

Rosa Luxemburg  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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# Chapter 1

The scene has changed fundamentally. The six weeks' march to Paris has grown into a world drama.<sup>[1]</sup> Mass slaughter has become the tiresome and monotonous business of the day and the end is no closer. Bourgeois statecraft is held fast in its own vise. The spirits summoned up can no longer be exorcised.

Gone is the euphoria. Gone the patriotic noise in the streets, the chase after the gold-colored automobile, one false telegram after another, the wells poisoned by cholera, the Russian students heaving bombs over every railway bridge in Berlin, the French airplanes over Nuremberg, the spy hunting public running amok in the streets, the swaying crowds in the coffee shops with ear-deafening patriotic songs surging ever higher, whole city neighborhoods transformed into mobs ready to denounce, to mistreat women, to shout hurrah and to induce delirium in themselves by means of wild rumors. Gone, too, is the atmosphere of ritual murder, the Kishinev air where the crossing guard is the only remaining representative of human dignity.<sup>[2]</sup>

The spectacle is over. German scholars, those "stumbling lemurs," have been whistled off the stage long ago. The trains full of reservists are no longer accompanied by virgins fainting from pure jubilation. They no longer greet the people from the windows of the train with joyous smiles. Carrying their packs, they

quietly trot along the streets where the public goes about its daily business with aggrieved visages.

In the prosaic atmosphere of pale day there sounds a different chorus – the hoarse cries of the vulture and the hyenas of the battlefield. Ten thousand tarpaulins guaranteed up to regulations! A hundred thousand kilos of bacon, cocoa powder, coffee-substitute – c.o.d, immediate delivery! Hand grenades, lathes, cartridge pouches, marriage bureaus for widows of the fallen, leather belts, jobbers for war orders – serious offers only! The cannon fodder loaded onto trains in August and September is moldering in the killing fields of Belgium, the Vosges, and Masurian Lakes where the profits are springing up like weeds. It's a question of getting the harvest into the barn quickly. Across the ocean stretch thousands of greedy hands to snatch it up.

Business thrives in the ruins. Cities become piles of ruins; villages become cemeteries; countries, deserts; populations are beggared; churches, horse stalls. International law, treaties and alliances, the most sacred words and the highest authority have been torn in shreds. Every sovereign "by the grace of God" is called a rogue and lying scoundrel by his cousin on the other side. Every diplomat is a cunning rascal to his colleagues in the other party. Every government sees every other as dooming its own people and worthy only of universal contempt. There are food riots in Venice, in Lisbon, Moscow, Singapore. There is plague in Russia, and misery and despair everywhere.

Violated, dishonored, wading in blood, dripping filth – there stands bourgeois society. This is it [in reality]. Not all spic and span and moral, with pretense to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace, and the rule of law – but the ravening beast, the witches' sabbath of

anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity. Thus it reveals itself in its true, its naked form.

In the midst of this witches' sabbath a catastrophe of world-historical proportions has happened: International Social Democracy has capitulated. To deceive ourselves about it, to cover it up, would be the most foolish, the most fatal thing the proletariat could do. Marx says: "...the democrat (that is, the petty bourgeois revolutionary) [comes] out of the most shameful defeats as unmarked as he naively went into them; he comes away with the newly gained conviction that he must be victorious, not that he or his party ought to give up the old principles, but that conditions ought to accommodate him."<sup>[3]</sup> The modern proletariat comes out of historical tests differently. Its tasks and its errors are both gigantic: no prescription, no schema valid for every case, no infallible leader to show it the path to follow. Historical experience is its only school mistress. Its thorny way to self-emancipation is paved not only with immeasurable suffering but also with countless errors. The aim of its journey – its emancipation depends on this – is whether the proletariat can learn from its own errors. Self-criticism, remorseless, cruel, and going to the core of things is the life's breath and light of the proletarian movement. The fall of the socialist proletariat in the present world war is unprecedented. It is a misfortune for humanity. But socialism will be lost only if the international proletariat fails to measure the depth of this fall, if it refuses to learn from it.

The last forty-five year period in the development of the modern labor movement now stands in doubt. What we are experiencing in this critique is a closing of accounts for what will soon be half a century of work at our posts. The grave of the Paris Commune ended the first phase of the European labor movement as well as the First International.<sup>[4]</sup> Since then there began a new

phase. In place of spontaneous revolutions, risings, and barricades, after which the proletariat each time fell back into passivity, there began the systematic daily struggle, the exploitation of bourgeois parliamentarianism, mass organizations, the marriage of the economic with the political struggle, and that of socialist ideals with stubborn defense of immediate daily interests. For the first time the polestar of strict scientific teachings lit the way for the proletariat and for its emancipation. Instead of sects, schools, utopias, and isolated experiments in various countries, there arose a uniform, international theoretical basis which bound countries together like the strands of a rope. Marxist knowledge gave the working class of the entire world a compass by which it can make sense of the welter of daily events and by which it can always plot the right course to take to the fixed and final goal.

She who bore, championed, and protected this new method was German Social Democracy. The [Franco-Prussian] War and the defeat of the Paris Commune had shifted the center of gravity for the European workers' movement to Germany. As France was the classic site of the first phase of proletarian class struggle and Paris the beating, bleeding heart of the European laboring classes of those times, so the German workers became the vanguard of the second phase. By means of countless sacrifices and tireless attention to detail, they have built the strongest organization, the one most worthy of emulation; they created the biggest press, called the most effective means of education and enlightenment into being, gathered the most powerful masses of voters and attained the greatest number of parliamentary mandates. German Social Democracy was considered the purest embodiment of Marxist socialism. She had and laid claim to a special place in the Second International - its instructress and leader.<sup>[5]</sup>

In his famous 1895 foreword to Marx's [The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850](#), Friedrich Engels wrote:

“No matter what happens in other countries, German Social Democracy has a special position and therefore a special task, at least for the time being. The two million voters it sends to the ballot box, and the young men and women who, although non-voters, stand behind them, constitute the most numerous and compact mass, the ‘decisive force’ of the proletarian army.”

German Social Democracy, as the Vienna **Arbeiterzeitung** wrote on August 5, 1914, was “the jewel of class-conscious proletarian organizations.” In her footsteps trod the increasingly enthusiastic Social Democrats of France, Italy, and Belgium, the labor movements of Holland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the United States. The Slavic countries, the Russians, the Social Democrats of the Balkans looked upon [German Social Democracy] with limitless, nearly uncritical, admiration. In the Second International the German “decisive force” played the determining role. At the [international] congresses, in the meetings of the international socialist bureaus, all awaited the opinion of the Germans. Especially in the questions of the struggle against militarism and war, German Social Democracy always took the lead. “For us Germans that is unacceptable” regularly sufficed to decide the orientation of the Second International, which blindly bestowed its confidence upon the admired leadership of the mighty German Social Democracy: the pride of every socialist and the terror of the ruling classes everywhere.

And what did we in Germany experience when the great historical test came? The most precipitous fall,

the most violent collapse. Nowhere has the organization of the proletariat been yoked so completely to the service of imperialism. Nowhere is the state of siege borne so docilely.<sup>[6]</sup> Nowhere is the press so hobbled, public opinion so stifled, the economic and political class struggle of the working class so totally surrendered as in Germany.

But German Social Democracy was not merely the strongest vanguard troop, it was the thinking head of the International. For this reason, we must begin the analysis, the self-examination process, with its fall. It has the duty to begin the salvation of international socialism, that means unsparing criticism of itself. None of the other parties, none of the other classes of bourgeois society, may look clearly and openly into the mirror of their own errors, their own weaknesses, for the mirror reflects their historical limitations and the historical doom that awaits them. The working class can boldly look truth straight in the face, even the bitterest self-renunciation, for its weaknesses are only confusion. The strict law of history gives back its power, stands guarantee for its final victory.

Unsparing self-criticism is not merely an essential for its existence but the working class's supreme duty. On our ship we have the most valuable treasures of mankind, and the proletariat is their ordained guardian! And while bourgeois society, shamed and dishonored by the bloody orgy, rushes headlong toward its doom, the international proletariat must and will gather up the golden treasure that, in a moment of weakness and confusion in the chaos of the world war, it has allowed to sink to the ground.

One thing is certain. The world war is a turning point. It is foolish and mad to imagine that we need only survive the war, like a rabbit waiting out the storm under a bush, in order to fall happily back into the old

routine once it is over. The world war has altered the conditions of our struggle and, most of all, it has changed us. Not that the basic law of capitalist development, the life-and-death war between capital and labor, will experience any amelioration. But now, in the midst of the war, the masks are falling and the old familiar visages smirk at us. The tempo of development has received a mighty jolt from the eruption of the volcano of imperialism. The violence of the conflicts in the bosom of society, the enormousness of the tasks that tower up before the socialist proletariat – these make everything that has transpired in the history of the workers' movement seem a pleasant idyll.

Historically, this war was ordained to thrust forward the cause of the proletariat ... It was ordained to drive the German proletariat to the pinnacle of the nation and thereby begin to organize the international and universal conflict between capital and labor for political power within the state.

And did we envision a different role for the working class in the world war? Let us recall how we, only a short while ago, were accustomed to describe the future:

Then comes the *catastrophe*. Then the great mobilization will take place in Europe; 16-18 million men, the flower of the various nations, armed with the best tools of death, will enter the field as enemies. But, I am convinced, that behind the great mobilization there stands the *great havoc*. It will not come through our agency, but rather yours. You are driving things to the limit. You are leading us to catastrophe. You will reap what you have sown. The *Götterdämmerung of the bourgeois world approaches. Believe it! It is approaching!* [All italics are Luxemburg's.]

Thus spoke our leader, [August] Bebel<sup>[7]</sup>, during the Reichstag debate on the Morocco Crisis.

**Imperialism or Socialism?**, the official party pamphlet distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies a few years ago, closes with these words:

Thus the struggle against imperialism develops ever more into the decisive struggle between capital and labor. War crises, rising prices, capitalism vs. peace, welfare for all, socialism! Thus is the question stated. *History is moving toward great decisions.* The proletariat must work unceasingly at its world-historical task, strengthen its organization, the clarity of its understanding. Then come what may, be it that [proletarian] power spares mankind the terrible cruelty of a world war, *or be it that the capitalist world sinks into history in the same way as it was born, in blood and violence. [In either case] the historical hour will find the working class prepared – and preparation is everything.* [All italics are Luxemburg's.]

The official **Handbook for Social-Democratic Voters** (1911), for the last Reichstag election, says on p.42 concerning the expected world war:

*Do our rulers and ruling classes expect the peoples to permit this awful thing? Will not a cry of horror, of scorn, of outrage not seize the peoples and cause them to put an end to this murder? Will they not ask: For whom? what's it all for? Are we mentally disturbed to be treated this way, to allow ourselves to be so treated? He who is calmly convinced of the probability of a great European war can come to no other conclusion than the following: The next European war will be such a desperate gamble as the world has never seen. In all probability it will be the last war.*



With speeches and words such as these, our current Reichstag deputies acquired their 110 mandates.

In the summer of 1911, when the *Panther* made its lunge to Agadir<sup>[8]</sup> and the noisy agitation of the German imperialists put war in the immediate offing, an international meeting in London accepted the following resolution (August 4, 1911):

The delegates of the German, Spanish, English, Dutch, and French workers' organizations declare themselves *to be ready to oppose any declaration of war with all the means at their disposal*. Every represented nation undertakes the obligation, according to the resolutions of national and international congresses, *to act against all criminal machinations of the ruling classes*.

When, in November 1912, the congress of the International met in the minster at Basel and when the long procession of worker representatives entered the cathedral, everyone present felt a presentiment of the greatness of the coming destiny and a heroic resolve.

The cool, skeptical Victor Adler spoke:

Comrades, the most important thing is that we are here at the common source of our strength, that we can draw from this strength so that each can do in his own country what he can, according to the forms and means that we have, to oppose the crime of war with all the power we possess. And if it can be stopped, if it is really stopped, *then we must see to it that it becomes a cornerstone for the end* [of bourgeois society]. This is the moving spirit for the whole International. And if murder and arson and pestilence are unleashed throughout civilized Europe – we can only think of this with horror, outrage and indignation churning in our breasts. *And we ask ourselves: are we men, are the*

*proletarians of today still sheep that they  
can be led dumbly to slaughter? ...*

And [Jean] Jaurès concluded the reading of the International Bureau's manifesto against the war with these words:

*The International represents all the moral  
force of the world! And if the tragic hour  
strikes and we must give ourselves up to it,  
the consciousness of this will support and  
strengthen us. We do not merely say  
"no" but from the depth of our hearts we  
declare ourselves ready to sacrifice  
everything.*

It was reminiscent of the Oath of Ruetli.<sup>[9]</sup> The world directed its gaze to the church at Basel where the bell sounded solemnly for the future great battle between the army of labor and the power of capital ...

Even a week before the outbreak of war, on July 26, 1914, German party newspapers wrote:

*We are not marionettes. We combat with  
all our energy a system that makes men  
into will-less tools of blind circumstance,  
this capitalism that seeks to transform a  
Europe thirsting for peace into a steaming  
slaughterhouse. If destruction has its way,  
if the united will to peace of the German,  
the international proletariat, which will  
make itself known in powerful  
demonstrations in the coming days, if the  
world war cannot be fended off, then at  
least this should be the last war, it should  
become the G?tterd?mmerung of  
capitalism. (Frankfurter Volksstimme)*

Then on July 30, 1914, the central organ of German Social Democracy stated:

*The socialist proletariat rejects any  
responsibility for the events being brought  
about by a blinded, a maddened ruling  
class. Let it be known that a new life shall*

*bloom from the ruins. All responsibility falls to the wielders of power today! It is "to be or not to be!" "World-history is the world-court!"*

And then came the unheard of, the unprecedented, the 4th of August 1914.

Did it have to come? An event of this scope is certainly no game of chance. It must have deep and wide-reaching objective causes. These causes can, however, also lie in the errors of the leader of the proletariat, the Social Democrats, in the waning of our fighting spirit, our courage, and loyalty to our convictions. Scientific socialism has taught us to comprehend the objective laws of historical development. Men do not make history according to their own free will. But they make history nonetheless. Proletarian action is dependent upon the degree of maturity in social development. However, social development is not independent of the proletariat but is equally its driving force and cause, its effect and consequence. [Proletarian] action participates in history. And while we can as little skip a stage of historical development as escape our shadow, we can certainly accelerate or retard history.

Socialism is the first popular movement in world history that has set itself the goal of bringing human consciousness, and thereby free will, into play in the social actions of mankind. For this reason, Friedrich Engels designated the final victory of the socialist proletariat a leap of humanity from the animal world into the realm of freedom. This "leap" is also an iron law of history bound to the thousands of seeds of a prior torment-filled and all-too-slow development. But this can never be realized until the development of complex material conditions strikes the incendiary spark of conscious will in the great masses. The victory of socialism will not descend from heaven. It can only

be won by a long chain of violent tests of strength between the old and the new powers. The international proletariat under the leadership of the Social Democrats will thereby learn to try to take its history into its own hands; instead of remaining a will-less football, it will take the tiller of social life and become the pilot to the goal of its own history.

Friedrich Engels once said: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.” What does “regression into barbarism” mean to our lofty European civilization? Until now, we have all probably read and repeated these words thoughtlessly, without suspecting their fearsome seriousness. A look around us at this moment shows what the regression of bourgeois society into barbarism means. This world war is a regression into barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization. At first, this happens sporadically for the duration of a modern war, but then when the period of unlimited wars begins it progresses toward its inevitable consequences. Today, we face the choice exactly as Friedrich Engels foresaw it a generation ago: either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration – a great cemetery. Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war. This is a dilemma of world history, an either/or; the scales are wavering before the decision of the class-conscious proletariat. The future of civilization and humanity depends on whether or not the proletariat resolves manfully to throw its revolutionary broadsword into the scales. In this war imperialism has won. Its bloody sword of genocide has brutally tilted the scale toward the abyss of misery. The only compensation for all the misery and all the shame

would be if we learn from the war how the proletariat can seize mastery of its own destiny and escape the role of the lackey to the ruling classes.

Dearly bought is the modern working class's understanding of its historical vocation. Its emancipation as a class is sown with fearful sacrifices, a veritable path to Golgotha. The June days, the sacrifice of the Commune, the martyrs of the Russian Revolution – a dance of bloody shadows without number.<sup>[10]</sup> All fell on the field of honor. They are, as Marx wrote about the heroes of the Commune, eternally “enshrined in the great heart of the working class.” Now, millions of proletarians of all tongues fall upon the field of dishonor, of fratricide, lacerating themselves while the song of the slave is on their lips. This, too, we are not spared. We are like the Jews that Moses led through the desert. But we are not lost, and we will be victorious if we have not unlearned how to learn. And if the present leaders of the proletariat, the Social Democrats, do not understand how to learn, then they will go under “to make room for people capable of dealing with a new world.”

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## Footnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> Six weeks was the time allotted for victory on the Western Front by the Schlieffen Plan. The general staff was forced to scrap the plan in October 1914, as the war of movement swiftly evolved into grinding trench warfare.

<sup>[2]</sup> For three days in April 1903, Kishinev, the provincial capital of Bessarabia in the Russian Empire, was the scene of an anti-Jewish riot. According to an official report, more than fifty Jews were killed and over five hundred injured; hundreds of homes and shops were plundered and vandalized. Local authorities supported antisemitic organizations and deliberately maximized the carnage by holding back on the use of force to reestablish order. Luxemburg here uses the reference to the Kishinev pogrom and to “ritual murder” – the medieval belief that Jews used the blood of Christians, usually children, for ritual purposes – as the nadir of civilization.

<sup>[3]</sup> Quoting Karl Marx, [\*\*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte\*\*](#) (1852).

<sup>[4]</sup> At the close of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, besieged Paris revolted against the regular French government (sitting in Bordeaux). For ten weeks representatives of the working class, organized as the Commune, ruled “the capital of Europe” with an efficiency and fairness that surprised and disturbed the propertied classes all over Europe. Recouping its forces, the elected French government retook Paris in street-by-street fighting marked by wanton atrocities and destruction of property on both sides. The First International, founded with the collaboration of Karl Marx in 1864, was falsely accused of fomenting the Commune, but defended it against the attacks of Reaction (cf. Marx’s [\*\*The Civil War in France\*\*](#)). Its true purpose was to unite working class parties in pursuit of the revolutionary goals first outlined in the [\*\*Communist Manifesto\*\*](#) (1848). But after the defeat of the Commune, doctrinal divisions and factionalism paralyzed the organization which met for the last time in Philadelphia in 1874.

<sup>[5]</sup> The successor to the First International, the Second took form in 1889 and coordinated most of the Social Democratic parties of Europe from its central offices in Brussels. World War I destroyed the viability of the organization, although it continued to function as the voice of moderate socialists as opposed to the more radical communist parties arrayed in Lenin's Third International or Comintern (1919-43).

<sup>[6]</sup> With mobilization at the outbreak of the war, the role of the civilian sector in Germany shrank continually. The country was divided into defense sectors and commanding generals within these took over all the functions of government; they could suspend civil rights, arrest individuals under the guise of protective custody, and exercise considerable powers of censorship. Thus they were able to stifle dissent and particularly to restrict news of the military failures.

<sup>[7]</sup> [August Bebel](#) (1840-1913), an authentic worker, singlehandedly organized the Marxist branch of the German labor movement in the 1860s and then guided it until his death. The Second Morocco Crisis of 1911 aroused fears of imminent European war. The crisis resolution entailed Germany's recognition of a French protectorate in exchange for a large, relatively worthless strip of French Equatorial Africa. While Britain strongly supported its French ally, Germany had had to back down when its own allies showed clear unwillingness to go to war on behalf of overseas interests. Nationalists at home regarded the outcome as a humiliation, further proof that the Kaiser's government was incapable of directing the drive for world power. Leftists saw the crisis as ominous proof of the intentions of militarists and imperialists.

<sup>[8]</sup> Sending the German gunboat, *Panther*, to Agadir, a port in Morocco, was the Kaiser's way of announcing his intention of protecting German interests. The

symbolic attempt to preempt French designs on erecting a protectorate over Morocco was seen as a provocation and helped the conflict in interest escalate into a full-blown crisis.

<sup>[9]</sup> According to legend, Wilhelm Tell and representatives of three Swiss cantons met at Ruetli in 1307 to pledge resistance against Austrian tyranny, the traditional foundation of Swiss freedom.

<sup>[10]</sup> In June 1848, four months after the revolutionary overthrow of the Orleanist monarchy in France, the conservative bourgeoisie regained control of Paris amid street-fighting and great bloodshed. The defeat of the Parisian communards in June 1871 by regular French forces was accompanied by mass executions and later deportations. The Russian revolution referred to by Luxemburg took place in 1905. Briefly, workers' soviets (councils) controlled St. Petersburg and Moscow, but Tsarist forces were able to quell the revolutionaries and reestablish a somewhat modified autocracy.



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## Chapter 2

“We are now facing the irrevocable fact of war. We are threatened by the horrors of invasion. The decision, today, is not for or against war; for us there can be but one question: by what means is this war to be conducted? Much, aye everything, is at stake for our people and its future, if Russian despotism, stained with the blood of its own people, should be the victor. This danger must be averted, the civilisation and the independence of our people must be safeguarded. Therefore we will carry out what we have always promised: in the hour of danger we will not desert our fatherland. In this we feel that we stand in harmony with the International, which has always recognised the right of every people to its national independence, as we stand in agreement with the International in emphatically denouncing every war of conquest. Actuated by these motives, we vote in favour of the war credits demanded by the Government.”

With these words the Reichstag group issued the countersign that determined and controlled the position of the German working class during the war. Fatherland in danger, national defence, people's war for existence, *Kultur*, liberty – these were the slogans proclaimed by the parliamentary representatives of the social democracy. What followed was but the logical sequence. The position of the party and the labour union press, the patriotic frenzy of the masses, the civil

peace, the disintegration of the International, all these things were the inevitable consequence of that momentous orientation in the Reichstag.

If it is true that this war is really a fight for national existence, for freedom, if it is true that these priceless possessions can be defended only by the iron tools of murder, if this war is the holy cause of the people, then everything else follows as a matter of course, we must take everything that the war may bring as a part of the bargain. He who desires the purpose must be satisfied with the means. War is methodical, organised, gigantic murder. But in normal human beings this systematic murder is possible only when a state of intoxication has been previously created. This has always been the tried and proven method of those who make war. Bestiality of action must find a commensurate bestiality of thought and senses; the latter must prepare and accompany the former. Thus the **Wahre Jacob** of August 28, 1914, with its brutal picture of the German thresher, the party papers of Chemnitz, Hamburg, Kiel, Frankfurt, Koburg and others, with their patriotic drive in poetry and prose, were the necessary narcotic for a proletariat that could rescue its existence and its liberty only by plunging the deadly steel into its French and English brothers. These chauvinistic papers are after all a great deal more logical and consistent than those others who attempted to unite hill and valley, war with humanity, murder with brotherly love, the voting for war credits with socialist internationalism.

If the stand taken by the German Reichstag group on the fourth of August was correct, then the death sentence of the proletarian International has been spoken, not only for this war, but forever. For the first time since the modern labour movement exists there yawns an abyss between the commandments of international solidarity of the proletariat of the world and the interests of freedom and nationalist existence

of the people; for the first time we discover that the independence and liberty of the nations command that working men kill and destroy each other. Up to this time we have cherished the belief that the interests of the peoples of all nations, that the class interests of the proletariat are a harmonious unit, that they are identical, that they cannot possibly come into conflict with one another. That was the basis of our theory and practice, the soul of our agitation. Were we mistaken in the cardinal point of our whole world philosophy? We are holding an inquest over international socialism.

This world war is not the first crisis through which our international principles have passed. Our party was first tried forty-five years ago. At that time, on the twenty-first of July, 1870, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel made the following historical declaration before the Reichstag:

“The present war is a dynastic war in the interest of the Bonaparte dynasty as the war of 1866 was conducted in the interest of the Hollenzollern dynasty.

“We cannot vote for the funds which are demanded from the Reichstag to conduct this war because this would be, in effect, a vote of confidence in the Prussian government. And we know that the Prussian government by its action in 1866 prepared this war. At the same time we cannot vote against the budget, lest this be construed to mean that we support the conscienceless and criminal policies of Bonaparte.

“As opponents, on principle, of every dynastic war, as socialist republicans and members of the International Workingmen’s Association which, without regard to nationality, has fought all oppressors, has tried to unite all the oppressed into a great band of brothers, we cannot directly or indirectly lend support

to the present war. We therefore refuse to vote, while expressing the earnest hope that the peoples of Europe, taught by the present unholy events, will strive to win the right to control their own destinies, to do away with the present rule of might and class as the cause of all social and national evil.”

With this declaration the representatives of the German proletariat put their cause clearly and unreservedly under the banner of the International and definitely repudiated the war against France as a national war of independence. It is well known that Bebel, many years later, in his memoirs, stated that he would have voted against the war loan had he known, when the vote was taken, the things that were revealed in the years that followed.

Thus, in a war that was considered by the whole bourgeois public, and by a powerful majority of the people under the influence of Bismarckian strategy, as a war in the national life interest of Germany, the leaders of the German social democracy held firmly to the conviction that the life interest of a nation and the class interest of the proletariat are one, that both are opposed to war. It was left to the present world war and to the social democratic Reichstag group to uncover, for the first time, the terrible dilemma: either you are for national liberty – or for international socialism.

Now the fundamental fact in the declaration of our Reichstag group was, in all probability, a sudden inspiration. It was simply an echo of the crown speech and of the chancellor’s speech of August 4. “We are not driven by the desire for conquest,” we hear in the crown speech, “we are inspired by the unalterable determination to preserve the land upon which God has placed us for ourselves, and for all coming generations. From the documents that have been presented to you, you will have seen how my

government, and above all my chancellor strove, to the last, to avert the utmost. We grasp the sword in self-defence, with a clear conscience and a clean hand.” And Bethmann-Hollweg declared:

“Gentlemen, we are acting in self-defence, and necessity knows no law. He who is threatened as we are threatened, he who is fighting for the highest aims can be guided by but one consideration, how best to beat his way out of the struggle. We are fighting for the fruits of our peaceful labour, for the heritage of our great past, for the future of our nation.”

Wherein does this differ from the social democratic declaration? (1) We have done everything to preserve peace, the war was forced upon us by others. (2) Now that the war is here we must act in self-defence. (3) In this war the German people are in danger of losing everything. This declaration of our Reichstag group is an obvious rehashing of the government declaration. As the latter based their claims upon diplomatic negotiations and imperial telegrams, so the socialist group points to peace demonstrations of the social democracy before the war. Where the crown speech denies all aims of conquest, the Reichstag group repudiates a war of conquest by standing upon its socialism. And when the emperor and chancellor cry out, “We are fighting for the highest principles. We know no parties, we know only Germans,” the social democratic declaration echoes: “Our people risk everything. In this hour of danger we will not desert our fatherland.”

Only in one point does the social democratic declaration differ from its government model: it placed the danger of Russian despotism in the foreground of its orientation, as a danger to German freedom. The crown speech says, regarding Russia: with a heavy heart I have been forced to mobilise against a

neighbour with whom I have fought upon so many battlefields. With honest sorrow I have seen a friendship faithfully kept by Germany fall to pieces.” The social democratic group changed this sorrowful rupture of a true friendship with the Russian czar into a fanfare for liberty against despotism, used the revolutionary heritage of socialism to give to the war a democratic mantle, a popular halo. Here alone the social democratic declaration gives evidence of independent thought on the part of our social democrats.

As we have said, all these things came to the social democracy as a sudden inspiration on the fourth of August. All that they had said up to this day, every declaration that they had made, down to the very eve of the war, was in diametrical opposition to the declaration of the Reichstag group. The **Vorwärts** wrote on July 25, when the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was published: “They want the war, the unscrupulous elements that influence and determine the Wiener Hofburg. They want the war – it has been ringing out of the wild cries of the black-yellow press for weeks. They want the war – the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia makes it plain and clear to the world.

“Because the blood of Franz Ferdinand and his wife flowed under the shots of an insane fanatic, shall the blood of thousands of workers and farmers be shed? Shall one insane crime be purged by another even more insane? ... The Austrian ultimatum may be the torch that will set Europe in flames at all four corners.

“For this ultimatum, in its form and in its demands, is so shameless, that a Serbian government that should humbly retreat before this note, would have to reckon with the possibility of being driven

out by the masses of the people between dinner and dessert ....

“It was a crime of the chauvinistic press of Germany to egg on our dear ally to the utmost in its desire for war. And beyond a doubt, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg promised Herr Berchtold our support. But Berlin is playing a game as dangerous as that being played by Vienna.”

The **Leipziger Volkszeitung** wrote on July 24:

“The Austrian military party has staked everything on one card, for in no country in the world has national and military chauvinism anything to lose. In Austria chauvinistic circles are particularly bankrupt; their nationalistic howls are a frantic attempt to cover up Austria’s economic ruin, the robbery and murder of war to fill its coffers ...”

The **Dresden Volkszeitung** said, on the same day:

“Thus far the war maniacs of the Wiener Ballplatz have failed to furnish proof that would justify Austria in the demands it has made upon Serbia. So long as the Austrian government is not in a position to do this, it places itself, by its provocative and insulting attacks upon Serbia, in a false position before all Europe. And even if Serbia’s guilt was proven, even if the assassination in Sarajevo had actually been prepared under the eyes of the Serbian government, the demands made in the note are far in excess of normal bounds. Only the most unscrupulous war lust can explain such demands upon another state... .”

The **Muenchener Post**, on July 25, wrote:

“This Austrian note is a document unequalled in the history of the last two centuries. Upon the findings of an investigation whose contents have, till now, been kept from the European public,

without court proceedings against the murderer of the heir presumptive and his spouse, it makes demands on Serbia, the acceptance of which would mean national suicide to Serbia ...”

The **Schleswig-Holstein Volkszeitung** declared, on the twenty-fourth of July:

“Austria is provoking Serbia. Austria-Hungary wants war, and is committing a crime that may drown all Europe in blood ... Austria is playing *va banque*. It dares a provocation of the Serbian state that the latter, if it is not entirely defenceless, will certainly refuse to tolerate ...

“Every civilized person must protest emphatically against the criminal behaviour of the Austrian rulers. It is the duty of the workers above all, and of all other human beings who honour peace and civilisation, to try their utmost to prevent the consequences of the bloody insanity that has broken out in Vienna.”

The **Magdeburger Volksstimme** of July 25 said:

“Any Serbian government that even pretended to consider these demands seriously would be swept out in the same hour by the parliament and by the people.

“The action of Austria is the more despicable because Berchtold is standing before the Serbian government and before Europe with empty hands.

“To precipitate a war such as this at the present time means to invite a world war. To act thus shows a desire to disturb the peace of an entire hemisphere. One cannot thus make moral conquests, or convince non-participants of one’s own righteousness. It can be safely assumed that the press of Europe, and with it the European governments, will call the vainglorious and senseless Viennese



statesmen energetically and unmistakably to order.”

On July 24 the **Frankfurter Volksstimme** wrote:

“Upheld by the agitation of the clerical press, which mourns in Franz Ferdinand its best friend and demands that his death be avenged upon the Serbian people, upheld by German war patriots whose language becomes daily more contemptible and more threatening, the Austrian government has allowed itself to be driven to send an ultimatum to Serbia couched in language that, for presumptuousness, leaves little to be desired; containing demands whose fulfilment by the Serbian government is manifestly impossible.”

On the same day the **Elberfelder Freie Presse** wrote:

“A telegram of the semiofficial Wolff Bureau reports the terms of the demands made on Serbia by Austria. From these it may be gathered that the rulers in Vienna are pushing toward war with all their might. For the conditions imposed by the note that was presented in Belgrade last night are nothing short of a protectorate of Austria over Serbia. It is eminently necessary that the diplomats of Berlin make the war agitators of Vienna understand that Germany will not move a finger to support such outrageous demands, that a withdrawal of the threats would be advisable.”

The **Bergische Arbeiterstimme** of Solingen writes:

“Austria demands a conflict with Serbia, and uses the assassination at Sarajevo as a pretext for putting Serbia morally in the wrong. But the whole matter has been approached too clumsily to influence European public opinion.

“But if the war agitators of the Wiener Ballplatz believe that their allies of the Triple Alliance, Germany and Italy, will come to their assistance in a conflict in which Russia, too, will be involved, they are suffering from a dangerous illusion. Italy would welcome the weakening of Austria-Hungary, its rival on the Adriatic and in the Balkans, and would certainly decline to burn its fingers to help Austria. In Germany, on the other hand, the powers that be – even should they be so foolish as to wish it – would not dare to risk the life of a single soldier to satisfy the criminal lust for power of the Habsburgers without arousing the fury of the entire people.”

Thus the entire working-class press, without exception, judged the war's causes a week before its outbreak. Obviously the question was one of neither the existence nor the freedom of Germany, but a shameful adventure of the Austrian war party; not a question of self-defence, national protection and a holy war forced upon us in the name of freedom, but a bold provocation, an abominable threat against foreign, Serbian independence and liberty.

What was it that happened on August 4 to turn this clearly defined and so unanimously accepted attitude of the social democracy upside down? Only one new factor had appeared – the **White Book** that was presented to the Reichstag by the German government on that day. And this contained, on page 4, the following:

“Under these circumstances Austria must say to itself that it is incompatible with the dignity and the safety of the monarchy to remain inactive any longer in the face of the occurrences across the border. The Austrian imperial government has notified us of this, their attitude, and has begged us to state our views. Out of a full heart we could but assure our ally of our agreement

with this interpretation of conditions and assure him that any action that would seem necessary to put an end to Serbian attempts against the existence of the Austrian monarchy would meet with our approval. We fully realised that eventual war measures undertaken by Austria must bring Russia into the situation and that we, in order to carry out our duty as ally, might be driven into war. But we could not, realising as we did that the most vital interests of Austria-Hungary were threatened, advise our ally to adopt a policy of acquiescence, that could not possibly be brought into accord with its dignity, nor could we refuse to lend our aid in this attitude.

“And we were particularly prevented from taking this stand by the fact that the persistent subversive Serbian agitation seriously jeopardised us. If the Serbians had been permitted, with the aid of Russia and France, to continue to threaten the existence of the neighbouring monarchy, there would have ensued a gradual collapse of Austria and a subjection of all the Slavic races under the Russian sceptre, which would have rendered untenable the situation of the Germanic race in Central Europe. A morally weakened Austria, succumbing before the advance of Russian Pan-Slavism, would no longer be an ally on which we could count and depend, as we are obliged to do in view of the increasingly menacing attitude of our neighbours to the East and to the West. We therefore gave Austria a free hand in her proceedings against Serbia. We have had no share in the preparations.”

These were the words that lay before the social democratic Reichstag group on August 4, the only important and determining phrases in the entire **White Book**, a concise declaration of the German government beside which all other yellow, grey, blue, orange books on the diplomatic passages

that preceded the war and its most immediate causes become absolutely irrelevant and insignificant. Here the Reichstag group had the key to a correct judgment of the situation in hand. The entire social democratic press, a week before, had cried out that the Austrian ultimatum was a criminal provocation of the world war and demanded preventive and pacific action on the part of the German government. The entire socialist press assumed that the Austrian ultimatum had descended upon the German government like a bolt from the blue as it had upon the German public.

But now the **White Book** declared, briefly and clearly:

1. That the Austrian government had requested German sanction before taking a final step against Serbia.
2. That the German government clearly understood that the action undertaken by Austria would lead to war with Serbia, and ultimately, to European war.
3. That the German government did not advise Austria to give in, but on the contrary declared that an acquiescent, weakened Austria could not be regarded as a worthy ally of Germany.
4. That the German government assured Austria, before it advanced against Serbia, of its assistance under all circumstances, in case of war, and finally,

5. That the German government, withal, had not reserved for itself control over the decisive ultimatum from Austria to Serbia, upon which the whole world war depended, but had left to Austria “an absolutely free hand.”

All of this our Reichstag group learned on August 4. And still another fact it learned from the government – that German forces already had invaded Belgium. And from all this the social democratic group concluded that this is a war of defence against foreign invasion, for the existence of the fatherland, for “Kultur,” a war for liberty against Russian despotism.

Was the obvious background of the war, and the scenery that so scantily concealed it, was the whole diplomatic performance that was acted out at the outbreak of the war, with its clamour about a world of enemies, all threatening the life of Germany, all moved the one desire to weaken, to humiliate, to subjugate the German people and nation – were all these things such a complete surprise? Did these factors actually call for more judgment, more critical sagacity than they possessed? Nowhere was this less true than of our party. It had already gone through two great German wars, and in both of them had received memorable lessons.

Even a poorly informed student of history knows that the war of 1866 against Austria was systematically prepared by Bismarck long before it broke out, and that his policies, from the very beginning, led inevitably to a rupture and to war with Austria. The crown prince himself, later Emperor Frederick, in his memoirs under the date of November 14 of that year, speaks of this purpose of the chancellor:

“He (Bismarck), when he went into office, was firmly resolved to bring Prussia to a war with Austria, but was very careful not to betray this purpose, either at that time or on any other premature occasion to His Majesty, until the time seemed favourable.”

“Compare with this confession,” says Auer in his brochure **Die Sedanfeier und die Sozialdemokratie** “the proclamation that King William sent out ‘*to my people*’.

“The fatherland is in danger! Austria and a large part of Germany have risen in arms against us.

“It is only a few years ago since I, of my own free will, without thinking of former misunderstandings, held out a fraternal hand to Austria in order to save a German nation from foreign domination. But my hopes have been blasted. Austria cannot forget that its lords once ruled Germany; it refuses to see in the younger, more virile Prussia an ally, but persists in regarding it as a dangerous rival. Prussia – so it believes – must be opposed in all its aims, because whatever favours Prussia harms Austria. The old unholy jealousy has again broken out; Prussia is to be weakened, destroyed, dishonoured. All treaties with Prussia are void, German lords

are not only called  
upon, but persuaded,  
to sever their alliance  
with Prussia. Wherever  
we look in Germany,  
we are surrounded by  
enemies whose war cry  
is – Down with  
Prussia!”

Praying for the blessings of heaven, King William ordered a general day of prayer and penance for the eighteenth of July, saying: “It has not pleased God to crown with success my attempts to preserve the blessings of peace for my people.”

Should not the official accompaniment to the outbreak of the war on August 4 have awakened in the minds of our group vivid memories of long remembered words and melodies? Had they completely forgotten their party history?

But not enough! In the year 1870 there came the war with France, and history has united its outbreak with an unforgettable occurrence: the Ems dispatch, a document that has become a classic byword for capitalist government art in war making, and which marks a memorable episode in our party history. Was it not old Liebknecht, was it not the German social democracy who felt in duty bound, at that time, to disclose these facts and to show to the masses “how wars are made”?

Making war simply and solely for the protection of the fatherland was, by the way, not Bismarck’s invention. He only carried out, with characteristic unscrupulousness, an old, well-known and truly international recipe of capitalist statesmanship. When and where has there been a war since so-called public opinion has played a role in governmental calculations, in which each and every belligerent party did not, with

a heavy heart, draw the sword from its sheath for the single and sole purpose of defending its fatherland and its own righteous cause from the shameful attacks of the enemy? This legend is as inextricably a part of the game of war as powder and lead. The game is old. Only that the Social Democratic Party could play it is new.



**Rosa Luxemburg**  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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## Chapter 3

Our party should have been prepared to recognise the real aims of this war, to meet it without surprise, to judge it by its deeper relationship according to their wide political experience. The events and forces that led to August 4, 1914, were no secrets. The world had been preparing for decades, in broad daylight, in the widest publicity, step by step, and hour by hour, for the world war. And if today a number of socialists threaten with horrible destruction the “secret diplomacy” that has brewed this devilry behind the scenes, they are ascribing to these poor wretches a magic power that they little deserve, just as the Botokude whips his fetish for the outbreak of a storm. The so-called captains of nations are, in this war, as at all times, merely chessmen, moved by all-powerful historic events and forces, on the surface of capitalist society. If ever there were persons capable of understanding these events and occurrences, it was the members of the German social democracy.

Two lines of development in recent history lead straight to the present war. One has its origin in the period when the so-called national states, i.e., the modern states, were first constituted, from the time of the Bismarckian war against France. The war of 1870, which, by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, threw the French republic into the arms of Russia, split Europe into two opposing camps and opened up a period of

insane competitive armament, first piled up the firebrands for the present world conflagration.

Bismarck's troops were still stationed in France when Marx wrote to the *Braunschweiger Ausschuss*:

“He who is not deafened by the momentary clamour, and is not interested in deafening the German people, must see that the war of 1870 carries with it, of necessity, a war between Germany and Russia, just as the war of 1866 bore the war of 1870. I say of necessity, unless the unlikely should happen, unless a revolution breaks out in Russia before that time. If this does not occur, a war between Germany and Russia may even now be regarded as *un fait accompli*. It depends entirely upon the attitude of the German victor to determine whether this war has been useful or dangerous. If they take Alsace-Lorraine, then France with Russia will arm against Germany. It is superfluous to point out the disastrous consequences.”

At that time this prophecy was laughed down. The bonds which united Russia and Prussia seemed so strong that it was considered madness to believe in a union of autocratic Russia with republican France. Those who supported this conception were laughed at as madmen. And yet everything that Marx has prophesied has happened, to the last letter. “For that is,” says Auer in his **Sedanfeier**, “social democratic politics, seeing things clearly as they are, and differing therein from the day-by-day politics of the others, bowing blindly down before every momentary success.”

This must not be misunderstood to mean that the desire for revenge for the robbery accomplished by Bismarck has driven the French into a war with Germany, that the kernel of the present war is to be found in the much discussed “revenge for Alsace-Lorraine.” This is the convenient nationalist legend of

the German war agitator, who creates fables of a darkly-brooding France that “cannot forget” its defeat, just as the Bismarckian press-servants ranted of the dethroned Princess Austria who could not forget her erstwhile superiority over the charming Cinderella Prussia. As a matter of fact revenge for Alsace-Lorraine has become the theatrical property of a couple of patriotic clowns, the “Lion de Belfort” nothing more than an ancient survival.

The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine long ago ceased to play a role in French politics, being superseded by new, more pressing cares; and neither the government nor any serious party in France thought of a war with Germany because of these territories. If, nevertheless, the Bismarck heritage has become the firebrand that started this world conflagration, it is rather in the sense of having driven Germany on the one hand, and France, and with it all of Europe, on the other, along the downward path of military competition, of having brought about the Franco-Russian alliance, of having united Austria with Germany as an inevitable consequence. This gave to Russian czarism a tremendous prestige as a factor in European politics. Germany and France have systematically fawned before Russia for her favour. At that time the links were forged that united Germany with Austria-Hungary, whose strength, as the words quoted from the **White Book** show, lie in their “brotherhood in arms,” in the present war.

Thus the war of 1870 brought in its wake the outward political grouping of Europe about the axes of the Franco-German antagonism, and established the rule of militarism in the lives of the European peoples. Historical development has given to this ride and to this grouping an entirely new content. The second line that leads to the present world war, and which again brilliantly justifies Marx’s prophecy, has its origin in

international occurrences that Marx did not live to see, in the imperialist development of the last twenty-five years.

The growth of capitalism, spreading out rapidly over a reconstituted Europe after the war period of the sixties and seventies, particularly after the long period of depression that followed the inflation and the panic of the year 1873, reaching an unnatural zenith in the prosperity of the nineties opened up a new period of storm and danger among the nations of Europe. They were competing in their expansion toward the non-capitalist countries and zones of the world. As early as the eighties a strong tendency toward colonial expansion became apparent. England secured control of Egypt and created for itself, in South Africa, a powerful colonial empire, France took possession of Tunis in North Africa and Tonkin in East Asia; Italy gained a foothold in Abyssinia; Russia accomplished its conquests in Central Asia and pushed forward into Manchuria; Germany won its first colonies in Africa and in the South Sea, and the United States joined the circle when it procured the Philippines with “interests” in Eastern Asia. This period of feverish conquests has brought on, beginning with the Chinese-Japanese War in 1895, a practically uninterrupted chain of bloody wars, reaching its height in the Great Chinese Invasion, and closing with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904.

All these occurrences, coming blow upon blow, created new, extra-European antagonisms on all sides: between Italy and France in Northern Africa, between France and England in Egypt, between England and Russia in Central Asia, between Russia and Japan in Eastern Asia, between Japan and England in China, between the United States and Japan in the Pacific Ocean – a very restless ocean, full of sharp conflicts and temporary alliances, of tension and relaxation, threatening every few years to break out into a war

between European powers. It was clear to everybody, therefore, (1) that the secret underhand war of each capitalist nation against every other, on the backs of Asiatic and African peoples must sooner or later lead to a general reckoning, that the wind that was sown in Africa and Asia would return to Europe as a terrific storm, the more certainly since increased armament of the European states was the constant associate of these Asiatic and African occurrences; (2) that the European world war would have to come to an outbreak as soon as the partial and changing conflicts between the imperialist states found a centralised axis, a conflict of sufficient magnitude to group them, for the time being, into large, opposing factions. This situation was created by the appearance of German imperialism.

In Germany one may study the development of Imperialism, crowded as it was into the shortest possible space of time, in concrete form. The unprecedented rapidity of German industrial and commercial development since the foundation of the empire brought out during the eighties two characteristically peculiar forms of capitalist accumulation: the most pronounced growth of monopoly in Europe and the best developed and most concentrated banking system in the whole world. The monopolies have organised the steel and iron industry, i.e., the branch of capitalist endeavour most interested in government orders, in militaristic equipment and in imperialistic undertakings (railroad building, the exploitation of mines, etc.) into the most influential factor in the nation. The latter has cemented the money interests into a firmly organised whole, with the greatest, most virile energy, creating a power that autocratically rules the industry, commerce and credit of the nation, dominant in private as well as public affairs, boundless in its powers of expansion, ever hungry for profit and activity, impersonal, and

therefore, liberal-minded, reckless and unscrupulous, international by its very nature, ordained by its capacities to use the world as its stage.

Germany is under a personal regime, with strong initiative and spasmodic activity, with the weakest kind of parliamentarism, incapable of opposition, uniting all capitalist strata in the sharpest opposition to the working class. It is obvious that this live, unhampered imperialism, coming upon the world stage at a time when the world was practically divided up, with gigantic appetites, soon became an irresponsible factor of general unrest.

This was already foreshadowed by the radical upheaval that took place in the military policies of the empire at the end of the nineties. At that time two naval budgets were introduced which doubled the naval power of Germany and provided for a naval program covering almost two decades. This meant a sweeping change in the financial and trade policy of the nation. In the first place, it involved a striking change in the foreign policy of the empire. The policy of Bismarck was founded upon the principle that the empire is and must remain a land power, that the German fleet, at best, is but a very dispensable requisite for coastal defence. Even the secretary of state, Hollmann, declared in March 1897, in the Budget Commission of the Reichstag: "We need no navy for coastal defence. Our coasts protect themselves."

With the two naval bills an entirely new program was promulgated: on land and sea, Germany first. This marks the change from Bismarckian continental policies to *Weltpolitik*, from the defensive to the offensive as the end and aim of Germany's military program. The language of these facts was so unmistakable that the Reichstag itself furnished the necessary commentary. Lieber, the leader of the Center

at that time, spoke on the eleventh of March, 1896, after a famous speech of the emperor on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German empire, which had developed the new program as a forerunner to the naval bills, In which he mentioned “shoreless naval planer against which Germany must be prepared to enter Into active opposition. Another Center leader, Schadler, cried out in the Reichstag on March 23, 1898, when the first naval bill was under discussion, “The nation believes that we cannot be first on land and first on sea. You answer, gentlemen, that is not what we want! Nevertheless, gentlemen, you are at the beginning of such a conception, at a very strong beginning.”

When the second bill came, the same Schadler declared in the Reichstag on the fifth of February, 1900, referring to previous promises that there would be no further naval bills, “and today comes this bill, which means nothing more and nothing less than the inauguration of a world fleet, as a basis of support for world policies, by doubling our navy and binding the next two decades by our demands.” As a matter of fact the government openly defended the political program of its new course of action. On December 11, 1899, von Bülow, at that time state secretary of the foreign office, in a defence of the second naval bill stated,

“When the English speak of ‘a greater Britain,’ when the French talk of ‘The New France,’ when the Russians open up Asia for themselves, we too have a right to aspire to a greater Germany. If we do not create a navy sufficient to protect our trade, our natives in foreign lands, our missions and the safety of our shores, we are threatening the most vital interests of our nation. In the coming century the German people will be either the hammer or the anvil.”

Strip this of its coastal defence ornamentation, and there remains the colossal program: greater Germany, as the hammer upon other nations.

It is not difficult to determine the direction toward which these provocations, in the main, were directed. Germany was to become the rival of the world's great naval force – England. And England did not fail to understand. The naval reform bills, and the speeches that ushered them in, created a lively unrest in England, an unrest that has never again subsided. In March 1910, Lord Robert Cecil said in the House of Commons during a naval debate: “I challenge any man to give me a plausible reason for the tremendous navy that Germany is building up, other than to take up the fight against England.” The fight for supremacy on the ocean that lasted for one and a half decades on both sides and culminated in the feverish building of dreadnoughts and superdreadnoughts, was, in effect, the war between Germany and England. The naval bill of December 11, 1899, was a declaration of war by Germany, which England answered on August 4, 1914.

It should be noted that this fight for naval supremacy had nothing in common with the economic rivalry for the world market. The English “monopoly of the world market” which ostensibly hampered German industrial development, so much discussed at the present time, really belongs to the sphere of those war legends of which the ever green French “revenge” is the most useful. This “monopoly” had become an old time fairy tale, to the lasting regret of the English capitalists. The industrial development of France, Belgium, Italy, Russia, India and Japan, and above all, of Germany and America, had put an end to this monopoly of the first half of the nineteenth century. Side by side with England, one nation after another stepped into the world market, capitalism developed automatically, and with gigantic strides, into world economy.



English supremacy on the sea, which has robbed so many social democrats of their peaceful sleep, and which, it seems to these gentlemen, must be destroyed to preserve international socialism, had, up to this time, disturbed German capitalism so little that the latter was able to grow up into a lusty youth, with bursting cheeks, under its “yoke.” Yes, England itself, and its colonies, were the cornerstones for German industrial growth. And similarly, Germany became, for the English nation, its most important and most necessary customer. Far from standing in each other’s way, British and German capitalist development were mutually highly interdependent, and united by a far-reaching system of division of labour, strongly augmented by England’s free trade policy. German trade and its interests in the world market, therefore, had nothing whatever to do with a change of front in German politics and with the building of its fleet.

Nor did German colonial possessions at that time come into conflict with the English control of the seas. German colonies were not in need of protection by a first-class sea power. No one, certainly not England, envied Germany her possessions. That they were taken during the war by England and Japan, that the booty had changed owners, is but a generally accepted war measure, just as German imperialist appetites clamour for Belgium, a desire that no man outside of an insane asylum would have dared to express in time of peace. South-East and South-West Africa, Wilhelmsland or Tsingtau would never have caused any war, by land or by sea, between Germany and England. In fact, just before the war broke out, a treaty regulating a peaceable division of the Portuguese colonies in Africa between these two nations had been practically completed.

When Germany unfolded its banner of naval power and world policies it announced the desire for new and

far-reaching conquest in the world by German imperialism. By means of a first-class aggressive navy, and by military forces that increased in a parallel ratio, the apparatus for a future policy was established, opening wide the doors for unprecedented possibilities. Naval building and military armaments became the glorious business of German industry, opening up a boundless prospect for further operations by trust and bank capital in the whole wide world. Thus, the acquiescence of all capitalist parties and their rallying under the flag of imperialism was assured. The Center followed the example of the National Liberals, the staunchest defenders of the steel and iron industry, and, by adopting the naval bill it had loudly denounced in 1900, became the party of the government. The Progressives trotted after the Center when the successor to the naval bill – the high-tariff party – came up; while the Junkers, the staunchest opponents of the “horrid navy” and of the canal brought up the rear as the most enthusiastic porkers and parasites of the very policy of sea-militarism and colonial robbery they had so vehemently opposed. The Reichstag election of 1907, the so-called Hottentot Elections, found the whole of Germany in a paroxysm of imperialistic enthusiasm, firmly united under one flag, that of the Germany of von Buelow, the Germany that felt itself ordained to play the role of the hammer in the world. These elections, with their spiritual pogrom atmosphere, were a prelude to the Germany of August 4, a challenge not only to the German working class, but to other capitalist nations as well, a challenge directed to no one in particular, a mailed fist shaken in the face of the entire world ...

**Rosa Luxemburg**  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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## Chapter 4

Turkey became the most important field of operations of German imperialism; the Deutsche Bank, with its enormous Asiatic business interests, about which all German oriental policies centre, became its peacemaker. In the 50's and 60's Asiatic Turkey worked chiefly with English capital, which built the railroad from Smyrna and leased the first stretch of the Anatolian railroad, up to Ismir. In 1888 German capital appeared upon the scene and procured from Abdul Hamid the control of the railroad that English capital had built and the franchise for the new stretch from Ismir to Angora and branch lines to Scutari, Bursa, Konya and Kaizarili. In 1899 the Deutsche Bank secured concessions for the building and operation of a harbour and improvements in Hardar Pasha, and the sole control over trade and tariff collections in the harbour. In 1901 the Turkish Government turned over to the Deutsche Bank the concession for the Great Baghdad railroad<sup>[1]</sup> to the Persian Gulf, in 1907 for the drainage of the Sea of Karaviran and the irrigation of the Koma plain.

The reverse of this wonderful work of "peaceful culture" is the "peaceful" and wholesale ruin of the farming population of Asia Minor. The cost of this tremendous undertaking was advanced, of course, by the Deutsche Bank on the security of a widely diversified system of public indebtedness. Turkey will

be, to all eternity, the debtor of Messrs. Siemens, Gwinner, Helfferich, etc., as it was formerly that of English, French and Austrian capital. This debtor, now, was forced not only to squeeze enormous sums out of the state to pay the interest on these loans, but, in addition, to guarantee a net income upon the railway, thus built. The most modern methods of transportation were grafted upon a primitive, in many cases purely agricultural, population. From the unfruitful soil of farming sections that had been exploited unscrupulously, for years, by an oriental despotism, producing scarcely enough to feed the population after the huge state debts had been paid, it is practically impossible to secure the profits demanded by the railroads. Freight and travelling are exceedingly undeveloped, since the industrial and cultural character of the region is most primitive, and can improve only at a slow rate. The deficit that must be paid to raise the required profit is, therefore, paid by the Turkish Government in the form of a so-called kilometer guarantee. European Turkey was built up according to this system by Austrian and French capital, and the same system has been adopted by the Deutsche Bank in its operations in Asiatic Turkey. As bond and surety that the subsidy will be paid, the Turkish Government has handed over to the representatives of European capital, the so-called Executive Board in control of public debt, the main source of Turkish national income, which has given to the Deutsche Bank the right to collect the tithe from a number of provinces. In this way, for instance, the Turkish Government paid, from 1893 to 1910, for the railroad to Angora and for the line from Eskişehir to Konya, a subsidy of about 9,090,000 francs. The tithes thus leased by the Turkish Government to its European creditors are ancient payments rendered in produce such as corn, sheep, silk, etc. They are not collected directly but through sub-lessees, somewhat similar to

the famous tax-collectors, so notorious in pre-revolutionary France, the state selling the right to raise the amount required from each vilayet (province) by auction, against cash payment. When the speculator or company has thus procured the right to collect the tithe of a vilayet, it, in turn, sells the tithe of each individual sanjak (district) to other speculators, who again divide their portion among a veritable band of smaller agents. Since each one of these collectors must not only cover his own expenses but secure as large a profit as possible besides, the tithe grows like a landslide as it approaches the fanner, if the lessee has been mistaken in his calculation, he seeks to recompense himself at the expense of the farmer. The latter, practically always in debt, waits impatiently for the time when he can sell his crop. But after his grain is cut he must frequently wait for weeks before the tithe collector comes to take his portion. The collector, who is usually graindealer as well, exploits this need of the farmer whose crop threatens to rot in the field, and persuades him to sell at a reduced price, knowing full well that it will be easy to secure the assistance of public officials and particularly of the mukhtar (town mayor) against the dissatisfied. When no tax-collector can be found the government itself collects the tithe in produce, puts it into storage houses and turns it over as part payment to the capitalists. This is the inner mechanism of the “industrial regeneration of Turkey” by European capital.

Thus a twofold purpose is accomplished. The farming population of Asia Minor becomes the object of a well organized process of exploitation in the interest of European, in this case German, financial and industrial capital. This again promotes the growth of the German sphere of interest in Turkey and lays the foundation for Turkey’s “political protection.” At the same time the instrument that carries out the exploitation of the

farming population, the Turkish Government, becomes the willing tool and vassal of Germany's foreign policies. For many years Turkish finance, tariff policies, taxation and state expenditures have been under European control. German influence has made itself particularly felt in the Turkish military organization.

It is obvious from the foregoing, that the interests of German imperialism demand the protection of the Turkish State, to the extent at least of preventing its complete disintegration. The liquidation of Turkey would mean its division between England, Russia, Italy, and Greece among others and the basis for a large-scale operation by German capital would vanish. Moreover, an extraordinary increase in the power of Russia, England and the Mediterranean States would result. For German imperialism, therefore, the preservation of this accommodating apparatus of the "independent Turkish State," the "integrity" of Turkey is a matter of necessity. And this necessity will exist until such time as this state will fall, having been consumed from within by German capital, as was Egypt by England and more recently Morocco by France, into the lap of Germany. The well-known spokesman of German imperialism, Paul Rohrbach, expressed this candidly and honestly when he said:

"In the very nature of things Turkey, surrounded on all sides by envious neighbours, must seek the support of a power that has practically no territorial interests in the Orient. That power is Germany. We, on the other hand, would be at a disadvantage if Turkey should disappear. If Russia and England fall heir to the Turkish state, obviously it will mean to both of these states a considerable increase in power. But even if Turkey should be so divided that we should also secure an extensive portion, it would mean for us endless difficulties. Russia, England, and In a certain sense France and Italy as

well. are neighbours of present Turkish possessions and are in a position to hold and defend their portion by land and by sea. But we have no direct connection with the Orient. A German Asia Minor or Mesopotamia can become a reality only if Russia, and in consequence France as well, should be forced to relinquish their present political aims and ideals, i.e., if the world war should take a decisive turn in favour of German interests.” (**The War and German Policy**, p.36).

Germany swore solemnly on November 8th, 1898, in Damascus, by the shade of the great Saladin, to protect and to preserve the Mohammedan world and the green flag of the Prophet, and in so doing strengthened the regime of the bloody Sultan Abdul Hamid for over a decade, It has been able, after a short period of enstrangement, to exert the same influence upon the Young Turk regime.<sup>[2]</sup> Aside from conducting the profitable business of the Deutsche Bank, the German mission busied itself chiefly with the reorganization and training of Turkish militarism, under German instructors with von der Goltz Pasha at the head. The modernization of the army, of course, piled new burdens upon the Turkish farmers, but it was a splendid business arrangement for Krupp and the Deutsche Bank. At the same time Turkish militarism became entirely dependent upon Prussian militarism, and became the centre of German ambitions in the Mediterranean and in Asia Minor.

That this “regeneration” of Turkey is a purely artificial attempt to galvanize a corpse, the fate of the Turkish revolutions best shows. In the first stage, while ideal considerations still predominated in the Young Turkish movement, when it was still fired with ambitious plans and illusions of a real springtime of life and of a rejuvenation for Turkey, its political sympathies were decidedly in favour of England. This

country seemed to them to represent the ideal state of modern liberal rule, while Germany, which has so long played the role of protector of the holy regime of the old Sultan was felt to be its natural opponent. For a while it seemed as if the revolution of 1908 would mean the bankruptcy of German oriental policies. It seemed certain that the overthrow of Abdul Hamid would go hand in hand with the downfall of German influence. As the Young Turks assumed power, however, and showed their complete inability to carry out any modern industrial, social or national reform on a large scale, as the counterrevolutionary hoof became more and more apparent, they turned of necessity to the tried and proven methods of Abdul Hamid, which meant periodic bloody massacres of oppressed peoples, goaded on until they flew at each other's throats, boundless, truly oriental exploitation of the farming population became the foundation of the nation. The artificial restoration of rule by force again became the most important consideration for "Young Turkey" and the traditional alliance of Abdul Hamid with Germany was re-established as the deciding factor in the foreign policy of Turkey.

The multiplicity of national problems that threaten to disrupt the Turkish nation make its regeneration a hopeless undertaking. The Armenian, Kurdian, Syrian, Arabian, Greek, and (up to the most recent times) the Albanian and Macedonian questions, the manifold economic and social problems that exist in the different parts of the realm, are a serious menace. The growth of a strong, a hopeful, capitalism in the neighbouring Balkan states and the long years of destructive activity of international capital and international diplomacy stamp every attempt to hold together this rotting pile of timber as nothing but a reactionary undertaking. This has long been apparent, particularly to the German Social Democracy. As early as 1896, at the time of the



Cretan uprising,<sup>[3]</sup> the German Party press was filled with long discussions on the Oriental problem, that led to a revision of the attitude taken by Marx at the time of the Crimean War<sup>[4]</sup> and to definite repudiation of the “integrity of Turkey” as a heritage of European reaction. Nowhere was the Young Turkish regime, its inner sterility and its counter-revolutionary character, so quickly and so thoroughly recognized as in the German Social Democratic press. It was a real Prussian idea, this building of strategic railroads for rapid mobilization, this sending of capable military instructors to prop up the crumbling edifice of the Turkish state.

In 1912 the Young Turkish regiment was forced to abdicate to the counter-revolution. Characteristically, the first act of “Turkish regeneration” in this war was a coup d’etat, the annihilation of the constitution. In this respect too there was a formal return to the rule of Abdul Hamid.

The first Balkan war<sup>[5]</sup> brought bankruptcy to Turkish militarism, in spite of German training. And the present war, into which Turkey was precipitated as Germany’s “charge,” will lead, with inevitable fatality, to the further or to the final liquidation of the Turkish Empire.

The position of German militarism – and its essence, the interests of the Deutsche Bank – has brought the German Empire in the Orient into opposition to all other nations. Above all to England. The latter had not only rival business relations and fat profits in Mesopotamia and Anatolia which were forced to retreat before their German rivals. This was a situation that English capitalism grudgingly accepted. But the building of strategic I railroad, and the strengthening of Turkish militarism under German influence was felt by England to be a sore point, in a strategic question of its

world political relations; lying as it did at the cross roads between Central Asia, Persia and India, on the one side, and Egypt on the other.

“England,” writes Rohrbach in his **Baghdadbahn**, “can be attacked and mortally wounded on land in Egypt. The loss of Egypt will mean to England not only the loss of control over the Suez Canal and its connections with India and Asia, but probably the sacrifice of its possessions in Central and Eastern Africa as well. A Mohammedan power like Turkey, moreover could exercise a dangerous influence over the 60 millions of Mohammedan subjects of England in India, in Afghanistan and Persia, should Turkey conquer Egypt. But Turkey can subjugate Egypt only if it possesses an extended system of railroads in Asia Minor and Syria, if by an extension of the Anatolian Railway it is able to ward off an English attack upon Mesopotamia, if it increases and improves its army, if its general economic and financial conditions are improved.”

And in his **The War and German Policy**, which was published after the outbreak of the war, he says:

“The Baghdad Railroad was destined from the start to bring Constantinople and the military strongholds of the Turkish Empire in Asia Minor into direct connection with Syria and the provinces on the Euphrates and on the Tigris. Of course it was to be foreseen that this railway, together with the projected and, partly or wholly, completed railroads in Syria and Arabia, would make it possible to use Turkish troops in the direction of Egypt. No one will deny that, should the Turkish-German alliance remain in force, and under a number of other important conditions whose realization will be even more difficult than this alliance, the Baghdad railway is a political life insurance policy for Germany.”

Thus the semi-official spokesman of German imperialism openly revealed its plan and its aims in the Orient. Here German policies were clearly marked out, and an aggressive fundamental tendency most dangerous for the existing balance of world power, with a clearly defined point against England, was disclosed. German oriental policies became the concrete commentary to the naval policy inaugurated in 1899.

With its programme for Turkish integrity, Germany came into conflict with the Balkan states, whose historic completion and inner growth are dependent upon the liquidation of European Turkey. It came into conflict with Italy, finally, whose imperialistic appetite was likewise longing for Turkish possessions. At the Morocco Conference at Algeiras<sup>[6]</sup> in 1905, Italy already sided with England and France. Six years later the Italian expedition to Tripoli,<sup>[7]</sup> which followed the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and gave the signal for the Balkan War, already indicated a withdrawal of Italy, foreshadowed the disruption of the Triple Alliance<sup>[8]</sup> and the isolation of German policies on this side as well. The other tendency of German expansionist desires in the West became evident in the Morocco affair.<sup>[9]</sup> Nowhere was the negation of the Bismarck policy in Germany more clearly shown. Bismarck, as is well known, supported the colonial aspirations of France in order to distract its attention from Alsace-Lorraine. The new course of Germany, on the other hand, ran exactly counter to French colonial expansion. Conditions in Morocco were quite different from those that prevailed in Asiatic Turkey. Germany had few legitimate interests in Morocco. To be sure, German imperialists puffed up the claims of the German firm of Mannesmann, which had made a loan to the Moroccan Sultan and demanded mining concessions in return, into a national issue. But the well known fact that both of these rival groups in

Morocco, the Mannesmann as well as the Krupp-Schneider Company are a thoroughly international mixture of German, French and Spanish capitalists, prevents anyone from seriously speaking of a German sphere of interest. The more symptomatic was the determination and the decisiveness with which the German Empire, in 1905, suddenly announced its claim to participation in the regulation of Moroccan affairs, and protested against French rule in Morocco. This was the first world-political clash with France. In 1895 Germany, together with France and Russia, assumed a threatening attitude toward victorious Japan to prevent it from exploiting its victory over China at Shimonoseki.<sup>[10]</sup> Five years later it went arm in arm with France all along the line on a plundering expedition against China. Morocco caused a radical reorientation in Germany's relations with France. The Morocco crisis which in seven years of its duration, twice brought Europe to the verge of war between France and Germany, was not a question of "revenge" for continental conflicts between the two nations. An entirely new conflict had arisen, German imperialism had come into competition with that of France. In the end, Germany was satisfied with the French Congo region, and in accepting this admitted that it had no special interests to protect in Morocco itself. This very fact gave to the German attack in Morocco a far reaching political significance. The very indefinitiveness of its tangible aims and demands betrayed its insatiable appetite, the seeking and feeling for prey – it was a general imperialistic declaration of war against France. The contrast between the two nations here was brought into the limelight. On the one hand, a slow industrial development, a stagnant population, a nation living on its investments, concerned chiefly with foreign financial business, burdened with a large number of colonial possessions that it could hold together only with the utmost

difficulty. On the other hand, a mighty young giant, a capitalism forging toward the first place among nations, going out into the world to hunt for colonies. English colonies were out of the question. So the hunger of German imperialism, besides feeding on Asiatic Turkey, turned at once to the French heritage. The French colonies moreover wore a convenient bait with which Italy might eventually be attracted and repaid for Austrian desires of expansion on the Balkan peninsula, and be thus more firmly welded into the Triple Alliance by mutual business interests. The demands Germany made upon French imperialism were exceedingly disturbing, especially when it is remembered that Germany, once it had taken a foothold in any part of Morocco, could at any time set fire to the entire French North African possessions, whose inhabitants were in a chronic state of incipient warfare with the French conquerors, by supplying them with ammunition. Germany's final withdrawal for suitable compensation did away with this immediate danger. But they could not allay the general disturbance in France and the world-political conflict that had been created.

Its Morocco policy not only brought Germany into conflict with France but with England as well. Here in Morocco, in the immediate neighbourhood of Gibraltar, the second important centre of world-political interests of the British Government, the sudden appearance of German imperialism with its demands, and the drastic impressiveness with which these demands were supported, were regarded as a demonstration against England as well. Furthermore the first formal protest of 1911 was directed specifically against the agreement of 1904 between England and France concerning Egypt and Morocco.<sup>[11]</sup> Germany insisted briefly and definitely that England be disregarded in all further regulations of Moroccan

affairs. The effect that such a demand was certain to have on German-English relations is obvious. The situation was commented upon in the **Frankfurter Zeitung** of November 8, 1911, by a London correspondent:

“This is the outcome: a million negroes in Congo, a great Katzenjammer<sup>[12]</sup> and a furious resentment against *perfides Albion*.<sup>[13]</sup> The Katzenjammer Germany will live down. But what is to become of our relations with England? As they stand today matters are untenable. According to every historic probability they will either lead to something worse, that is war, or they will have to be speedily patched up ... The trip of the *Panther* was, as a Berlin correspondent said so well in the **Frankfurter Zeitung** the other day, a dig into the ribs of France to show that Germany is still here ... Concerning the effect that this event would create here, Berlin cannot possibly entertain the slightest doubt. Certainly no correspondent in London was for a moment in doubt that England would stand energetically on the side of France. How can the **Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung** still insist that Germany must treat with France alone? For several hundred years Europe has been the scene of a steadily increasing interweaving of political interests. The misfortune of one, according to the laws of politics, fills some with joy, others with apprehension. When two years ago Austria had its difficulties with Russia, Germany appeared upon the scene with shimmering armour, although Vienna, as was afterwards stated, would have preferred to settle matters without German intervention. It is very unlikely that England, having just emerged from a period of anti-German feeling, should consider that our dealings with France are none of its business. In the last analysis, it was a question of might; for a dig in the ribs, be it ever so friendly, it is a very

tangible matter. For no one can be quite sure when a blow on the teeth may follow. Since then the situation has become less critical. At the moment when Lloyd George spoke, the danger of a war between Germany and England was acute. Are we justified in expecting a different attitude from Sir Edward Grey after the policies that he and his followers have been pursuing? If Berlin entertained such ideas then it seems to me that the German foreign policies have been weighed and found wanting.”

Thus did our imperialistic policies create sharp conflicts in Asia Minor and Morocco, between England and Germany, between Germany and France. But what of German relations with Russia? In the murderous spirit that took possession of the German public during the first weeks of the war everything seemed credible. The German populace believed that Belgian women had gouged out the eyes of the German wounded, that Cossacks ate tallow candles, that they had taken infants by the legs and torn them to pieces; they believed that Russia aspired to the annexation of the German Empire, to the destruction of German “Kultur,” to the introduction of absolutism from Kiel to Munich, from the Warthe to the Rhine. The Social Democratic **Chemnitzer Volksstimme** wrote on August 2nd:

“At this moment we all feel it our duty to fight first against the Russian knout. German women and children shall not become the victims of Russian bestiality, German territory must not fall into the hands of the Cossacks. For if the Entente is victorious, not the French Republicans, but the Russian Czar will rule over Germany. In this moment we defend everything that we possess of German culture and German freedom against a pitiless and barbarous foe.”

On the same day the **Fränkische Tagespost** cried out:

“Shall the Cossacks, who have already taken possession of our border towns, in their onrush on our country, bring destruction to our cities? Shall the Russian Czar, whose love of peace the Social Democrats refused to trust even on the day when his peace manifesto was published, who is the worst enemy of the Russian people themselves, rule over one man of German blood?”

And the **Königsberger Volkzeitung** wrote on August 3rd:

“Not one of us can doubt, whether he is liable for military service or not, that he must do everything to keep these worthless vandals from our borders so long as the war may last. For if they should be victorious, thousands of our comrades will be condemned to horrible prison sentences. Under the Russian sceptre there is no such thing as self-expression of the people, no Social Democratic press is allowed to exist, Social Democratic meetings and organizations are prohibited. We cannot conceive for a moment the possibility of a Russian victory. While still upholding our opposition to war, we will all work together to protect ourselves against these vandals that rule the Russian nation.”

We shall later enter a little more fully into the relations that exist between German culture and Russian Czarism. They form a chapter by itself in the position of the German Social Democracy on the war. This much may be said now, one might with as much justification assume that the Czar desires to annex Europe or the moon, as to speak of his desire to annex Germany. In the present war only two nations are threatened in their national existence, Belgium and Serbia. While we howled about safeguarding the national existence of



Germany, our cannon were directed against these two states. It is impossible to discuss with people who still believe in the possibility of ritual murder. But to those who do not act from mob instinct, who do not think in terms of clumsy slogans that are invented to catch the rabble, who guide their thoughts by historic facts, it must be obvious that Russian Czarism cannot have such intentions. Russia is ruled by desperate criminals, but not by maniacs. And after all, the policies of absolutism, in spite of all their characteristic differences, have this similarity in all nations, that they live not on thin air but upon very real possibilities, in a realm where concrete things come into the closest contact with each other. We need have no fear of the arrest of our German comrades and their banishment to Siberia, nor of the introduction of Russian absolutism into Germany. For the statesmen of the bloody Czar, with all their mental inferiority, have a clearer materialistic conception of the situation than some of our party editors. These statesmen know very well that political forms of government cannot be "introduced" anywhere and everywhere according to the desire of the rulers; they know full well that every form of government is the outcome of certain economic and social foundations, they know from bitter experience that even in Russia itself conditions are almost beyond their power to control; they know, finally, that reaction in every country can use only the forms that are in accord with the nature of the country, and that the absolutism that is in accord with our class and party conditions is the Hohenzollern police state and the Prussian three-class electoral system. A dispassionate consideration of the whole situation will show that we need not fear that Russian Czarism, even if it should win a complete victory over Germany, would feel called upon to do away with these products of German culture.

In reality the conflicts that exist between Germany and Russia are of an entirely different nature. These differences are not to be found in the field of inner politics. Quite the contrary: their mutual tendencies and internal relationships have established a century-old traditional friendship between the two nations. But in spite of and notwithstanding their solidarity on questions of inner policy, they have come to blows in the field of foreign, world-political hunting grounds.

Russian imperialism, like that of western nations, consists of widely diversified elements. Its strongest strain is not, however, as in Germany or England, the economic expansion of capital, hungry for territorial accumulation, but the political interests of the nation. To be sure, Russian industry can show a considerable export to the Orient, to China, Persia and Central Asia, and the Czarist Government seeks to encourage this export trade because it furnishes a desirable foundation for its sphere of interest. But national policies here play an active, not a passive, role. On the one hand, the traditional tendencies of a conquest-loving Czardom, ruling over a mighty nation whose population today consists of 172 millions of human beings, demand free access to the ocean, to the Pacific Ocean on the East, to the Mediterranean on the South, for industrial as well as for strategic reasons. On the other hand, the very existence of absolutism, and the necessity of holding a respected place in the world-political field, and finally the need of financial credit in foreign countries without which Czarism cannot exist, all play their important part. We must add to these, as in every other monarchy, the dynastic interest. Foreign prestige and temporary forgetfulness of inner problems and difficulties are well known family remedies in the art of ruling, when a conflict arises between the government and the great mass of the people.

But modern capitalist interests are becoming more and more a factor in the imperialist aims of the Czarist nation. Russian capitalism, still in its earliest youth, cannot hope to perfect its development under an absolutist regime. On the whole it has advanced little beyond the primitive stage of home industry. But it sees a gigantic future before its eyes in the exploitation of the nation's natural resources. As soon as Russia's absolutism is swept away, of this there can be no doubt, Russia will develop rapidly into the foremost capitalist nation, provided always that the international situation will give it the time necessary for such development. It is this hope, and the appetite for foreign markets that will mean increased capitalistic development even at the present time, that has filled the Russian bourgeoisie with imperialistic desires and led them to eagerly voice their demands in the coming division of the world's resources. This historic desire is actively supported by very tangible immediate interests. There are, in the first place, the armament industry and its purveyors. In the second place the conflicts with the "enemy within," the revolutionary proletariat, have given to the Russian bourgeoisie an increased appreciation of the powers of militarism and the distracting efforts of a world-political evangel. It has bound together the various capitalist groups and the nobility under one counterrevolutionary regime. The imperialism of bourgeois Russia, particularly among the liberals, has grown enormously in the stormy atmosphere of the revolutionary period, and has given to the traditional foreign policies of the Romanovs a modern stamp. Chief among the aims of the traditional policies of monarchic Russia, as well as of the more modern appetites of the Russian bourgeoisie, are the Dardanelles. they are, according to the famous remark made by Bismarck, the latchkey to the Russian possessions on the Black Sea. Since the eighteenth century, Russia has waged a number of bloody wars

against Turkey, has undertaken its mission as the liberator of the Balkans, for the realization of this goal. For this ideal, Russia has piled up mountains of dead in Ismail, in Navarin, in Sinope, Silistria and Sevastopol, in Plevna and Shipka. To the Russian muzhik, the defence of his Slavic and Christian brothers from the horrors of Turkish oppression has become as potent a war legend as the defence of German culture and freedom against the horrors of Russia has become to the German Social Democracy.

But the Russian bourgeoisie also was much more enthusiastic over the Mediterranean prospect than for its Manchurian and Mongolian "mission." The liberal bourgeoisie of Russia criticised the Japanese war so severely as a senseless adventure, because it distracted the attention of Russian politics from the problem that was to them more important, the Balkans. And in another way, the unfortunate war with Japan had the same effect. The extension of Russian power into Eastern and Central Asia, to Tibet and down into Persia necessarily aroused a feeling of discomfort in the minds of English imperialists. England, fearing for its enormous Indian Empire, viewed the Asiatic movements of Russia with growing suspicion. In fact, at the beginning of the present century the English-Russian conflict in Asia was the strongest world-conflict in the international situation. Moreover this will be, in all probability, the most critical issue in future world-political developments when the present war is over. The crushing defeat of Russia in 1904<sup>[14]</sup> and the subsequent outbreak of the Russian revolution only temporarily changed the situation. The apparent weakening of the empire of the Czar brought about a relaxation of the tension between England and Russia. In 1907 a treaty was signed between the two nations providing for a mutual control of Persia<sup>[15]</sup> that established, for the time being, friendly neighbourly

relations in Central Asia. This kept Russia from undertaking great projects in the East, and her energies reverted all the more vigorously to their old occupation, Balkan politics. Here the Russia of the Czar came for the first time into sharp conflict with German culture, after a century of faithful and well-founded friendship. The road to the Dardanelles leads over the corpse of Turkey. But for more than a decade Germany has regarded the "integrity" of this corpse as its most important world-political task. Russian methods in the Balkans had changed at various times. Embittered by the ingratitude of the liberated Balkan Slavs who tried to escape from their position as vassals to the Czarist Government, Russia for a time supported the programme of Turkish integrity with the silent understanding that the division of that country should be postponed to some more auspicious time. But today the final liquidation of Turkey coincides with the plans of both Russian and English politics. The latter aims to unite Arabia and Mesopotamia and the Russian territories that lie between Egypt and India, under British rule, into a great Mohammedan empire, thus conserving its own position in India and Egypt. In this way Russian imperialism, as in earlier times English imperialism, came into opposition with that of Germany. For this privileged exploiter of Turkish disintegration had taken up her position as sentinel on the Bosphorus.

Russian interests came to a clash in the Balkans not only directly with Germany but with Austria as well. Austrian imperialism is the political complement of German imperialism, at the same time its Siamese twin brother and its fate.

Germany having isolated herself on all sides by her world policy, has in Austria her only ally. The alliance with Austria is old, having been founded by Bismarck in 1879. But since that time it has completely changed

its character. Like the enmity toward France, the alliance with Austria received an entirely new content through the development of the last decades. In 1879 its chief purpose was the mutual defence of the possessions gained in the wars of 1864-1870.<sup>[16]</sup> The Bismarck Triple Alliance was conservative in character, especially since it signified Austria's final renunciation of admission to the German federation of states, its acceptance of the state of affairs created by Bismarck, and the military hegemony of Greater Prussia. The Balkan aspirations of Austria were as distasteful to Bismarck as the South African conquests of Germany. In his **Gedanken und Erinnerungen**<sup>[17]</sup> he says:

“It is natural that the inhabitants of the Danube region should have needs and aspirations that extend beyond the present boundaries of their monarchy. The German national constitution points out the way along which Austria can form a union of the political and material interests that exist between the most eastern Rumanian tribe and the Bay of Cattaro. But the duty of the German Empire does not demand that it satisfy the desires of its neighbours for increased territory with the blood and wealth of its subjects.”

He expressed the same thought still more drastically when he uttered the well known sentiment that, to him, the whole of Bosnia was not worth the bone of a Pomeranian grenadier. Indeed, a treaty drawn up with Russia in 1884 proves conclusively that Bismarck never desired to place the Triple Alliance at the service of Austrian annexationist desires. By this treaty, the German Empire promised, in the event of a war between Austria and Russia, not to support the former, but rather to observe a “benevolent neutrality.”

But since imperialism has taken hold of German politics, its relations to Austria have changed as well. Austria-Hungary lies between Germany and the

Balkans, in other words, on the road over the critical point in German Oriental politics. To make Austria its enemy at this time would mean complete isolation, and complete abdication by Germany of its world-political plan. But the weakening of Austria, which would signify the final liquidation of Turkey, with a consequent strengthening of Russia, the Balkan states, and England, would probably accomplish the national unification of Germany, but would, at the same time, wipe out, forever, its imperialistic aspirations. The safety of the Hapsburg monarchy has therefore logically become a necessary complement to German imperialism, the preservation of Turkey its chief problem.

But Austria means a constant latent state of war in the Balkans. For Turkish disintegration has promoted the existence and growth of the Balkan States in the immediate neighbourhood of the Hapsburg monarchy, and the resulting state of chronic incipient warfare. Obviously the existence of virile and independent national states on the border of a monarchy that is made up of fragments of these same nationalities, which it can rule only by the whip-lash of dictatorship must hasten its downfall. Austrian Balkan politics and particularly its Serbian relations have plainly revealed its inner decay. Although its imperialistic appetites wavered between Salonika and Durazzo, Austria was not in a position to annex Serbia, even before the latter had grown in strength and size through the two Balkan wars. For the forcible annexation of Serbia would have dangerously strengthened in its interior one of the most refractory South Slavic nationalities, a people that even now, because of Austria's stupid regime of reaction, can scarcely be held in check. But neither can Austria tolerate the normal independent development of Serbia or profit from it by normal commercial relations. For

the Hapsburg monarchy is not the political expression of a capitalist state, but a loose syndicate of a few parasitic cliques, striving to grasp everything within reach, utilizing the political powers of the nation so long as this weak edifice still stands. For the benefit of Hungarian agrarians, and for the purpose of increasing the prices of agricultural products, Austria has forbidden Serbia to send cattle and fruits into Austria, thus depriving this nation of farmers of its most important market.<sup>[18]</sup> In the interest of Austrian monopolies it has forced Serbia to import industrial products exclusively from Austria, and at the highest, prices. To keep Serbia in a state of economic and political dependence, it prevented Serbia from uniting on the East with Bulgaria, to secure access to the Black Sea, and from securing access to the Adriatic, on the West, by prohibiting the acquisition of a harbour in Albania. In short, the Balkan policy of Austria was nothing more than a barefaced attempt to choke off Serbia. Also it was directed against the establishment of mutual relations between and against the inner growth of the Balkan states, and was, therefore, a constant menace for them.

Austrian imperialism constantly threatened the existence and development of the Balkan States, now by the annexation of Bosnia, now by its demands upon the Sanjak of Novibazar and on Saloniki, now by its encroachments upon the Albanian coast. To satisfy these tendencies on the part of Austria, and to meet the competition of Italy as well, the caricature of an independent Albania under the rule of a German nobleman was created after the second Balkan war, a country which was, from the first hour, little more than the plaything of the intrigues of imperialistic rivals.

Thus the imperialistic policies of Austria during the last decade were a constant hindrance to the normal progressive development of the Balkans, and led to the



inevitable alternative: either the Hapsburg monarchy or the capitalist development of the Balkan States.

Emancipated from Turkish rule, the Balkan now faced its new hindrance, Austria, and the necessity of removing it from its path. Historically the liquidation of Austria-Hungary is the logical sequence of Turkish disintegration, and both are in direct line with the process of historical development.<sup>[19]</sup>

There was but one solution: war – a world war. For behind Serbia stood Russia, unable to sacrifice its influence in the Balkans and its role of “protector” without giving up its whole imperialistic programme in the Orient as well. In direct conflict with Austrian politics, Russia aimed to unite the Balkan States under a Russian protectorate, to be sure. The Balkan union that had almost completely annihilated European Turkey in the victorious war of 1912 was the work of Russia, and was directly and intentionally aimed against Austria. In spite of Russian efforts, the Balkan union was smashed in the second Balkan war. But Serbia, emerging the victor, became dependent upon the friendship of Russia in the same degree as Austria had become Russia’s bitter enemy. Germany, whose fate was firmly linked to that of the Hapsburg monarchy, was obliged to back up the stupid Balkan policy of the latter, step by step, and was thus brought into a doubly aggravated opposition to Russia.

But the Balkan policies of Austria, furthermore, brought Austria into conflict with Italy, which was actively interested in the dissolution of the Turkish and Austrian Empires. The imperialism of Italy has found in the Italian possessions of Austria a most popular cloak for its own annexationist desires. Its eyes are directed especially toward the Albanian coast of the Adriatic, should a new regulation of Balkan affairs take place. The Triple Alliance, having already sustained a

severe blow in the Tripolitan war, was destroyed by-the acute crisis in the Balkans during the two Balkan wars. The Central Powers were thus brought into conflict with the entire outside world. German imperialism, chained to two decaying corpses, was steering its course directly toward a world war.

Moreover, Germany embarked upon this course with a full realization of its consequences. Austria, as the motive power, was rushing blindly into destruction. Its clique of clerical-militarist rulers with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his right hand man Baron von Chlumezki at the head, fairly jumped at every excuse to strike the first blow. In 1909 Austria framed up the famous documents by Professor Friedmann, exposing what purported to be a widespread, criminal conspiracy of the Serbs against the Hapsburg Monarchy for the sole purpose of infusing the German nations with the necessary war-enthusiasm. These papers had only one slight drawback – they were forged from beginning to end. A year later the rumour of the horrible martyrdom of the Austrian consul Prohaska in Ueskub was busily spread for days to serve as the spark that would ignite the keg of powder, while Prohaska roamed unmolested and happy through the streets of Ueskub. Then came the assassination at Sarajevo, a long desired, truly shameful crime.<sup>[20]</sup> “If ever, blood sacrifice has had a liberating, releasing effect, it was the case here,” rejoiced the spokesman of German imperialism. Among Austrian imperialists the rejoicing was still greater, and they decided to use the noble corpses while they were still warm. After a hurried conference with Berlin, war was virtually decided and the ultimatum sent out as a flaming torch that was to set fire to the capitalist world at all four corners.

But the occurrence at Sarajevo only furnished the immediate pretext. Causes and conflicts for the war had

been overripe for a long time. The conjuncture that we witness today was ready a decade ago. Every year, every political occurrence of recent years has but served to bring war a step nearer: the Turkish revolution, the annexation of Bosnia, the Morocco crisis, the Tripoli expedition, the two Balkan wars. All military bills of the last years were drawn up in direct preparation for this war; the countries, of Europe were preparing, with open eyes, for the inevitable final contest. Five times during recent years this war was on the verge of an outbreak: in the summer of 1905, when Germany for the first time made her decisive demands in the Morocco crisis; in the summer of 1908, when England Russia and France threatened with war after the conference of the monarchs in Reval over the Macedonian question, and war was prevented only by the sudden outbreak of the Turkish revolution; in the beginning of 1909 when Russia replied to the Bosnian annexation with a mobilization, when Germany in Petersburg formally declared its readiness to go to war on the side of Austria; in the summer of 1911 when the *Panther* was sent to Agadir, an act that would certainly have brought on war if Germany had not finally acquiesced in the Morocco question and allowed itself to be compensated with the Congo concession; and finally, in the beginning of 1913, when Germany, in view of the proposed Russian invasion of Albania, a second time threatened Petersburg with its readiness for warlike measures.

Thus the world war has been hanging fire for eight years. It was postponed again and again only because always one of the two sides in question was not yet ready with its military preparations.

So, for instance, the present world war was imminent at the time of the *Panther* adventure in 1911 – without a murdered Grand Duke, without French fliers over Nuremberg, without a Russian invasion into East

Prussia. Germany simply put it off for a more favourable moment – one need only read the frank explanation of a German imperialist:

“The German government has been accused by the so-called pan-Germans of weakness in the Morocco crisis in 1911. Let them disabuse their minds of this false impression. It is a fact that, at the time when we sent the *Panther* to Agadir, the reconstruction of the North-East Sea Canal was still in progress, that building operations on Helgoland for the construction of a great fort were nowhere near completion, that our fleet of dreadnoughts and accessories, in comparison with the English sea power, was in a far more unfavourable position than was the case three years later.

“Compared to the present time, 1914, the canal as well as Helgoland were in a deplorable state of unreadiness, were partially absolutely useless for war purposes. Under such circumstances, where one knows that one’s chances will be far more favourable in a few years, it would be worse than foolish to provoke a war. First the German fleet had to be put in order; the great military bill had to be pushed through the Reichstag. In the summer of 1914 Germany was prepared for war, while France was still labouring over its three years military service programme, while in Russia neither the army nor the naval programme were ready. It was up to Germany to utilize the auspicious moment.”

The same Rohrbach, who is not only the most serious representative of imperialism in Germany, but is also in intimate touch with the leading circles in German politics and is their semi-official mouthpiece, comments upon the situation in July, 1914, as follows: “At this time there was only one danger, that we might be morally forced, by an apparent acquiescence on the

part of Russia, to wait until Russia and France were really prepared.” In other words, Germany feared nothing so much as that Russia might give in. “With deep pain we saw our untiring efforts to preserve world peace shipwrecked, etc., etc.”<sup>[21]</sup>

The invasion of Belgium, therefore, and the accomplished fact of war was not a bolt from the blue. It did not create a new, unheard of situation. Nor was it an event that came, in its political associations, as a complete surprise to the Social Democratic group. The world war that began officially on August 4th, 1914, was the same world war toward which German imperialism had been driving for decades, the same war whose coming the Social Democracy and prophesied year after year. This same war has been denounced by Social Democratic parliamentarians, newspapers and leaflets a thousand times as a frivolous imperialistic crime, as a war that is against every interest of culture and against every interest of the nation.

And, indeed, not the “existence and the independent development of Germany in this war are at stake, in spite of the reiterations of the Social Democratic press, but the immediate profits of the Deutsche Bank in Asiatic Turkey and the future profits of the Mannesmann and Krupp interests in Morocco, the existence and the reactionary character of Austria, “this heap of organized decay, that calls itself the Hapsburg monarchy,” as the **Vorwaerts** wrote on the 25th of July, 1914; Hungarian pigs and prunes, paragraph 14, the “Kultur” of Friedmann-Prohaska, the existence of Turkish rule in Asia Minor and of counter-revolution on the Balkan.

Our party press was filled with moral indignation over the fact that Germany’s foes should drive black men and barbarians, Negroes, Sikhs and Maoris into the war. Yet these peoples play a role in this war that is

approximately identical with that played by the socialist proletariat in the European states. If the Maoris of New Zealand were eager to risk their skulls for the English king, they showed only as much understanding of their own interests as the German Social Democratic group that traded the existence, the freedom and the civilization of the German people for the existence of the Hapsburg monarchy, for Turkey and for the vaults of the Deutsche Bank.

One difference there is between the two. A generation ago, Maori negroes were still cannibals and not students of Marxist philosophy.

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## Footnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> **The Berlin-Baghdad railroad**, as a Eurasian axis with oil on both sides of it (Rumania and Iraq) and a short route to the Indian Ocean, was mooted in 1871 by Wilhelm I and the Deutsche Bank. Abdul Hamid granted the concession in 1899. Britain supported the idea as against the Czar and opposed it for its own fears. Britain had her plans for a railroad from Cape to Cairo, while the Russians planned one from St. Petersburg to the Persian Gulf.

<sup>[2]</sup> **The Young Turks**, or the Committee of Union and Progress were an essentially military organization. On the 23rd July 1908 they compelled Sultan Abdul Hamid II to proclaim a constitution. On the Sultan's attempt early in 1909 to stage a counter-revolution with the help of the counter-revolutionary Moslem

Brotherhood (Istanbul was held by them for three days), he was deposed on 23rd April. In May–June 1912, “Saviour Officers,” another counter-revolutionary group was formed, and on 17th July they compelled the Government to resign. The Committee of Union and Progress was ousted. On 23rd January 1913, a coup d’état took place and Turkey was from then till 1922 under the dictatorship of a triumvirate of Pashas.

<sup>[3]</sup> **Cretan Uprising:** In 1897, the Christian peoples of Crete, which had been conquered by Turkey 1645–1669, rose against their rulers with the help of Greece, and the Turks, though victorious in the war, were forced to withdraw in November 1898. Crete was placed under European trusteeship. In March 1905, another insurrection took place under the leadership of Venizelos. This lasted till 1906, and in 1907 a new constitution was proclaimed, and the island annexed to Greece.

<sup>[4]</sup> **Crimean War:** Britain, France and Turkey fought Russia in 1854–56 for the control of Crimea. Piedmont (Italy) joined them in 1855. On 8th September 1855 Sevastopol was taken from the Russians and they were soon defeated.

<sup>[5]</sup> **Balkan Wars:** The first, broke out in October 1912. The Turks were pushed back to Constantinople. It ended with the Treaty of London (30th May 1913). Turkey was forced to give up all claims to its former European possessions. Albania was created as a new state. In June 1913, the Second Balkan War began: Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece, and Rumania and Turkey opposed Bulgaria. It ended with the Treaty of Bucharest (30th July 1913). Italy invaded Albania in 1914.

<sup>[6]</sup> **Algeciras Conference:** When a crisis between France and Britain (who had entered into an “Entente

Cordiale” in 1904) on the one hand, and Germany and Austria Hungary on the other threatened with the Kaiser’s personal attempt to lead an expedition to Tangier Morocco in March 1905, Theodore Roosevelt organized a conference in Algeciras, Spain on 16th January 1906. An agreement was signed on 7th April 1906, but the Morocco crisis was to brew again.

<sup>[7]</sup> **Tripoli** which had been under Turkish rule from 1551, was attacked by Italy in September 1911. Turkey was defeated, but the local population put up a courageous resistance. Under the Treaty of Lausanne (October 1912), Tripoli and Cyrenaica became Italian colonies and remained so till 1943.

<sup>[8]</sup> **The Triple Alliance:** Following the Dual Alliance of 1879 (Germany and Austro-Hungary) the Triple Alliance was formed in 1882 between Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy. Rumania joined in 1883. It was repudiated by Italy in 1906 at the Algeciras Conference and Italy finally joined the “Entente” nations (Britain, France, Russia) in 1915.

<sup>[9]</sup> In July 1911, the German gunboat ***Panther*** sailed to Agadir, Morocco, “to protect German interests,” i.e. to secure sources of iron ore for Mannesmann Steel. War almost broke out between France and Germany, but on Lloyd-George’s threat of British intervention, Germany withdrew. At the Treaty of Berlin (November 1911) Germany was given a slice of the Cameroons and gave up her claims to Morocco

The Peace Congress at Basel (Switzerland) was held at the Basel Minster on 24th and 25th November 1912. The immediate occasion was the fear of general European war, as Montenegro had declared war on Turkey in October, embroiling the Balkans. It was the last pre-war meeting of the Second International, and its significance is that for the first time a socialist peace



conference had recognized that the period of national wars in Europe was over and that all future wars would be imperialist wars.

<sup>[10]</sup> **The Treaty of Shimonoseki** ended the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 and foreigners were granted the right to invest in China.

<sup>[11]</sup> Under the terms of the **Entente Cordiale** between Britain and France in 1904, France was given a free hand in Morocco in exchange for a free hand for Britain in Egypt.

<sup>[12]</sup> **Katzenjammer** (German) A caterwaul (also a hangover).

<sup>[13]</sup> **Perfides Albion** (French): *La perfide Angleterre*, perfidious England, had changed by the French Revolution to Albion perfide.

<sup>[14]</sup> England took Egypt from Turkey in 1881 and consolidated its hold on south Africa after the Boer War (October 1899–May 1902). France, having been given a free hand in Tunisia by Britain in return for having been permitted to annex Cyprus, established a “protectorate” over Tunisia by the Treaty of Kassar (11th May 1881). Tunisia achieved independence only in 1956. The French invasion of Tonkin (now northern Vietnam) dated from 1873. Russia expanded into Central Asia following the Treaty of Berlin 1878, which forced her to concede the conquests of the Russo-Turkish War. Italy’s fortunes in Abyssinia fluctuated from 1869 to the 1889 treaty; in 1896 Italy was defeated and the war ended for the time being with the Treaty of Addis Ababa, October 1896. After the Spanish-American War and Peace of 1898, the United States annexed Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Germany annexed the Cameroons and Togoland in 1884; exchanged Zanzibar for Heligoland with Britain

in 1890. In 1897 it compelled China to “lease” Tsingtau in the Kiachow Bay for 99 years and the German flag finally flew in the Far East.

<sup>[15]</sup> **The Anglo-Russian Treaty** of 31st August 1907, which discussed Tibet, Afghanistan and Persia. Persia was divided into three zones for development. Britain lost in the deal, as oil was soon discovered in the area which she had abandoned. However, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was soon formed.

<sup>[16]</sup> **The Wars of 1864–1870** were Bismarck’s successful efforts to establish Prussian domination over Germany. With Austria, Prussia fought Denmark in January **1864**. Prussia annexed Schleswig, Austria took Holstein.

In **1866** Prussia, having secured the neutrality of Russia, France and Italy turned against its ally of 1864 and with a series of victories ending in Sadowa, defeated Austria, annexing new territories and establishing the domination of the Hohenzollerns over the north German Confederation and ending the German Confederation.

In 1869 the rulers of both France and Germany wanted war. In May of that year the Empress Eugenie had declared that only a war could save the Bonaparte dynasty. In September an agreement was reached between Austria, Italy and France. On 2nd July **1870** the Provisional Government of Spain promulgated the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to succeed Queen Isabella, who had been deposed in September 1868. On 6 July France protested and 6 days later the candidature was withdrawn. On 7th July the French ambassador to Germany, Benedetti, demanded an apology from the king of Prussia and an undertaking that a Hohenzollern would never again aspire to the Spanish throne. The

King was at Ems taking the waters. Bismarck drafted the King's reply, the now famous Ems despatch, making war inevitable. Prussia, having neutralized England and Russia, scored immediate victories. On 27th October 175,000 troops under Marshal Bazaine were surrounded at Metz. The main army under Marshal MacMahon and the Emperor Napoleon III surrendered at Sedan on 2nd September. Paris fell after a 4-month siege (19th September 1870-28th January 1871). Under the Treaty of Frankfurt (10th May 1871), France lost Alsace, Lorraine, Moselle, Haut Rhine and Bas Rhine, and had to pay an indemnity of 5 billion francs.

<sup>[17]</sup> **Gedanken and Erinnerungen** (German): Bismarck's **Reflections and Reminiscences**, written 1896–98.

<sup>[18]</sup> Beginning 1906, Austria applied economic sanctions against Serbia which found its market for livestock in Austria-Hungary. This led to the "Pig War" of 1906 and later political friction.

<sup>[19]</sup> Luxemburg's prediction proved correct. At Versailles the Austro-Hungarian Empire was carved up, and Austria was left with almost the same territory as she now occupies.

<sup>[20]</sup> On 28th June 1914—the anniversary of the defeat of Serbia by Turkey in 1389 and the defeat of the Turks in the 1st Balkan War—Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Crown Prince of Austria, and his wife, who were visiting Sarajevo, then part of Austro-Hungary, were fired at and killed by a Serbian patriot, Gavrilo Princip.

This provided the excuse for Austria's ultimatum to Serbia on 23rd July 1914 and the declaration of war on the 27th.

Germany, whose General Staff, had had the army ready for war since the 1st June, declared war on Russia on 1st August and on the same day the German armies rolled into Belgium and Luxembourg against France.

Today Sarajevo is the capital of the Bosnia-Herzegovina: When Bosnia was part of Yugoslavia the spot where Princip fired the historic shots was marked by a commemorative plaque, and a bridge nearby was named after him.

<sup>[21]</sup> The words quoted are those of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Rosa Luxemburg  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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## Chapter 5

But czarism! In the first moments of the war this was undoubtedly the factor that decided the position of our party. In its declaration, the social democratic group had given the slogan: against czarism! And out of this the socialist press has made a fight for European culture.

The **Frankfurter Volksstimme** wrote on July 31:

“The German social democracy has always hated czarism as the bloody guardian of European reaction: from the time that Marx and Engels followed, with far-seeing eyes, every movement of this barbarian government, down to the present day, where its prisons are filled with political prisoners, and yet it trembles before every labour movement. The time has come when we must square accounts with these terrible scoundrels, under the German flag of war.”

The **Pfälzische Post** of Ludwigshafen wrote on the same day:

“This is a principle that was first established by our August Bebel. This is the struggle of civilisation against barbarism, and in this struggle the proletariat will do its share.”

The **Münchener Post** of August 1:

“When it comes to defending our country against the bloody czardom we will not be made citizens of the second class.”

The **Halle Volksblatt** wrote on August 5:

“If this is so, if we have been attacked by Russia, and everything seems to corroborate this statement – then the social democracy, as a matter of course, must vote in favour of all means of defence. With all our strength we must fight to drive czarism from our country!”

And on August 18:

“Now that the die is cast in favour of the sword, it is not only the duty of national defence and national existence that puts the weapon into our hands as into the hands of every German, but also the realisation that in the enemy whom we are fighting in the east we are striking a blow at the foe of all culture and all progress ... The overthrow of Russia is synonymous with the victory of freedom in Europe.”

On August 5, the **Braunschweiger Volksfreund** wrote:

“The irresistible force of military preparation drives everything before it. But the class-conscious labour movement obeys, not an outside force, but its own conviction, when it defends the ground upon which it stands from attack in the east.”

The **Essener Arbeiterzeitung** cried out on August 3:

“If this country is threatened by Russia’s determination, then the social democrats, since the fight is against Russian blood – czarism, against the perpetrator of a million crimes against freedom and culture, will allow none to excel them in the fulfilment of their duty, in their willingness

to sacrifice. Down with czarism! Down with the home of barbarism! Let that be our slogan!"

Similarly the **Bielefelder Volkswacht** writes on August 4:

"Everywhere the same cry: against Russian despotism and faithlessness."

The Elberfeld party organ on August 5:

"All Western Europe is vitally interested in the extermination of rotten murderous czarism. But this human interest is crushed by the greed of England and France to cheek the profits that have been made possible by German capital."

The **Rheinische Zeitung** in Cologne:

"Do your duty, friends, wherever fate may place you. You are fighting for the civilisation of Europe, for the independence of your fatherland, for your own welfare."

The **Schleswig-Holstein Volkszeitung** of August 7 writes:

"Of course we are living in an age of capitalism. Of course we will continue to have class struggles after the great war is over. But these class struggles will be fought out in a freer state, they will be far more confined to the economic field than before. In the future the treatment of socialists as outcasts, as citizens of the second class, as politically rightless will be impossible, once the czardom of Russia has vanished."

On August 11, the **Hamburger Echo** cried:

"We are fighting to defend ourselves not so much against England and France as against czarism. But this war we carry on

with the greatest enthusiasm, for it is the war for civilisation.”

And the Lübeck party organ declared, as late as September 4:

“If European liberty is saved, then Europe will have German arms to thank for it Our fight is a fight against the worst enemy of all liberty and all democracy.”

Thus the chorus of the German party press sounded and resounded.

In the beginning of the war the German government accepted the proffered assistance. Nonchalantly it fastened the laurels of the liberator of European culture to its helmet. Yes, it endeavoured to carry through the role of the “liberator of nations,” though often with visible discomfort and rather awkward grace. It flattered the Poles and the Jews in Russia, and egged one nation on against the other, using the policies that had proven so successful in their colonial warfare, where again and again they played up one chief against the other. And the social democrats followed each leap and bound of German imperialism with remarkable agility. While the Reichstag group covered up every shameful outrage with a discrete silence, the social democratic press filled the air with jubilant melodies, rejoicing in the liberty that “German riflebutts” had brought to the poor victims of czarism.

Even the theoretical organ of the party, **Neue Zeit**, wrote on the twenty-eighth of August:

“The border population of the ‘little father’s’ realm greeted the coming of the German troops with cries of joy. For these Poles and Jews have but one conception of their fatherland, that of corruption and rule by the knout. Poor devils, really fatherlandless creatures, these



downtrodden subjects of bloody Nicholas. Even should they desire to do so, they could find nothing to defend but their chains. And so they live and toil, hoping and longing that German rifles, carried by German men, will crush the whole czarist system ... A clear and definite purpose still lives in the German working class, though the thunder of a world war is crashing over its head. It will defend itself from the allies of Russian barbarism in the west to bring about an honorable peace. It will give to the task of destroying czarism the last breath of man and beast.”

After the social democratic group had stamped the war as a war of defence for the German nation and European culture, the social democratic press proceeded to hail it as the “saviour of the oppressed nations.” Hindenburg became the executor of Marx and Engels.

The memory of our party has played it a shabby trick. It forgot all its principles, its pledges, the decision of international congresses just at the moment when they should have found their application. And to its great misfortune, it remembered the heritage of Karl Marx and dug it out of the dust of passing years at the very moment when it could serve only to decorate Prussian militarism, for whose destruction Karl Marx was willing to sacrifice “the last breath of man and beast.” Long forgotten chords that were sounded by Marx in the **Neue Rheinische Zeitung** against the vassal state of Nicholas I, during the German March Revolution of 1848, suddenly reawakened in the ears of the German social democracy in the year of Our Lord 1914, and called them to arms arm in arm with Prussian junkerdom, against the Russia of the Great Revolution of 1905.

This is where a revision should have been made; the slogans of the March Revolution should have been

brought into accord with the historical experiences of the last seventy years.

In 1848 Russian czarism was, in truth, “the guardian of European reaction.” The product of Russian social conditions, firmly rooted in its medieval, agricultural state, absolutism was the protector and at the same time the mighty director of monarchical reaction. This was weakened, particularly in Germany where a system of small states still obtained. As late as 1851 it was possible for Nicholas I to assure Berlin through the Prussian consul von Rochow “that he would, indeed, have been pleased to see the revolution destroyed by the roots when General von Wrangel advanced upon Berlin in November, 1848.” At another time, in a warning to Manteuffel, the mar stated, “that he relied upon the imperial ministry, under the leadership of His Highness, to defend the rights of the crown against the chambers, and give to the principles of conservatism their due.” It was possible for the same Nicholas I to bestow the Order of Alexander Nevski on a Prussian ministerial president in recognition of his “constant efforts to preserve legal order in Prussia.”

The Crimean War worked a noticeable change in this respect. It ended with the military and therefore with the political bankruptcy of the old system. Russian absolutism was forced to grant reforms, to modernise its rule, to adjust itself to capitalist conditions. In so doing, it gave its little finger to the devil who already holds it firmly by the arm, and will eventually get it altogether. The Crimean War was, by the way, an instructive example of the kind of liberation that can be brought to a downtrodden people “at the point of a gun.” The military overthrow at Sedan brought France its republic. But this republic was not the gift of the Bismarck soldiery. Prussia, at that time as today, can give to other peoples nothing but its own junker rule. Republican France was the ripe fruit of inner social

struggles and of the three revolutions that had preceded it. The crash at Sevastopol was in effect similar to that of Jena. But because there was no revolutionary movement in Russia, it led to the outward renovation and reaffirmation of the old regime.

But the reforms that opened the road for capitalist development in Russia during the sixties were possible only with the money of a capitalist system. This money was furnished by Western European capital. It came from Germany and France, and has created a new relationship that has lasted down to the present day. Russian absolutism is now subsidised by the western European bourgeoisie. No longer does the Russian ruble "roll in diplomatic chambers" as Prince William of Prussia bitterly complained in 1854, "Into the very chambers of the king." On the contrary, German and French money is rolling to Petersburg to feed a regime that would long ago have breathed its last without this life-giving juice. Russian czarism is today no longer the product of Russian conditions; its root lies in the capitalist conditions of Western Europe. And the relationship is shifting from decade to decade. In the same measure as the old root of Russian absolutism in Russia itself is being destroyed, the new, West European root is growing stronger and stronger. Besides lending their financial support, Germany and France, since 1870, have been vying with each other to lend Russia their political support as well. As revolutionary forces arise from the womb of the Russian people itself to fight against Russian absolutism, they meet with an ever growing resistance in Western Europe, which stands ready to lend to threatened czarism its moral and political support. So when, in the beginning of the eighties the older Russian socialist movement severely shook the czarist government and partly destroyed its authority within

and without, Bismarck made his treaty with Russia and strengthened its position in international politics.

Capitalist development, tenderly nurtured by czarism with its own hands, finally bore fruit: in the nineties the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat began. The erstwhile “guardian of reaction!” was forced to grant a meaningless constitution, to seek a new protector from the rising flood in its own country. And it found this protector – in Germany. The Germany of Buelow must pay the debt of gratitude that the Prussia of Wrangel and Manteuffel had incurred. Relations were completely reversed. Russian support against the revolution in Germany is superseded by German aid against the revolution in Russia. Spies, outrages, betrayals – a demagogic agitation, like that which blessed the times of the Holy Alliance, was unleashed in Germany against the fighters for the cause of Russian freedom, and followed to the very doorsteps of the Russian Revolution. In the Königsberg trial of 1904 this wave of persecution was at its height. This trial threw a scathing light upon a whole historical development since 1848 and showed the complete change of relations between Russian absolutism and European reaction. “*Tua res agitur*” [Your problem is being attended to!] cried a Prussian minister of justice to the ruling classes of Germany, pointing to the tottering foundation of the czarist regime. “The establishment of a democratic republic in Russia would strongly influence Germany,” declared First District Attorney Schulze in Königsberg. “When my neighbour’s home burns my own is also in danger.” And his assistant Casper also emphasised: “It is naturally not indifferent to Germany’s public interests whether this bulwark of absolutism stands or falls. Certainly the flames of a revolutionary movement may easily spring over into Germany ...”

The revolution was overthrown, but the very causes that led to its temporary downfall are valuable in a discussion of the position taken by the German social democracy in this war. That the Russian uprising in 1905-06 was unsuccessful in spite of its unequalled expenditure of revolutionary force, its clearness of purpose and tenacity can be ascribed to two distinct causes. The one lies in the inner character of the revolution itself, in its enormous historical program, in the mass of economic and political problems that it was forced to face. Some of them, for instance, the agrarian problem, cannot possibly be solved within capitalist society. There was the difficulty furthermore of creating a class state for the supremacy of the modern bourgeoisie against the counter-revolutionary opposition of the bourgeoisie as a whole. To the onlooker it would seem that the Russian Revolution was doomed to failure because it was a proletarian revolution with bourgeois duties and problems, or if you wish, a bourgeois revolution waged by socialist proletarian methods, a crash of two generations amid lightning and thunder, the fruit of the delayed industrial development of class conditions in Russia and their over-ripeness in Western Europe. From this point of view its downfall in 1906 signifies not its bankruptcy, but the natural closing of the first chapter, upon which the second must follow with the inevitability of a natural law.

The second cause was of external nature; it lay in Western Europe. European reaction once more hastened to help its endangered protege; not with lead and bullets, although "German guns" were in German fists even in 1905 and only waited for a signal from Petersburg to attack the neighbouring Poles. Europe rendered an assistance that was equally valuable: financial subsidy and political alliances were arranged to help czarism in Russia. French money paid for the

armed forces that broke down the Russian Revolution; from Germany came the moral and political support that helped the Russian government to clamber out from the depths of shame into which Japanese torpedoes and Russian proletarian fists had thrust it. In 1910, in Potsdam, official Germany received Russian czarism with open arms. The reception of the blood-stained monarch at the gates of the German capital was not only the German blessing for the throttling of Persia, but above all for the hangman's work of the Russian counter-revolution. It was the official banquet of German and European "Kultur" over what they believed to be the grave of the Russian Revolution.

And strange! At that time, when this challenging feast upon the grave of the Russian Revolution was held in its own home, the German social democracy remained silent, and had completely forgotten "the heritage of our masters" from 1848. At that time, when the hangman was received in Potsdam, not a sound, not a protest, not an article vetoed this expression of solidarity with the Russian counter-revolution. Only since this war has begun, since the police permits it, the smallest party organ intoxicates itself with bloodthirsty attacks upon the hangman of Russian liberty. Yet nothing could have disclosed more clearly than did this triumphal tour of the czar in 1910 that the oppressed Russian proletariat was the victim, not only of domestic reaction, but of Western European reaction as well. Their fight, like that of the March revolutionists of 1848, was against reaction, not only in their own country, but against its guardians in all other European countries.

After the inhuman crusades of the counter-revolution had somewhat subsided, the revolutionary ferment in the Russian proletariat once more became active. The flood began to rise and to boil. Economic strikes in Russia, according to the official reports, involved

46,623 workers and 256,386 days in 1910; 96,730 workers and 768,556 days in 1911; and 89,771 workers and 1,214,881 days in the first five months of 1912. Political mass strikes, protests and demonstrations comprised 1,005,000 workers in 1912, 1,272,000 in 1913. In 1914 the flood rose higher and higher. On January 22, the anniversary of the beginning of the revolution, there was a demonstration mass strike of 200,000 workers. As in the days before the revolution of 1905, the flame broke out in June, in the Caucasus. In Baku, 40,000 workers were on a general strike. The flames leaped over to Petersburg. On the seventeenth of June 80,000 workers in Petersburg laid down their tools, on the twentieth of July, 200,000 were out; July 23 the general strike movement was spreading out all over Russia, barricades were being built, the revolution was on its way. A few more months and it would have come, its flags fluttering in the wind. A few more years, and perhaps the whole world political constellation would have been changed. imperialism perhaps would have received a firm check on its mad impulse.

But German reaction checked the revolutionary movement. From Berlin and Vienna came declarations of war, and the Russian Revolution was buried beneath its wreckage. "German guns" are shattering, not czarism, but its most dangerous enemy. The hopefully fluttering flag of the revolution sank down amid a wild whirlpool of war. But it sank honourably, and it will rise again out of the horrible massacre, in spite of "German guns," in spite of victory or defeat for Russia on the battlefields.

The national revolts in Russia which the Germans tried to foster, too, were unsuccessful. The Russian provinces were evidently less inclined to fall for the bait of Hindenburg's cohorts than the German social democracy. The Jews, practical people that they are, were able to count on their fingers that "German fists"

which have been unable to overthrow their own Prussian reaction, can hardly be expected to smash Russian absolutism. The Poles, exposed to the triple-headed war, were not in a position to answer their “liberators” in audible language. But they will have remembered that Polish children were taught to say the Lord’s prayer in the German language with bloody welts on their backs, will not have forgotten the liberality of Prussian anti-Polish laws. All of them, Poles, Jews and Russians, had no difficulty in understanding that the “German gun,” when it descends upon their heads, brings not liberty, but death.

To couple the legend of Russian liberation with its Marxian heritage is worse than a poor joke on the part of the German social democracy. It is a crime. To Marx, the Russian revolution was a turning point in the history of the world. Every political and historical perspective was made dependent upon the one consideration, “provided the Russian revolution has not already broken out.” Marx believed in the Russian revolution and expected it even at a time when Russia was only a state of vassals. When the war broke out the Russian Revolution had occurred. Its first attempt had not been victorious; but it could not be ignored; it is on the order of the day. And yet our German social democrats came with “German guns,” declaring the Russian Revolution null and void, struck it from the pages of history. In 1848 Marx spoke from the German barricades; in Russia there was a hopeless reaction. In 1914 Russia was in the throes of a revolution; while its German “liberators” were cowed by the fists of Prussian junkerdom.

But the liberating mission of the German armies was only an episode. German imperialism soon raised its uncomfortable mask and turned openly against France and England. Here, too, it was supported valiantly by a



large number of the party papers. They ceased railing against the bloody czar, and held up “perfidious Albion” and its merchant soul to the public disdain. They set out to free Europe, no longer from Russian absolutism, but from English naval supremacy. The hopeless confusion in which the party had become entangled found a drastic illustration in the desperate attempt made by the more thoughtful portion of our party press to meet this new change of front. In vain they tried to force the war back into its original channels, to nail it down to the “heritage of our masters” – that is, to the myth that they, the social democracy, had themselves created. “With heavy heart I have been forced to mobilise the army against a neighbour at whose side I have fought on so many battlefields. With honest sorrow I saw a friendship, truly served by Germany, break.” That was simple, open, honest. But when the rhetoric of the first weeks of war backed down before the lapidary language of imperialism, the German social democracy lost its only plausible excuse.

**Rosa Luxemburg**  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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## **Chapter 6**

Of equal importance in the attitude of the social democracy was the official adoption of a program of civil peace, i.e., the cessation of the class struggle for the duration of the war. The declaration that was read by the social democratic group in the Reichstag on the fourth of August had been agreed upon in advance with representatives of the government and the capitalist parties. It was little more than a patriotic grandstand play, prepared behind the scenes and delivered for the benefit of the people at home and in other nations.

To the leading elements in the labour movement, the vote in favour of the war credits by the Reichstag group was a cue for the immediate settlement of all labour controversies. Nay more, they announced this to the manufacturers as a patriotic duty incurred by labour when it agreed to observe a civil peace. These same labour leaders undertook to supply city labour to farmers in order to assure a prompt harvest. The leaders of the social democratic women's movement united with capitalist women for "national service" and placed the most important elements that remained after the mobilisation at the disposal of national Samaritan work. Socialist women worked in soup kitchens and on advisory commissions instead of carrying on agitation work for the party.

Under the anti-socialist laws the party had utilised parliamentary elections to spread its agitation and to keep a firm hold upon the population in spite of the state of siege that had been declared against the party and the persecution of the socialist press. In this crisis the social democratic movement has voluntarily relinquished all propaganda and education in the interest of the proletarian class struggle, during Reichstag and Landtag elections. Parliamentary elections have everywhere been reduced to the simple bourgeois formula; the catching of votes for the candidates of the party on the basis of an amicable and peaceful settlement with its capitalist opponents. When the social democratic representatives in the Landtag and in the municipal commissions – with the laudable exceptions of the Prussian and Alsatian Landtag – with high sounding references to the existing state of civil peace, voted their approval of the war credits that had been demanded, it only emphasised how completely the party had broken with things as they were before the war.

The social democratic press, with a few exceptions, proclaimed the principle of national unity as the highest duty of the German people. It warned the people not to withdraw their funds from the savings banks lest by so doing they unbalance the economic life of the nation, and hinder the savings banks in liberally buying war-loan bonds. It pleaded with proletarian women that they should spare their husbands at the front the tales of suffering that they and their children were being forced to undergo, to bear in silence the neglect of the government, to cheer the fighting warriors with happy stories of family life and favourable reports of prompt assistance through government agencies. They rejoiced that the educational work that had been conducted for so many years in and through the labour movement had become

a conspicuous asset in conducting the war. Something of this spirit the following example will show:

“A friend in need is a friend indeed. This old adage has once more proven its soundness. The social democratic proletariat that has been prosecuted and clubbed for its opinions went, like one man, to protect our homes. German labour unions that had so often suffered both in Germany and in Prussia report unanimously that the best of their members have joined the colours. Even capitalist papers like the **General-Anzeiger** note the fact and express the conviction that ‘these people’ will do their duty as well as any man, that blows will rain most heavily where they stand.

“As for us, we are convinced that our labour unionists can do more than deal out blows. Modern mass armies have by no means simplified the work of their generals. It is practically impossible to move forward large troop divisions in close marching order under the deadly fire of modern artillery. Ranks must be carefully widened, must be more accurately controlled. Modern warfare requires discipline and clearness of vision not only in the divisions but in every individual soldier. The war will show how vastly human material has been improved by the educational work of the labour unions, how well their activity will serve the nation in these times of awful stress. The Russian and the French soldier may be capable of marvellous deeds of bravery. But in cool, collected consideration none will surpass the German labour unionists. Then too, many of our organised workers know the ways and byways of the borderland as well as they know their own pockets, and not a few of them are accomplished linguists. The Prussian advance in 1866 has been termed a schoolmasters’ victory. This will be a victory of labour union leaders”

(**Frankfurter Volksstimme**, August 18, 1914).

In the same strain **Neue Zeit**, the theoretical organ of the party, declared (no.23, September 25, 1914):

“Until the question of victory or defeat has been decided, all doubts must disappear, even as to the causes of the war. Today there can be no difference of party, class and nationality within the army or the population.”

And in number 8, November 27, 1914, the same **Neue Zeit** declared in a chapter on *The Limitations of the International*:

“The world war divides the socialists of the world into different camps and especially into different national camps. The International cannot prevent this. In other words, the International ceases to be an effective instrument in times of war. It is, on the whole, a peace instrument. Its great historic problem is the struggle for peace and the class struggle in times of peace.”

Briefly, therefore, beginning with the fourth of August until the day when peace shall be declared, the social democracy has declared the class struggle extinct. The first thunder of Krupp cannons in Belgium welded Germany into a wonderland of class solidarity and social harmony.

How is this miracle to be understood? The class struggle is known to be not a social democratic invention that can be arbitrarily set aside for a period of time whenever it may seem convenient to do so. The proletarian class struggle is older than the social democracy, is an elementary product of class society. It flamed up all over Europe when capitalism first came into power. The modern proletariat was not led by the social democracy into the class struggle. On the

contrary the international social democratic movement was called into being by the class struggle to bring a conscious aim and unity into the various local and scattered fragments of the class struggle.

What then has changed in this respect when the war broke out? Have private property, capitalist exploitation and class rule ceased to exist? Or have the propertied classes in a spell of patriotic fervour declared: in view of the needs of the war we hereby turn over the means of production, the earth, the factories and the mills therein, into the possession of the people? Have they relinquished the right to make profits out of these possessions? Have they set aside all political privileges, will they sacrifice them upon the altar of the fatherland, now that it is in danger? It is, to say the least, a rather naive hypothesis, and sounds almost like a story from a kindergarten primer. And yet the declaration of our official leaders that the class struggle has been suspended permits no other interpretation. Of course nothing of the sort has occurred. Property rights, exploitation and class rule, even political oppression in all its Prussian thoroughness, have remained intact. The cannons in Belgium and in Eastern Prussia have not had the slightest influence upon the fundamental social and political structure of Germany.

The cessation of the class struggle was, therefore, a deplorably one-sided affair. While capitalist oppression and exploitation, the worst enemies of the working class, remain; socialist and labour union leaders have generously delivered the working class, without a struggle, into the hands of the enemy for the duration of the war. While the ruling classes are fully armed with the property and supremacy rights, the working class, at the advice of the social democracy, has laid down its arms.

Once before, in 1848 in France, the proletariat experienced this miracle of class harmony, this fraternity of all classes of a modern capitalist state of society. In his [Class Struggles in France](#), Karl Marx writes:

“In the eyes of the proletariat, who confused the moneyed aristocracy with the bourgeoisie, in the imagination of republican idealists, who denied the very existence of classes, or attributed them to a monarchical form of government, in the deceitful phrases of those bourgeois who had hitherto been excluded from power, the rule of the bourgeoisie was ended when the republic was proclaimed. At that time all royalists became republican, all millionaires in Paris became labourers. In the word *Fraternité*, the brotherhood of man, this imaginary destruction of classes found official expression. This comfortable abstraction from class differences, this sentimental balancing of class interests, this utopian disregard of the class struggle, this *Fraternité* was the real slogan of the February Revolution ... The Parisian proletariat rejoiced in an orgy of brotherhood ... The Parisian proletariat, looking upon the republic as its own creation, naturally acclaimed every act of the provisional bourgeois government. Willingly it permitted Caussidiere to use its members as policemen to protect the property of Paris. With unquestioning faith it allowed Louis Blanc to regulate wage differences between workers and masters. In their eyes it was a matter of honour to preserve the fair name of the republic before the peoples of Europe.”

Thus in February 1848, a naïve Parisian proletariat set aside the class struggle. But let us not forget that even they committed this mistake only after the July monarchy had been crushed by their revolutionary action, after a republic had been established. The

fourth of August, 1914, is an inverted February Revolution. It is the setting aside of class differences, not under a republic, but under a military monarchy, not after a victory of the people over reaction, but after a victory of reaction over the people, not with the proclamation of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, but with the proclamation of a state of siege, after the press had been choked and the constitution annihilated.

Impressively the government of Germany proclaimed a civil peace. Solemnly the parties promised to abide by it. But as experienced politicians these gentlemen know full well that it is fatal to trust too much to promises. They secured civil peace for themselves by the very real measure of a military dictatorship. This too the social democratic group accepted without protest or opposition. In the declarations of August 4 and December 2 there is not a syllable of indignation over the affront contained in the proclamation of military rule. When it voted for civil peace and war credits, the social democracy silently gave its consent to military rule as well, and laid itself, bound and gagged, at the feet of the ruling classes. The declaration of military rule was purely an antisocialist measure. From no other side were resistance, protest, action, and difficulties to be expected. As a reward for its capitulation the social democracy merely received what it would have received under any circumstances, even after an unsuccessful resistance, namely, military rule. The impressive declaration of the Reichstag group emphasises the old socialist principle of the right of nations to self-determination, as an explanation of their vote in favour of war credits. Self-determination for the German proletariat was the straightjacket of a siege. Never in the history of the world has a party made itself more ridiculous.

But, more! In refuting the existence of the class struggle, the social democracy has denied the very basis



of its own existence. What is the very breath of its body, if not the class struggle? What role could it expect to play in the war, once having sacrificed the class struggle, the fundamental principle of its existence? The social democracy has destroyed its mission, for the period of the war, as an active political party, as a representative of working-class politics. It has thrown aside the most important weapon it possessed, the power of criticism of the war from the peculiar point of view of the working class. Its only mission now is to play the role of the gendarme over the working class under a state of military rule.

German freedom, that same German freedom for which, according to the declaration of the Reichstag group, Krupp cannons are now fighting, has been endangered by this attitude of the social democracy far beyond the period of the present war. The leaders of the social democracy are convinced that democratic liberties for the working class will come as a reward for its allegiance to the fatherland. But never in the history of the world has an oppressed class received political rights as a reward for service rendered to the ruling classes. History is full of examples of shameful deceit on the part of the ruling classes, even when solemn promises were made before the war broke out. The social democracy has not assured the extension of liberty in Germany. It has sacrificed those liberties that the working class possessed before the war broke out.

The indifference with which the German people have allowed themselves to be deprived of the freedom of the press, of the right of assembly and of public life, the fact that they not only calmly bore, but even applauded, the state of siege is unexampled in the history of modern society. In England the freedom of the press has nowhere been violated, in France there is incomparably more freedom of public opinion than in Germany. In no country has public opinion so

completely vanished, nowhere has it been so completely superseded by official opinion, by the order of the government, as in Germany. Even in Russia there is only the destructive work of a public censor who effectively wipes out opposition of opinion. But not even there have they descended to the custom of providing articles ready for the press to the opposition papers.

In no other country has the government forced the opposition press to express in its columns the politics that have been dictated and ordered by the government in “Confidential Conferences!” Such measures were unknown even in Germany during the war of 1870. At that time the press enjoyed unlimited freedom, and accompanied the events of the war, to Bismarck’s active resentment, with criticism that was often exceedingly sharp. The newspapers were full of active discussion on war aims, on questions of annexation, and constitutionality. When Johann Jacobi was arrested, a storm of indignation swept over Germany, so that even Bismarck felt obliged to disavow all responsibility for this “mistake” of the powers of reaction. Such was the situation in Germany at a time when Bebel and Liebknecht, in the name of the German working class, had declined all community of interests with the ruling jingoes. It took a social democracy with four and a half million votes to conceive of the touching *Burgfrieden*, to assent to war credits, to bring upon us the worst military dictatorship that was ever suffered to exist. That such a thing is possible in Germany today, had not only the bourgeois press, but the highly developed and influential socialist press as well, permits these things without even the pretence of opposition bears a fatal significance for the future of German liberty. It proves that society in Germany today has within itself no foundation for political freedom, since it allows itself to be thus lightly deprived of its most sacred rights.

Let us not forget that the political rights that existed in Germany before the war were not won, as *were* those of France and England, in great and repeated revolutionary struggles, are not firmly anchored in the lives of the people by the power of revolutionary tradition. They are the gift of a Bismarckian policy granted after a period of victorious counter-revolution that lasted over twenty years. German liberties did not ripen on the field of revolution, they are the product of diplomatic gambling by Prussian military monarchy, they are the cement with which this military monarchy has united the present German empire. Danger threatens the free development of German freedom not, as the German Reichstag group believes, from Russia, but in Germany itself. It lies in the peculiar counter-revolutionary origin of the German constitution, and looms dark in the reactionary powers that have controlled the German state since the empire was founded, conducting a silent but relentless war against these pitiful "German liberties."

The Junkers of East of the Elbe, the business jingoes, the arch-reactionaries of the Center, the degraded "German liberals," the personal rulership, the sway of the sword, the Zabern policy that triumphed all over Germany before the war broke out, these are the real enemies of culture and liberty; and the war, the state of siege and the attitude of the social democracy are strengthening the powers of darkness all over the land. The liberal, to be sure, can explain away this graveyard quietly in Germany with a characteristically liberal explanation; to him it is only a temporary sacrifice, for the duration of the war. But to a people that are politically ripe, a sacrifice of their rights and their public life, even temporarily, is as impossible as for a human being to give up, for a time, his right to breathe. A people that give silent consent to military government in times of war thereby admit that political

independence at any time is superfluous. The passive submission of the social democracy to the present state of siege and its vote for war credits without attaching the slightest condition thereto, its acceptance of a civil peace, has demoralised the masses, the only existing pillar of German constitutional government, has strengthened the reaction of its rulers, the enemies of constitutional government.

By sacrificing the class struggle, our party has moreover, once and for all, given up the possibility of making its influence effectively felt in determining the extent of the war and the terms of peace. To its own official declaration, its acts have been a stinging blow. While protesting against all annexations, which are, after all, the logical consequences of an imperialist war that is successful from the military point of view, it has handed over every weapon that the working class possessed that might have empowered the masses to mobilise public opinion in their own direction, to exert an effective pressure upon the terms of war and of peace. By assuring militarism of peace and quiet at home, the social democracy has given its military rulers permission to follow their own course without even considering the interests of the masses, has unleashed in the hearts of the ruling classes the most unbridled imperialistic tendencies. In other words, when the social democracy adopted its platform of civil peace, and the political disarmament of the working class, it condemned its own demand of no annexations to impotence.

Thus the social democracy has added another crime to the heavy burden it already has to bear, namely the lengthening of the war. The commonly accepted dogma that we can oppose the war only so long as it is threatened has become a dangerous trap. As an inevitable consequence, once the war has come, social democratic political action is at an end. There can be,

then, but one question, victory or defeat, i.e., the class struggle must stop for the period of the war. But actually the greatest problem for the political movement of the social democracy begins only after the war has broken out. At the International congresses held in Stuttgart in 1907 and in Basel in 1912, the German party and labour union leaders unanimously voted in favour of a resolution which says:

“Should war nevertheless break out, it shall be the duty of the social democracy to work for a speedy peace, and to strive with every means in its power to utilise the industrial and political crisis to accomplish the awakening of the people, thus hastening the overthrow of the capitalist class rule.”

What has the social democracy done in this war? Exactly the contrary. By voting in favour of war credits and entering upon a civil peace, it has striven, by all the means in its power, to prevent the industrial and political crisis, to prevent an awakening of the masses by the war. It strives “with all the means in its power” to save the capitalist state from its own anarchy to reduce the number of its victims. It is claimed – we have often heard this argument used by Reichstag deputies – that not one man less would have fallen upon the battlefields if the social democratic group had voted against the war credits. Our party press has steadfastly maintained that we must support and join in the defence of our country in order to reduce the number of bloody victims that this war shall cost.

But the policy that we have followed out has had exactly the opposite effect. In the first place, thanks to the civil peace, and the patriotic attitude of the social democracy, the imperialist war unleashed its furies without fear. Hitherto, fear of restiveness at home, fear of the fury of the hungry populace have been a load upon the minds of the ruling classes that effectively

checked them in their bellicose desires. In the well-known words of Buelow: "They are trying to put off the war chiefly because they fear the social democracy." Rohrbach says in his **Krieg und die Deutsche Politik**, page 7, "unless elemental catastrophies intervene, the only power that can force Germany to make peace is the hunger of the breadless." Obviously, he meant a hunger that attracts attention, that forces itself unpleasantly upon the ruling classes in order to force them to pay heed to its demands. Let us see, finally, what a prominent military theoretician, General Bernhardi, says, in his great work **Vom Heutigen Kriege**:

"Thus modern mass armies make war difficult for a variety of reasons. Moreover they constitute, in and of themselves, a danger that must never be underestimated.

"The mechanism of such an army is so huge and so complicated, that it can remain efficient and flexible only so long as its cogs and wheels work, in the main, dependably, and obvious moral confusion is carefully prevented. These are things that cannot be completely avoided, as little as we can conduct a war exclusively with victorious battles. They can be overcome if they appear only within certain restricted limits. But when great, compact masses once shake off their leaders, when a spirit of panic becomes widespread, when a lack of sustenance becomes extensively felt, when the spirit of revolt spreads out among the masses of the army, then the army becomes not only ineffectual against the enemy, it becomes a menace to itself and to its leaders. When the army bursts the bands of discipline, when it voluntarily interrupts the course of military operation, it creates problems that its leaders are unable to solve.

"War, with its modern mass armies, is, under all circumstances, a dangerous

game, a game that demands the greatest possible sacrifice, personal and financial sacrifice the state can offer. Under such circumstances it is clear that provision must be made everywhere that the war, once it has broken out, be brought to an end as quickly as possible, to release the extreme tension that must accompany this supreme effort on the part of whole nations.”

Thus capitalist politicians and military authorities alike believe war, with its modern mass armies, to be a dangerous game. And therein lay for the social democracy the most effectual opportunity to prevent the rulers of the present day from precipitating war and to force them to end it as rapidly as possible. But the position of the social democracy in this war cleared away all doubts, has torn down the dams that held back the storm-flood of militarism. In fact it has created a power for which neither Bernhardi nor any other capitalist statesman dared hope in his wildest dreams. From the camp of the social democrats came the cry: “Durchhalten” [see it through], i.e., the continuation of this human slaughter. And so the thousands of victims that have fallen for months on battlefields lie upon our conscience.

**Rosa Luxemburg**  
**The Junius Pamphlet**

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## Chapter 7

“But since we have been unable to prevent the war, since it has come in spite of us, and our country is facing invasion, shall we leave our country defenceless! Shall we deliver it into the hands of the enemy? Does not socialism demand the right of nations to determine their own destinies? Does it not mean that every people is justified, nay more, is in duty bound, to protect its liberties, its independence? ‘When the house is on fire, shall we not first try to put out the blaze before stopping to ascertain the incendiary?’”

These arguments have been repeated, again and again in defence of the attitude of the social democracy in Germany and in France.

Even in the neutral countries this argument has been used. Translated into Dutch we read for instance:

“When the ship leaks must we not seek, first of all, to stop the hole?”

To be sure. Fie upon a people that capitulates before invasion and fie upon a party that capitulates before the enemy within.

But there is one thing that the firemen in the burning house have forgotten: that in the mouth of a socialist, the phrase “defending one’s fatherland” cannot mean



playing the role of cannon fodder under the command of an imperialistic bourgeoisie.

Is an invasion really the horror of all horrors, before which all class conflict within the country must subside as though spellbound by some supernatural witchcraft? According to the police theory of bourgeois patriotism and military rule, every evidence of the class struggle is a crime against the interests of the country because they maintain that it constitutes a weakening of the stamina of the nation. The social democracy has allowed itself to be perverted into this same distorted point of view. Has not the history of modern capitalist society shown that in the eyes of capitalist society, foreign invasion is by no means the unmitigated terror as it is generally painted; that on the contrary, it is a measure to which the bourgeoisie has frequently and gladly resorted as an effective weapon against the enemy within? Did not the Bourbons and the aristocrats of France invite foreign invasion against the Jacobins? Did not the Austrian counter-revolution in 1849 call out the French invaders against Rome, the Russian against Budapest? Did not the “Party of Law and Order” in France in 1850 openly threaten an invasion of the Cossacks in order to bring the National Assembly to terms? And was not the Bonaparte army released, and the support of the Prussian army against the Paris Commune assured, by the famous contract between Jules Favre, Thiers and Co., and Bismarck?

This historical evidence led Karl Marx, forty-five years ago, to expose the “national wars” of modern capitalist society as miserable frauds. In his [famous address to the General Council](#) of the International on the downfall of the Paris Commune, he said:

“That, after the greatest war of modern times the belligerent armies, the victor and the vanquished, should unite for the mutual butchery of the proletariat – this

incredible event proves, not as Bismarck would have us believe, the final overthrow of the new social power, but the complete disintegration of the old bourgeois society. The highest heroic accomplishment of which the old order is capable is the national war. And this has now proved to be a fraud perpetrated by government for no other purpose than to put off the class struggle, a fraud that is bared as soon as the class struggle flares up in a civil war. Class rule can no longer hide behind a national uniform. The national governments are united against the proletariat.”

In capitalist history, invasion and class struggle are not opposites, as the official legend would have us believe, but one is the means and the expression of the other. Just as invasion is the true and tried weapon in the hands of capital against the class struggle, so on the other hand the fearless pursuit of the class struggle has always proven the most effective preventive of foreign invasions. On the brink of modern times are the examples of the Italian cities, Florence and Milan, with their century of bitter struggle against the Hohenstaufen. The stormy history of these cities, torn by inner conflicts, proves that the force and the fury of inner class struggles not only does not weaken the defensive powers of the community, but that, on the contrary, from their fires shoot the only flames that are strong enough to withstand every attack from a foreign foe.

But the classic example of our own times is the Great French Revolution. In 1793 Paris, the heart of France, was surrounded by enemies. And yet Paris and France at that time did not succumb to the invasion of a stormy flood of European coalition; on the contrary, it welded its force in the face of the growing danger to a more gigantic opposition. If France, at that critical time, was able to meet each new coalition of the enemy

with a new miraculous and undiminished fighting spirit, it was only because of the impetuous loosening of the inmost forces of society in the great struggle of the classes of France. Today, in the perspective of a century, it is clearly discernible that only this intensification of the class struggle, that only the dictatorship of the French people and their fearless radicalism, could produce means and forces out of the soil of 'France, sufficient to defend and to sustain a newborn society against a world of enemies, against the intrigues of a dynasty, against the traitorous machinations of the aristocrats, against the attempts of the clergy, against the treachery of their generals, against the opposition of sixty departments and provincial capitals, and against the united armies and navies of monarchical Europe. The centuries have proven that not the state of siege, but relentless class struggle, is the power that awakens the spirit of self-sacrifice, the moral strength of the masses; that the class struggle is the best protection and the best defence against a foreign enemy.

This same tragic *quid pro quo* victimised the social democracy when it based its attitude in this war upon the doctrine of the right of national self-determination.

It is true that socialism gives to every people the right of independence and the freedom of independent control of its own destinies. But it is a veritable perversion of socialism to regard present-day capitalist society as the expression of this self-determination of nations. Where is there a nation in which the people have had the right to determine the form and conditions of their national, political and social existence? In Germany the determination of the people found concrete expression in the demands formulated by the German revolutionary democrats of 1848; the first fighters of the German proletariat, Marx, Engels, Lassalle, Bebel and Liebknecht, proclaimed and fought

for a united German Republic. For this ideal the revolutionary forces in Berlin and in Vienna, in those tragic days of March, shed their heart's blood upon the barricades. To carry out this program, Marx and Engels demanded that Prussia take up arms against czarism. The foremost demand made in the national program was for the liquidation of "the heap of organised decay, the Habsburg monarchy," as well as of two dozen other dwarf monarchies within Germany itself. The overthrow of the German revolution, the treachery of the German bourgeoisie to its own democratic ideals, led to the Bismarck regime and to its creature, present-day Greater Prussia, twenty-five fatherlands under one helm, the German Empire.

Modern Germany is built upon the grave of the March Revolution [of 1848] upon the wreckage of the right of self-determination of the German people. The present war, supporting Turkey and the Habsburg monarchy, and strengthening German military autocracy is a second burial of the March revolutionists, and of the national program of the German people. It is a fiendish jest of history that the social democrats, the heirs of the German patriots of 1848, should go forth in this war with the banner of "self-determination of nations" held aloft in their hands. But, perhaps the Third French Republic, with its colonial possessions in four continents and its colonial horrors in two, is the expression of the self-determination of the French nation? Or the British nation, with its India, with its South African rule of a million whites over a population of five million coloured people? Or perhaps Turkey, or the empire of the czar?

Capitalist politicians, in whose eyes the rulers of the people and the ruling classes are the nation, can honestly speak of the "right of national self-determination" in connection with such colonial

empire. To the socialist, no nation is free whose national existence is based upon the enslavement of another people, for to him colonial peoples, too, are human beings, and, as such, parts of the national state. International socialism recognises the right of free independent nations, with equal rights. But socialism alone can create such nations, can bring self-determination of their peoples. This slogan of socialism is like all its others, not an apology for existing conditions, but a guidepost, a spur for the revolutionary, regenerative, active policy of the proletariat. So long as capitalist states exist, Le., so long as imperialistic world policies determine and regulate the inner and the outer life of a nation, there can be no “national self-determination” either in war or in peace.

In the present imperialistic milieu there can be no wars of national self-defence. Every socialist policy that depends upon this determining historic milieu, that is willing to fix its policies in the world whirlpool from the point of view of a single nation, is built upon a foundation of sand.

We have already attempted to show the background for the present conflict between Germany and her opponents. It was necessary to show up more clearly the actual forces and relations that constitute the motive power behind the present war, because this legend of the defence of the existence, the freedom and civilisation of Germany plays an important part in the attitude of our group in the Reichstag and our socialist press. Against this legend historical truth must be emphasised to show that this is a war that has been prepared by German militarism and its world political ideas for years, that it was brought about in the summer of 1914, by Austrian and German diplomacy, with a full realisation of its import.

In a discussion of the general causes of the war, and of its significance, the question of the “guilty party” is completely beside the issue. Germany certainly has not the right to speak of a war of defence, but France and England have little more justification. They too are protecting, not their national, but their world political existence, their old imperialistic possessions, from the attacks of the German upstart. Doubtless the raids of German and Austrian imperialism in the Orient started the conflagration, but French imperialism, by devouring Morocco, and English imperialism, in its attempts to rape Mesopotamia, and all the other measures that were calculated to secure its rule of force in India, Russia’s Baltic policies, aiming toward Constantinople, all of these factors have carried together and piled up, brand for brand, the firewood that feeds the conflagration. If capitalist armaments have played an important role as the mainspring that times the outbreak of the catastrophe, it was a competition of armaments in all nations. And if Germany laid the cornerstone for European competitive armaments by Bismarck’s policy of 1870, this policy was furthered by that of the second empire and by the military-colonial policies of the third empire, by its expansions in East Asia and in Africa.

The French socialists have some slight foundation for their illusion of “national defence,” because neither the French government nor the French people entertained the slightest warlike desires in July 1914. “Today everyone in France is honestly, uprightly and without reservation for peace,” insisted Jaurès in the last speech of his life, on the eve of the war, when he addressed a meeting in the People’s House in Brussels. This was absolutely true, and gives the psychological explanation for the indignation of the French socialists when this criminal war was forced upon their country. But this fact was not sufficient to determine the

socialist attitude on the world war as a historic occurrence.

The events that bore the present war did not begin in July 1914 but reach back for decades. Thread by thread they have been woven together on the loom of an inexorable natural development until the firm net of imperialist world politics has encircled five continents. It is a huge historical complex of events, whose roots reach deep down into the Plutonic deeps of economic creation, whose outermost branches spread out and point away into a dimly dawning new world, events before whose all-embracing immensity, the conception of guilt and retribution, of defence and offence, sink into pale nothingness.

Imperialism is not the creation of any one or of any group of states. It is the product of a particular stage of ripeness in the world development of capital, an innately international condition, an indivisible whole, that is recognisable only in all its relations, and from which no nation can hold aloof at will. From this point of view only is it possible to understand correctly the question of "national defence!" in the present war.

The national state, national unity and independence were the ideological shield under which the capitalist nations of central Europe constituted themselves in the past century. Capitalism is incompatible with economic and political divisions, with the accompanying splitting up into small states. It needs for its development large, united territories, and a state of mental and intellectual development in the nation that will lift the demands and needs of society to a plane corresponding to the prevailing stage of capitalist production, and to the mechanism of modern capitalist class rule. Before capitalism could develop, it sought to create for itself a territory sharply defined by national limitations. This program was carried out only in France at the time of

the great revolution, for in the national and political heritage left to Europe by the feudal middle ages, this could be accomplished only by revolutionary measures. In the rest of Europe this nationalisation, like the revolutionary movement as a whole, remained the patchwork of half-kept promises. The German Empire, modern Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey, the Russian Empire and the British world empire are all living proofs of this fact. The national program could play a historic role only so long as it represented the ideological expression of a growing bourgeoisie, lusting for power, until it had fastened its class rule, in some way or other, upon the great nations of central Europe and had created within them the necessary tools and conditions of its growth. Since then, imperialism has buried the old bourgeois democratic program completely by substituting expansionist activity irrespective of national relationships for the original program of the bourgeoisie in all nations. The national phase, to be sure, has been preserved, but its real content, its function, has been perverted into its very opposite. Today the nation is but a cloak that covers imperialistic desires, a battle cry for imperialistic rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialistic wars.

This general tendency of present-day capitalist policies determines the policies of the individual states as their supreme blindly operating law, just as the laws of economic competition determine the conditions under which the individual manufacturer shall produce.

Let us assume for a moment, for the sake of argument, for the purpose of investigating this phantom of “national wars” that controls social democratic politics at the present time, that in one of the belligerent states, the war at its outbreak was



purely one of national defence. Military success would immediately demand the occupation of foreign territory. But the existence of influential capitalist groups interested in imperialistic annexations will awaken expansionist appetites as the war goes on. The imperialistic tendency that, at the beginning of hostilities, may have been existent only in embryo, will shoot up and expand in the hothouse atmosphere of war until they will in a short time determine its character, its aims and its results.

Furthermore, the system of alliance between military states that has ruled the political relations of these nations for decades in the past makes it inevitable that each of the belligerent parties, in the course of war, should try to bring its allies to its assistance, again purely from motives of self-defence. Thus one country after another is drawn into the war, inevitably new imperialistic circles are touched and others are created. Thus England drew in Japan, and, spreading the war into Asia, has brought China into the circle of political problems and has influenced the existing rivalry between Japan and the United States, between England and Japan, thus heaping up new material for future conflicts. Thus Germany has dragged Turkey into the war, bringing the question of Constantinople, of the Balkans and of Western Asia directly into the foreground of affairs.

Even he who did not realise at the outset that the world war, in its causes, was purely imperialistic, cannot fail to see after a dispassionate view of its effects that war, under the present conditions, automatically and inevitably develops into a process of world division. This was apparent from the very first. The wavering balance of power between the two belligerent parties forces each, if only for military reasons, in order to strengthen its own position, or in order to frustrate possible attacks, to hold the neutral nations in check by

intensive deals in peoples and nations, such as the German-Austrian offers to Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece on the one hand, and the English-Russian bids on the other. The “national war of defence” has the surprising effect of creating, even in the neutral nations, a general transformation of ownership and relative power, always in direct line with expansionist tendencies. Finally the fact that all modern capitalist states have colonial possessions that will, even though the war may have begun as a war of national defence, be drawn into the conflict from purely military considerations, the fact that each country will strive to occupy the colonial possessions of its opponent, or at least to create disturbances therein, automatically turns every war into an imperialistic world conflagration.

Thus the conception of even that modest, devout fatherland-loving war of defence that has become the ideal of our parliamentarians and editors is pure fiction, and shows, on their part, a complete lack of understanding of the whole war and its world relations. The character of the war is determined, not by solemn declaration, not even by the honest intentions of leading politicians, but by the momentary configuration of society and its military organisations. At the first glance the term “national war of defence” might seem applicable in the case of a country like Switzerland. But Switzerland is no national state, and, therefore, no object of comparison with other modern states. Its very “neutral” existence, its luxury of a militia are after all only the negative fruits of a latent state of war in the surrounding great military states. It will hold this neutrality only so long as it is willing to oppose this condition. How quickly such a neutral state is crushed by the military heel of imperialism in a world war the fate of Belgium shows.

This brings us to the peculiar position of the “small nation.” A classic example of such “national wars!” is

Serbia. If ever a state, according to formal considerations, had the right of national defence on its side, that state is Serbia. Deprived through Austrian annexations of its national unity, threatened by Austria in its very existence as a nation, forced by Austria into war, it is fighting, according to all human conceptions, for existence, for freedom, and for the civilisation of its people. But if the social democratic group is right in its position, then the Serbian social democrats who protested against the war in the parliament at Belgrade and refused to vote war credits are actually traitors to the most vital interests of their own nation. In reality the Serbian socialists Laptchevic and Kaclerovic have not only enrolled their names in letters of gold in the annals of the international socialist movement, but have shown a clear historical conception of the real causes of the war. In voting against war credits they therefore have done their country the best possible service. Serbia is formally engaged in a national war of defence. But its monarchy and its ruling classes are filled with expansionist desires as are the ruling classes in all modern states. They are indifferent to ethnic lines, and thus their warfare assumes an aggressive character. Thus Serbia is today reaching out toward the Adriatic coast where it is fighting out a real imperialistic conflict with Italy on the backs of the Albanians, a conflict whose final outcome will be decided not by either of the powers directly interested, but by the great powers that will speak the last word on terms of peace. But above all this we must not forget: behind Serbian nationalism stands Russian imperialism. Serbia itself is only a pawn in the great game of world politics. A judgment of the war in Serbia from a point of view that fails to take these great relations and the general world political background into account is necessarily without foundation.

The same is true of the recent Balkan War. Regarded as an isolated occurrence, the young Balkan states were historically justified in defending the old democratic program of the national state. In their historical connection, however, which makes the Balkan the burning point and the center of imperialistic world policies, these Balkan wars, also, were objectively only a fragment of the general conflict, a link in the chain of events that led, with fatal necessity, to the present world war. After the Balkan war the international social democracy tendered to the Balkan socialists, for their determined refusal to offer moral or political support to the war, a most enthusiastic ovation at the peace congress at Basel. In this act alone the International condemned in advance the position taken by the German and French socialists in the present war.

All small states, as for instance Holland, are today in a position like that of the Balkan states. "When the ship leaks, the hole must be stopped"; and what, forsooth, could little Holland fight for but for its national existence and for the independence of its people? If we consider here merely the determination of the Dutch people, even of its ruling classes, the question is doubtlessly one purely of national defence. But again proletarian politics cannot judge according to the subjective purposes of a single country. Here again it must take its position as a part of the International, according to the whole complexity of the world's political situation. Holland, too, whether it wishes to be or not, is only a small wheel in the great machine of modern world politics and diplomacy. This would become clear at once, if Holland were actually torn into the maelstrom of the world war. Its opponents would direct their attacks against its colonies. Automatically Dutch warfare would turn to the defence of its present possessions. The defence of the national independence of the Dutch people on the North Sea would expand

concretely to the defence of its rule and right of exploitation over the Malays in the East Indian Archipelago. But not enough: Dutch militarism, if forced to rely upon itself, would be crushed like a nutshell in the whirlpool of the world war. Whether it wished to or not it would become a member of one of the great national alliances. On one side or the other it must be the bearer and the tool of purely imperialistic tendencies.

Thus it is always the historic milieu of modern imperialism that determines the character of the war in the individual countries, and this milieu makes a war of national self-defence impossible.

Kautsky also expressed this, only a few years ago, in his pamphlet **Patriotism and Social Democracy**, Leipzig 1907, pages 12-14:

“Though the patriotism of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat are two entirely different, actually opposite, phenomena, there are situations in which both kinds of patriotism may join forces for united action, even in times of war. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat of a nation are equally interested in their national independence and self-determination, in the removal of all kinds of oppression and exploitation at the hands of a foreign nation. In the national conflicts that have sprung from such attempts, the patriotism of the proletariat has always united with that of the bourgeoisie. But the proletariat has become a power that may become dangerous to the ruling classes at every great national upheaval; revolution looms dark at the end of every war, as the Paris Commune of 1871 and Russian terrorism after the Russo-Japanese war have proven.

“In view of this the bourgeoisie of those nations which are not sufficiently united have actually sacrificed their national aims

where these can be maintained only at the expense of the government for they hate and fear the revolution even more than they love national independence and greatness. For this reason, the bourgeoisie sacrifices the independence of Poland and permits ancient constellations like Austria and Turkey to remain in existence, though they have been doomed to destruction for more than a generation. National struggles as the bringers of revolution have ceased in civilised Europe. National problems that today can be solved only by war or revolution will be solved in the future only by the victory of the proletariat. But then, thanks to international solidarity, they will at once assume a form entirely different from that which prevails today in a social state of exploitation and oppression. In capitalist states this problem needs no longer to trouble the proletariat in its practical struggles. It must divert its whole strength to other problems.”

“Meanwhile the likelihood that proletarian and bourgeois patriotism will unite to protect the liberty of the people is becoming more and more rare.” Kautsky then goes on to say that the French bourgeoisie has united with czarism, that Russia has ceased to be a danger for western Europe because it has been weakened by the revolution. “Under these circumstances a war in defence of national liberty in which bourgeois and proletarian may unite is nowhere to be expected” (**ibid.**, p.16).

“We have already seen that conflicts which, in the nineteenth century, might still have led some liberty-loving peoples to oppose their neighbours, by warfare, have ceased to exist. We have seen that modern militarism nowhere aims to defend important popular rights, but everywhere strives to support profits. Its activities are dedicated not to assure the independence and invulnerability of its own nationality, that is nowhere threatened, but to the

assurance and the extension of overseas conquests that again only serve the aggrandisement of capitalist profits. At the present time the conflicts between states can bring no war that proletarian interests would not, as a matter of duty, energetically oppose” (**ibid.**, p.23).

In view of all these considerations, what shall be the practical attitude of the social democracy in the present war? Shall it declare: since this is an imperialist war, since we do not enjoy in our country, any socialist self-determination, its existence or non-existence is of no consequence to us, and we will surrender it to the enemy? Passive fatalism can never be the role of a revolutionary party like the social democracy. It must neither place itself at the disposal of the existing class state, under the command of the ruling classes, nor can it stand silently by to wait until the storm is past. It must adopt a policy of active class politics, a policy that will whip the ruling classes forward in every great social crisis and that will drive the crisis itself far beyond its original extent. That is the role that the social democracy must play as the leader of the fighting proletariat.

Instead of covering this imperialist war with a lying mantle of national self – defence, the social democracy should have demanded the right of national self-determination seriously, should have used it as a lever against the imperialist war.

The most elementary demand of national defence is that the nation takes its defence into its own hands. The first step in this direction is the militia; not only the immediate armament of the entire adult male populace, but above all, popular decision in all questions of peace and war. It must demand, furthermore, the immediate removal of every form of political oppression, since the greatest political

freedom is the best basis for national defence. To proclaim these fundamental measures of national defence, to demand their realisation, that was the first duty of the social democracy.

For forty years we have tried to prove to the ruling classes as well as to the masses of the people that only the militia is really able to defend the fatherland and to make it invincible. And yet, when the first test came, we turned over the defence of our country, as a matter of course, into the hands of the standing army to be the cannon fodder under the club of the ruling classes. Our parliamentarians apparently did not even notice that the fervent wishes with which they sped these defenders of the fatherland to the front were, to all intents and purposes, an open admission that the imperial Prussian standing army is the real defender of the fatherland. They evidently did not realise that by this admission they sacrificed the fulcrum of our political program, that they gave up the militia and dissolved the practical significance of forty years of agitation against the standing army into thin air. By the act of the social democratic group our military program became a utopian doctrine, a doctrinaire obsession, that none could possibly take seriously.

The masters of the international proletariat saw the idea of the defence of the fatherland in a different light. When the proletariat of Paris, surrounded by Prussians in 1871, took the reins of the government into its own hands, Marx wrote enthusiastically:

“Paris, the center and seat of the old government powers, and simultaneously the social center of gravity of the French working class, Paris has risen in arms against the attempt of Monsieur Thiers and his Junkers to reinstate and perpetuate the government of the old powers of imperial rule. Paris was in a position to resist only, because through a state of siege, it was rid



of its army, because in its place there had been put a national guard composed chiefly of working men. It was necessary that this innovation be made a permanent institution. The first act of the Commune was, therefore, the suppression of the standing army and the substitution of an armed people ... If now, the Commune was the true representative of all healthy elements of French society and, therefore, a true national government, it was likewise, as a proletarian government, as the daring fighter for the liberation of labour, international in the truest sense of that word. Under the eyes of the Prussian army, which has annexed two French provinces to Germany, the Commune has annexed the workers of a whole world to France?" ([Address of the General Council of the International](#)).

But what did our masters say concerning the role to be played by the social democracy in the present war? In 1892 Friedrich Engels expressed the following opinion concerning the fundamental lines along which the attitude of proletarian parties in a great war should follow: "A war in the course of which Russians and Frenchmen should invade Germany would mean for the latter a life and death struggle. Under such circumstances it could assure its national existence only by using the most revolutionary methods. The present government, should it not be forced to do so, will certainly not bring on the revolution, but we have a strong party that may force its hand, or that, should it be necessary, can replace it, the Social Democratic Party.

"We have not forgotten the glorious example of France in 1793. The one hundredth anniversary of 1793 is approaching. Should Russia's desire for conquest, or the chauvinistic impatience of the French bourgeoisie check the victorious but peaceable march of the German

socialists, the latter are prepared – be assured of that – to prove to the world that the German proletarians of today are not unworthy of the French Sansculottes, that 1893 will be worthy of 1793. And should the soldiers of Monsieur Constans set foot upon German territory we will meet them with the words of the *Marsellaise*:

Shall hateful tyrants, mischief breeding,  
With hireling host, a ruffian band,  
Affright and desolate the land?

“In short, peace assures the victory of the Social Democratic Party in about ten years. The war will bring either victory in two or three years or its absolute ruin for at least fifteen or twenty years.”

When Engels wrote these words, he had in mind a situation entirely different from the one existing today. In his mind's eye, ancient czarism still loomed threateningly in the background. We have already seen the great Russian Revolution. He thought, furthermore, of a real national war of defence, of a Germany attacked on two sides, on the east and on the west by two enemy forces. Finally, he overestimated the ripeness of conditions in Germany and the likelihood of a social revolution, as all true fighters are wont to overrate the real tempo of development. But for all that, his sentences prove with remarkable clearness, that Engels meant by national defence, in the sense of the social democracy, not the support of a Prussian Junker military government and its Generalstab, but a revolutionary action after the example of the French Jacobins.

Yes, socialists should defend their country in great historical crises, and here lies the great fault of the German social democratic Reichstag group. When it announced on the fourth of August, “in this hour of danger, we will not desert our fatherland,” it denied its

own words in the same breath. For truly it has deserted its fatherland in its hour of greatest danger. The highest duty of the social democracy toward its fatherland demanded that it expose the real background of this imperialist war, that it rend the net of imperialist and diplomatic lies that covers the eyes of the people. It was their duty to speak loudly and clearly, to proclaim to the people of Germany that in this war victory and defeat would be equally fatal, to oppose the gagging of the fatherland by a state of siege, to demand that the people alone decide on war and peace, to demand a permanent session of parliament for the period of the war, to assume a watchful control over the government by parliament, and over parliament by the people, to demand the immediate removal of all political inequalities, since only a free people can adequately govern its country, and finally, to oppose to the imperialist war, based as it was upon the most reactionary forces in Europe, the program of Marx, of Engels, and Lassalle.

That was the flag that should have waved over the country. That would have been truly national, truly free, in harmony with the best traditions of Germany and the international class policy of the proletariat.

The great historical hour of the world war obviously demanded unanimous political accomplishment, a broad-minded, comprehensive attitude that only the social democracy is destined to give. Instead, there followed, on the part of the parliamentary representatives of the working class, a miserable collapse. The social democracy did not adopt the wrong policy – it had no policy whatsoever. It has wiped itself out completely as a class party with a world conception of its own, has delivered the country, without a word of protest, to the fate of imperialist war without, to the dictatorship of the sword within. Nay more, it has taken the responsibility for the war upon its own

shoulders. The declaration of the “Reichstag group;’ says: “We have voted only the means for our country’s defence. We decline all responsibility for the war.” But as a matter of fact, the truth lies in exactly the opposite direction. The means for “national defence,” i.e., for imperialistic mass butchery by the armed forces of the military monarchy, were not voted by the social democracy. For the availability of the war credits did not in the least depend upon the social democracy. They, as a minority, stood against a compact three-quarters majority of the capitalist Reichstag. The social democratic group accomplished only one thing by voting in favour of the war credits. It placed upon the war the stamp of democratic fatherland defence, and supported and sustained the fictions that were propagated by the government concerning the actual conditions and problems of the war.

Thus the serious dilemma between the national interests and international solidarity of the proletariat, the tragic conflict that made our parliamentarians fall “with heavy heart’ to the side of imperialistic warfare, was a mere figment of the imagination, a bourgeois nationalist fiction. Between the national interests and the class interests of the proletariat, in war and in peace. there is actually complete harmony. Both demand the most energetic prosecution of the class struggle, and the most determined insistence on the social democratic program.

But what action should the party have taken to give to our opposition to the war and to our war demands weight and emphasis? Should it have proclaimed a general strike? Should it have called upon the soldiers to refuse military service? Thus the question is generally asked. To answer with a simple yes or no were just as ridiculous as to decide: “When war breaks out we will start a revolution.” Revolutions are not “made” and great movements of the people are not

produced according to technical recipes that repose in the pockets of the party leaders. Small circles of conspirators may organise a riot for a certain day and a certain hour, can give their small group of supporters the signal to begin. Mass movements in great historical crises cannot be initiated by such primitive measures.

The best prepared mass strike may break down miserably at the very moment when the party leaders give the signal, may collapse completely before the first attack. The success of the great popular movements depends, aye, the very time and circumstance of their inception is decided, by a number of economic, political and psychological factors. The existing degree of tension between the classes, the degree of intelligence of the masses and the degree or ripeness of their spirit of resistance – all these factors, which are incalculable, are premises that cannot be artificially created by any party. That is the difference between the great historical upheavals, and the small show – demonstrations that a well-disciplined party can carry out in times of peace, orderly, well-trained performances, responding obediently to the baton in the hands of the party leaders. The great historical hour itself creates the forms that will carry the revolutionary movements to a successful outcome, creates and improvises new weapons, enriches the arsenal of the people with weapons unknown and unheard of by the parties and their leaders.

What the social democracy as the advance guard of the class-conscious proletariat should have been able to give was not ridiculous precepts and technical recipes, but a political slogan, clearness concerning the political problems and interests of the proletariat in times of war.

For what has been said of mass strikes in the Russian Revolution is equally applicable to every mass movement:

“While the revolutionary period itself commands the creation and the computation and payment of the cost of a mass strike, the leaders of the social-democracy have an entirely different mission to fill. Instead of concerning itself with the technical mechanism of the mass movement, it is the duty of the social democracy to undertake the political leadership even in the midst of a historical crisis. To give the slogan, to determine the direction of the struggle, to so direct the tactics of the political conflict that in its every phase and movement the whole sum of available and already mobilised active force of the proletariat is realised and finds expression in the attitude of the party, that the tactics of the social democracy in determination and vigour shall never be weaker than is justified by the actual power at its back, but shall rather hasten in advance of its actual power, that is the important problem of the party leadership in a great historical crisis. Then this leadership will become, in a sense, the technical leadership. A determined, consistent, progressive course of action on the part of the social democracy will create in the masses assurance, self-confidence and a fearless fighting spirit. A weakly vacillating course, based upon a low estimate of the powers of the proletariat, lames and confuses the masses. In the first case mass action will break out ‘of its own accord’ and ‘at the right time’; in the second, even a direct call to action on the part of the leaders often remains ineffectual” ([The Mass Strike, The Political Party and the Trade Unions](#)).

Far more important than the outward, technical form of the action is its political content. Thus the

parliamentary stage, for instance, the only far reaching and internationally conspicuous platform, could have become a mighty motive power for the awakening of the people, had it been used by the social democratic representatives to proclaim loudly and distinctly the interests, the problems and the demands of the working class.

“Would the masses have supported the social democracy in its attitude against the war?” That is a question that no one can answer. But neither is it an important one. Did our parliamentarians demand an absolute assurance of victory from the generals of the Prussian army before voting in favour of war credits? What is true of military armies is equally true of revolutionary armies. They go into the fight, wherever necessity demands it, without previous assurance of success. At the worst, the party would have been doomed, in the first few months of the war, to political ineffectuality.

Perhaps the bitterest persecutions would have been inflicted upon our party for its manly stand, as they were, in 1870, the reward of Liebknecht and Bebel. “But what does that matter,” said Ignaz Auer, simply, in his speech on the Sedanfeier in 1895. “A party that is to conquer the world must bear its principles aloft without counting the dangers that this may bring. To act differently is to be lost!”

“It is never easy to swim against the current,” said the older Liebknecht “And when the stream rushes on with the rapidity and the power of a Niagara it does not become easier. Our older comrades still remember the hatred of that year of greatest national shame, under the socialist exception laws of 1878. At that time millions looked upon every social democrat as having played the part of a murderer and vile criminal in 1870; the socialist had

been in the eyes of the masses a traitor and an enemy. Such outbreaks of the 'popular soul' are astounding, stunning, crushing in their elemental fury. One feels powerless, as before a higher power. It is a real *force majeure*. There is no tangible opponent. It is like an epidemic, in the people, in the air, everywhere.

"The outbreak of 1878 cannot, however, be compared with the outbreak in 1870. This hurricane of human passions, breaking, bending, destroying all that stands in its way – and with it the terrible machinery of militarism, in fullest, most horrible activity; and we stand between the crushing iron wheels, whose touch means instant death, between iron arms, that threaten every moment to catch us. By the side of this elemental force of liberated spirits stood the most complete mechanism of the art of murder the world had hitherto seen; and all in the wildest activity, every boiler heated to the bursting point. At such a time, what is the will and the strength of the individual? Especially, when one feels that one represents a tiny minority, that one possesses no firm support in the people itself.

"At that time our party was still in a period of development. We were placed before the most serious test, at a time when we did not yet possess the organisation necessary to meet it. When the anti-socialist movement came in the year of shame of our enemies, in the year of honour for the social democracy, then we had already a strong, widespread organisation. Each and every one of us was strengthened by the feeling that he possessed a mighty support in the organised movement that stood behind him, and no sane person could conceive of the downfall of the party.

"So it was no small thing at that time to swim against the current. But what is to be



done, must be done. And so we gritted our teeth in the face of the inevitable. There was no time for fear ... Certainly Bebel and I ... never for a moment thought of the warning. We did not retreat. We had to hold our posts, come what might!"

They stuck to their posts, and for forty years the social democracy lived upon the moral strength with which it had opposed a world of enemies.

The same thing would have happened now. At first we would perhaps have accomplished nothing but to save the honour of the proletariat, and thousands upon thousands of proletarians who are dying in the trenches in mental darkness would not have died in spiritual confusion, but with the one certainty that that which has been everything in their lives, the international, liberating social democracy is more than the figment of a dream.

The voice of our party would have acted as a wet blanket upon the chauvinistic intoxication of the masses. It would have preserved the intelligent proletariat from delirium, would have it more difficult for imperialism to poison and to stupefy the minds of the people. The crusade against the social democracy would have awakened the masses in an incredibly short time.

And as the war went on, as the horror of endless massacre and bloodshed in all countries grew and grew, as its imperialistic hoof became more and more evident, as the exploitation by bloodthirsty speculators became more and more shameless, every live, honest, progressive and humane element in the masses would have rallied to the standard of the social democracy. The German social democracy would have stood in the midst of this mad whirlpool of collapse and decay, like a rock in a stormy sea, would have been the lighthouse

of the whole International, guiding and leading the labour movements of every country of the earth. The unparalleled moral prestige that lay in the hands of the German socialists would have reacted upon the socialists of all nations in a very short time. Peace sentiments would have spread like wildfire and the popular demand for peace in all countries would have hastened the end of the slaughter, would have decreased the number of its victims.

The German proletariat would have remained the lighthouse keeper of socialism and of human emancipation.

Truly this was a task not unworthy of the disciples of Marx, Engels and Lassalle.

Rosa Luxemburg  
The Junius Pamphlet

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## Chapter 8

In spite of the military dictatorship and censorship of the press, in spite of the abdication of the Social Democrats, in spite of the fratricidal war, the class struggle rises with elemental force from out of the *Burgfrieden*;<sup>[1]</sup> and the international solidarity of labor from out of the bloody mists of the battlefield. Not in the weak and artificial attempts to galvanize the old International, not in pledges renewed here and there to stand together again *after* the war. No! Now in and from the war the fact emerges with a wholly new power and energy that the proletarians of all lands have one and the same interests. The war itself dispels the illusion it has created.

Victory or defeat? Thus sounds the slogan of the ruling militarism in all the warring countries, and, like an echo, the Social Democratic leaders have taken it up. Supposedly, victory or defeat on the battlefield should be for the proletarians of Germany, France, England, or Russia exactly the same as for the ruling classes of these countries. As soon as the cannons thunder, every proletarian should be interested in the victory of his own country and, therefore, in the defeat of the other countries. Let us see what such a victory can bring to the proletariat.

According to official version, adopted uncritically by the Social Democratic leaders, German victory holds

the prospect of unlimited economic growth, while defeat means economic ruin. This conception rests upon the pattern of the war of 1870. However, the flourishing capitalism following that war was not the consequence of the war but of the political unification, even though this came in the crippled form of Bismarck's German Empire. Economic growth proceeded out of unification *despite* the war and the many reactionary obstacles that came in its wake. What the victorious war contributed to all this was the entrenchment of the military monarchy in Germany and the rule of the Prussian Junkers; the defeat of France helped liquidate the [Second] Empire and establish the [Third] Republic.

But today matters are quite different in the belligerent states. Today war does not function as a dynamic method of procuring for rising young capitalism the preconditions of its "national" development. War has this character only in the isolated and fragmentary case of Serbia. Reduced to its historically objective essence, today's world war is entirely a competitive struggle amongst fully mature capitalisms for world domination, for the exploitation of the remaining zones of the world not yet capitalistic. That is why this war is totally different in character and effects. The high degree of economic development in the capitalist world is expressed in the extraordinarily advanced technology, that is, in the destructive power of the weaponry which approaches the same level in all the warring nations. The international organization of the murder industry is reflected now in the military balance, the scales of which always right themselves after partial decisions and momentary changes; a general decision is always and again pushed into the future. The indecisiveness of military results leads to ever new reserves from the population masses of warring and hitherto neutral nations being sent into

fire. The war finds abundant material to feed imperialist appetites and contradictions, creates its own supplies of these, and spreads like wildfire. But the mightier the masses and the more numerous the nations dragged into the war on all sides, the more drawn out its existence will be.

Considered all together, and before any decision regarding military victory or defeat has been taken, the effect of the war will be unlike any phenomenon of earlier wars in the modern age: the economic ruin of all belligerents and to an increasing degree that of the formally neutral as well. Every additional month of the war affirms and extends this result and postpones the expected fruits of military success for decades. In the last analysis, neither victory nor defeat can change any of this. On the contrary, it makes a purely military decision extremely unlikely and leads one to conclude the greater probability that the war will end finally with the most general and mutual exhaustion.

In these circumstances a victorious Germany would win but a Pyrrhic victory, even should its imperialistic warmongers succeed in the total defeat of all its enemies through mass murder and thus realize its audacious dream. [Germany's] trophies would be: a few beggared and depopulated territories to annex. Under its own roof would be a leering ruin. And once the stage scenery of war loan financing and the Potemkin villages<sup>[2]</sup> of war contracts and unshakable national prosperity are pushed aside it will be immediately seen [as the ruin it is]. It must be clear even to the most superficial observer that the most victorious state can not expect any reparations that would even come close to healing the wounds inflicted by this war. A replacement for this and a complement of "victory" would be the perhaps even greater economic ruin of the conquered side: France and England, the very countries most closely connected economically to

Germany and upon whose welfare she is most dependent for her own recovery. After a “victorious” war the German people would have to pay back the war credits granted by the patriotic parliament, that is, in reality have to bear an immense burden of taxation while enduring a strengthened military reaction – the only lasting, tangible fruit of “victory.”

If we seek to imagine the worst results of a [military] defeat, then, aside from the imperialist annexations, they present feature for feature essentially the same consequences as would have issued from victory. The consequences of waging war are today so deeply embedded and far-reaching in nature that the military outcome has only minimal effects upon it.

Nevertheless, let us accept for the moment, that the victorious state would understand how to throw off the burden of great ruin from itself onto its defeated opponent and to hamstring its economic development with all sorts of obstacles. Can the trade union struggles of the German working class go forward after the war if the union action of the French, English, Belgian, and Italian workers is thwarted by economic regression? Until 1870 the workers’ movement operated independently in each country; sometimes key decisions were taken in individual cities. It was in Paris on whose cobblestones the battles of the proletariat were joined and decided. The labor movement of today, [because of] its more arduous daily economic struggle, bases its mass organization on cooperation [with worker movements] in all capitalist countries. If the principle is valid that the workers’ cause can flourish only on the basis of a healthy, powerfully pulsating economic life, then it is valid not only for Germany but also for France, England, Belgium, Russia, Italy. And if the workers’ movement stagnates in all the capitalist countries of Europe, if there exist low wages, weak unions, and slight

resistance to exploitation, then it will be impossible for the trade union movement to thrive in Germany. From this standpoint and in the last analysis, it is exactly the same loss for the situation of the proletariat if German capitalism enriches itself at the cost of the French or the English at the cost of the German.

Let us turn, however, to the political results of the war. Here differentiation ought to be easier than in the economic area. Historically, the sympathies and partisanship of the socialists have been on the side fighting for historical progress and against reaction. Which side in the present war represents progress and which reaction? Clearly, this question cannot be answered on the basis of the superficial labels of the warring states, such as “democracy” or “absolutism.” Rather, [the question should be judged] on the actual objective tendencies they represent in world politics. Before we can judge what benefits a German victory would bring to the German proletariat, we must see what the effects [of such a victory] would have upon the overall shape of European political relationships.

The definitive victory of Germany would result in the immediate annexation of Belgium, as well as additional strips of territory in east and west, wherever feasible, and a part of the French colonies. The Habsburg monarchy would be preserved and enriched with new regions. Finally, Turkey, retaining a fictional “integrity,” would become a German protectorate which would mean the simultaneous transformation of the Middle East into de facto German provinces, whatever the form. The actual military and economic hegemony of Germany in Europe would logically follow these results.

These results of a decisive German military victory will come about, not because they correspond to the wishes of imperialist agitators in this war, but because

they are the wholly inevitable consequences emanating from Germany's position in the world and from the original conflicts with England, France, and Russia that have grown tremendously beyond their initial dimensions during the course of the war. It will suffice to put these results into context by understanding that under no circumstances will it be possible to maintain any sort of balance of power in the world.

The war means ruin for all the belligerents, although more so for the defeated. On the day after the concluding of peace, preparations for a new world war will be begun under the leadership of England in order to throw off the yoke of Prusso-German militarism burdening Europe and the Near East. A German victory would be only a prelude to a soon-to-follow second world war; and this would be the signal for a new, feverish arms race as well as the unleashing of the blackest reaction in all countries, but first and foremost in Germany itself.

On the other hand, an Anglo-French victory would most probably lead to the loss of at least some German colonies, as well as Alsace-Lorraine. Quite certain would be the bankruptcy of German imperialism on the world stage. But that also means the partition of Austria-Hungary and the total liquidation of Turkey. The fall of such arch-reactionary creatures as these two states is wholly in keeping with the demands of progressive development. [But] the fall of the Habsburg monarchy as well as Turkey, in the concrete situation of world politics, can have no other effect than to put their peoples in pawn to Russia, England, France, and Italy. Add to this grandiose redrawing of the world map power shifts in the Balkans and the Mediterranean and a further one in Asia. The liquidation of Persia and a new dismemberment of China will inevitably follow.



In the wake [of these changes] the English-Russian, as well as the English-Japanese, conflict will move into the foreground of world politics. And directly upon the liquidation of this world war, these [conflicts] may lead to a new world war, perhaps over Constantinople, and would certainly make it likely. Thus, from this side, too, [an Anglo-French] victory would lead to a new feverish armaments race among all the states – with defeated Germany obviously in the forefront. An era of unalloyed militarism and reaction would dominate all Europe with a new world war as its ultimate goal.

Thus proletarian policy is locked in a dilemma when trying to decide on which side it ought to intervene, which side represents progress and democracy in this war. In these circumstances, and from the perspective of international politics as a whole, victory or defeat, in political as well as economic terms, comes down to a hopeless choice between two kinds of beatings for the European working classes. Therefore, it is nothing but fatal madness when the French socialists imagine that the military defeat of Germany will strike a blow at the head of militarism and imperialism and thereby pave the way for peaceful democracy in the world. Imperialism and its servant, militarism, will calculate their profits from every victory and every defeat in this war – except in one case: if the international proletariat intervenes in a revolutionary way and puts an end to such calculations.

This war's most important lesson for the policy of the proletariat is the unassailable fact that it cannot parrot the slogan *Victory or Defeat*, not in Germany or in France, not in England or in Russia. Only from the standpoint of imperialism does this slogan have any real content. For every Great Power it is identical to the question of gain or loss of political standing, of annexations, colonies, and military predominance. From the standpoint of class for the European

proletariat as a whole the victory and defeat of any of the warring camps is equally disastrous.

It is war as such, no matter how it ends militarily, that signifies the greatest defeat for Europe's proletariat. It is only the overcoming of war and the speediest possible enforcement of peace by the international militancy of the proletariat that can bring victory to the workers' cause. And in reality this victory alone can simultaneously rescue Belgium as well as democracy in Europe.

The class-conscious proletariat cannot identify with any of the military camps in this war. Does it follow that proletarian policy ought to demand maintenance of the status quo, that we have no other action program beyond the wish that everything should be as it was before the war? But existing conditions have never been our ideal; they have never expressed the self-determination of peoples. Furthermore, the earlier conditions are no longer to be saved; they no longer exist, even if historic state borders continue to exist. Even before its results have been formally established, the war has already brought about immense confusion in power relationships, the reciprocal estimate of forces, of alliances, and conflicts. It has sharply revised the relations between states and of classes within society. So many old illusions and potencies have been destroyed, so many new forces and problems have been created that a return to the old Europe as it existed before August 4, 1914 is out of the question. [It is] as out of the question as a return to pre-revolutionary conditions even after a defeated revolution.

Proletarian policy knows no retreat; it can only struggle forward. It must always go beyond the existing and the newly created. In this sense alone, it is legitimate for the proletariat to confront both camps of imperialists in the world war with a policy of its own.

But this policy can not consist of social democratic parties holding international conferences where they individually or collectively compete to discover ingenious recipes with which bourgeois diplomats ought to make the peace and ensure the further peaceful development of democracy. All demands for complete or partial “disarmament,” for the dismantling of secret diplomacy, for the partition of all multinational great states into small national one, and so forth are part and parcel utopian as long as capitalist class domination holds the reins. [Capitalism] cannot, under its current imperialist course, dispense with present-day militarism, secret diplomacy, or the centralized multinational state. In fact, it would be more pertinent for the realization of these postulates to make just one simple “demand”: abolition of the capitalist class state.

It is not through utopian advice and schemes to tame, ameliorate, or reform imperialism within the framework of the bourgeois state that proletarian policy can reconquer its leading place. The actual problem that the world war has posed to the socialist parties, upon the solution of which the destiny of the workers’ movement depends, is this: *the capacity of the proletarian masses for action in the battle against imperialism*. The proletariat does not lack for postulates, prognoses, slogans; it lacks deeds, the capacity for effective resistance to imperialism at the decisive moment, to intervene against it during [not after] the war and to convert the old slogan “war against war” into practice. Here is the crux of the matter, the Gordian knot of proletarian politics and its long term future.

Imperialism and all its political brutality, the chain of incessant social catastrophes that it has let loose, is undoubtedly an historical necessity for the ruling classes of the contemporary capitalist world. Nothing

would be more fatal for the proletariat than to delude itself into believing that it were possible after this war to rescue the idyllic and peaceful continuation of capitalism. However, the conclusion to be drawn by proletarian policy from the historical necessity of imperialism is that surrender to imperialism will mean living forever in its victorious shadow and eating from its leftovers.

The historical dialectic moves forward by contradiction, and establishes in the world the antithesis of every necessity. Bourgeois class domination is undoubtedly an historical necessity, but, so too, the rising of the working class against it. Capital is an historical necessity, but, so too, its grave digger, the socialist proletariat. Imperialist world domination is an historical necessity, but, so too, its destruction by the proletarian international. Step for step there are two historical necessities in conflict with one another. Ours, the necessity of socialism, has the greater stamina. Our necessity enters into its full rights the moment that the other - bourgeois class domination - ceases to be the bearer of historical progress, when it becomes an obstacle, a danger to the further development of society. The capitalist world order, as revealed by the world war, has today reached this point.

The expansionist imperialism of capitalism, the expression of its highest stage of development and its last phase of existence, produces the [following] economic tendencies: it transforms the entire world into the capitalist mode of production; all outmoded, pre-capitalist forms of production and society are swept away; it converts all the world's riches and means of production into capital, the working masses of all zones into wage slaves. In Africa and Asia, from the northernmost shores to the tip of South America and the South Seas, the remnant of ancient primitive

communist associations, feudal systems of domination, patriarchal peasant economies, traditional forms of craftsmanship are annihilated, crushed by capital; whole peoples are destroyed and ancient cultures flattened. All are supplanted by profit mongering in its most modern form.

This brutal victory parade of capital through the world, its way prepared by every means of violence, robbery, and infamy, has its light side. It creates the preconditions for its own final destruction. It put into place the capitalist system of world domination, the indispensable precondition for the socialist world revolution. This alone constitutes the cultural, progressive side of its reputed “great work of civilization” in the primitive lands. For bourgeois-liberal economists and politicians, railroads, Swedish matches, sewer systems, and department stores are “progress” and “civilization.” In themselves these works grafted onto primitive conditions are neither civilization nor progress, for they are bought with the rapid economic and cultural ruin of peoples who must experience simultaneously the full misery and horror of two eras: the traditional natural economic system and the most modern and rapacious capitalist system of exploitation. Thus, the capitalist victory parade and all its works bear the stamp of progress in the historical sense only because they create the material preconditions for the abolition of capitalist domination and class society in general. And in this sense imperialism ultimately works for us.

The world war is a turning point. For the first time, the ravening beasts set loose upon all quarters of the globe by capitalist Europe have broken into Europe itself. A cry of horror went through the world when Belgium, that precious jewel of European civilization, and when the most august cultural monuments of northern France fell into shards under the impact of

the blind forces of destruction. This same “civilized world” looked on passively as the same imperialism ordained the cruel destruction of ten thousand Herero tribesmen and filled the sands of the Kalahari with the mad shrieks and death rattles of men dying of thirst;<sup>[3]</sup> [the “civilized world” looked on] as forty thousand men on the Putumayo River [Columbia] were tortured to death within ten years by a band of European captains of industry, while the rest of the people were made into cripples; as in China where an age-old culture was put to the torch by European mercenaries, practiced in all forms of cruelty, annihilation, and anarchy; as Persia was strangled, powerless to resist the tightening noose of foreign domination; as in Tripoli where fire and sword bowed the Arabs beneath the yoke of capitalism, destroyed their culture and habitations. Only today has this “civilized world” become aware that the bite of the imperialist beast brings death, that its very breath is infamy. Only now has [the civilized world] recognized this, after the beast’s ripping talons have clawed its own mother’s lap, the bourgeois civilization of Europe itself. And even this knowledge is grappled with in the distorted form of bourgeois hypocrisy. Every people recognizes the infamy only in the national uniform of the enemy. “German barbarians!” – as though every people that marches out to do organized murder were not transformed instantly into a barbarian horde. “Cossack atrocities!” – as though war itself were not the atrocity of atrocities, as though the praising of human slaughter as heroism in a socialist youth paper were not the purest example of intellectual cossack-dom!

None the less, the imperialist bestiality raging in Europe’s fields has one effect about which the “civilized world” is not horrified and for which it has no breaking heart: that is *the mass destruction of the European proletariat*. Never before on this scale has a war

exterminated whole strata of the population; not for a century have all the great and ancient cultural nations of Europe been attacked. Millions of human lives have been destroyed in the Vosges, the Ardennes, in Belgium, Poland, in the Carpathians, on the Save. Millions have been crippled. But of these millions, nine out of ten are working people from the city and the countryside.

It is our strength, our hope, that is mown down day after day like grass under the sickle. The best, most intelligent, most educated forces of international socialism, the bearers of the holiest traditions and the boldest heroes of the modern workers' movement, the vanguard of the entire world proletariat, the workers of England, France, Belgium, Germany, Russia – these are the ones now being hamstrung and led to the slaughter. These workers of the leading capitalist countries of Europe are exactly the ones who have the historical mission of carrying out the socialist transformation. Only from out of Europe, only from out of the oldest capitalist countries will the signal be given when the hour is ripe for the liberating social revolution. Only the English, French, Belgian, German, Russian, Italian workers together can lead the army of the exploited and enslaved of the five continents. When the time comes, only they can settle accounts with capitalism's work of global destruction, with its centuries of crime committed against primitive peoples.

But to push ahead to the victory of socialism we need a strong, activist, educated proletariat, and masses whose power lies in intellectual culture as well as numbers. These masses are being decimated by the world war. The flower of our mature and youthful strength, hundreds of thousands of whom were socialistically schooled in England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Russia, the product of decades of

educational and agitational training, and other hundreds of thousands who could be won for socialism tomorrow, fall and mold on the miserable battlefields. The fruits of decades of sacrifice and the efforts of generations are destroyed in a few weeks. The key troops of the international proletariat are torn up by the roots.

The blood-letting of the June days [1848] paralyzed the French workers' movement for a decade and a half. Then the blood-letting of the Commune massacres again retarded it for more than a decade. What is now occurring is an unprecedented mass slaughter that is reducing the adult working population of all the leading civilized countries to women, old people, and cripples. This blood-letting threatens to bleed the European workers' movement to death. Another such world war and the outlook for socialism will be buried beneath the rubble heaped up by imperialist barbarism. This is more [significant] than the ruthless destruction of Liege and the Rheims cathedral. This is an assault, not on the bourgeois culture of the past, but on the socialist culture of the future, a lethal blow against that force which carries the future of humanity within itself and which alone can bear the precious treasures of the past into a better society. Here capitalism lays bear its death's head; here it betrays the fact that its historical rationale is used up; its continued domination is no longer reconcilable to the progress of humanity.

The world war today is demonstrably not only murder on a grand scale; it is also suicide of the working classes of Europe. The soldiers of socialism, the proletarians of England, France, Germany, Russia, and Belgium have for months been killing one another at the behest of capital. They are driving the cold steel of murder into each other's hearts. Locked in the embrace of death, they tumble into a common grave.



*“Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles! Long live democracy! Long live the Tsar and Slav-dom! Ten thousand tarpaulins guaranteed up to regulations! A hundred thousand kilos of bacon, coffee-substitute for immediate delivery!”* ... Dividends are rising, and the proletarians are falling. And with every one there sinks into the grave a fighter of the future, a soldier of the revolution, mankind’s savior from the yoke of capitalism.

The madness will cease and the bloody demons of hell will vanish only when workers in Germany and France, England and Russia finally awake from their stupor, extend to each other a brotherly hand, and drown out the bestial chorus of imperialist war-mongers and the shrill cry of capitalist hyenas with labor’s old and mighty battle cry:

**Proletarians of all lands, unite!**

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## Footnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> The *Burgfrieden*, literally the “peace of the castle” imposed upon all those seeking shelter in a fortified spot during the Middle Ages, signified the political truce agreed upon by the political parties represented in the Reichstag at the outbreak of the war. After voting the credits that made the war financially possible, members of the Reichstag suspended further elections for the duration of hostilities and declared a cessation of “politics.” Essentially, the civilian sector abdicated its responsibility to participate in policy making,

leaving all major decisions in the hands of the Kaiser's government and then in those of the general staff of the armed forces. This behavior contrasted sharply with that of the western democracies where, all through the war, it was "politics as usual." Only toward the end of the war, did the Reichstag reconquer some of the lost ground of 1914.

<sup>[2]</sup> Count Gregory Alexandrovich Potemkin (1724-91) was said to have deceived Catherine the Great of Russia with cardboard facades of new villages he was supposed to have constructed.

<sup>[3]</sup> The Herero tribesmen rebelled against German control of their homeland in Southwest Africa, 1903-07. During the brutal wars of pacification, German troops forced men, women, and children into the Kalahari desert where many perished. The extraction of rubber from along the Putumayo River was accompanied by horrifying exploitation of native laborers.