast any doubt on Shklovsky's recollections. He had no motive to excessively build up Lenin, either personal or political. Shklovsky was an old Bolshevik and remained one throughout his revolutionary career, during the period of building the party, during the revolution, and long afterwards. He had been arrested many times and exiled, escaped from exile, and went to Switzerland in 1912. He was a Bolshevik delegate to the Basel International Socialist Congress and attended the Berne Congress of Bolshevik organizations abroad.

"On about the second day [after Lenin's arrival in Berne] a meeting was held in the forest ... where Ilich spoke on the attitude toward the war this being the only possible subject of discussion for us at that time." And only a bare few days later, that is, "on September 6 or 7," says Shklovsky, "a more intimate meeting was held in my apartment; at this meeting Ilich presented his theses on the war. It is interesting to see who was at this meeting in addition to Lenin."

In addition to Ilich, Zinoviev and Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, the following comrades were present: Samoilov, Safarov, and Lilina, and possible Inessa.

"At this meeting Ilich's theses met with no objection whatsoever and were accepted in full. In a few days Comrade N.F. Samoilov departed with these theses for Russia via Italy and the Balkans. Furthermore, I had handed several copies of these theses to a student,

Shenkman, who was at that time in sympathy with us and was leaving for Russia on the same boat. ..."

Had all gone well, Lenin's anti-war resolution would have been in the hands of the Bolshevik party. However, it was learned that the theses had been intercepted and became, as Shklovsky says, the chief evidence of the czarist government against the Bolshevik Duma group. Nonetheless, members of the Central Committee of the Duma group did become acquainted with the theses, adopted them, and thereafter the ball really started rolling to link up the Leninist grouping outside of Russia with the party inside the country.

Shklovsky then describes the trial of the Bolshevik deputies to the Duma.

"From Deputy Petrovsky's testimony at the trial of the Bolsheviks it was revealed that these theses were also adopted by seven of the largest concerns in Petrograd." This is an extremely significant symptom of how class-conscious the workers were in Petrograd, but also shows that organizational steps of real import were already in progress.

A note in Gankin and Fisher's book *The Bolsheviks and the World War* states,

"In Russia these theses were mimeographed and sent to various large party organizations. Apparently they were discussed and adopted by the workers of a number of factories in Petersburg during the second half of September 1914; they were sent to Kamenev, in October they were discussed in Moscow, according to police records. They were discovered also in Baku. ... Samoilov recalls that in the middle of September 1914, immediately on his return from abroad, he presented the point of view of the Bureau of the Central



Committee Abroad at a meeting of party members in Ivanovo-Voznesensk."<sup>28</sup>

Finally the theses were discussed at a conference of Bolshevik deputies and party members on November 17, 1914.

The first concern of Lenin upon his arrival in Switzerland was to resume the publication of the central organ, *Sotsial-Demokrat*. "I had to dig up my entire library," continues Shklovsky, "in order to establish the fact that the last number of *Sotsial-Demokrat* which had appeared in Paris approximately a year before was No. 32. ... [A]fter a period of almost two months, No. 33 of *Sotsial-Demokrat* appeared, the first issue after a long interruption.

". ... We were entirely cut off from Russia. Only in the middle of October did we succeed, through Comrade Aleksandr [Shliapnikov], who had come to Stockholm for that purpose, in establishing the first contact with Russia. Vladimir Ilich held on to that link with all his strength, fearing that it might break, especially since about November 20 news was received of the arrest of the Duma group and of the members of the Central Committee in Russia."

It was then that Lenin decided to call a conference of the sections of the party abroad. It was difficult to do this in light of wartime conditions, even from neutral Switzerland.

"Still," says Shklovsky, "we succeeded in calling this Conference, although it was not as well represented as we had wished it. Our Scandinavian sections were not represented at the Conference and not a single representative was present from our comrades in Germany and Austria. Nor was there a representative from the London section. ..."

Nonetheless, a break was made. Lenin was steadily moving with determination. He "missed no occasion of getting in touch with those individual foreigners, who in some way or other protested

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28 O.H. Gankin and H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

against the war" and attempted to reach out in every way with his revolutionary internationalist position. He "paid special interest to the parties and groups which had taken a more or less internationalist position (the Italian and Swiss parties, the German Left tendency, the Left tendency among the youth organizations).

"In his relations with them," Shklovsky affirms, Lenin "directed all the strength of his revolutionary passion and of his iron logic not so much against the open opportunists, the struggle against whom he considered to be relatively easy, but against the covert defensists, the 'Centrists,' with Kautsky at the head. He missed no occasion, by word of mouth, in the press, in private letters, at meetings and wherever possible, to expose and to brand them as the meanest and most dangerous traitors. ..."

This is an altogether different Lenin than the ones presented by the rabid restorationist Solzhenitsyn or the leftist Deutscher. And it is a very different view of the period immediately following the outbreak of the war. It dispels the falsehood that the leaders were all paralyzed and merely waiting for the masses to revolt, or were downcast, full of pessimism, and intending to quit altogether, as Deutscher presents Lenin. Instead, the immediate period after the war began was particularly significant in the preparation for the revolution. It was a vital link in the struggle to develop and strengthen the party and to enable it to ultimately carry out its task.

The bourgeois view of it as presented above eliminates this vital link between the necessity of organizational and political preparation and the intervention of the masses for the overthrow of the czarist monarchy. It eliminates the very difficult and very necessary task of organizing and spreading Lenin's message on converting the imperialist war into a civil war. The impression is left that the spontaneous revolutionary intervention of the masses alone accounted for the revolution; it downplays the vital element of preparing the cadres to direct the spontaneous revolutionary upheaval, not merely into anti-czarist but into anti-capitalist and

anti-imperialist directions, paving the way for the proletarian revolution.

It is no accident that bourgeois historians almost universally underplay the period of preparation, the long hard years in exile. They show their hostility to the future leaders of the revolution by portraying them as a variety of exile groups, each claiming hegemony over the masses with whom these exile leaders had no connection, and squabbling over abstruse theories to which the masses had no affinity.

The possibility of a world war had been foreseen by Engels as far back as 1887.

No war is any longer possible for Prussia-Germany except a world war and a world war indeed of an extension and violence hitherto undreamt of. Eight to ten millions of soldiers will mutually massacre one another and in doing so devour the whole of Europe until they have stripped it barer than any swarm of locusts has ever done. The devastation of the Thirty Years' War compressed into three or four years and spread over the whole Continent; famine, pestilence, general demoralization both of the armies and of the mass of the people produced by acute distress; hopeless confusion of our artificial machinery in trade, industry and credit, ending in general bankruptcy; collapse of the old states and their traditional state wisdom to such an extent that crowns will roll by dozens on the pavement and there will be nobody to pick them up, absolute impossibility of foreseeing how it will all end and who will come out of the struggle as victor; only one result absolutely certain: general

exhaustion and the establishment of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class.<sup>29</sup>

This general prognosis of Engels was well known among the socialist leaders. The Russo-Japanese war and the Balkans war were responded to in a generally progressive manner by the parties in the Second International.

Lenin would certainly have written more on the subject had there been divergent prognoses on the war, if differences had arisen on the approach. Had that been the case, and had he failed to join the polemic, criticism would be valid. In general Lenin was not given to speculation and writing on subjects of no immediate significance in preparing the workers for the struggle. His main work was to relentlessly and without letup propagate the irreconcilable struggle against the bourgeoisie, whose representatives in the working class movement were the Mensheviks, the conciliators with the bourgeoisie, and the liquidators. It was therefore no wonder that the Bolsheviks led the anti-war struggle and were exiled to Siberia for their role in it.

The fact that Lenin in this period did not write on the impending imperialist war which would have been speculative in character in any case, should be seen against the background of his most urgent tasks in relation to the party.

Frequently overlooked by Western historians of the period we are discussing are the immense, almost herculean tasks Lenin had in coordinating the legal and illegal work of the party, and supervising the very important but delicate work of the Bolshevik fraction in the Duma.

One of Lenin's outstanding contributions to the proper pursuit of the class struggle against the bourgeoisie lies precisely in his unique approach to rigorously pursuing a revolutionary class line,

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<sup>29</sup> *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), pp. 456-457.

without falling into the trap of surrendering to whatever semblance of bourgeois legality exists, or of giving up on the struggle altogether and awaiting the spontaneous rise of the masses. Much of Lenin's work went into elaborating and consistently pursuing the need for combining both tasks -- legal and illegal. What probably is least of all understood in the Western bourgeois democracies is Lenin's role in organizing, educating, and supervising the work of the Bolshevik fraction in the Duma.

Take for instance the Social Democratic Party in Germany as it exists today, or for that matter as it has always existed. Even back in Kautsky's time, when he was the recognized theoretical leader of the party, the work of the Reichstag fraction was mostly done by the insiders themselves. It was a fraction that sort of led itself. Of course, there was general agreement with the central organ of the party, but by and large it was loose. Kautsky did not exercise the kind of political authority and organizational direction over the fraction that Lenin did in Russia, even when he was in exile. Today Willy Brandt, chairman of the German Social Democratic Party can exercise only whatever broad moral authority he may have over the party. By and large the party fraction in the Federal Republic of Germany today is run by the parliamentarians. Even party congresses are little more than advisory groups whose often radical resolutions are rarely taken seriously by the establishment "inside" groups who wield the power and authority. To the extent that the party as a whole exercises influence upon the fraction it is really of a marginal character. And this is the case in almost all the other workers' parties in the bourgeois democracies where parliamentary fractions exist.

Lenin's task was most difficult in that the Bolshevik deputies were hunted and harassed by the czarist police, and often faced long years in prison. In order to wield political influence over them and infuse them with his revolutionary class approach, Lenin had to do more than just generalize the problems of the Duma fraction, which

by then had become a strong force in the Russian labor movement. He also meticulously did their work for them.

It was Lenin who in the early days, following the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, carefully studied the deliberately complex character of the czarist election procedures after the czar finally authorized elections to the Duma. Lenin unraveled many of these intricate election technicalities and showed how in even the most reactionary Duma it was possible to introduce important resolutions on the situation in Russia -- workers' conditions, the nationalities question, and many others. He frequently wrote their speeches. He particularly studied the agrarian question so as to enable the Bolshevik deputies to present an independent program in relation to the bourgeois parties, who vied with the Bolsheviks for the allegiance of the peasantry.

It should be noted that in the 1912 elections to the Duma, the Bolsheviks carried all seats in the workers' districts, or so-called curias. Their fraction was known as the Bolshevik Six. The Menshevik Seven won their seats mostly in areas reflecting the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Krupskaya in her *Reminiscences of Lenin*<sup>30</sup> says that the Bolshevik Six represented a million workers, whereas the seven Menshevik deputies represented less than a quarter of a million people.

A point to be made in connection with the present era is that the social democrats everywhere regard themselves (and the bourgeoisie almost always is only too eager to agree) as being democratic, in contrast to the communists, and especially the Bolsheviks. Yet when the Bolshevik Six and the Menshevik Seven tried to work together as one fraction, the Mensheviks "democratically" decided that they alone could speak for the combined group, they alone could frame the questions to be asked in the Duma, and they alone could decide what petty privileges the

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30 Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).

deputies would get in the way of exercising whatever rights the Duma members had. One would think in light of the narrow margin won, let alone how many workers each represented, that elementary democratic rules dictated at least a more or less equal division of authority. But the Menshevik Seven stuck to their guns and even caused a scandal in the international. They forced Plekhanov, who was abroad then and was nominally the head of the Social Democratic Party as a whole, to resign because of this dispute. Of course, on the broader questions dividing the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Plekhanov stood with the former.

By 1912 when the resurgence was in full swing and legality was restored in some measure because of the upsurge, the Bolsheviks were able to put out a daily paper -- Pravda. It was no mean task for Lenin to write for it almost daily. Overall there were always urgent tasks organizing conferences of the party and continuing the struggle against the Mensheviks in all phases of the class struggle.

All this work had the greatest significance in shaping the Bolshevik party to be able to withstand the tide of chauvinism that swept Europe at the outbreak of the war.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Imperialism and the growth of opportunism**

The period of the rise and development of the great mass socialist parties in Europe in the last two decades of the 19th century is frequently characterized as one of peaceful growth. Lenin and other Marxists, particularly after the First World War, used the term peaceful to contrast that period to the great revolutionary epochs of 1848 and of the Paris Commune (1870-71), as well as the early years of the 20th century which saw the 1905 Russian Revolution and the tremendous revolutionary ferment it caused in Asia, the Mideast, and reaching to Africa. Most particularly however the era of peaceful growth is distinguished from the cataclysmic explosion of war in 1914 and the convulsive revolutionary developments in Russia that followed, affecting to a greater or lesser extent the working classes and oppressed peoples of most of the world.

The long stretch of historical evolution from 1871 to 1914, when there was no major revolutionary development on the continent of Europe, helped sow the illusion of a peaceful transition to socialism. This period of the peaceful development of capitalism, however, was anything but peaceful so far as the greater portion of the earth was concerned. What was happening around the world was of a most violent character, and was the direct result of the maturing of the basic contradictions of capitalism, first and foremost in Europe but also in the U.S. and Japan.

On the surface it seemed that the class forces had reached an equilibrium, imparting a certain stability to the capitalist system. But this overlooks the sharpening of the class antagonisms, which reached the surface through many struggles of the workers, many of a violent character. However, all these appeared as merely minor manifestations while by



and large the growth of the productive forces of capitalism was actually reaching a higher stage of development on a peaceful basis.

Bourgeois historians interpret this period as one in which there were merely quantitative changes taking place; no qualitative transformation was occurring in the development of capitalism. It was not recognized that the development of the contradictions growing out of the class antagonisms was leading to a violent resolution, which broke out in all the fury and violence of the First World War.

The struggle over surplus value, which is what the class struggle is about, got diverted somewhat from the home front into the more lucrative struggle for profit among the imperialist powers. It was both an expression of the class struggle of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat and a further extension of this struggle beyond the national borders which had until the 1860s been sufficient for exploitation under the competitive stage of capitalism. But as the subsequent development of monopoly capitalism spurred the search for superprofits, for more surplus value, exploitation abroad acquired a qualitatively new importance.

This period was characterized by the worldwide expansion of the great European capitalist states into virtually all corners of the earth. Since this expansion roughly parallels the development of the Second International into a mighty force, it is important to at least sketch in very broad outline the nature and extent of the global expansion of the European, Japanese, and United States capitalist powers.

It is to be noted that in the period roughly from the 1880s until the Basel Conference of 1912, the European imperialists completed the carving up of virtually all of Africa. This was truly the period of the rape of Africa's resources,

following on centuries of the slave trade. With unprecedented ruthlessness and wanton disregard for the natural affinities of the people, the imperialists created artificial geographical boundaries as they colonized to suit their material needs. This left a legacy of endless internal strife in Africa, which still prevails today. The imperialists still retain, if not direct political control, certainly a variety of economic and diplomatic instrumentalities that enable them to impose a new form of colonialism -- neo-colonialism.

England, France, Portugal, and Belgium all grabbed immense territories many times larger than themselves. Italy, Spain, and the formidable latecomer Germany got the least imperialist booty, but it was still enough to bring in vast profits. In addition the U.S. had control over the supposedly independent country of Liberia. Only Ethiopia was able to remain relatively independent, if we disregard commercial and economic intercourse with the imperialists.

In attempting to understand the role of the Second International in the struggle against imperialism, it must be borne in mind that, particularly after the turn of the century, the struggle of the imperialist powers was not confined to Africa. The struggle was particularly intense over Asia, where not only the European powers were involved but also Japan, Russia, and the United States. All were deeply interested and competing for imperialist advantages. It is enough to mention that Japan had earlier virtually made Korea a colony and by 1910 had fully annexed it. The U.S. and Russia were also concerned with subjugating Korea, and began to penetrate it economically as long ago as the 1880s in unsuccessful efforts to stop Japan, which had in the meantime taken over Taiwan. The three competed over the penetration of China while Russia and Japan both eyed Manchuria.

The Dutch had taken over Indonesia several centuries earlier, but had increasing difficulty with rising insurgency, leading to rebellion, which unfortunately was unsuccessful. Britain and France between them subjugated the Indian subcontinent and most of Southeast Asia.

The U.S. in this period had mounted the most aggressive campaign of economic and political penetration in Latin America, so that by the end of the First World War it could be said by Ludwell Denny in his book, *America Conquers Britain*<sup>31</sup> that the U.S. had won the battle not by force but by economic penetration. Its displacement of the European colonial powers extended from Latin America to Asia with the Spanish-American War of 1898, whose outcome was to establish U.S. hegemony over not only Cuba and Puerto Rico but the Philippines as well.

Bourgeois historians, in depicting this long stretch of the "peaceful" development of capitalism, invariably concentrate on the various alliances and treaties, both secret and open, and almost always make Europe the focus of all of the struggles, obscuring the basic objective of the inter-imperialist struggle, which was to carve up the rest of the world under their domination. Even as the dangers of world war seemed to become more and more imminent around the years 1911-12, bourgeois historical accounts are filled with the struggle over the Balkans. Over and over again, there pops up the cliché, "the Balkan powderkeg," with the implication that a spark from the Balkans may ignite the whole world. Others dwell on the animosities and nationalist or religious rivalries in that small portion of the earth. All the post-war wisdom of imperialist apologists is contained in the admonition to the Great Powers not to let such small countries, with their ancient, unsolvable

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<sup>31</sup> Ludwell Denny, *America Conquers Britain* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1930).

problems draw the great imperialist powers into a world conflict.

How like today! Can one forget how during the Vietnam war the wisdom of the liberals was to plead with the bourgeois state not to let ruthless dictators like Diem in South Vietnam drag "us," the imperialist U.S., into a quagmire, or lay the basis for a confrontation with the USSR itself? This line of argument is still being used today, whether about the Philippines, or south Korea, or in the Middle East. Liberal columnists wrote about how U.S. Marines in Lebanon were just acting as a "proxy" for the fascist Phalange, propping up the ambitions of this faction, and so on and so forth. It's not monopoly finance capital with its lust to control the oil and vital arteries of the Middle East that is the root cause -- oh no, it's the various factions and religious sects that are dragging the U.S. into the struggle!

During the period of the rape of Africa, the attempt to partition China and to turn South and Central America into nothing but spheres of influence based on old colonial conquest, the liberal bourgeoisie and also some right-wing elements among the socialist parties, preached just about the same wisdom to the imperialists, admonishing them to have a more imaginative, clever, and less crude policy, which would really lay the basis for peace. Not so Lenin. Lenin not only understood the struggle against outright colonialism in its proper historical perspective, but he was also aware of what was then only vaguely understood in the socialist movement but was well understood by the bourgeoisie: the new phenomenon of neocolonialism. He took up this question in writings on the struggle of the Young Turks.

The Turkish Revolution of 1908-09 was commonly referred to in the West as the revolution of the Young Turks. They had founded the Unity and Progressive Party as early as

1894. They were a group of progressive and revolutionary intellectuals mostly representing the interests of the rising merchant class. In 1908, troops under the leadership of the Young Turk officers mutinied and were supported by the masses in the towns and by the peasants. The outcome was finally a Young Turk government which sought agreement with the reactionary feudal and clerical element and with the imperialist powers.

The imperialist bourgeoisie was very pleased with the Young Turk government and praised it for its moderation. Lenin on the other hand pointed out that the Turkish revolution was not really a popular revolution in that the mass of the people did not come out actively and independently with their own political demands. Lenin recognized in this generally progressive development in Turkey a form of what we would call today a neocolonialist regime. Lenin saw why the bourgeois liberals praised it to the satisfaction of the imperialists. He wrote about the struggle in Turkey in 1908 in the article "Events in the Balkans and in Persia."<sup>32</sup>

"Essentially," he said, "what we see going on in the Balkans, Turkey, and Persia is a counter-revolutionary coalition of the European powers against the mounting tide of democracy in Asia. ... Rivalry among the capitalist powers, anxious to bite off as big a piece as they can and extend their possessions and colonies, coupled with fear of an independent democratic movement among the nations dependent on or 'protected' by Europe -- these are two mainsprings of all European policy. The Young Turks are praised for their moderation and restraint, i.e. the Turkish revolution is being praised because it is weak, because it is not

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32 V.I. Lenin, "Events in the Balkans and in Persia," in his *Collected Works*(Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), Vol. 15, pp. 220-230.

rousing the popular masses to really independent action, because it is hostile to the proletarian struggle beginning in the Ottoman Empire -- and at the same time the plunder of Turkey continues. The Young Turks are praised for making it possible to go on plundering Turkish possessions."

Looking at it in the light of the contemporary imperialist domination of oppressed nations, one can see that neocolonialism was at that time a new trend. But it was not recognized as such by many liberals and right-wing socialists. Lenin caught on to and unmasked it while other socialists passed it off and allowed the liberals to set the tone and formulate the issue for the workers. He later elaborated on this to show that the collapse of the International was not an accident of history but that revisionism and opportunism had economic and social roots in the new expansionist monopoly stage of capitalism.

Imperialist history on the period we are covering rarely if ever touches upon the anti-militarist struggle put up by the working class, especially the youth. Typical of such treatment is the highly touted book *The Guns of August*,<sup>33</sup> by Barbara W. Tuchman, a darling of imperialist statesmen. It deals with the period leading to the outbreak of the First World War and is considered a major historical study by bourgeois reviewers. The book doesn't mention the Socialist International, the struggle of the working class parties, or even any anti-imperialist demonstrations.

Lenin paid close attention to the anti-militarist struggle in Europe. The intense inter imperialist rivalries had indeed provoked tremendous anti-militarist struggles on the part of the European workers, especially the youth. In *Bellicose*

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33 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

Militarism and the Anti-Militarist Tactics of Social Democracy,<sup>34</sup>  
Lenin wrote,

"The more menacingly the governments rattle their sabers one against the other, the more ruthlessly do they crush the anti-militarist movement at home." [You wouldn't know the movement existed if you only read the bourgeois press of the time, or the works of today's imperialist historians!]

"The persecutions of anti-militarists are growing extensively and intensively. The 'Radical-Socialist' Ministry of Clemenceau-Briand acts no less violently than the Junker-Conservative Ministry of Bulow. Bourgeois public opinion these days has been taught to believe that the peaceful development of capitalism in Europe included a peaceful attitude toward the anti-war movement by the civilized educated democratic governments of France and Germany!

"The dissolution of the 'youth organizations' throughout Germany, following the introduction of the new law on unions and assemblies, which prohibits persons under the age of 20 from attending political meetings has made anti-militarist agitation in Germany extremely difficult."

Such was the pre-war democracy of Germany and also of France.

"Special anti-militarist propaganda," Lenin explains later on, "has behind it not only the evidence of principle but also extensive historical experience. Belgium is ahead of other countries in this respect. The Belgian Labor

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34 V.I. Lenin, "Bellicose Militarism and the Anti-Militarist Tactics of Social Democracy," *op. cit.*, Vol. 15, pp. 191-201.

Party, apart from its general propaganda of anti-militarist ideas, has organized groups of socialist youth. ... Groups in one and the same area constitute an Area Federation, and all the Area Federations in turn form a National Federation. The newspapers of the youth circulate in tens of thousands of copies. The strongest is the Walloon Federation, which has 62 local groups with 10,000 members. ...

"Outside the town halls, in the open air, socialist speakers explain to the (army) recruits the meaning of militarism. ...

A complaints committee from the Youth Council gathers information, says Lenin, about all acts of injustice committed in the barracks.

"This information under the heading 'From the Army' is daily published in *Le Peuple*, the central organ of the party. Anti-militarist propaganda does not halt at the threshold of the barracks and socialist soldiers form propaganda groups within the army. At the present time there are about 15 such groups ('soldiers' unions')."

During the Vietnam war, only one such group was formed in this country which had a somewhat similar program and was oriented toward the working class. It was the American Servicemen's Union, founded by Andy Stapp.<sup>35</sup>

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35 American Servicemen's Union: The American Servicemen's Union (ASU) was formed in 1968 by active-duty GIs who opposed the Vietnam War and oppression within the military. At its height it had 160 chapters on bases in the U.S. and overseas on 50 U.S. Navy ships. In 1971, its newspaper *The Bond* was mailed to 20,000 service people and reached thousands more as it was passed hand to hand. Its programmatic demands included the election of officers by the ranks; no use of troops against strikers, anti-war demonstrators, or the oppressed communities; an end to racism and sexism in the military and the right to collective bargaining. The ASU was the subject of an *Esquire* magazine article in August 1968 entitled "The Plot to Unionize the Army."



The Belgian example, says Lenin, was followed in France, Austria, Switzerland, and other countries. Lenin was obliged to recall all this in polemicizing against two right-wing, that is, revisionist representatives in the Second International who were basically opposed to anti-militarist activity. First they argued that it would endanger the existence of the Socialist Party, but the basic reason for their opposition was their stand on the colonial question, which after all was the basis for the developing imperialist struggle.

Both the growing danger of imperialist war, and the colonial question were therefore fundamental issues at each of the congresses of the Socialist International. Formed originally in 1889, the International had by the time of the Stuttgart Congress already held congresses in Brussels (1891); Zurich, (1893); London, (1896); Paris, (1900); and Amsterdam (1904). The Russo-Japanese War gave the Second International an opportunity to roundly condemn the war in a way which illustrated at the time the strength of the anti-war current in the working class movement, as expressed by the delegations at the 1904 Amsterdam Congress. Julius Braunthal in his *History of the International*,<sup>36</sup> relates how the Second International took the occasion of the Russo-Japanese War "to demonstrate to the world the solidarity of the Russian and Japanese workers [by electing Sen] Katayama and [George] Plekhanov as its joint Presidents. ... It was a memorable moment when, to the immense joy of the delegates, these representatives of the working class of two warring [imperialist] countries demonstratively clasped hands on the platform."

It was certainly a high point in the International's attempt to rally working class internationalism against capitalist

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<sup>36</sup> Julius Braunthal, *History of the International* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 242.

imperialism.

About Plekhanov, it should be noted that at that time he was still representing the Russian Social-Democratic Party as a whole. Shortly thereafter, however, the Bolsheviks under Lenin would elect their own representatives to the International Socialist Bureau.

It was not too long after this conference that Plekhanov, following the defeat of the Russian Revolution of 1905, proclaimed, "They should not have taken up arms." He thereby clarified for many, at least in the Russian working class movement, the deep and profound significance of the split that had taken place in 1903 in the Russian Social-Democratic Party, in which Plekhanov had emerged as leader of the Menshevik faction and Lenin as leader of the Bolsheviks. Few in the European movement at the time had seen in this schism more than a difference in organizational tactics and personalities. But it really reflected deep political differences on a whole range of national and international questions.

On the question of czarist expansionism and the struggle for colonies among the European, Japanese and U.S. imperialists, both the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks seemed to have a more or less identical view. In 1907, in his article analyzing the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, Lenin took special note that it was "gratifying" to see that the Russian delegation all voted against a colonialist position put forward by a revisionist, right-wing grouping in the International. However, the Mensheviks not only took an imperialist (defensist) position during the First World War, but after the February 1917 Revolution supported the Kerensky regime on the colonial question insofar as czarist Russia's annexationist designs were involved.

Lenin's insight on the colonial question has interested many progressive writers, but most have concentrated on the period after the October Revolution. A reading of Lenin's earlier writings, however, explains why he would fight against the imperialist war with such fervor and passion; his anti-war stand grew out of his clarity and depth of understanding of the processes at work in the European labor movement in general and in the socialist movement in particular.

For instance, in an article on the Stuttgart congress<sup>37</sup> he reveals a theme that he was to hammer on and expand at great length during the war years.

"On the colonial question an opportunist majority was formed in the Commission, and the following monstrous phrase appeared in the draft resolution: 'The Congress does not in principle and for all time reject all colonial policy, which, under a socialist regime may have a civilizing effect.

In reality this proposition was tantamount to a direct retreat towards bourgeois policy and a bourgeois world outlook that justifies colonial wars and atrocities. It was a retreat towards [Theodore] Roosevelt, said one of the American delegates. The attempts to justify this retreat by the tasks of a socialist colonial policy and of constructive reform work in the colonies were unfortunate in the extreme. Socialism has never refused to advocate reforms in the colonies as well; but this can have nothing in common with weakening our stand in principle against conquests, subjugation of other nations, violence, and plunder, which constitute 'colonial policy.' The minimum program of all the socialist parties applies both to the home countries and

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<sup>37</sup> V.I. Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart," in his *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962), Vol. 13, pp. 86-87.

the colonies. The very concept 'socialist colonial policy' is a hopeless muddle. The Congress quite rightly deleted the above-quoted words from the resolution and substituted for them a condemnation of colonial policy that was sharper than that contained in former resolutions."

In another article on this subject,<sup>38</sup> Lenin further related the issue of the colonial question to opportunism in the European workers' movement:

"This vote on the colonial question is of very great importance. First, it strikingly showed up socialist opportunism, which succumbs to bourgeois blandishments. Secondly, it revealed a negative feature in the European labor movement, one that can do no little harm to the proletarian cause, and for that reason should receive serious attention. Marx frequently quoted a very significant saying of Sismondi: The proletarians of the ancient world, this saying runs, lived at the expense of society; modern society lives at the expense of the proletarians.

"The non-propertied, but non-working, class is incapable of overthrowing the exploiters. Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, can bring about the social revolution. However, as a result of the extensive colonial policy, the European proletarian partly finds himself in a position when it is not his labor, but the labor of the practically enslaved natives in the colonies, that maintains the whole of society. The British bourgeoisie, for example, derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers. In certain

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38 *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

countries this provides the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism. Of course, this may be only a temporary phenomenon, but the evil must nonetheless be clearly realized and its causes understood in order to be able to rally the proletariat of all countries for the struggle against such opportunism. This struggle is bound to be victorious, since the 'privileged' nations are a diminishing faction of the capitalist nations."

This then is how a section of the proletariat became influenced by imperialism and its super profits. This explains to a large extent why the chauvinists and opportunists gained the upper hand eventually over the more progressive elements, formidable as they were but unorganized, in the Second International.

Lenin saw that what was happening in the European movement had manifested itself in the Russian Social-Democratic Party as well, although in different form. Even though the question of colonies and the expansionist policy of the regime did not divide the Russian working class movement as it did in Europe opportunism and revisionism had taken root there. It was Lenin's great contribution that he consistently and resolutely fought it from the beginning of his revolutionary career.

The trends he saw reflecting revisionism in all its varieties in the Russian movement were merely variations of the same international trend that had become far more visible on the European continent.

Lenin expanded on the theme of the colonial struggle later in his definitive exposition on imperialism.<sup>39</sup> Picking up on

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<sup>39</sup> V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," *op. cit.*, Vol. 22, pp. 185-304.

what seemed like loose threads but in reality were links in his theoretical armor, he explained that opportunism was a product of the transformation of so-called peaceful competitive capitalism into predatory monopolist imperialism.

Lenin's study of imperialism was not the only one written by a Marxist. Rosa Luxemburg and Rudolf Hilferding, among others, also analyzed some of the most important features of imperialism, particularly in Hilferding's work *Finance Capital*.<sup>40</sup> But what Hilferding did not do in his book, which Lenin did, was to link up the basic characteristics of imperialism with the practice of opportunism in the struggle against the bourgeoisie in general and chauvinism in particular.

Toward the end of his analysis of imperialism, Lenin showed that "monopoly has grown out of colonial policy." He showed that there was a difference between the old colonial policy and the new one.

"To the numerous 'old' motives of colonial policy," said Lenin, "finance capital has added the struggle for the sources of raw materials, for the export of capital, for spheres of influence, i.e., for spheres for profitable deals, concessions, monopoly profits, and so on economic territory in general."<sup>41</sup>

Yes, the struggle had become one for "economic territory." And this, if anything, is even more true today than it was in Lenin's time. A striking example pertains to one of the fundamental characteristics of imperialism, the export of capital. The export of capital to conquer new economic territory has become more outrageously significant than ever before. It has brought in a whole series of cunning variations on how it is done. Capital is not only exported but re-exported to the underdeveloped and oppressed countries. This process

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40 Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital -- A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). Originally published in German in 1910.

41 V.I. Lenin, op, cit., p. 299.

with its multitude of both hidden and open devices, is called "recycling" by the bourgeois economists. For example a tremendous amount of capital, some 1 trillion, was supposed to have flowed into the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries between 1972 and 1982, the decade after the big price increase in oil. But one New York Times analyst wrote that "it is not entirely clear where all that money is now and who controls it."

It is in the imperialist banks, of course! Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty, Manufacturers Trust, and BankAmerica are the four biggest holding so-called petrodollars. These imperialist banks, among others, control virtually all that capital. Only a modest, superficial amount has been used to any extent for modernization in the oppressed countries. Much of it has been spent on military hardware pushed by imperialist arms merchants, so that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have become arsenals for the U.S. and wholly dependent on the Pentagon for spare parts, training, etc.

The transformation of early competitive capitalism into imperialism, and the effect this had in cultivating an opportunist element in the working class of the developed capitalist countries, has been the source of pessimism to many who in this period have abandoned revolutionary Marxism. But not to Lenin. He analyzed this phenomenon most meticulously, and saw it as only transitional to the proletarian revolution.

"The receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists ... makes it economically possible for them to bribe certain sections of the workers, and for a time a fairly considerable minority of them, and win them to the side of the bourgeoisie of a given industry or given nation against all the others. ..." But, adds Lenin, "the extraordinary rapidity and the particularly revolting character of the development of opportunism is by no means a guarantee that its victory will be durable: The rapid

growth of a painful abscess on a healthy body can only cause it to burst more quickly and thus relieve the body of it. ...

"From all that has been said in this book on the economic essence of imperialism," he concludes, "it follows that we must define it as capitalism in transition, or more precisely, as moribund capitalism."<sup>42</sup>

Writing almost three years after the victorious Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Lenin in a preface to *Imperialism* again reinforced the political conclusions to be drawn from this new stage of capitalist development: "Imperialism," he concluded, "is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat."<sup>43</sup> The so-called "peaceful" period of imperialist development had been one in which the revolutionists prepared for the great opportunities to come. And they were not long in coming.

Even as far back as 1908, in his writings on Turkey and the counter-revolutionary coalition of the Western "democracies" against the rising revolution in Asia, Lenin had predicted that: "Only the world proletarian revolution can overthrow this combined power of the crowned bandits and international capital."<sup>44</sup> The opportunism that Lenin fought so hard against, and which was the product of the new imperialist plundering of the world, would be overcome.

Cynics would look at the failure of subsequent proletarian revolutions in Europe as a refutation of Lenin. But the fact is that the growth of imperialism, with its fierce exploitation and ferocious oppression as well as its revolutionizing of the means of production, has brought socialist revolution to many countries since Lenin's day.

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42 Ibid., pp. 301-302.

43 Ibid., p. 194.

44 V.I. Lenin, "Events in the Balkans and in Persia," in his *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963) Vol. 15, p. 227.



The long period of "peaceful" development from the days of the Paris Commune to 1914 was in fact a time when the contradictions of capitalism were maturing to the point where they were no longer capable of containment. This is what led to the explosion of world war in 1914 and ushered in the first series of proletarian revolutions. In many ways, contemporary world capitalism has gone through a similar period since World War II. "Peaceful" development in the imperialist countries themselves, that is, a period relatively free of acute class struggles, has been possible only because of the intensification of imperialist exploitation, wholesale robbery, and military intervention in a whole host of underdeveloped and oppressed countries. Of course one should not forget the magnificent revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat in 1968,<sup>45</sup> which unfortunately was sidetracked into a swamp of bourgeois social-reformism in which a few significant advantages to the working class were bought at the price of once again subordinating the workers to the rule of finance capital.

Equally important was the unfortunate revolutionary struggle in 1974 and 1975 of the Portuguese working class and peasants,<sup>46</sup> where U.S. imperialist subversion, with the actual

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45 The French struggle of 1968: In May 1968, what began as a struggle of French students for reform of the university system quickly turned into huge street battles with the police. As the state escalated its violence, the struggle was taken up by the workers, who began political strikes and the occupation of plants and offices throughout France. In less than two weeks, over six million workers were on general strike, over the protests of their official leaders who had been taken by surprise by the workers' militancy. The French economy ground to a halt for another two full weeks as the workers showed their great power and defied capitalist rule.

46 The unfortunate revolutionary struggle in Portugal: In April 1974, the encrusted fascist regime in Portugal, weakened by the growing liberation struggles in its African colonies, was overthrown by the military. This was the beginning of a revolutionary crisis that lasted over a year. Strong anti-imperialist sentiment surfaced in the army rank-and-file, who fraternized with increasingly militant mobilizations of workers and poor peasants. The workers' parties, however, while able to mobilize the masses to prevent the return of fascist rule allowed the petty-bourgeois officers of the Armed Forces Movement to wield political leadership of the revolution. Under pressure of the NATO imperialists, the left retreated and Portuguese capitalism stabilized itself through the auspices of a "Socialist" government headed by Mario Soares.

financing of counter-revolution, was the basic cause in derailing what was in broad outline a working class revolution.

It was no accident that these revolutionary possibilities came in France and in Portugal. Their imperialist empires were unraveling. The French had lost Algeria and Southeast Asia, Portugal was losing its African colonies to the national liberation movements.

Thus this long stretch from 1945 to the 1980s has features strikingly similar to the so-called peaceful period of imperialism from the days of the Paris Commune to 1914. There are however fundamental differences. The contemporary period is characterized not only by a heightening struggle among the imperialist powers for spheres of influence, economic territory, and the export and re-export of capital, etc. The contemporary epoch is also characterized by the transformation of the world class struggle into a struggle of the world working class, the oppressed countries, and the socialist countries against the imperialist bourgeoisie. The struggle of the Western proletariat, as well as the Japanese proletariat, must be viewed in this perspective.

The period ahead has no less revolutionary potential, not only for the oppressed people but for the proletariat in the imperialist countries, than did the earlier period of so-called peaceful development.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Class struggle in the nuclear age**

The threat of nuclear war has hung over humanity for almost four decades. It is commonly regarded as an outgrowth of the development of science and technology. Many scientists and progressive scholars and economists attribute it to the fact that humanity has lost control over its own productive forces. But this is an altogether too narrow and in any case one-sided view of the situation.

Nuclear energy could have been developed and tried experimentally for civilian purposes. The threat of nuclear war would never have arisen had the productive forces of society become the common property of humanity, as the earth and its natural resources once were before the dawn of class society.

The nuclear threat continues to grow and become more menacing every day not because these products of human technology are uncontrollable but because they are the outgrowth of a science and technology completely tied to the development of capitalist imperialism. Science and technology have not only become subservient to big capital, they have become integrated with the capitalist state.

Before the arms race in nuclear weapons began, there were arms races in biological, chemical, air, and naval weaponry. Prior to World War I, technology and science were being feverishly developed in what was called "the race between the dreadnoughts." These were huge battleships which were able to deal the most dreadful destruction on sea and on land. One of the principal proponents of stimulating ever-speedier and more effective weapons of war, such as the dreadnought, was imperialist Britain. It was intent on preserving and expanding its vast, far-flung empire of colonies

all around the globe from which it extracted imperialist booty. Because it spanned the globe, it could truly be said, "The sun never sets on the British Empire."

But coming up fast was imperialist Germany, a newer, more efficient, and more developed industrial colossus which felt constricted and constrained by the military, and above all naval power of Britain. The race between Germany and Britain for speedier dreadnoughts took on more and more momentum, particularly as Germany began to develop a huge and effective submarine fleet.

During this period French imperialism was by no means idle. Nor was Japan. And the czarist empire, weak and tottering under the blows of a revolutionary proletariat and peasantry, had still by no means surrendered its role as the gendarme over at least a part of Europe.

The U.S. was not the neutral power which Wilson had so vehemently and dramatically proclaimed it to be. His assertions about keeping the U.S. out of the war soon turned out to be one of the hollowest of all the mockeries.

These are the roots of the present nuclear threat.

The arms race took on especially ominous significance when U.S. imperialism decided, practically at the end of World War II when the imminence of surrender by Japan was evident to the whole world, to unloose nuclear death and destruction on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. This was not an attempt to save U.S. or other lives. It was an attempt to establish a nuclear-military superiority based on a permanent monopoly.

Against whom was it directed? Not against Japanese imperialism, which had been ruined and vanquished as had Nazi imperialism.

It was directed instead against the USSR which, despite overwhelming odds, had vanquished the Nazi-fascist Axis and emerged as a great world socialist power. By virtue of that fact alone, and notwithstanding the anti-fascist alliance with the imperialist democracies, the USSR was once again put in the dock as the enemy.

The truth of the matter is that there has never been a real peace between imperialism and the socialist republics of the USSR. U.S. imperialism in particular has never, even during the best days of the alliance with the Soviet Union against Hitler, really and truly accommodated itself to the existence of the Soviet Union and its new social order. The emergence of the USSR as a nuclear power, which destroyed the illusion of U.S. world mastery through nuclear monopoly, intensified the struggle of the U.S. and its imperialist allies against the Soviet Union. There have been intervals of so-called peaceful coexistence. But every now and then over these past dangerous years an incident has come along which threatens to explode into a world holocaust.

Let's take a look at one of these events.

Beginning on Thursday evening, Sept. 1, 1983, and lasting for 36 long and almost unendurable hours, a crisis emerged in which it once again seemed that at any moment a nuclear holocaust could develop. What was the nature of the episode?

As the whole world knows now, the U.S. accused the USSR of shooting down a civilian aircraft with 269 passengers aboard. According to the U.S., they were "murdered in cold blood," "with premeditation," "with malice aforethought," etc., etc. For 36 hours the population of the U.S. was kept hostage to an absolutely coordinated, pre-planned and meticulously executed barrage of media and press saturation.

No opposing view was presented. The capitalist presidential candidates, usually so eager for publicity, were told to either get out of sight or make themselves inconspicuous by their absence.

The Soviet Union was to be convicted of murder. The judge and the jury were to be the U.S. government, that is, the military-industrial complex of bankers, generals, and Big Oil. Swift punishment was demanded. The media, particularly ABC News Nightline, became the voice for the whipped-up elements in the population to demand tough measures for punishment. A so-called scientific poll of the public was said to run as high as 20-to-1 for the tough measures. It appeared to be a buildup to show that the "grass roots" were for harsh measures while a "reluctant," now moderate-looking, Reagan was to finally give the order to retaliate.

But that did not happen. It still is not clear where the crisis could have gone, how far it would have been permitted to proceed, and what stopped it.

But on January 8, 1984 -- four long months after the crisis had subsided – the Washington Post Magazine ran a feature story on the KAL which detailed how the whole incident had been managed by the vast U.S. intelligence gathering system.

The conclusion of the article was that the whole event had been "an intelligence treasure trove" for the U.S. on how to penetrate Soviet air defenses. It listed a few of the many, many times over the last 30 years that U.S. aircraft have been downed over the Soviet Union, showing that violation of Soviet airspace is a deliberate and frequent occurrence and has resulted in 120 U.S. personnel known to be killed.

The article told of the giant U.S. tracking station Cobra Judy aboard the ship Observation Island, which is stationed off the Kamchatka Peninsula and monitors the Soviet Far East. It

quoted from two U.S. pilots who had flown scores of missions over the USSR and China, Edward Eskelson and Tom Bernard. Their plane, the RC135, is the type of spy plane that had flown over Soviet territory the night the KAL was shot down. They said that the National Security Agency adjusts the flight plans of these planes so that they deliberately violate Soviet territory, thereby gathering information on the Soviet response. "We believe that the entire sweep of events -- from the time the Soviets first began tracking KAL Flight 007 ... to the time of the shoot down -- was meticulously monitored and analyzed instantaneously by U.S. intelligence," wrote Eskelson and Bernard.

Such information was not available during those initial days and hours of war hysteria, however. Then all the press would print told of the "innocent lives lost" and Soviet "savagery."

This incident is like so many in the past which momentarily aroused a great deal of emotional response. Tragic though they may be, it is necessary to know, based on a century of experience that these episodes are mostly of a contrived character. Even when they are not, they have no independent historical significance.

One must weigh them in the scales of the social evolution of capitalism as a whole. Viewed in that light one sees that their real significance lies in the fact that they inevitably set in motion a series of events which lead to a catastrophe and which cannot, except in rare instances, be reversed through peaceful means.

For instance, take the Gulf of Tonkin incident which should still be fresh in the minds of many. Has it really been that long since the U.S. press carried blazing headlines that North Vietnamese gunboats opened fire on U.S. naval forces

stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin? Was it not President Lyndon Johnson, the State Department, and the Pentagon which issued the first reports on Aug. 4, 1964, and got the capitalist media to scream that the North Vietnamese had attacked U.S. destroyers on a routine intelligence-gathering trip in international waters?

By Aug. 7, with the media helping the government, the Congress was dragooned into passing the Gulf of Tonkin resolution authorizing the administration to take "all necessary measures to repel attacks against U.S. forces." The result? Some 50,000 American lives lost and millions of Southeast Asian people killed by U.S. guns, planes, and tanks.

But let us take a more distant incident.

What was the meaning of the shot at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914? That was the day Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated along with his wife by a Serbian nationalist. How many times in history have dukes, princes, monarchs, even czars, been assassinated? Was such an incident the result of an individual from an oppressed country attempting to strike back at an oppressor, a representative of the Austro-Hungarian Empire? Was such an incident responsible for setting in motion the first worldwide imperialist holocaust?

Today, the heirs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire are gone. The empire itself has gone. The monarchies have bit the dust. And none in Austria, Hungary, or Bosnia-Herzegovina where the assassination took place (now part of Yugoslavia) mourn the loss of either the Archduke or the monarchy. The incident in and of itself, divorced from the pattern of social development, has absolutely no significance in the scale of history. The loss of two lives could scarcely be justification for the deaths of millions more in the war, not even in the minds of



the most fanatical of the followers and lackeys of the Hapsburg monarchy.

Yet the incident has to be weighed not in isolation but as a product of the entire course of development of imperialist policy which grew out of the evolution of capitalist competition into aggressive, expansionist, colonialist, racist, predatory imperialism. The assassination can only be evaluated in the light of the subsequent evolution of imperialist rivalry into imperialist war.

Confining oneself to merely the political or military manifestations of imperialism without understanding its basic nature is an exercise in futility. This can only obscure the real character, the actual inherent tendencies, of the contemporary stage of U.S. nuclear-military-imperialist strategy.

Certain elements in the bourgeois intelligentsia have time and again declared that in the nuclear-space age all philosophies and all theories concerning the development of contemporary society are irrelevant. They hold that science and technology, particularly as represented by the nuclear and outer-space weapons systems that are already in place, make any theory of society valid only if it divests itself of every kind of "special interest" and makes the struggle against nuclear war preeminent.

And who indeed would be against making the struggle against nuclear war the highest priority?

What class in capitalist society, however, has been able to abandon its own class interests in the interest of combating nuclear war? Has the bourgeoisie? On the contrary, it not only has not abandoned its ideological assault upon society and the workers and oppressed in particular, it has utilized the nuclear threat to intensify that assault.

All talk of the irrelevance of contemporary ideology in relation to the extraordinary advances in science, technology, and above all nuclear and space developments reduces itself to an attempt to induce the independent working class and oppressed people, especially their vanguard organizations, to abandon their "special interests" in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. This does not bring us one iota nearer to eliminating the nuclear threat but, on the contrary, makes it more imminent.

It is with this in view that we ought to examine the opposing views of the fundamental political currents in the struggle against imperialist war in general and nuclear war in particular.

Both Marxists and pacifists are opposed to war. Both Marxists and pacifists seek peaceful solutions in order to avoid war, even though it is often said that the fundamental difference between Marxists and pacifists is that the latter are unequivocally and inflexibly opposed to the use of all violence. On the other hand, it is maintained that Marxists rely almost exclusively on the use of violence.

There are a great variety of pacifists, ranging from humanists to Christian socialists to some who even say they espouse Marxism. Of course, only the most dogmatic of pacifists are against the use of violence anywhere and everywhere. Some of the more progressive ones have shown flexibility and at least agree that in some cases, mostly in a war of an oppressed people, it is justified to take up arms.

Marxists, on the other hand, have never rejected peaceful means out of hand, if it could be demonstrated that the objective could be obtained that way and the road was clearly open for such a course of action. Who except those who have taken leave of their senses would prefer the use of

violence if peaceful means were just as accessible and successful? Would any real union of workers prefer a strike if their demands could be obtained just as easily by negotiations?

There is, however, a very crucial and fundamental difference between Marxism and pacifism. Marxists differ from all varieties of pacifists in that they take as their initial point of analysis the class character of a given society. This is necessary in order to determine whose interests the state serves.

Pacifists take the view that the state in contemporary capitalist society can be either good or evil. They espouse the wholly erroneous conception that it is the nature of violence itself that stands in the way of a just, equitable, and prosperous society. In their view, the nature of society flows from the conceptions which prevail within that society. Marxists on the other hand hold the view that the prevailing ideas of society flow from its class character.

"The prevailing ideas of any time," said Marx, "are the ideas of the ruling class." Thus in capitalist society the prevailing conceptions in politics and philosophy as well as in morals are the product of and serve the interests of the ruling bourgeoisie.

It is not true that pacifists and Marxists only differ in their tactics or methods. On the contrary it is their divergence in tactics that often discloses fundamentally different goals.

One of the most profound characteristics of Marxist methodology is that it never divorces or isolates the means from the ends. They are interdependent. This is not recognized by the pacifists, who look upon the state as a means in capitalist society, as something like an empty bag which can be filled with any social content regardless of the exploitation

and oppression which this supposed means, namely the bourgeois state, visits upon the working class and oppressed. The pacifists maintain that the state is or can be above the class struggle. Marxists, on the other hand, affirm that the state is an expression of the irreconcilable class antagonisms which are constantly tearing capitalist society apart.

Marxists hold the view that the state is a repressive force and by its nature rests on naked violence. Pacifists, however, reject this view, despite centuries of experience which unequivocally demonstrate that in every great crisis of society, in every case where the oppressed masses have challenged the ruling class, force has been used as the instrument to subdue and suppress the masses.

At the same time, the ruling classes have always insisted that the masses be imbued with pacifism, prayer and nonviolence as a means of continuing their monstrous oppression and exploitation.

Marx demonstrated that "force is the midwife to every great social revolution." Even political revolutions, that is, revolutions for independence and national sovereignty which may only change the form of state, are also accompanied by violence. It should be remembered that both revolutions in the U.S. -- the one for independence as well as the Civil War which was a social revolution that changed the form of property relations, i.e., from chattel slavery to wage slavery -- came as the result of the revolutionary use of violence.

Lenin carried on a relentless struggle against not only the pacifism of non-Marxists in general, that is, bourgeois pacifism in all its varieties, but also against those who subscribed to socialist doctrine and in a general way adhered to Marxism, but had abandoned its revolutionary content.

The latter abandoned Marxism when the bourgeoisie launched the first imperialist world war, a period of great social and political crisis, when the bourgeoisie got the upper hand over the working class. In addition to taking millions of lives, that war wrought havoc in the working-class movement and for a period of time blotted out revolutionary class consciousness and proletarian internationalism in Europe and elsewhere. Drawing on this tragic but vital experience, Lenin brought back to light Marx's conception that the capitalist state is an instrument of suppression no matter what form it takes, whether that of a bourgeois democracy, a monarchy, or a military or fascist dictatorship.

World War I proved that it didn't matter whether the form of state was a czarist autocracy like in Russia, a limited monarchy, as in Germany, a full-fledged bourgeois democracy like in France, or a military form of rule as in Turkey.

Finally, the war disclosed that force on a huge scale is not an accidental factor in the evolution of capitalist society. On the contrary capitalist war is a function of the capitalist state, which in turn is the executive organ of the ruling class. Just as in the human anatomy there is no vital organ without a function, so it is in the social organism of capitalism. The capitalist state is a vital organ in the sociological anatomy of capitalist society, and one of its main functions is the waging of capitalist war.

Why do capitalist governments launch destructive wars? Pacifists say it is because they lack reasonable men in government or because they lack moral values, clarity of aims, political foresight, or intellectual acumen. All these things may be part and parcel of and accompany the development and prosecution of a capitalist war. But these are not the driving forces of war. They are merely superficial aspects of the war.

What drives the capitalists to war is the very nature of their social system, a system based on the wresting of super-profits from the hides of the workers and oppressed, that is, capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression.

The pacifists deny that these grow organically out of the social system. Marxists, however, proceed on the basis that the politics of the capitalist system cannot be separated from the economics of the system. Capitalist exploitation and oppression of the workers and oppressed people at home make exploitation and oppression abroad an inseparable and indispensable necessity. The two are tied together in one knot and any attempt to separate them can only result in a fatal, bankrupt anti-war policy which by its misleading tactics really facilitates the prosecution of capitalist war rather than stops it.

Nevertheless it is false to say that Marxists and pacifists cannot work together against capitalist war in such areas as are possible and permissible for both.

There are, however, times in the anti-war struggle when it becomes painfully clear that the Marxist approach, notwithstanding the participation of Marxists, progressive workers, and militants of many varieties, is completely drowned out by pacifist propaganda. In fact, Marxists can even forget their Marxism in the course of some exciting and impressive anti-war demonstrations against a developing war. Even some of the most advanced and class-conscious workers can become overwhelmed by an imperialist ideological and political onslaught that utilizes some international incident like the downing of the KAL spy plane to ignite, spread, and cultivate a spirit of jingoism and chauvinism.

It is important to go over at least two examples, which stand out as clear as crystal.

The first regards the KAL affair. The totalitarian, political control and monopolization of the means of communication by the Reagan-CIA-military-industrial complex in the early hours and days of September 1983 offers a dramatic and highly significant lesson for the anti-war movement in general and the anti-nuclear forces in particular. Nobody from the sizable anti-nuclear movement was either trying to or was capable of penetrating the imperialist electronic networks or the large capitalist newspapers. When somebody from the anti-nuclear forces was finally given a brief few moments on ABC News Nightline a week after the incident, the position taken was so weak and timid and in fundamental agreement on the alleged basic guilt of the USSR that it really seemed to bolster the fraudulent case put up by the Pentagon and the White House. An article in the New York Times of September 9 by a representative of Nuclear Times magazine was again clearly the type of pro-imperialist dissent which plays into the hands of the Pentagon propaganda machine.

The truth of the matter is that the anti-nuclear movement and the millions upon millions who are opposed to the launching of a nuclear war by the U.S. were left completely leaderless in the most critical hours of this dangerous episode.

Even if the capitalist press were completely closed to them, it could have been possible to rally the movement with their own not inconsiderable independent resources. This, however, was not done. The leadership was completely paralyzed.

It was not only fear that prevented them from doing anything in a moment of great crisis for which they should have been prepared. On the contrary many of them are distinguished by unusual devotion and courage. The paralysis which gripped the leadership was not of a psychological character. The vacillation and indecision were the result of a

well-known social phenomenon which particularly manifests itself during periods of acute political crisis when ideology is tested in the crucible of momentous events.

The crisis imperiously demands a definitive stand -- to open a struggle or to stand paralyzed in the face of an unmitigated assault by the very forces of blatant reaction and war which the movement is pledged to struggle against to the end. Why then this social and political paralysis at a time of crisis. It is not only the petty-bourgeois, middle-class character of the movement that is responsible.

Throughout the whole life cycle of capitalism the petty-bourgeoisie has been known to vacillate between the working-class position and the capitalist-imperialist position. In times of great crisis they always gravitate to whichever side appears stronger and more formidable. They also can be progressive during a period when the class struggle is dormant and when they can easily aspire to leadership of the movement.

But with a crucial world issue like the nuclear struggle, the ultimate, insurmountable obstacle is that the petty-bourgeois leadership of the movement leans particularly heavily on and is indissolubly tied to the liberal bourgeoisie, to its political representatives, and occasionally to those liberal bourgeois elements who themselves are leaders in finance and industry and captains of multi-national corporations.

The Harrimans, the Watsons, the Vances, and others have not only formulated policy in administrations considered more "liberal" on world issues, but they represent a formidable, though diminishing, element in the hierarchy of the capitalist establishment. They are always ready to present "peaceful solutions," sometimes quite vociferously. But what they mean is a peaceful imperialist solution. Their umbilical cord to imperialism can never be untied.



Individuals here or there may abandon their own personal interests and loyalty to their class and go over to the side of the oppressed, to the camp of anti-imperialism and socialism. But the class grouping itself, the liberal bourgeoisie as a whole, cannot do this. Even were they to try they would be overridden by the combination of the ever-increasing rightists and ultra-rightists in the capitalist establishment.

The political line of the pacifists is basically an appeal to reason, much like those pleas made in the past, often by some of the most brilliant intellects of their time. The bourgeois liberals however cannot transcend their class grouping, certainly not as a group and not as a class.

The anti-nuclear movement has wholly tied itself to this type of political conception, which is an antediluvian form of pacifism, an 18th-century appeal to reason. As Engels demonstrated in his celebrated *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*(Anti-Duhring),<sup>47</sup> the particular reasoning of any age represents the reasoning of a particular class in society. It may be advanced and certainly far more rational than the preceding exploiting class, but it is still, nevertheless, a reflection of basic class interests.

Marx, for instance, refers to Aristotle, the most encyclopedic mind of ancient Greece, the intellectual titan of the ancient world. Why, asks Marx in his analysis of the nature of a commodity, could Aristotle not see that when commodities are exchanged their common denominator (after their use values are abstracted from their concrete form) is disclosed as undifferentiated human labor? Why couldn't a thinker with such an acute and deep insight into so many phenomena see that? Because in a society where slavery was the basis for the

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<sup>47</sup> Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*(Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), Vol. 3, pp. 95-151.

existence of the ruling class, such a vision of the equality of labor was impossible.

While this was true for Aristotle in the time of ancient slavery, one would think that many centuries later, during the French and American revolutions and the epoch of the rising bourgeoisie, the notion of equality might possibly have gone beyond being a mere reflection of class interests, that is, the class interests of the bourgeoisie, so that equality would mean social and political equality for all, not just for a particular class.

But did it?

Thomas Jefferson, a great bourgeois revolutionary for his time, went the furthest in pushing the notion of equality as stated in the Declaration of Independence, "All men are created equal." But his position as a slave owner and representative of his class, particularly the Virginian slavocracy, prevented him from going further than purely legal, formal equality for white men. Jefferson produced voluminous writings, many of which deal with science, history, and philosophy. He not only spoke French, German, and Italian but also knew Greek, Latin, and other languages and was one of the most learned men of his age. He nevertheless had this to say regarding slavery in his Notes on Virginia:<sup>48</sup>

To our reproach it must be said that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstances, are

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48 Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and of mind.

Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson are the heroes of the modern liberal bourgeoisie and the Democratic Party, in particular. The Democratic Party still sponsors Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners, particularly during election years, to give itself a liberal image. The modern liberal bourgeoisie in the epoch of imperialism is just as securely tied to its class position as Jefferson or Jackson were to theirs.

For the anti-nuclear movement and for the anti-war movement in general to tie its destiny to the liberal bourgeoisie and its politicians, whose class affinity to the more reactionary elements in the bourgeoisie is becoming ever more secure, makes winning the anti-war struggle by the movement as a whole impossible to achieve. While their dedication and sincerity in opposing the war danger may be beyond question, their actual ability to be effective, to be able to seriously engage in activities, particularly in times of acute crisis, to stop the war, to really fight it tooth and nail, is totally out of the question in light of their ideological and social ties to the bourgeoisie.

The second event we must analyze took place on a now historic date, June 12, 1982, when the city of New York was the scene of the largest anti-war demonstration in the history of the United States. The specifics of the program of the demonstration were directed against the threat of nuclear war and for a freeze on nuclear weapons. More immediately, it was to stop the deployment in Europe of Pershing II and cruise missiles and the development of the most threatening of all U.S. weapons, the MX first-strike missile.

The demonstration was widely heralded as the most successful ever. Almost all the capitalist newspapers said that

perhaps as many as 500,000-800,000 attended. The more progressive papers and those in the working-class movement gave it almost a million.

But there was an extraordinary aspect to this demonstration that seemed to escape the attention of the organizers and, in particular, the scores of speakers who delivered short messages and greetings during the day-long demonstration. There were perhaps as many as a hundred speakers, and most of them were well aware of what was going on in the world. Yet they omitted to mention (or if they did so it was in such a perfunctory way as to be completely overlooked in all accounts of the event, the war of devastating proportions going on in Lebanon at that very moment.

On that very day there was already in progress one of the cruelest, most barbarous, if not genocidal wars of U.S. imperialism. The fact that the actual fighting was being carried out by its surrogate Israel should have fooled no one. The war was being conducted against one of the most oppressed and persecuted peoples of the century -- the Palestinians. No one could avoid seeing it on television, hearing about it on the radio, or reading the banner headlines in the world or U.S. press.

The first wave of the terrible invasion by the Israelis began on June 5 and continued, with merciless destruction, all the way to June 15-16. An eight-column banner headline in the New York Times of June 7 read, "Big Israeli force invades south Lebanon, sharp fighting with guerrillas reported." Two days later a similar dramatic headline said that now the Israelis were only 15 miles outside Beirut and were using tanks and infantry in an evident attempt to trap and destroy the Palestinians. It was substantially the same on June 12, 13, and 14.

It would have been utterly impossible for any speaker to have denied knowledge of what was going on. The newspapers and the media were full of it worldwide. Yet the speakers, with the possible exception of one or two, all hewed to the bourgeois-pacifist line. They spoke only about the threat of nuclear war and completely closed their eyes to the war that was literally in front of them. It was as though the imperialist architects of this war were not inseparably bound up with the very same imperialist forces that are promoting nuclear war.

All that was really needed was a clear and simple resolution denouncing the U.S.-Israeli war being waged against the Palestinians and the Lebanese. No one would have demanded that the U.S.-Israeli war against the Palestinians and Lebanese be the focus of the demonstration. But a clear denunciation of the war in the form of a resolution could hardly have escaped the attention of the world press, even if the U.S. press tried to hide it.

Showing that this was not an isolated error on the part of the organizers of this demonstration, they failed to take note of and denounce another imperialist war which was reaching a dramatic climax almost at the same time. On the same day, the reactionary British government, with its mighty nuclear fleet, was carrying on a terrible war of destruction in its effort to retake its colonial possession, the Malvinas Islands, from Argentina.

There was hardly any comment in the radical press on the failure of the anti-nuclear movement to condemn the ghastly Beirut massacres of a whole people. Most treated the war and the nuclear issue as totally separate developments, as though one had little to do with the other. What imperialism was doing with its right hand seemed to be of no concern or of little relevance to what it was doing with its left hand. It was as

though the violence were from two separate sociological and political entities.

For example, a long article in the social democratic newspaper *In These Times* of June 30-July 13 by David Moberg analyzing the demonstration was full of effusive praise of the unity and solidarity shown. The article did not contain a word about the contradiction between letting imperialism mercilessly destroy the lives and homes of an oppressed people while expounding the main theme of the protest -- the growing nuclear danger and support for a nuclear freeze. There was no word about the struggle of the besieged people of Palestine or the Arabs in general.

The *Guardian*, which styles itself as an independent radical newsweekly, in an editorial in its June 23 issue called the demonstration a "historic turning point." In what way was it really a turning point? It was historic in that it was so huge. But what about its effectiveness in light of its clear avoidance of one of the most monstrous examples of imperialist slaughter? The *Guardian* failed to mention the glaring discrepancy that such a huge anti-war demonstration could take place in the midst of a genocidal imperialist war and never even mention that it was going on. Covering the story of the horrors of the Mideast war by shunting it off to a separate and less significant part of the paper was a cop-out. Doing it that way was like creating two different compartments out of the same imperialist pattern and cultivating the pernicious illusion that one had nothing to do with the other. This is precisely what the imperialist bourgeoisie had assiduously drummed into the heads of the masses during that long horrendous week.

It is no accident that the *Guardian* also became overwhelmed by bourgeois prejudice in the spy plane episode. Their editorial in the September 14, 1983, issue repeated many of the arguments of the capitalist media, calling the incident a

"double tragedy" and attacking the Soviet Union for what it claimed to be a "completely uncalled for reaction." Their position amounted to a complete capitulation to Reaganite reaction in the midst of this ominous war crisis. The fact that the Guardian, In These Times, and a whole slew of other so-called progressives took their cue from the ruling class proves again that Marx was right -- the prevailing ideas of any time are the ideas of the ruling class.

Of course, it was very important that the June 12 demonstration be vigorously supported by all progressives and Marxists with an independent anti-imperialist working-class line. It was, however, a thoroughly bourgeois pacifist demonstration which proved to be entirely harmless to the Pentagon's plans for war. And, sure enough, it was only some months later that the Democratic-controlled House as well as the Republican-controlled Senate passed the necessary appropriations for the development of the dreaded MX first-strike missile, whose defeat had been a key point in the program of this giant peace demonstration.

The coordinators and the speakers at June 12 not only completely separated capitalist politics from capitalist economics and imperialist foreign policy from reactionary domestic policy, but they carried on a rhetorical exercise with many dearly beloved peace platitudes and empty abstractions. Lo and behold, even some of the reactionaries and avowed warmongers later either appropriated these phrases or gave them a particular twist so that whatever meaning they had was lost.

To separate imperialist policy in arms control from imperialism and the subjugation of oppressed peoples by the most cruel force was clearly the tragic policy of the organizers and coordinators of the demonstration. While the murderous bombing was going on and the speech-making was taking

place before a huge demonstration in Central Park, eight imperialist leaders were gathering at precisely the same time in Paris in one of their annual meetings. The heads of state of the U.S., Britain, France, West Germany, Canada, Japan, Belgium, and Italy were meeting in secret and only letting out just enough of what in their view the public should know.

There in Paris they agreed that the Israelis should pull back somewhat from their assault on the Lebanese and Palestinian people so as to make room for their multi-national imperialist force to enter the area, replace the Israeli invaders and push them somewhat into the background. These imperialist brigands needed a multilateral force for their own predatory interests in this small country of Lebanon, which was reduced to rubble only because of their imperialist interests.

The leader of this imperialist caravan was of course to be the Reagan administration. Later on, the Socialist -- what a tortured word it has become! -- Mitterrand was to begin massive airlifting of paratroopers to the small African country of Chad. There the U.S. had taken upon itself a so-called mercy mission of protecting the Chadians against supposed aggression from Libya. It did so with a huge naval armada steaming near the Gulf of Sidra and giant AWACS spy planes flying into Egypt and the Sudan aimed against the rebellious Chadians as well as the Libyans.

The purpose of all this was to strengthen the ties among the imperialists for the next phase of the struggle in Lebanon. Clearly the imperialists had made it their task to either partition the country or take it over completely by force of arms.

But what happened thereafter should be as illuminating to the pacifists, Social-Democrats of all stripes, and progressives generally, as it was so onerous and oppressive for



the Lebanese people against whom the so-called U.S. peace-keeping force was aimed. The "peace-keepers" finally unmasked themselves, together with the French, and opened fire on the Lebanese people on September 7, 1983. The dazed U.S. Marines who were assured, as was the U.S. public, that this was a peace-keeping mission, were finally brought to reality when the Lebanese people returned the fire.

The Marines might well have said, as did the mythical cartoon character Pogo, "We have discovered the enemy. It is us."

Not only the Marines, but the U.S. capitalist establishment and the public at large were finally given the first real opening to see with their own eyes that the U.S. government was again at war without a declaration by Congress as expressly stated in the Constitution.

We thus see that what was happening at the time of the June 12 demonstration was a war for the recolonization of the Malvinas, an imperialist-instigated war against the Palestinians and the Lebanese, a U.S.-French operation in Chad, and at the same time an intervention and blockade of Central America. Never to be forgotten, and almost always underplayed, are the tremendous events also going on in southern Africa, Namibia, besieged Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia.

Are not these imperialist wars, which the bourgeoisie and the capitalist press refer to as local wars, intimately connected and indissolubly bound up with the preparation for nuclear war against the USSR? Did not the so-called local wars of 1912 in the Balkans lead to World War I, a war for colonial booty and division of markets among the imperialist powers?

Did not World War I demonstrate that the struggle which the imperialist powers carry on abroad is inseparably connected to and really an extension of the same war which

these very imperialists carry on in the form of the class struggle against the workers and oppressed at home?

All theories must pass the crucial test of experience. Experience alone is the true test of the scientific validity of any theoretical proposition.

Two significant developments, two really momentous events -- the war against Lebanon and the Korean spy plane episode -- two phases in the world struggle of imperialism against the oppressed people and the socialist countries proved the utter inability of the pacifist, neo-social-democratic leaders to rise to the occasion, to be an effective instrument in the struggle, or even to show signs of resistance on a modest scale. The movement as a whole, composed of many, many millions, must be distinguished from the leaders.

The divorce of leaders from the progressive elements of society and their capture by the insidious forces of big business and high finance is one of the elements born of the antagonistic character of the class contradictions in capitalist society.

Should the working class and oppressed fall prey to and become followers of the bourgeois, neo-social-democratic trend even before they have the opportunity to reinvigorate themselves and rise from a debilitating capitalist crisis, it would be a tragic repetition of the experience of the Second International in its hour of great crisis.

Right up to the last moment, practically on the eve of the outbreak of World War I, the leaders of the Second International were meeting and discussing what to do in the light of the ultimatum which the Austrians gave to the Serbians demanding a complete capitulation. Even as the German, French, and Russian armies were beginning to move, nothing but paralysis seemed to reign supreme in this body of leaders

whom the working class of a whole continent had endowed with its confidence in the struggle against imperialist war. They did not take the necessary action to oppose by legal and illegal means the thoroughly mendacious, thoroughly anti-human unleashing of a holocaust whose effects were to continue for generations.

It was to Lenin's great credit that he led his party in an opposite direction, in the direction of urging the masses not only to oppose the war but to call it by its right name. The other leaders of the Second International failed to do this, as do their counterparts today.

Why did the Second International end up in ruins?

Certainly among the most important reasons is the fact that, notwithstanding that they stood at least in words on the platform of working-class struggle, they failed to see that the only antidote to an imperialist war is the development of a class war, and that a class war in the midst of an imperialist war inevitably means defeating the armies of the ruling class by overturning its rule. This the leaders of the Second International had agreed to in words, as late as two years before the First World War broke out.

Where Lenin's more profound understanding of the class struggle and of imperialism in general proved itself superior was where he went beyond both the pacifism of bourgeois liberals as well as the pacifism of the various socialist parties on the European continent. In his view, the imperialist war was just a continuation of imperialist politics by other (violent) means. While not for a moment abandoning any type of peaceful demonstrations against the war, he resolutely and with determination pushed his own formula for a solution to the imperialist war: "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot but desire the defeat of its own (capitalist) government.

The defeat of one's own government in an imperialist war is the lesser evil." Only in that way can there be a real fraternization collectively of the workers in the imperialist countries against the war.

Just as energetically, however, Lenin relentlessly agitated for and defended the correctness of a revolutionary war of the oppressed people and urged revolutionary defeatism by the workers in the oppressing imperialist countries. He urged upon the workers in the oppressing imperialist countries fraternal support and anti-imperialist solidarity, up to and including revolutionary measures that would facilitate the defeat of the imperialist government.

A century of imperialist struggle has not invalidated but really confirmed the correctness of the principled, revolutionary Marxist-Leninist tactics and strategical approach. Local conditions and temporary lulls in the class struggle may necessitate a diversity of different tactical approaches. They must, however, be in harmony with the principled revolutionary working-class position of anti-imperialist struggle.

What is the social content of imperialist aggression? It is for super-profits at home and abroad. It is the congenital drive of the bourgeoisie for super-exploitation which is the source of the super-profits.

For popular consumption and to deceive the masses, the struggle for markets, sources of raw materials, and conditions favorable for super-exploitation is often masked in idealistic terms as a mission to repel aggression or to "democratize" this or that country. But more often than not these days it is put in naked military terms.

Does this not explain why retired Admiral Elmo Zumwalt demanded of a Congressional hearing in blunt terms that "We

need aircraft carriers for the Third World and nuclear submarines against the Soviet Union"?

It should be noted that Congress, notwithstanding the anti-nuclear movement and the anti-war sentiment of the majority of the people, granted to the military not only funds for the further development of the MX missile but also the major weapons system known as the B-1 bomber and the even more costly Trident nuclear submarine.

Of course, Congress has on occasion postponed one weapons system in favor of another. The hidden cause behind the change is usually not due to any swift changes in public opinion but to the fact that one group of weapons systems manufacturers has gotten the upper hand over another and has gotten the blessings of the Pentagon, which in turn has manipulated the necessary votes in the Congress.

These giant multi-national monopolies are more powerful than any ancient empire ever was. There are even few modern imperialist states that can rival the power of one of the dynastic finance capitalist groupings which bankroll the various weapons systems. They relentlessly milk the U.S. Treasury which in turn passes on its losses to the masses of the working class and oppressed.

If the struggle against imperialist war is to become serious, it must take on a working-class character. That doesn't mean to narrow the appeal, as capitalist politicians maintain. On the contrary, it means to broaden it, for it is the working class and the oppressed people together with the lower middle class that constitute the majority in any case.

Taking on a working-class character means that the fundamental aim of the anti-war struggle is not merely against the military-industrial complex, but also the defense contractors and the big banks, as well as the giant oil

corporations. In a word, the struggle against imperialist war must be conducted as an all-around classwide struggle against the bourgeoisie. Only a real class war can stop an imperialist war and has the material basis for winning the allegiance of all the oppressed and exploited masses.

## Chapter 6

### **The Green Corn Rebellion and the struggle for socialism**

The anti-war struggles of the past in the U.S. have not always been mere protest movements of a passive character composed mainly of middle class elements and the youth. Those earlier struggles against wars of U.S. imperialism were altogether different, particularly the movement against the first imperialist world war of 1914-1918.

The truth of the matter is that at that time the struggles had mainly a working class and socialist character. Opposition to the war took on many forms and was often militant in character resorting to direct action and armed resistance. Opposition to the draft was widespread, and took on massive proportions in many of the cities of the U.S.

To understand the character of the militant opposition to the war, it is necessary to know that the socialist movement in general and the Socialist Party in particular were very strong. The Socialist Party had become a truly mass party of the working class as it existed at the time.

Historians sometimes allude to the 1912 elections as the high point of mass socialist activity in the U.S. Still others assert that the movement increased its relative strength in relation to the capitalist parties even in 1916, when the Wilson administration and the capitalist government had already had several years to inculcate a vicious jingoism and chauvinism in preparation for U.S. intervention into the imperialist war.

The socialist movement had a splendid press at the time. James Weinstein, in his book *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*,<sup>49</sup> estimates that total circulation of the socialist press exceeded two million copies in 1913. There were several weekly and monthly newspapers with a national circulation, as well as daily and weekly local papers. There were also trade union papers with a socialist perspective and a considerable number of foreign language socialist dailies and weeklies, in addition to cultural and theoretical magazines.

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49 James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

The International Socialist Review, it should be noted, had a truly international reputation and was widely read. The Appeal to Reason, the Socialist Party's principal organ, had an average weekly circulation of 761,747; the National Rip-Saw, 150,000; and so on.

From far-off czarist Russia, Lenin hailed the growth in the circulation of the Appeal to Reason. "The latest issue of the American labor weekly Appeal to Reason reports that its circulation has increased to 984,000 copies," Lenin wrote in "The Successes of the American Workers", and he went on to quote from a current issue " 'The letters and demands coming in,' writes the editor (No. 875, Sept. 7), 'indicates beyond doubt that we shall exceed one million copies in the next few weeks.' "

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The election of 1912 gave the Socialist standard bearer, Eugene Debs, the largest vote ever -- 897,000, or 6% of the national total. When one considers that this was at a time when Black people were virtually disenfranchised and when women could not vote, the election results are of considerable political significance in the working class history of the U.S.

But it wasn't only in the national elections for president that the party showed its influence. It also came through in many city and state elections.

About 1,200 socialists were elected to public office in 343 municipalities throughout the country, including 79 mayors in 24 states. Two socialist congressmen, Victor Berger from Wisconsin and Meyer London from New York, were elected, although London was never seated.

With this as background, it is easy to see that it was mainly socialist and working class organizations which conducted the anti-war struggle at that time, making it part and parcel of the struggle against capitalism.

There were few demonstrations or anti-war struggles which were not conducted under the banner of socialist agitation against capitalism. In this respect the anti-war movement of that period differs fundamentally from the later movement of the 1960s during the Vietnam war.

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50 V.I. Lenin, "The Successes of the American Workers," in his *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), Vol. 18, p. 335.



We have already described how the outbreak of the imperialist war in Europe caught all the socialist parties of the world by surprise. They were particularly demoralized to learn that the European parties had by and large capitulated on the question of participation in imperialist war and joined their own capitalist governments in world slaughter.

However, as we said earlier, not all the socialist parties renounced their fidelity to socialist internationalism. The Serbian, Bulgarian, and Italian parties opposed the war, and the stand of the Bolshevik Party in Russia is well known. And it is significant that the Socialist Party of the U.S. condemned the war at the outset.

Eugene Debs, the party's presidential candidate who was later jailed for opposing the war, wrote in 1915: "I am not a capitalist soldier; I am a proletarian revolutionist. I do not belong to the regular army of the plutocracy, but to the irregular army of the people. I refuse to obey any command to fight from the ruling class. 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."

It is true, however, that the Socialist Party as a whole faltered to some extent in the period between the outbreak of the war in Europe and the historic St. Louis convention of April 1917. But by and large it conducted tremendous mass meetings and demonstrations against the war, and continued an aggressive electoral campaign right up to and including the war years.

Pacifist organizations such as the American Union Against Militarism and the American Peace Society had little if any influence. However, in response to the socialist and working class movement, workers and farmers were opposed to the war.

John Hays Hammond, a prominent Republican and mining engineer, told an annual meeting of the National Civic Federation in January 1917, "Some influence or combination of influences has brought about a weakening of the patriotic spirit in this country when we find that neither the working man nor the farmers -- the two great groups upon which our national life depends -- are taking any part or interest in the efforts of the

security or defense leagues or other movements of national preparedness."<sup>51</sup>

The combination of influences which Hammond refers to by innuendo is that of the working class and socialist agitation which was becoming ever more widespread in the period, taking hold of a large mass of the population.

It took a great effort on the part of the Wilson administration to "turn the country around." It was done with a variety of methods, even including fraudulent incidents like the sinking of the Lusitania (a civilian passenger ship secretly loaded with munitions, making it a prime target of German attack) and a vicious campaign of jingoism in the capitalist press.

The Wilson administration resorted to arrest, indictment, and imprisonment of thousands of socialist anti-war agitators in an effort to silence the movement. It struck out against the many socialist and working class papers and magazines by revoking their second-class mailing rights, thereby making it financially extremely difficult for them to continue to publish.

Utilizing the so-called Espionage Act the Wilson administration inaugurated a period of witch-hunting which in many respects exceeded that of the McCarthy period of the 1950s. Nevertheless, the movement was not cowed. It continued to fight on and in some areas became more aggressive than ever.

One key election in 1917 showed the temper of the ruling class press and the kind of opposition to the war which continued despite repression. Commenting on the forthcoming election, the New York World, a liberal daily, had this to say, "Today's election will determine whether New York is a traitor town, a quasi-copperhead town, or an American town devoted to American ideals and pledged without reservation to the war policies of the U.S. government."<sup>52</sup>

While this was directed at the Democratic candidate, who had a wishy-washy attitude toward the war, the brunt of the attack was against Morris Hillquit, the Socialist candidate. The interesting thing about the election is that Hillquit nevertheless received 21%, a large increase over the usual socialist vote.

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51 Weinstein, op. cit., p. 134.

52 Weinstein, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

In addition several Socialist aldermen and ten assemblymen were elected. These results were a stunning blow to the Wilson administration, especially after all the hysteria the government and press had whipped up, the repression, and the jailing of prominent leaders such as Debs and other outspoken anti-war figures. Anti-capitalist propaganda continued to be strong and widespread, notwithstanding the defection of middle class intellectuals, writers and publicists.

More than during the later period of McCarthyism and the Korean War, the witch-hunt of the Wilson administration met resistance. Nor was this response confined to Eastern cities like New York, as is sometimes presumed. On the contrary, the more militant opposition came from the Western and Central states as well as the South.

The Socialist Party's declaration against the war as embodied in the main resolution of its St. Louis convention of April 1917 was representative of a broad and growing section of the working class that was opposed to the war and capitalist exploitation. It was not merely a paper resolution embodying the thinking of a small, isolated sector of the population. On the contrary, it gave voice to the most viable section of the working class.

This resolution opens: "The Socialist Party of the United States in the present grave crisis solemnly reaffirms its allegiance to the principle of internationalism and working-class solidarity the world over, and proclaims its unalterable opposition to the war just declared by the government of the United States."

After characterizing all modern wars as being only for the benefit of the capitalists, the resolution continues: "The Socialist Party of the United States is unalterably opposed to the system of exploitation and class rule which is upheld and strengthened by military power and sham national patriotism. We therefore call upon the workers of all countries to refuse support to their governments in their wars. The wars of the contending national groups of capitalists are not the concern of the workers. The only struggle which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working class of the world to free itself of economic exploitation and political

oppression, and we particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of so-called defensive wars."<sup>53</sup>

The resolution was approved by a huge majority. But there was also a considerable minority of 50 opposed to the forthright anti-imperialist position taken at the St. Louis convention. They basically reflected the fear, intimidation, hysteria, and chauvinism manufactured by the capitalist press and the Wilson administration. But while chauvinism and capitulationism were growing in some areas as a result of the pressures exerted by the capitalist class, in other areas socialists took an entirely different cue in the struggle against the war.

Some took the road of arming themselves to resist. This took place in several areas, especially in the South. Socialists were arrested in Dallas, Texas, for possession of arms. In North Carolina, farmers in Chatham County organized an armed revolt against the draft. Outside Toledo, Ohio, someone fired on a troop train. These were scattered and unorganized efforts against the war, often not well directed. However, one very significant and dramatic struggle, really an armed rebellion, took place in the heart of Oklahoma.

The Green Corn Rebellion of August 1917 was a genuine working class attempt at an anti-war insurrection in what had formerly been called the Indian Territory of Oklahoma. It had in its ranks mostly poor tenant farmers, dispossessed people who had been forced off their land, and former railroad workers who had lost their jobs when the railroad strike led by Debs was broken in the 1890s. Among the participants were many Black people as well as Native people from the Seminole nation.

The rebellion was organized by the Working Class Union, the left wing of the Socialist movement in Oklahoma and Arkansas. It had a strong affinity if not direct ties to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a syndicalist union movement which also opposed the war and was a vigorous part of the socialist movement.

The Working Class Union had a membership estimated as high as 35,000, and may have had many more than the 2,000 armed men and women they are given credit for today. A

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53 Anthony Bimba, *The History of the American Working Class* (New York: International Publishers, 1927), pp. 261-262.

conspiracy of silence and an effort to obliterate them from history has characterized events since the rebellion.

The constitution of the WCU said that all members of the working class over the age of 18, "regardless of race, sex, color, or occupation," could join, and that "any means necessary" would be used to better the conditions of the working people. Their first demand was for the "total abolition of the crime, disease, and death-producing practice of rent, interest, and profit-taking as iniquities that have been and are now being imposed upon the working class of the world."

All accounts of the rebellion come from sources hostile to a militant anti-war struggle and/or to socialism. A disparaging description of the people and locality can be found in an unpublished thesis submitted in 1932 to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Oklahoma by Charles D. Bush. Here is part of Bush's material:

Participants in the revolt were almost wholly native Americans. A few Negroes, usually coerced into joining the disaffected party, and a very small number of irreconcilable Snake Indians made up a minority racial group, but the vast majority of the people were white American citizens. Hardly a foreign name appears in the list. They could truthfully claim to be "one-hundred-percent Americans."

The first thing to notice about this paragraph is the racism. It is inconceivable that Black people would have to be coerced into a struggle for land and against a capitalist war, let alone a foreign war. The reference to the Snake Indians as "irreconcilable" does nothing to illuminate the nature of their irreconcilability. But it could not have been to whites in general, since this was a genuine rainbow coalition of poor whites, Indians, and Blacks.

But let Bush continue:

A majority of these people were from the hill country of Arkansas, Tennessee, and other Southern states, migrating from the poorer sections of these older communities. These people were generally lacking in education. Actual illiteracy was common, and even a grade-school education was very rare. A man was

locally considered well-educated if he was able to write a little and read the columns of the weekly paper.

Their schools, for the most part, were poor and attended by the children only during the seasons when the crops were "laid by" in July and for a brief period in winter. Frequently, they did not attend at all. Good schools could not be brought to these people because the districts were poor.

Bush then gives his views on their religion.

Shrouded in superstition, and frequently in a peculiar mysticism, their religion was intolerant and often wildly demonstrative. ...

Economically these people were generally very poor and chronically in debt. They were too restless to stay long in one location and consequently they accumulated little property. Practically all were tenant farmers. Farm improvements, provided by absentee owners, were of the very poorest kind. Untutored even in agriculture, they generally depended on one crop -- cotton -- and measured their prosperity or poverty by the price of cotton and the prevalence of the boll weevil.

In many respects these men were little more than serfs or peons, slaves to a "cash crop" demanded by their landlords. Yet they did but little to help themselves. When they did have money, they spent it freely and often foolishly. The practice of saving was generally neglected, and they lived from crop to crop, year to year, vaguely dissatisfied, always dreaming of a new country somewhere. ...

Many turned to Socialism as a sort of gospel of despair.

The finer tenets of Socialism were undoubtedly but faintly understood by these people, but it offered a hope that neither of the major parties promised, and a recognition that had long been denied them except during the hot days of the summer primaries. Socialism gained rapidly in strength. It not only became a real third party but it also had its third of the total area vote and its share of county officers, at the time the world was plunged into the Great War.

Probably the fullest account of the rebellion is contained in the book, *If You Don't Weaken*,<sup>54</sup> the autobiography of Oscar Ameringer. Ameringer had direct contact with some members of the Green Corn Rebellion. He was also a socialist of sorts, who says he was in the camp of the "Yellows" as against the "Reds" or left wing.

His account begins with a characterization of the event as the "worst" thing that had happened during his absence from Oklahoma. He explains that the rebellion got its name from the green corn, or roasting ears, which constituted the principal diet of the rebels. (Other versions, however, say it came from the annual green corn dance of the Shawnee Indians.)

Ameringer's account is most tendentious where he ex post facto relates how he warned the rebels about what would befall the splendid Socialist organization if the Working Class Union decided to take up arms in the anti-war struggle.

My own connection was that of an adviser whose advice was not followed. I had heard rumors of an intended putsch, but knew nothing about it until I was invited to attend a meeting of a small group of extreme left-wingers. In this connection I should add that farmers are naturally given to direct action, or self-help. This trait is primarily due to their

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<sup>54</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

isolation and the strong individualism arising from that fact. To these extreme leftists, the policy and tactics of the Socialists, as expressed in education, organization, and political action, were too slow. They were the true Reds; we of the center and right wing were "compromisers," "opportunists," and "yellows."

Evidently Ameringer had been sent by the right wing of the party to frighten the organizers of the rebellion into giving up their plans. The leader, Tad Cumbie, must have refused to meet with him, knowing what he was up to, but out of courtesy he sent a few people just to listen. The right wing of the Socialist Party was notoriously hostile to such a multi-national, working class coalition.

In order to secure speedy action they had organized the Working Class Union and the Jones Family. Both of these were secret societies, as contrasted to the open and aboveboard organization of the Socialists. ... The real leaders of the two organizations were not present at that meeting for the simple reason that they knew well enough that we "yellows" had done everything in our power to destroy their influence among our people. After the customary preliminaries, we got down to business. They had, I was told, sent for me to give me a chance to change from yellow to red.

"And what, precisely, have you boys in mind in relation to my changing color?"

"We are going to stop this damned war the gang out East has foisted on us."

"But how?"

"On a given signal we'll slam the bankers, county officials, and newspaper owners in jail."

In relating his own version of what was said, Ameringer tells how he continued to question them on how they would keep the insurrection secret. Finally he advises them to "scatter right now," and adds, for the "benefit" of any spies who may be present:

"The only thing any one of us can do is to work for a speedy peace through all the legal and constitutional means still open to us. This is what I am going to do.



This is what I advise all of you and your followers to do. . . ."

When the Green Corn Rebellion had fizzled out, as we "yellows" predicted, a veritable white terror swept Oklahoma, and of course, we were on the receiving end. . . .

Though not a single official of the Party was connected with the Green Corn Rebellion, thousands of our members were arrested. Jails were so overcrowded that four hundred prisoners were shipped to the state penitentiary for safekeeping. Thousands sought safety in the Winding Stairs Mountains, in adjoining Colorado, Texas, and Arkansas.

Of the Green Corn rebels convicted, some thirty-odd went to Leavenworth, the federal prison, from which the last of them were released after Kate Richards O'Hare had marched their wives and children to Washington, where they picketed the White House. . . .

Shortly after the trial of the Green Corn rebels an emergency convention of the mortally wounded Party was held in Oklahoma City. It was at that convention that Patrick S. Nagle, one of the leading attorneys of the rebels, sponsored and succeeded in passing a resolution disbanding the Socialist Party of Oklahoma.

Ameringer blames the Oklahoma rebels for the destruction of the Socialist Party, whose leaders were soon thereafter put on trial in Chicago on charges of conspiracy to obstruct the war. But in reality the SP dissolved its Oklahoma organization in a panic and a cowardly surrender to the war

hysteria. The leaders of the SP on trial in Chicago had not been indicted for the Green Corn Rebellion.

To dissolve a party branch usually required ratification by referendum. But this was not done, even though the Oklahoma organization was one of the strongest locals of the SP.

Ameringer gives only a sketchy description of the rebellion itself. Not too much more of substance is provided in this account by Garin Burbank, author of *When Farmers Voted Red*:

When the Socialist party resolved that its members should refuse to serve the "militarists" and die "fighting the enemies of Humanity" in their own country, some of the tenants took the advice literally. When distant Europe's troubles were officially declared to be America's own and when federal and state authorities prepared to enforce the 1917 Conscription Act in Oklahoma, country people rebelled. On August 3, 1917 an ill-organized band of country rebels met a well-armed posse along the banks of the South Canadian River between Seminole, Pontotoc, and Hughes counties. The country rebels did not know that their plans had been largely betrayed by an informer in their own ranks. Catching sight of the advancing townsmen, the country people fired a few desultory shots and fled in disorder. This was the pathetic end of their overt resistance to the incursions of outside political authority.<sup>55</sup>

A paragraph in Howard Zinn's, *A People's History of the United States* includes this information on the rebellion: "At a

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55 Garin Burbank, *When Farmers Voted Red: The Gospel of Socialism in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1910-1924* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 133-134.

mass meeting of the [Working Class] Union, plans were made to destroy a railroad bridge and cut telegraph wires in order to block military enlistments. A march on Washington was planned for draft objectors throughout the country."<sup>56</sup>

A more detailed account of the Green Corn Rebellion is found in *Grass-Roots Socialism* by James R. Green. Here is what he has to say:

Although two of its leaders, "Rube" Munson and Homer Spence, had already been indicted for obstructing the draft, the Working Class Union continued to organize in eastern Oklahoma and by midsummer it had recruited a membership estimated at between eighteen thousand and thirty-five thousand. On August 22, the Seminole County sheriff and some deputies set out from Wewoka to investigate mysterious radical activities in a district with WCU loyalties. The lawmen were ambushed and driven away by five black men who belonged to the secret order. That night, just a day after the body of Oklahoma-born Wobbly, Frank Little, was found hanging from a trestle outside of Butte, Montana, the WCU called a secret meeting on a sandbar in the Canadian River and decided to take action. Munson and Spence, who were free on bail, had been agitating in and around Seminole County for several days, urging resisters to arm themselves and to prepare for a fight. Sentiment against the war and the draft had been rising since the spring. As pressure for conscription increased, the isolated tenants of the old Indian Nations grew more determined to resist the patriotic demands of President Wilson and his agents in the country seats. They were

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<sup>56</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), p. 361.

not going to let the "Big Slick" in Washington send them off to die in France.

On the morning of August 3, resisters from the WCU and the Jones Family gathered on a bluff near the farm of "old man" Spears who had raised the "red flag of rebellion" above his barn a few days before. During the night raiding parties went out to cut telegraph and telephone wires and to bum railroad bridges in the area. They also blew up some oil pipelines leading out of the Healdton fields. On the previous day WCU agitators had been blamed for a spontaneous "political" strike at a large coal mine in Wilberton, where the Socialist party had one of its largest locals. The new secretary of District 21, a Democrat who had replaced Fred Holt, failed to persuade the militant miners to return to work. He suspended the charter of this UMW local which he said was under the influence of the IWW. Agents of resistance also moved into the poor cotton country south of the Canadian River, where they encouraged armed action against the draft. Incendiary posters like the following were found along the country roads in Marshall and Bryan counties: "Now is the time to rebel against this war with Germany boys. Get together boys and don't go. Rich mans war. Poor mans fight. If you don't go J.P. Morgan Co. is lost. Speculation is the only cause of war. Rebel now."

The main body of militants on Spears' Bluff gathered more supporters from the surrounding tenant country, including a group of black WCU sharecroppers and several Indians led by John Harjo, one of the many relatives of the Creek renegade, Crazy Snake, who had led the last armed rebellion against white rule in the

Indian Nations eight years before. A WCU organizer, W.L. Benefield, led the largest contingent, a group of about fifty well-armed tenants from the Lone Dove community near Saskawa. "Captain" Bill wearing a sabre and a dashing red sash, took overall command of the resistance army at Spears' Bluff.

Along with other revolutionaries, he railed against the "Big Slick" and the tyranny of conscription. "Rube" Munson told the men that other uprisings were occurring throughout the West. A large army of Wobblies would march on Washington to overthrow the government and put an end to the war and the draft. The Working Class Union should start its own march to the nation's capital, and link up with thousands of farmers and workers throughout the land who would also be up in arms. The Oklahoma rebels would be the vanguard of an army marching across the South to the sea, living on beef and ripe corn as it traveled. And so, this uprising came to be called the Green Corn Rebellion.

The insurgent farmers who gathered along the banks of the Canadian River on August 3 never started marching. A posse of seventy mobilized immediately after hearing about the resisters' violent activities and quickly advanced on the rebel stronghold. The undisciplined tenants disobeyed "Captain" Benefield's orders and fled when they saw the armed townsmen moving against them; the bloodless battle of Spears Bluff was a rout. The papers said we were cowards," a Green Corn rebel recalled, "but we weren't." Walter Strong explained, "Some of the men in the posse were neighbors of ours and we couldn't shoot 'em down in

cold blood. That's the way we felt 'bout the Germans too. ... We didn't have no quarrel with them at all."

For the next week posses rounded up radicals, resisters, suspected rebels. They fought several bloody skirmishes with backwoods renegades, but within a week the law enforcers had crushed the organized militant antiwar movement in Oklahoma. Of the 450 men arrested for allegedly participating in the rebellion, 184 were indicted, 150 convicted, and in the fall about half that number sentenced to prison terms. After the fear of lynch mobs receded, most of the men arrested in the roundup, including many Socialists who had had no part in the rebellion, were released from the state penitentiary at McAlester. The rebel leaders, including Tad Cumbie, Socialist party gubernatorial candidate in 1910, and the WCU captains, were given stiff sentences at Leavenworth, because they were responsible for "misleading" the ignorant farmers.<sup>57</sup>

The published sources we have mentioned claim that the rebellion was quelled and its leaders arrested before their plans could be carried out. But Oklahoma progressives alive today who remember those times say that a march of thousands did converge on Oklahoma City. While the leaders were arrested, the courthouse was besieged by so many hundreds of their supporters that many were let go with only one-dollar fines.

Weinstein's book on the Socialist movement, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*, contains a brief account of the rebellion which does not even mention that it included Black as well as Native people, indicating solidarity between

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<sup>57</sup> James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest: 1895-1943* (Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

the working class and oppressed peoples. At that period in history this was a rarity and had immense significance in light of the chauvinism and racism of the right wing in the Socialist Party.

Berger and his group, unlike Debs and Haywood, looked down on the poorer workers and tenant farmers. Like the social democrats in Germany, they were oriented more toward the skilled workers and the intelligentsia. The racism of Berger and the right wing of the party was shamefully apparent. Indeed, one of the basic reasons for the eventual disintegration of the SP was its refusal to link up with the struggle of the Black masses.

Most of the authors who deal with the Green Corn Rebellion either do not know what to make of it, treat it as something way out of this world involving only a so-called lunatic fringe element, or, like Weinstein, regard it as a sad but dramatic event in the struggle against the war.

Weinstein lumps together this revolutionary development with ill-conceived individual acts of sabotage directed against soldiers. This obscures the revolutionary significance of the Green Corn Rebellion. It was a mass struggle which should not be confused with isolated individual acts. In many ways, it was an early harbinger of the future, a promise of how the working class, including Black, Latin, Asian, and Native people, can fight together as one in the struggle against capitalism.

This popular insurrection did not conform to the preconceptions of many socialists of the time or of later historians. They expected a mass antiwar movement if it unfolded to develop new creative forms within the electoral and trade union arenas. They were removed from the lives of the tenant farmers, Black and Native people, and unemployed workers in areas like Oklahoma.

As Marx pointed out in his study of the Paris Commune, new forms of development are often mistaken for older social transformations; the Commune of Paris in 1871 was likened to that of 1791. The Green Corn Rebellion was not just a repeat of earlier uprisings, as Ameringer suggests, but a very early form of a new alignment of forces that becomes more relevant as the struggle in the U.S. unfolds today.

None of the accounts mentioned here takes into consideration the relationship between the progressive anti-capitalist and antiwar propaganda of the socialist movement and the insurrection. The insurrection, as these historians see it, was something that arose out of the blue and carried to the very extreme in a distorted way the socialist program for working class emancipation from imperialist war. That, however, is not so.

The Working Class Union was not isolated from the rest of the socialist movement in the country. It certainly was not isolated from the Socialist Party of Oklahoma, which Weinstein tells us had at the time as many as 1,500 locals in the state. Ameringer himself says there were 57,000 members of the Socialist Party in Oklahoma alone. Daniel Bell writes in *Marxian Socialism in the U.S.*<sup>58</sup> that per capita it was the largest local in the country. Tad Cumbie, leader of the Working Class Union, was well known and had politically drawn swords with Victor Berger from Milwaukee, leader of the right wing of the Socialist Party, over questions of tactics and strategy.

As Ameringer himself relates, "At the convention of 1912 in Indianapolis a rather bitter controversy had broken out among the simon-pure Marxists and the revisionists, to which latter group both Victor (Berger) and I were adherents. In one of his usual brief remarks he had pointed out the folly of

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<sup>58</sup> Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).



separating ourselves from the body of the nation. 'Don't,' he warned, 'be like the ancient Hebrews who, when going on a journey, carried a bundle of hay to sleep on so as not to come in contact with a place on which a Gentile had previously slept.'

"That afternoon," he says, "Tad Cumbie, 'the Gray Horse of the Prairie,' and one of our irreconcilables, who was to become commander in chief of the Green Corn Rebellion, appeared with a tiny bundle of hay pinned to his flaming red shirt.

" 'Well, Victor,' said Tad, 'here is my bundle of hay.'

" 'Well, well,' replied Victor, 'I see you brought your lunch with you.' "<sup>59</sup>

The idea that the rebellion was an isolated event, that the mass of the participants in the Green Corn Rebellion had no idea what they were for or what the struggle between the left and the right was all about, is a complete distortion.

It is equally false to portray the rebellious workers and farmers -- Black, Native, and white -- as ignorant, lacking in common sense, and being taken in by a momentary impulse.

The Working Class Union leadership was intent on taking to heart what the program of the Socialist Party called for in the eventuality of an imperialist war. Even more to the point, they tried to carry out the historic resolution of the St. Louis convention of the Socialist Party which had taken place immediately after the U.S. entered the war.

That resolution not only condemned the war, but as we have shown above, reaffirmed the principle of working class internationalism. "The only struggle," said the resolution, "which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great

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59 Ameringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295.

struggle of the working class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression."

The slogan of "War against war!" had originated among the European socialists before their leadership turned renegade. To serious revolutionary socialists, whose sons were about to shed their blood, as they put it, "for Morgan and the bankers," the alternative was to take up arms. There were several such mutinies in Western Europe toward the close of the world imperialist slaughter.

This was also precisely the strategic outlook fought for by Lenin which enabled the Bolsheviks to turn the imperialist war into civil war, overturn the czarist autocracy and establish the first successful workers' state in history.

The Green Corn Rebellion should not be confused with isolated, anarchistic acts by a small group of petty bourgeois leaders divorced from the masses, who seek to substitute their own adventurism for the mass activity of the working class. It is altogether unlikely that Tad Cumbie and his comrades were unacquainted with the stirring developments at the St. Louis convention or that he himself was not a participant in it. He was on speaking terms with the Socialist leaders, as Ameringer himself relates. The conclusions he drew were diametrically opposite to the ones drawn by those who wanted to confine the struggle to mere electoral bouts and protests or who were for throwing in the towel altogether and joining the chauvinists.

The St. Louis resolution did not specifically forbid armed struggle to defeat the imperialist war. It in fact could be interpreted as a call to arms, certainly under circumstances which favored such a struggle.

The St. Louis resolution was virtually a reaffirmation of the famous resolution passed at the International Socialist Congress of 1907 at Stuttgart and reaffirmed in 1912 at Basel.

These resolutions, as we have already said, had been widely disseminated and discussed for years. A variety of divergent tactics were discussed at these congresses. Once the war broke out, however, a capitulationist position was taken by most of the European parties, led by the most famous of the German Social Democrats, Karl Kautsky. In the U.S., Berger was a representative of this same trend.

Even such measures as the calling of a general strike to stop the war had been proposed at these early conferences. This, however, was generally opposed so as to leave the propriety of such a decision up to the discretion of each section of the International and not pin all hopes on just one tactic. In some countries a general strike was not feasible in light of the weakness of the socialists in the trade union movement. In other places revolutionary mass actions were more suitable.

Big Bill Haywood, a leader of the IWW and the representative of the U.S. at the 1912 International Congress, had urged a general strike. The issue here is not whether he was correct in proposing it as a practical measure, but rather how it demonstrates that the movement in the U.S. was oriented toward stopping an imperialist war by mass intervention and not confining the movement to mere protests or electoral procedures.

The direct action supporters, while militant and revolutionary, did not possess the necessary Marxist approach which Lenin elaborated at the very beginning of the war and relentlessly and successfully pursued to the very end. Lenin reshaped and refined the rather generalized 1907 and 1912 resolutions of the Socialist International on war. They had called for the abolition of the capitalist system and the end of exploitation, for "War upon war." He made it more concrete. Lenin's program embodied the idea of revolutionary defeatism: that the defeat of one's own capitalist government was the

lesser evil in the struggle against imperialist war. He called for converting the imperialist war into civil war.

The Green Corn Rebellion leaders were on the right track!

The right-wing Socialists were on another track. They ultimately succumbed to the war hysteria, the intimidation and repression. None of the accounts of the rebellion show the slightest interest in assessing what tactics should have been employed to actually stop the war.

The Leninist approach was to carry out both legal and illegal work in the struggle against the war; to utilize legal parliamentary struggles and combine them with extra-parliamentary, or illegal, work. The Bolsheviks combined all forms of tactics which could stop the war and conceivably transform it into a war of liberation of the working class against the capitalist class.

That is what those who were fighting and dying on the war front really wanted. Everyone in the U.S. movement was in favor of legal activity where it was available, but the government under the Wilson administration was bent on curtailing and destroying it as it suppressed the socialist press and carried out an early version of the McCarthy witch-hunt.

Ameringer poses himself as an adviser to the revolutionary leaders of the Green Corn Rebellion. But he must have appeared to them as a city slicker, a bourgeois socialist bent on confining the movement to paltry reforms. He paints them as either stupid or naive. But these men and women from Oklahoma who lived near to the earth and the forms of exploitation existing in that era, who knew what it was like to risk life and limb, were hardly taken to flights of fancy.

The peasant stock everywhere and working class people in general may not attain the level of academic education of middle class socialists, who in that period had surged to the top and won many elected offices in the party and in local elections. But they were not bereft of common sense and the shrewdness that comes with the difficult struggle for existence. They were idealistic and believed in the justness of their cause, and the propriety of taking up arms. They also probably had good reason to think that, with more than just an abstract affinity to the great centers where the IWW was strong, it conceivably would link up with them once the initiative was taken to do so.

That they faltered as the result of an uneven struggle and the collapse of the socialist movement is because they were hit by a double-barreled load that came both from the government and from the surrender of the Socialist Party leadership of Oklahoma.

The planning of the insurrection could not have been a secret in Oklahoma. It could not have been a secret to the Socialist Party leadership there, with which the Working Class Union was in contact, and all of whom were considered to be in one camp. Had the official Socialist Party leadership been bent on opposition to the war rather than dissolving the party and running away from the struggle, who knows what may have developed as a result of the revolutionary initiative. It is easy to condemn, scorn, and deride it in hindsight. What was necessary and indispensable was a coordination of the socialist electoral struggle with an extra-legal, revolutionary struggle against the war.

The Green Corn Rebellion was an echo of the revolutionary defeatism practiced in Russia by the Bolsheviks and in Germany by the left-wing socialists headed by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

In France, too, a rebellion broke out in the armed forces led by Andre Marti, who was then a heroic revolutionary figure. Had the Russian Revolution not been victorious, wouldn't Marti have been regarded with scorn, if not amusement, the way Tad Cumbie is treated in these accounts? But Marti was lifted to revolutionary fame at a later date when the left wing of the Socialist Party of France reconstituted itself as the Communist Party.

Had Marx not analyzed the Paris Commune as an early model of working class revolution and the seizure of state power, had Lenin not drawn on those lessons from Marx, had the Bolshevik Revolution not triumphed, the Paris Commune would have gone down only as a futile uprising which cost a great many lives.

Marx did not urge the Parisian workers to rise up during the Franco-Prussian War. On the contrary, he warned against it and said it would be folly to undertake such a course. But once the insurrection was on, Marx immediately declared his solidarity with the workers of Paris and proceeded to draw revolutionary lessons from the Commune which the international working class is still learning.

The revolutionary socialist and class-conscious leadership which sees that a premature uprising is in the making by an authentic detachment of the working class and oppressed people has a duty to act in solidarity with the objective of the general uprising. It also must concentrate on finding ways and means to cut the losses and guide the struggle through a difficult period so as to preserve this splendid detachment of the working class, learn from what errors there were in calculation, strengthen the bonds of solidarity with them in the face of persecution, and move on to higher ground to prepare for the next offensive, even if that

involves a tactical retreat on the part of both elements of the movement.

To have dissolved the Socialist Party in Oklahoma, this "splendid" organization as Ameringer puts it, was a cowardly act in the face of fire from the enemy. It abandoned a singularly significant detachment of the army of the working class during the socialist struggle against imperialist war.

The indictments of the national executive committee of the Socialist Party constituted one front of the overall struggle of the imperialist government against the working class in general and the socialist movement in particular. It didn't help these defendants one iota that their organization dissolved the Oklahoma party and denounced the Green Corn Rebellion.

It's all well and good to abide by bourgeois legality if the capitalist government itself sticks to its norms of bourgeois legality. But by suppressing the socialist and working class press, by promoting, instigating, and organizing vigilante mobs not only to harass and disrupt socialist organizations but to attempt to destroy them, the capitalist government violated its own legal norms. The war which had been perpetrated was itself illegal because it was based on fraud and deceit. Wilson had promised again and again to stay out of the war, but in reality had planned from the beginning to get the U.S. headlong into it. As the socialists said, this was done for the good of the bankers and industrialists and against the interests of the working class.

By suppressing socialist agitation, by having enacted an unconstitutional espionage law, by virtually abrogating the First Amendment, the capitalist government broke its own legal norms. The working class and oppressed people have a right to strike back in kind, especially when legal avenues have

become narrow to nonexistent and the world is in the midst of a bloody slaughter.

We should not be the first to fire the shots, Engels admonished the Socialist Party toward the close of his life. But, he added, some of the early theoreticians like Montesquieu who wrote about the forms of bourgeois government taught that the relation between the people and the government is the result of a contract. Now, if that be true and the government violates its contract, then of course the working class should be free to do whatever it deems necessary to promote its own ends -- emancipation from capitalist slavery and imperialist war.

The lessons of the Green Corn Rebellion should be studied and researched again and again in relationship to the contemporary wars of U.S. imperialism.

Liberal imperialist politicians do not at all mind mere protests against imperialist wars, wars they themselves not only permit but are downright central figures in. People like Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, George Kennan of cold war fame, and George Ball, who come across now as liberals but were architects of the wars in Viet Nam, the Dominican Republic, and the Middle East, do not at all mind dissent and protests against imperialist wars if they are orderly, reasonable, and show the proper decorum toward the military-industrial complex and the constituted authorities in general.

As long as the war machine is permitted to function smoothly, a little dissent and mass protest kept within bounds may even make the capitalist government operate more effectively and smooth the machinery of war.

It is all part of the "democratic way," the way of imperialist profits and the expansion of capitalist markets in the search for new sources of raw materials and cheap labor.



The result of this process eventually is unemployment, increasing poverty, a declining living standard for the masses and the growth of super-profits as a result of extortionate loans on a world scale.

What were the "differences" between the liberal capitalist politicians and the Reaganites over the Grenada invasion? They came down not to a struggle over principle but to a quibble over whether the U.S. should have better methods. Should it have first invoked the War Powers Act and gotten Congressional approval; could the same results have been accomplished by methods of diversion; should the invasion have taken place with the collusion of the press and media instead of without it.

But in no case were any of them for the right of the Grenadan people to determine their own destiny, that is, a socialist destiny in alliance with other socialist countries. That, of course, was subversive of the interests of predatory imperialism.

The mass movement that attempted the Green Corn Rebellion, unlike Lenin's thoroughly Marxist working class organization, did not use a variety of forms of struggle in its effort to stop the imperialist war. It was derided and minimized by the right wing of the socialist movement for its failure.

But the capitulation of the socialist leaders to the war was a much greater failure. The First World War cost 20 million lives and many more casualties. It laid the basis for yet another holocaust just two decades later when imperialism unleashed a second world war in its insatiable drive for profits. The cost escalated to another 50 million dead. Since then the bloodshed has continued with hundreds of interventions and dozens of "local" wars instigated by U.S. imperialism. And each day the specter of nuclear war becomes more threatening.

The only response commensurate to this grave situation is the kind of all-round, revolutionary working class struggle against war and the capitalist system itself that Lenin's party carried out so successfully. The Green Corn Rebellion, a genuine revolutionary coalition of the most downtrodden workers and oppressed, showed in an early and premature form that the forces for such a struggle are being generated here on the soil of the world's greatest imperialist power.



## **Appendix I**

### **Resolution adopted at the Seventh International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart**

The Congress confirms the resolutions adopted by previous international congresses against militarism and imperialism and declares once more that the struggle against militarism cannot be separated from the Socialist class struggle in general.

Wars between capitalist states are, as a rule, the outcome of their competition on the world market, for each state seeks not only to secure its existing markets, but also to conquer new ones. In this, the subjugation of foreign peoples and countries plays a prominent role. These wars result furthermore from the incessant race for armaments by militarism, one of the chief instruments of bourgeois class rule and of the economic and political subjugation of the working class.

Wars are favored by the national prejudices which are systematically cultivated among civilized peoples in the interest of the ruling classes for the purpose of distracting the proletarian masses from their own class tasks as well as from their duties of international solidarity.

Wars, therefore, are part of the very nature of capitalism; they will cease only when the capitalist system is abolished or when the enormous sacrifices in men and money required by the advance in military technique and the indignation called forth by armaments, drive the peoples to abolish this system.

For this reason, the proletariat, which contributes most of the soldiers and makes most of the material sacrifices is a natural opponent of war which contradicts its highest goal -- the creation of an economic order on a Socialist basis which will bring about the solidarity of all peoples.

The Congress, therefore, considers it as the duty of the working class and particularly of its representatives in the parliaments to combat the naval and military armaments with all their might, characterizing the class nature of bourgeois society and the motive for the maintenance of national antagonisms, and to refuse the means for these armaments. It is their duty to work for the education of the working-class youth in the spirit of the brotherhood of nations and of Socialism while developing their class consciousness.

The Congress sees in the democratic organization of the army, in the substitution of the militia for the standing army, an essential guarantee that offensive wars will be rendered impossible and the overcoming of national antagonisms facilitated.

The International is not able to determine in rigid forms the anti-militarist actions of the working class which are naturally different in different countries and for different circumstances of time and place. But it is its duty to coordinate and increase to the utmost the efforts of the working class against war.

In fact, since the International Congress at Brussels the proletariat has employed the most diverse forms of action with increasing emphasis and success in its indefatigable struggles against militarism by refusing the means for naval and military armaments and by its efforts to democratize the military organization -- all for the purpose of preventing the outbreak of wars or of putting a stop to them, as well as for utilizing the convulsions of society caused by war for the emancipation of the working class.

This was evidenced especially by the agreement between the English and French trade unions following the Fashoda Affair for the maintenance of peace and for the

restoration of friendly relations between England and France; by the procedure of the Social-Democratic parties in the German and French parliaments during the Morocco crisis; the demonstrations arranged by the French and German Socialists for the same purpose; the concerted action of the Socialists of Austria and Italy who met in Trieste in order to prevent a conflict between the two countries; furthermore, by the energetic intervention of the Socialist workers of Sweden in order to prevent an attack upon Norway; finally, the heroic, self-sacrificing struggle of the Socialist workers and peasants of Russia and Poland in order to oppose the war unleashed by czarism, to put a stop to it, and to utilize the crisis of the country for the liberation of the working class.

All these efforts are evidence of the growing power of the proletariat and of its increasing ability to secure the maintenance of peace by resolute intervention. The action of the working class will be all the more successful the more that its spirit is prepared by a corresponding action and the labor parties of the various countries are spurred on and coordinated by the International.

The Congress is convinced that, under the pressure of the proletariat, by a serious use of arbitration in place of the miserable measures of the governments, the benefit of disarmament can be secured to all nations, making it possible to employ the enormous expenditures of money and energy, which are swallowed up by military armaments and wars, for cultural purposes.

If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the coordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau, to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the

sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation.

In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule.

International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart,  
August 18-24, 1907  
Vorwärts Publishers, Berlin, 1907, pp. 64-66.

## **Appendix II**

### **Manifesto of the International Socialist Congress at Basel**

At its congresses at Stuttgart and Copenhagen the International formulated for the proletariat of all countries these guiding principles for the struggle against war:

If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved supported by the coordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation.

In case war should break out anyway it is their duty to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule.

More than ever, recent events have imposed upon the proletariat the duty of devoting the utmost force and energy to planned and concerted action. On the one hand, the universal craze for armaments has aggravated the high cost of living, thereby intensifying class antagonisms and creating in the working class an implacable spirit of revolt; the workers want to put a stop to this system of panic and waste. On the other hand, the incessantly recurring menace of war has a more and more inciting effect. The great European peoples are constantly on the point of being driven against one another, although these attempts are against humanity and reason cannot be justified by even the slightest pretext of being in the interest of the people.



If the Balkan crisis, which has already caused such terrible disasters, should spread further, it would become the most frightful danger to civilization and the proletariat. At the same time it would be the greatest outrage in all history because of the crying discrepancy between the immensity of the catastrophe and the insignificance of the interests involved.

It is with satisfaction that the Congress records the complete unanimity of the Socialist parties and of the trade unions of all countries in the war against war.

The proletarians of all countries have risen simultaneously in a struggle against imperialism; each section of the international has opposed the resistance of the proletariat to the government of its own country, and has mobilized the public opinion of its nation against all bellicose desires. Thus there resulted the grandiose cooperation of the workers of all countries which has already contributed a great deal toward saving the threatened peace of the world. The fear of the ruling class of a proletarian revolution as a result of a world war has proved to be an essential guarantee of peace.

The Congress therefore calls upon the Social-Democratic parties to continue their action by every means that seems appropriate to them. In this concerted action it assigns to each Socialist party its particular task.

The Social-Democratic parties of the Balkan peninsula have a difficult task. The Great Powers of Europe, by the systematic frustration of all reforms, have contributed to the creation of unbearable economic, national and political conditions in Turkey which necessarily had to lead to revolt and war. Against the exploitation of these conditions in the interest of the dynasties and the bourgeois classes, the Social-Democratic parties of the Balkans, with heroic courage, have

raised the demand for a democratic federation. The Congress calls upon them to persevere in their admirable attitude; it expects that the Social-Democracy of the Balkans will do everything after the war to prevent the results of the Balkan War attained at the price of such terrible sacrifices from being misused for their own purposes by dynasties, by militarism, by the bourgeoisie of the Balkan states greedy for expansion. The Congress, however, calls upon the Socialists of the Balkans particularly to resist not only the renewal of the old enmities between Serbs, Bulgars, Rumanians, and Greeks, but also every violation of the Balkan peoples now in the opposite camp, the Turks and the Albanians. It is the duty of the Socialists of the Balkans, therefore, to fight against every violation of the rights of these people and to proclaim the fraternity of all Balkan peoples including the Albanians, the Turks, and the Rumanians, against the unleashed national chauvinism.

It is the duty of the Social-Democratic parties of Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue with all their power their effective action against an attack upon Serbia by the Danubian monarchy. It is their task to continue as in the past to oppose the plan of robbing Serbia of the results of the war by armed force, of transforming it into an Austrian colony, and of involving the peoples of Austria-Hungary proper and together with them all nations of Europe in the greatest dangers for the sake of dynastic interests. In the future the Social-Democratic parties of Austria-Hungary will also fight in order that those sections of the South-Slavic people ruled by the House of Hapsburg may obtain the right to govern themselves democratically within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy proper.

The Social-Democratic parties of Austria-Hungary as well as the Socialists of Italy must pay special attention to the

Albanian question. The Congress recognizes the right of the Albanian people to autonomy but it protests against Albania, under the pretext of autonomy, becoming the victim of Austro-Hungarian and Italian ambitions for domination. The Congress sees in this not only a peril for Albania itself, but, in a short time, a menace to the peace between Austria-Hungary and Italy. Albania can lead a truly independent life only as an autonomous member of a democratic Balkan federation. The Congress therefore calls upon the Social-Democrats of Austria-Hungary and Italy to combat every attempt of their governments to envelop Albania in their sphere of influence and to continue their efforts to strengthen the peaceful relations between Austria-Hungary and Italy.

It is with great joy that the Congress greets the protest strikes of Russian workers as a guarantee that the proletariat of Russia and of Poland is beginning to recover from the blows dealt it by the czarist counterrevolution. The Congress sees in this the strongest guarantee against the criminal intrigues of czarism, which, after having drowned in blood the peoples of its own country, after having betrayed the Balkan peoples themselves innumerable times and surrendered them to their enemies, now vacillates between the fear of the consequences that a war would have upon it and the fear of the pressure of a nationalist movement which it has itself created. However, when czarism now tries to appear as the liberator of the Balkan nations, it is only to reconquer its hegemony in the Balkans in a bloody war under this hypocritical pretext. The Congress expects that the urban and rural proletariat of Russia, Finland, and Poland, which is growing in strength, will destroy this web of lies, will oppose every belligerent venture of czarism, will combat every design of czarism, whether upon Armenia or upon Constantinople, and will concentrate its whole force upon the renewal of the revolutionary struggle for emancipation

from czarism. For czarism is the hope of all the reactionary powers of Europe, the most terrible enemy of the democracy of the peoples dominated by it; and the achievement of its destruction must be viewed as one of the foremost tasks of the entire International.

However, the most important task within the action of the International devolves upon the working class of Germany, France, and England. At this moment, it is the task of the workers of these countries to demand of their governments that they refuse any support either to Austria-Hungary or Russia, that they abstain from any intervention in the Balkan troubles and maintain absolute neutrality. A war between the three great leading civilized peoples on account of the Serbo-Austrian dispute over a port would be criminal insanity. The workers of Germany and France cannot concede that any obligation whatever to intervene in the Balkan conflict exists because of secret treaties.

However, on further development, should the military collapse of Turkey lead to the downfall of the Ottoman rule in Asia Minor, it would be the task of the Socialists of England, France, and Germany to resist with all their power the policy of conquest in Asia Minor, which would inevitably lead in a straight line to war. The Congress views as the greatest danger to the peace of Europe the artificially cultivated hostility between Great Britain and the German Empire. The Congress therefore greets the efforts of the working class of both countries to bridge this hostility. It considers the best means for this purpose to be the conclusion of an accord between Germany and England concerning the limitation of naval armaments and the abolition of the right of naval booty. The Congress calls upon the Socialists of England and Germany to continue their agitation for such an accord.

The overcoming of the antagonism between Germany on the one hand, and France and England on the other, would eliminate the greatest danger to the peace of the world, shake the power of czarism which exploits this antagonism, render an attack of Austria-Hungary upon Serbia impossible, and secure peace to the world. All the efforts of the International, therefore, are to be directed toward this goal.

The Congress records that the entire Socialist International is unanimous upon these principles of foreign policy. It calls upon the workers of all countries to oppose the power of the international solidarity of the proletariat to capitalist imperialism. It warns the ruling classes of all states not to increase by belligerent actions the misery of the masses brought on by the capitalist method of production. It emphatically demands peace. Let the governments remember that with the present condition of Europe and the mood of the working class, they cannot unleash a war without danger to themselves. Let them remember that the Franco-German War was followed by the revolutionary outbreak of the Commune, that the Russo-Japanese War set into motion the revolutionary energies of the peoples of the Russian Empire, that the competition in military and naval armaments gave the class conflicts in England and on the Continent an unheard-of sharpness, and unleashed an enormous wave of strikes. It would be insanity for the governments not to realize that the very idea of the monstrosity of a world war would inevitably call forth the indignation and the revolt of the working class. The proletarians consider it a crime to fire at each other for the profits of the capitalists, the ambitions of dynasties, or the greater glory of secret diplomatic treaties.

If the governments cut off every possibility of normal progress, and thereby drive the proletariat to desperate steps,

they themselves will have to bear the entire responsibility for the consequences of the crisis brought about by them.

The International will redouble its efforts in order to prevent this crisis; it will raise its protest with increasing emphasis and make its propaganda more and more energetic and comprehensive. The Congress therefore commissions the International Socialist Bureau to follow events with much greater attentiveness and no matter what may happen to maintain and strengthen the bonds uniting the proletarian parties.

The proletariat is conscious of being at this moment the bearer of the entire future of humankind. The proletariat will exert all its energy to prevent the annihilation of the flower of all peoples, threatened by all the horrors of mass murder, starvation, and pestilence.

The Congress therefore appeals to you, proletarians and Socialists of all countries, to make your voices heard in this decisive hour! Proclaim your will in every form and in all places; raise your protest in the parliaments with all your force; unite in great mass demonstrations; use every means that the organization and the strength of the proletariat place at your disposal! See to it that the governments are constantly kept aware of the vigilance and passionate will for peace on the part of the proletariat! To the capitalist world of exploitation and mass murder, oppose in this way the proletarian world of peace and fraternity of peoples!

Extraordinary International Socialist Congress at Basel,  
November 24-25, 1912.

Vorwärts Publishers, Berlin, 1912, pp. 23-27.

## **Appendix III**

### **International Socialist Women's Conference (Berne)**

#### **Resolution introduced by the delegation of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks to the International Socialist Women's Conference at Berne**

The present world war, which has caused so many calamities wherever it has been waged, has devastated and ruined Belgium and Galicia, and has destroyed thousands upon thousands of workers' lives, is an imperialist war caused by the rivalry between the ruling classes of the several countries for the division of colonies and for predominance on the world markets, as well as by dynastic interests. It is the natural continuation of the policies of the capitalist class and of the governments of all countries, and, therefore, the question as to who was the first to strike the blow is of no interest whatsoever from the Socialist standpoint.

Not only does this war not to any extent serve the interests of the workers, but it serves as a weapon in the hands of the ruling classes for the destruction of the international solidarity of the workers, and for the weakening of their movement and the class struggle within each country. In the same manner, the slogan "defense of the fatherland," which has been proclaimed by the bourgeoisie and endorsed by the opportunists, is nothing but a lure used by the bourgeoisie to persuade the proletariat to sacrifice their lives and blood for the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Taking all this into consideration the extraordinary International Socialist Women's Conference, referring to the Stuttgart resolution, which recommends that the economic and political crisis caused by war be taken advantage of to arouse the people so as to hasten the downfall of the capitalist order, to the Copenhagen resolution which declares that it is the duty of Socialist Deputies to vote against war appropriations, and to

the Basel resolution, which proclaims that the workers regard it as a crime to fire at each other, hereby declares that the representatives of the majority of the Socialist parties in the belligerent countries have been acting in utter disregard of those resolutions and have committed, yielding to the pressure of circumstances, a veritable betrayal of Socialism for which they have substituted nationalism. The Conference proclaims that the proletarians of all countries have no other enemy but their class enemy which is the capitalist class.

The terrific sufferings which this war has caused have been arousing in all women, and especially in proletarian women, an ever-growing desire for peace. The conference declares war upon every imperialist war, and at the same time states its belief that in order that this desire for peace may be transformed into a conscious political force, it is essential that the women workers should clearly realize that the propertied classes strive for nothing else than annexations, conquest, and domination, that in the epoch of imperialism wars are inevitable, and that imperialism threatens the whole world with an entire series of wars, unless the proletariat finds sufficient strength in itself to put an end to the capitalist order, by a complete overthrow of capitalism. If a workingwoman is anxious to shorten the period of sufferings which is connected with the epoch of imperialist wars, it is indispensable that her desire for peace turn into revolt and into struggle for Socialism. It is only through the revolutionary movement of the masses through the strengthening and intensifying of the Socialist struggle, that the workingwoman will attain her end in this struggle. Her first duty is thus that of supporting the labor unions and Socialist organizations and of breaking the civil peace by fighting against war appropriations, against the participation in bourgeois cabinets, by supporting and encouraging the fraternizing among soldiers in the trenches



and on the battlefield, by setting up illegal organizations wherever the government has repealed the constitutional liberties, and, finally, by drawing the masses into participation in demonstrations and revolutionary movements.

The International Socialist Women's Conference appeals to the workingwomen of all countries to start this struggle forthwith, to organize it on an international scale, and to combine their action closely with that of those Socialists who, like Liebknecht, fight in all countries against nationalism and carry on a revolutionary Socialist struggle.

At the same time, the Conference reminds the workingwomen that in the most advanced countries of Europe the objective conditions for Socialist production are already ripe, that the entire movement is entering a new phase, that the present world war imposes upon them new and serious duties, that their movement may be the forerunner of a general action of the masses, which will give a new impulse to the entire Socialist movement and will bring nearer the hour of complete liberation. By assuming the initiative in the matter of organizing demonstrations and revolutionary protests, the workingwomen, marching abreast with the proletariat as a whole, will be in a position to usher in the new era of proletarian struggle, during which the proletariat will attain Socialism in the more advanced countries, and a democratic republic in the more backward ones.

Berne, March 26-28, 1915

Sotsial-Demokrat, No. 42, June 1, 1915

## **Appendix IV Zimmerwald Manifesto**

### **Manifesto of the International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald**

Proletarians of Europe!

The war has lasted more than a year. Millions of corpses cover the battlefields. Millions of human beings have been crippled for the rest of their lives. Europe is like a gigantic human slaughterhouse. All civilization, created by the labor of many generations, is doomed to destruction. The most savage barbarism is today celebrating its triumph over all that hitherto constituted the pride of humanity.

Irrespective of the truth as to the direct responsibility for the outbreak of the war, one thing is certain. The war which has produced this chaos is the outcome of imperialism, of the attempt on the part of the capitalist classes of each nation, to foster their greed for profit by the exploitation of human labor and of the natural treasures of the entire globe.

Economically backward or politically weak nations are thereby subjugated by the Great Powers who, in this war, are seeking to remake the world map with blood and iron in accord with their exploiting interests. Thus entire nations and countries, like Belgium, Poland, the Balkan states, and Armenia are threatened with the fate of being torn asunder, annexed as a whole or in part as booty in the game of compensations.

In the course of the war, its driving forces are revealed in all their vileness. Shred after shred falls the veil with which the meaning of this world catastrophe was hidden from the consciousness of the peoples. The capitalists of all countries who are coining the red gold of war-profits out of the blood shed by the people, assert that the war is for defense of the fatherland, for democracy, and the liberation of oppressed

nations! They lie. In actual reality, they are burying the freedom of their own people together with the independence of the other nations in the places of devastation.

New fetters, new chains, new burdens are arising, and it is the proletariat of all countries, of the victorious as well as of the conquered countries, that will have to bear them. Improvement in welfare was proclaimed at the outbreak of the war -- want and privation, unemployment and high prices, undernourishment and epidemics are the actual results. The burdens of war will consume the best energies of the peoples for decades, endanger the achievements of social reform, and hinder every step forward. Cultural devastation, economic decline, political reaction these are the blessings of this horrible conflict of nations. Thus the war reveals the naked figure of modern capitalism which has become irreconcilable, not only with the interests of the laboring masses, not only with the requirements of historical development, but also with the elementary conditions of human intercourse.

The ruling powers of capitalist society who held the fate of the nations in their hands, the monarchic as well as the republican governments, the secret diplomacy, the mighty business organizations, the bourgeois parties, the capitalist press, the Church, all these bear the full weight of responsibility for this war which arose out of the social order fostering them and protected by them, and which is being waged for their interests.

Workers!

Exploited, disfranchised, scorned, they called you brothers and comrades at the outbreak of the war when you were to be led to the slaughter, to death. And now that militarism has crippled you, mutilated you, degraded and annihilated you, the rulers demand that you surrender your

interests, your aims, your ideals, in a word, servile subordination to civil peace. They rob you of the possibility of expressing your views, your feelings, your pains; they prohibit you from raising your demands and defending them. The press gagged, political rights and liberties trod upon -- this is the way the military dictatorship rules today with an iron hand.

This situation which threatens the entire future of Europe and of humanity cannot and must not be confronted by us any longer without action. The Socialist proletariat has waged a struggle against militarism for decades. With growing concern, its representatives at their national and international congresses occupied themselves with the ever more menacing danger of war growing out of imperialism. At Stuttgart, at Copenhagen, at Basel, the international Socialist congresses have indicated the course which the proletariat must follow.

Since the beginning of the war, Socialist parties and labor organizations of various countries that helped to determine this course have disregarded the obligations following from this. Their representatives have called upon the working class to give up the class struggle, the only possible and effective method of proletarian emancipation. They have granted credits to the ruling classes for waging the war; they have placed themselves at the disposal of the governments for the most diverse services; through their press and their messengers, they have tried to win the neutrals for the government policies of their countries; they have delivered up to their governments Socialist Ministers as hostages for the preservation of civil peace, and thereby they have assumed the responsibility before the working class, before its present and its future, for this war, for its aims and its methods. And just as the individual parties, so the highest of the appointed representative bodies of the Socialists of all countries, the International Socialist Bureau, has failed them.

These facts are equally responsible for the fact that the international working class which did not succumb to the national panic of the first war period, or which freed itself from it, has still, in the second year of the slaughter of peoples, found no ways and means of taking up an energetic struggle for peace simultaneously in all countries.

In this unbearable situation, we, the representatives of the Socialist parties, trade unions and their minorities, we Germans, French, Italians, Russians, Poles, Letts, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, and Swiss, we who stand, not on the ground of national solidarity with the exploiting class, but on the ground of the international solidarity of the proletariat and of the class struggle, have assembled to retie the torn threads of international relations and to call upon the working class to recover itself and to fight for peace.

This struggle is the struggle for freedom, for the reconciliation of peoples, for Socialism. It is necessary to take up this struggle for peace, for a peace without annexations or war indemnities. Such a peace, however, is only possible if every thought of violating the rights and liberties of nations is condemned. Neither the occupation of entire countries nor of separate parts of countries must lead to their violent annexation. No annexation, whether open or concealed, and no forcible economic attachment made still more unbearable by political disfranchisement. The right of self-determination of nations must be the indestructible principle in the system of national relationships of peoples.

Proletarians!

Since the outbreak of the war, you have placed your energy, your courage, your endurance at the service of the ruling classes. Now you must stand up for your own cause, for

the sacred aims of Socialism, for the emancipation of the oppressed nations as well as of the enslaved classes, by means of the irreconcilable proletarian class struggle.

It is the task and the duty of the Socialists of the belligerent countries to take up this struggle with full force; it is the task and the duty of the Socialists of the neutral states to support their brothers in this struggle against bloody barbarism with every effective means. Never in world history was there a more urgent, a more sublime task, the fulfillment of which should be our common labor. No sacrifice is too great, no burden too heavy in order to achieve this goal: peace among the peoples.

Working men and working women! Mothers and fathers! Widows and orphans! Wounded and crippled! We call to all of you who are suffering from the war and because of the war: Beyond all borders, beyond the reeking battlefields, beyond the devastated cities and villages --

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

Zimmerwald, September 1915.

In the name of the International Socialist Conference:

For the German delegation:

Georg Ledebour, Adolf Hoffmann.

For the French delegation:

A. Bourderon, A. Merrheim.

For the Italian delegation:

G.E. Modigliani, Constantino Lazzari.

For the Russian delegation:

N. Lenin, Paul Axelrod, M. Bobrov.

For the Polish delegation:

St. Lapinski, A. Warski, Cz. Hanecki.

For the Inter-Balkan Socialist Federation: In the name of the Rumanian delegation:

C.Rakovsky;

In the name of the Bulgarian delegation:

Wassil Kolarov.

For the Swedish and Norwegian delegation:

Z. Hoglund, Ture Nerman.

For the Dutch delegation:

H. Roland-Holst.

For the Swiss delegation:

Robert Grimm, Charles Naine.

International Socialist Commission at Berne,  
Bulletin No. 1, pp. 2,  
September 21, 1915.

## **Appendix V**

### **Zimmerwald Declaration of sympathy**

#### **Declaration of sympathy for the war victims and the persecuted, adopted by the International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald**

The International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald sends its expression of profoundest sympathy to the countless victims of the war, to the Polish and Belgian people, to the persecuted Jewish and Armenian peoples, to the millions of human beings who are tormented by boundless sufferings and who have had to bear untold horrors.

The Conference honors the memory of the great Socialist Jean Jaures, the first victim of the war who fell as a martyr and fighter in the struggle against chauvinism and for peace. It honors the memory of the Socialist fighters Tutzowicz and Catanesi, who lost their young lives on the battlefield.

The Conference sends the expression of its profound and fraternal sympathy to the Duma Deputies exiled to Siberia who are continuing the glorious revolutionary tradition of Russia, to Liebknecht and Monatte, fettered by capitalism, both of whom have taken up the struggle against the civil peace policy of the workers in their respective countries, to Comrades Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin who have been imprisoned for their Socialist convictions, and to all comrades, men and women, who have been persecuted or arrested because they have waged a struggle against war.

The Conference solemnly vows to honor the living and dead by following the example of these brave fighters and by indefatigably carrying out the task of awakening the revolutionary spirit in the masses of the international proletariat, and uniting them in the struggle against the fratricidal war and against capitalist society.



September 1915

International Socialist Commission at Berne,

Bulletin No. 1, p. 8,

September 21, 1915.

## **Appendix VI**

### **Draft resolution from leftwing at Zimmerwald**

#### **Draft resolution of the leftwing delegates at the International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald**

The World War, which has been devastating Europe for the last year, is an imperialist war waged for the political and economic exploitation of the world, export markets, sources of raw material, spheres of capital investment, etc. It is a product of capitalist development which connects the entire world in a world economy, but at the same time permits the existence of national state capitalist groups with opposing interests.

If the bourgeoisie and the governments seek to conceal this character of the World War by asserting that it is a question of a forced struggle for national independence, it is only to mislead the proletariat, since the war is being waged for the oppression of foreign peoples and countries. Equally untruthful are the legends concerning the defense of democracy in this war, since imperialism signifies the most unscrupulous domination of big capital and political reaction.

Imperialism can only be overcome by overcoming the contradictions which produce it, that is, by the Socialist organization of the advanced capitalist countries for which the objective conditions are already ripe.

At the outbreak of the war, the majority of the labor leaders had not raised this only possible slogan in opposition to imperialism. Prejudiced by nationalism, rotten with opportunism, at the beginning of the World War they betrayed the proletariat to imperialism and gave up the principles of Socialism and thereby the real struggle for the everyday interests of the proletariat.

Social-patriotism and social-imperialism, the standpoint of the openly patriotic majority of the formerly Social-

Democratic leaders in Germany, as well as the opposition-mannered center of the party around Kautsky, and to which in France and Austria the majority, in England and Russia a part of the leaders (Hyndman, the Fabians, the Trade-Unionists, Plekhanov, Rubanovich, the Nasha Zarya group) confess, is a more dangerous enemy to the proletariat than the bourgeois apostles of imperialism, since, misusing the banner of Socialism, it can mislead the unenlightened workers. The ruthless struggle against social-imperialism constitutes the first condition for the revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat and the reconstruction of the International.

It is the task of the Socialist parties, as well as of the Socialist opposition in the now social-imperialist parties, to call and lead the laboring masses to the revolutionary struggle against the capitalist governments for the conquest of political power for the Socialist organization of society.

Without giving up the struggle for every foot of ground within the framework of capitalism, for every reform strengthening the proletariat, without renouncing any means of organization and agitation, the revolutionary Social-Democrats, on the contrary, must utilize all the struggles, all the reforms demanded by our minimum program for the purpose of sharpening this war crisis as well as every social and political crisis of capitalism of extending them to an attack upon its very foundations. By waging this struggle under the slogan of Socialism it will render the laboring masses immune to the slogans of the oppression of one people by another as expressed in the maintenance of the domination of one nation over another, in the cry for new annexations; it will render them deaf to the temptations of national solidarity which has led the proletarians to the battlefields.

The signal for this struggle is the struggle against the World War, for the speedy termination of the slaughter of

nations. This struggle demands the refusal of war credits, quitting the cabinets, the denunciation of the capitalist, anti-Socialist character of the war from the tribunes of the parliaments, in the columns of the legal, and where necessary illegal, press, the sharpest struggle against social-patriotism, and the utilization of every movement of the people caused by the results of the war (misery, great losses etc.) for the organization of street demonstrations against the governments, propaganda of international solidarity in the trenches, the encouragement of economic strikes, the effort to transform them into political strikes under favorable conditions. Civil war, not civil peace -- that is the slogan!

As against all illusions that it is possible to bring about the basis of a lasting peace, the beginning of disarmament, by any decisions of diplomats and the governments, the revolutionary Social-Democrats must repeatedly tell the masses of the people that only the social revolution can bring about a lasting peace and the emancipation of humanity.

September 5-8, 1915.  
International Socialist Commission at Berne,  
Bulletin No. 2, p. 14,  
November 27, 1915.

Note: This draft resolution was signed by two representatives of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (Zinoviev and Lenin), a representative of the Opposition of the Polish Social-Democracy (Radek), a representative of the Latvian province (Winter), a representative each of the Left Social-Democrats of Sweden (Hoglund) and Norway (Nerman), a Swiss delegate (Platten), and a German delegate. On the question of submitting the draft to the commission, 12 delegates voted for (the eight mentioned above, two Socialist-Revolutionaries, Trotsky, and Roland-Holst) and 19 against.

Sotsial-Demokrat Nos. 45-46,  
October 11, 1915.

## **Appendix VII**

### **Draft Manifesto introduced at Zimmerwald**

#### **Draft of manifesto introduced by the leftwing delegates at the International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald**

Proletarians of Europe!

The war has now lasted for more than a year. The battlefields are strewn with millions of dead, millions have been crippled and doomed to remain a burden to themselves and to others for the rest of their lives. The war has caused terrific devastations, it will result in an unheard-of increase in taxes.

The capitalists of all countries, who at the price of proletarian blood, have been reaping enormous profits during the war, demand of the masses that they strain all their efforts and hold out to the end. They say: "The war is necessary for the defense of the fatherland, it is waged in the interests of democracy." They lie! In not a single country did the capitalists start the war because the independence of their country was threatened, or because they wanted to free an oppressed people. They have led the masses to slaughter because they want to oppress and to exploit other peoples. They were unable to agree between themselves as to how to divide the peoples of Asia and Africa that were still independent; they were lying in ambush for each other, watching for a chance to snatch from each other the spoils previously seized. It is not for their own freedom, nor for the freedom of other peoples, that the masses are bleeding in all parts of the immense slaughterhouse called Europe. This war will bring the proletariat of Europe and the peoples of Asia and Africa new burdens and new chains.

There is, therefore, no reason why this fratricidal war should be waged to the end, to the last drop of blood; on the contrary, every effort must be strained to put an end to it.

The time for this has already come. What you must demand first is that your Socialist Deputies, those whom you delegated to parliament to fight against capitalism, against militarism, against the exploitation of the people, do their duty. All of them, with the exception of the Russian, Serbian, and Italian comrades, and with the exception of Comrades Liebknecht and Ruhle, have trampled upon that duty; they have either supported the bourgeoisie in their rapacious war, or else have vacillated and have shirked responsibility. You must demand that they either resign from their seats or that they use the platform of Parliament to make clear to the people the nature of the present war and that outside of parliament they help the working class to resume its struggle. Your first demand must be this: refusal of all war credits, withdrawal from the cabinets in France, Belgium, and England.

But that is not all! The Deputies cannot save you from that rabid beast, the World War, that subsists on your blood. You must act yourselves. You must make use of all your organizations, of your entire press, to rouse the broadest masses groaning under the burden of the war to revolt against it. You must go out into the streets and throw into the face of the ruling classes your rallying cry: "Enough of slaughters!" Let the ruling classes remain deaf to it, the discontented masses will hear it and they will join you and take a part in the struggle.

The demand must immediately and energetically be made that the war be stopped, a loud protest must be raised against the exploitation of one people by another, against the division of any people among several states. All this will take place if any capitalist government comes out victorious and is

able to dictate the terms of peace to the others. If we allow the capitalists to conclude peace in the same manner as they started the war without the participation of the masses, the new conquests will not only strengthen reaction and arbitrary police rule in the victorious country, but they will sow the seeds of new wars even more horrible.

The overthrow of the capitalist governments -- this is the object which the working class in all belligerent countries must set themselves, because only then will an end be put to the exploitation of one people by another, an end put to wars, when capital has been deprived of the power of disposing of the life and death of peoples. Only peoples who shall be freed of want and misery, of the rule of capital, will be in a position to settle their mutual relations, not by war, but by friendly agreement.

Great is the goal we set ourselves, great are the efforts that will be required to attain it, great will be the sacrifices before it is attained. Long will be the road to victory. Methods of peaceful pressure will be insufficient to overcome the enemy. But it is only when you are ready to make for your own liberation, in the struggle against capital, part of those innumerable sacrifices that you have been making on the battlefield for the interests of capital, only then will you be able to put an end to the war, to lay a firm foundation for a lasting peace, which will transform you from slaves of capital into free people.

But if the deceitful phrases of the bourgeoisie and of the Socialist parties that support it succeed in restraining you from energetic struggle, and if you confine yourselves to pious wishes because you are unwilling to proceed to an attack and to sacrifice your bodies and souls for the great cause, then capital will go on shedding your blood and wasting your belongings at its own discretion. In all countries the number of

those who think as we do grows daily. It is by their order that we have assembled representatives of various countries to address to you this call to battle. We shall carry on this struggle with mutual support as there are no interests to divide us. It is essential that the revolutionary workers of each country deem it their duty and honorable distinction to serve as a model for others, a model of energy and self-sacrifice. Not timid expectation as to whether the struggle of others will lead, but struggle in the first ranks, that is the road that leads to the formation of a powerful International which will put an end to war and capitalism.

September 5-8, 1915  
Sotsial-Demokrat, Nos. 456,  
October 11, 1915.



## **Appendix VIII**

### **Two Declarations made at Zimmerwald**

#### **Two declarations made at the International Socialist Conference at Zimmerwald**

##### 1

The undersigned declare as follows:

The manifesto adopted by the Conference does not give us complete satisfaction. It contains no pronouncement on either open opportunism or opportunism that is hiding under radical phraseology -- the opportunism which is not only the chief cause of the collapse of the International, but which strives to perpetuate that collapse. The manifesto contains no clear pronouncement as to the methods of fighting against the war.

We shall continue, as we have done heretofore, to advocate in the Socialist press and at the meetings of the International, a clear-cut Marxist position in regard to the tasks with which the epoch of imperialism has confronted the proletariat.

We vote for the manifesto because we regard it as a call to struggle and in this struggle we are anxious to march side by side with the other sections of the International.

We request that our present declaration be included in the official proceedings.

(Signed): N. Lenin, G. Zinoviev, Radek, Nerman, Hoglund, Winter.

##### 2

The other declaration, which was signed, in addition to the group that had introduced the resolution of the Left by Roland-Holst and Trotsky, read as follows:

"Inasmuch as the adoption of our amendment (to the manifesto) demanding the vote against war appropriations

might in a way endanger the success of the Conference, we do, under protest, withdraw our amendment and accept Ledebour's statement in the commission to the effect that the manifesto contains all that is implied in our proposition."

It may be added that Ledebour, as an ultimatum, demanded the rejection of the amendment, refusing to sign the manifesto otherwise.

Sotsial-Demokrat, No. 47,  
October 13, 1915.

## **Appendix IX**

### **War proclamation & program, Socialist Party (April, 1917).**

#### **War proclamation and program adopted at the National Convention of the Socialist Party of the United States, St. Louis, Mo., April 1917**

The Socialist Party of the United States in the present grave crisis solemnly reaffirms its allegiance to the principle of internationalism and working-class solidarity the world over, and proclaims its unalterable opposition to the war just declared by the Government of the United States.

Modern wars as a rule have been caused by the commercial and financial rivalry and intrigues of the capitalist interests in the different countries. Whether they have been frankly waged as wars of aggression or have been hypocritically represented as wars of "defense," they have always been made by the [ruling] classes and fought by the masses. Wars bring wealth and power to the ruling classes, and suffering, death, and demoralization to the workers.

They breed a sinister spirit of passion, unreason, race hatred, and false patriotism. They obscure the struggles of the workers for life, liberty, and social justice. They tend to sever the vital bonds of solidarity between them and their brothers in other countries, to destroy their organizations and to curtail their civic and political rights and liberties.

The Socialist Party of the United States is unalterably opposed to the system of exploitation and class rule which is upheld and strengthened by military power and sham national patriotism. We therefore call upon the workers of all countries to refuse support to their governments in their wars. The wars of the contending national groups of capitalists are not the concern of the workers. The only struggle which would justify

the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression, and we particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of so-called defensive warfare. As against the false doctrine of national patriotism we uphold the ideal of international working class solidarity. In support of capitalism we will not willingly give a single life or a single dollar; in support of the struggle of the workers for freedom we pledge our all.

The mad orgy of death and destruction which is now convulsing unfortunate Europe was caused by the conflict of capitalist interests in the European countries.

In each of these countries, the workers were oppressed and exploited. They produced enormous wealth but the bulk of it was withheld from them by the owners of the industries. The workers were thus deprived of the means to repurchase the wealth which they themselves had created.

The capitalist class of each country was forced to look for foreign markets to dispose of the accumulated "surplus" wealth. The huge profits made by the capitalists could no longer be profitably reinvested in their own countries, hence, they were driven to look for foreign fields of investment. The geographical boundaries of each modern capitalist country thus became too narrow for the industrial and commercial operations of its capitalist class.

The efforts of the capitalists of all leading nations were, therefore, centered upon the domination of the world markets. The acquisition of colonial possessions and the extension of spheres of commercial and political influence became the object of diplomatic intrigues and the cause of constant clashes between nations.

The acute competition between the capitalist powers of the earth, their jealousies and distrusts of one another and the fear of the rising power of the working class forced each of them to arm to the teeth. This led to the mad rivalry of armament, which, years before the outbreak of the present war, had turned the leading countries of Europe into armed camps with standing armies of many millions, drilled and equipped for war in times of "peace." Capitalism imperialism and militarism had thus laid the foundation of an inevitable general conflict in Europe. The ghastly war in Europe was not caused by an accidental event, nor by the policy or institutions of any single nation. It was the logical outcome of the competitive capitalist system.

The 6,000,000 men of all countries and races who have been ruthlessly slain in the first 30 months of this war, the millions of others who have been crippled and maimed, the vast treasures of wealth that have been destroyed, the untold misery and sufferings of Europe, have not been sacrifices exacted in a struggle for principles or ideals, but wanton offerings upon the altar of private profit.

The forces of capitalism which have led to the war in Europe are even more hideously transparent in the war recently provoked by the ruling class of this country.

When Belgium was invaded, the government enjoined upon the people of this country the duty of remaining neutral, thus clearly demonstrating that the "dictates of humanity," and the fate of small nations and of democratic institutions were matters that did not concern it. But when our enormous war traffic was seriously threatened, our government calls upon us to rally to the "defense of democracy and civilization."

Our entrance into the European War was instigated by the predatory capitalists in the United States who boast of the

enormous profit of \$7 billion from the manufacture and sale of munitions and war supplies and from the exportation of American food stuffs and other necessities. They are also deeply interested in the continuance of war and the success of the Allied arms through their huge loans to the governments of the Allied powers and through other commercial ties. It is the same interests which strive for imperialistic domination of the Western Hemisphere.

The war of the United States against Germany cannot be justified even on the plea that it is a war in defense of American rights or American "honor." Ruthless as the unrestricted submarine war policy of the German government was and is, it is not an invasion of the rights of the American people as such, but only an interference with the opportunity of certain groups of American capitalists to coin cold profits out of the blood and sufferings of our fellow men in the warring countries of Europe.

It is not a war against the militarist regime of the Central Powers. Militarism can never be abolished by militarism.

It is not a war to advance the cause of democracy in Europe. Democracy can never be imposed upon any country by a foreign power by force of arms.

It is cant and hypocrisy to say that the war is not directed against the German people, but against the Imperial Government of Germany. If we send an armed force to the battlefields of Europe, its cannon will mow down the masses of the German people and not the Imperial German Government.

Our entrance into the European conflict at this time will serve only to multiply the horrors of the war, to increase the toll of death and destruction and to prolong the fiendish slaughter. It will bring death, suffering, and destitution to the people of the United States and particularly to the working

class. It will give the powers of reaction in this country the pretext for an attempt to throttle our rights and to crush our democratic institutions, and to fasten upon this country a permanent militarism.

The working class of the United States has no quarrel with the working class of Germany or of any other country. The people of the United States have no quarrel with the people of Germany or any other country. The American people did not want and do not want this war. They have not been consulted about the war and have had no part in declaring war. They have been plunged into this war by the trickery and treachery of the ruling class of the country through its representatives in the National Administration and National Congress, its demagogic agitators, its subsidized press and other servile instruments of public expression. We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world.

In all modern history there has been no war more unjustifiable than the war which we are about to engage.

No greater dishonor has ever been forced upon a people than that which the capitalist class is forcing upon this nation against its will.

In harmony with these principles, the Socialist Party emphatically rejects the proposal that in time of war the workers should suspend their struggle for better conditions. On the contrary, the acute situation created by war calls for an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle, and we recommend to the workers and pledge ourselves to the following course of action:

1. Continuous, active, and public opposition to the war through demonstrations, mass petitions, and other means within our power.

2. Unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription. Should such conscription be forced upon the people we pledge ourselves to continuous efforts for the repeal of such laws and to the support of all mass movements in opposition to conscription. We pledge ourselves to oppose with all our strength any attempt to raise money for payment of war expense by taxing the necessities of life or issuing bonds which will put the burden upon future generations. We demand that the capitalist class, which is responsible for the war, pay its cost. Let those who kindled the fire, furnish the fuel.
3. Vigorous resistance to all reactionary measures such as censorship of press and mails, restriction of the rights of free speech, assemblage, and organization, or compulsory arbitration and limitation of the right to strike.
4. Consistent propaganda against military training and militaristic teaching in the public school.
5. Extension of the campaign of education among the workers to organize them into strong, class-conscious, and closely unified political and industrial organizations to enable them by concerted and harmonious mass action to shorten this war and to establish lasting peace.
6. Widespread educational propaganda to enlighten the masses as to the true relation between capitalism and war, and to rouse and organize them for action, not only against present war evils, but for the prevention of future wars and for the destruction of the causes of war.
7. To protect the masses of the American people from the pressing danger of starvation which the war in Europe has brought upon them, and which the entry of the United States has already accentuated we demand --



- (a) The restriction of food exports so long as the present shortage continues, the fixing of maximum prices and whatever measures may be necessary to prevent the food speculators from holding back the supplies now in their hands;
- (b) The socialization and democratic management of the great industries concerned with the production, transportation, storage, and the marketing of food and other necessities of life;
- (c) The socialization and democratic management of all land and other natural resources now held out of use for monopolistic or speculative profit.

These measures are presented as means of protecting the workers against the evil results of the present war. The danger of recurrence of war will exist as long as the capitalist system of industry remains in existence. The end of wars will come with the establishment of socialized industry and industrial democracy the world over. The Socialist Party calls upon all the workers to join it in its struggle to reach this goal, and thus bring into the world a new society in which peace, fraternity, and human brotherhood will be the dominant ideals.

## **Appendix X**

### **Decree on Peace by Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets**

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of October 24-25 and basing itself on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace.

By a just or democratic peace for which the overwhelming majority of the working class and other working people of all the belligerent countries, exhausted, tormented, and racked by the war, are craving -- a peace that has been most definitely and insistently demanded by the Russian workers and peasants ever since the overthrow of the czarist monarchy -- by such a peace the government means an immediate peace without annexations (i.e., without the seizure of foreign lands, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and without indemnities.

The Government of Russia proposes that this kind of peace be immediately concluded by all the belligerent nations and expresses its readiness to take all the resolute measures now, without the least delay, pending the final ratification of all the terms of such a peace by authoritative assemblies of the people's representatives of all countries and all nations.

In accordance with the sense of justice of democrats in general, and of the working class in particular, the government conceives the annexation or seizure of foreign lands to mean every incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the precisely, clearly and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation irrespective of the time when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given state or forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective

finally of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant overseas countries.

If any nation whatsoever is forcibly retained within the borders of a given state, if, in spite of its expressed desire -- no matter whether expressed in the press, at public meetings, in the decisions of parties, or in protests and uprisings against national oppression -- it is not accorded the right to decide the forms of its state existence by a free vote taken after the complete evacuation of the troops of the incorporating or generally of the stronger nation and without the least pressure being brought to bear, such incorporation is annexation, i.e., seizure and violence.

The government considers it the greatest of crimes against humanity to continue this war over the issue of how to divide among the strong and rich nations the weak nationalities they have conquered and solemnly announces its determination immediately to sign terms of peace to stop this war on the terms indicated, which are equally just for all nationalities without exception. At the same time the government declares that it does not regard the above-mentioned peace terms as an ultimatum; in other words, it is prepared to consider any other peace terms, and insists only that they be advanced by any of the belligerent countries as speedily as possible and that in the peace proposals there should be absolute clarity and the complete absence of all ambiguity and secrecy.

The government abolishes secret diplomacy, and, for its part, announces its firm intention to conduct all negotiations quite openly in full view of the whole people. It will proceed immediately with the full publication of the secret treaties endorsed or concluded by the government of landowners and capitalists from February to October 25, 1917. The government proclaims the unconditional and immediate annulment of everything contained in these secret treaties insofar as it is aimed, as is mostly the case, at securing advantages and privileges for the Russian landowners and capitalists

and at the retention or extension of the annexations made by the Great Russians.

Proposing to the governments and peoples of all countries immediately to begin open negotiations for peace the government, for its part, expresses its readiness to conduct these negotiations in writing, by telegraph, and by negotiations between representatives of the various countries or at a conference of such representatives. In order to facilitate such negotiations the government is appointing its plenipotentiary representative to neutral countries.

The government proposes an immediate armistice to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries and for its part considers it desirable that this armistice should be concluded for a period of not less than three months, i.e. a period long enough to permit the completion of negotiations for peace with the participation of the representatives of all peoples or nations, without exception, involved in or compelled to take part in the war, and the summoning of authoritative assemblies of the representatives of the peoples of all countries for the final ratification of the peace terms.

While addressing this proposal for peace to the governments and people of all the belligerent countries, the Provisional Workers and Peasants Government of Russia appeals in particular also to the class-conscious workers of the three most advanced nations of humanity and the largest states participating in the present war, namely, Great Britain, France, and Germany. The workers of these countries have made the greatest contributions to the cause of progress and socialism; they have furnished the great examples of the Chartist movement in England, a number of revolutions of historic importance effected by the French proletariat, and, finally, the heroic struggle against the Anti-Socialist Law in Germany and the prolonged, persistent, and disciplined work of creating mass proletarian organizations in Germany, a work which serves as a model to the workers of the whole world. All these examples of proletarian heroism and historical creative work are a pledge that

the workers of the countries mentioned will understand the duty that now faces them of saving humanity from the horrors of war and its consequences, that these workers by comprehensive, determined, and supremely vigorous action, will help us to conclude peace successfully, and at the same time emancipate the laboring and exploited masses of our population from all forms of slavery and all forms of exploitation.

The workers and peasants government, created by the Revolution of October 24-25 and basing itself on the support of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, must start immediate negotiations for peace. Our appeal must be addressed both to the governments and to the peoples. We cannot ignore the governments, for that would delay the possibility of concluding peace, and the people's government dare not do that; but we have no right not to appeal to the peoples at the same time. Everywhere there are differences between the governments and the peoples, and we must therefore help the peoples to intervene in questions of war and peace. We will, of course, insist upon the whole of our program for a peace without annexations and indemnities. We shall not retreat from it, but we must not give our enemies an opportunity to say that their conditions are different from ours and that therefore it is useless to start negotiations with us. No, we must deprive them of that advantageous position and not present our terms in the form of an ultimatum. Therefore the point is included that we are willing to consider any peace terms and all proposals. We shall consider them, but that does not necessarily mean that we shall accept them. We shall submit them for consideration to the Constituent Assembly which will have the power to decide what concessions can and what cannot be made. We are combating the deception practiced by governments which pay lip-service to peace and justice, but in fact wage annexationist and predatory wars. No government will say all it thinks. We, however, are opposed to secret diplomacy and will act openly in full view of the whole people. We do not close our eyes to

difficulties and never have done. War cannot be ended by refusal, it cannot be ended by one side. We are proposing an armistice for three months but shall not reject a shorter period so that the exhausted army may breathe freely even if only for a little while; moreover, in all the civilized countries national assemblies must be summoned for the discussion of the terms.

In proposing an immediate armistice we appeal to the class-conscious workers of the countries that have done so much for the development of the proletarian movement. We appeal to the workers of Britain, where there was the Chartist movement, to the workers of France, who have in repeated uprisings displayed the strength of their class-consciousness, and to the workers of Germany, who waged the fight against the Anti-Socialist Law and have created powerful organizations.

In the Manifesto of March 14, we called for the overthrow of the bankers, but, far from overthrowing our own bankers, we entered into an alliance with them. Now we have overthrown the government of the bankers.

The governments and the bourgeoisie will make every effort to unite their forces and drown the workers' and peasants' revolution in blood. But the three years of war have been a good lesson to the masses -- the Soviet movement in other countries and the mutiny in the German navy, which was crushed by the officer cadets of Wilhelm the hangman. Finally, we must remember that we are not living in the depths of Africa, but in Europe, where news can spread quickly.

The workers' movement will triumph and will pave the way to peace and socialism.

Izvestia No. 208, October 27, 1917,  
and Pravda No. 171, October 28, 1917