

Pacifism Is An Aid, Not a Deterrent, To the War-Makers

Lenin and Zinoviev

SOCIALISM AND WAR

The following is an extract from the pamphlet "Socialism and War" by Lenin and Zinoviev, written in Switzerland in 1915. When it was written, its two authors were part of a tiny handful of Socialists withstanding the wave of Chauvinism that overcame the leaders of the Socialist Parties of all countries who led the workers to the slaughter under the slogan "defense of the fatherland." Two years later the simple ideas put forth in this pamphlet found living expression in the Russian revolution and the emergence of the first Workers State. Lenin died in 1924. His co-author, Zinoviev, first chairman of the Communist International, was shot by Joseph Stalin as a "Fascist spy" in 1936. Leninism is synonymous with the most uncompromising resistance to imperialist war. Stalinism, its negation, today stands for support of imperialist slaughter under the hypocritical cloak of "democracy vs. Fascism" just as the Second International, in 1914-18, supported the war under the slogan of "Democracy vs. Kaiserism" or "German culture vs. Czarist barbarism."



V. I. Lenin

"War is politics continued by other (i.e., forcible) means."

This famous dictum belongs to one of the profoundest writers on military questions, Clausewitz. Rightly, the Marxists have always considered this axiom as the theoretical foundation for their understanding of the meaning of every war. It is from this very standpoint that Marx and Engels regarded wars.

Apply this idea to the present war (the world war). You will find that for decades, for almost half a century, the governments and the ruling classes of England, France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Russia, conducted a policy of colonial robbery, of suppressing labor movements, of oppressing foreign nations. Such a policy, and no other one, is being pursued in the present war. Notably in Austria and Russia the policy of both peace and war times consists in the enslavement of nations and not in their liberation.

NATIONAL AWAKENING

On the contrary, in China, Persia, India and other dependent nations we note in the last decade a policy of national awakening, tens and hundreds of millions of people striving to liberate themselves from under the yoke of the reactionary "great" nations. War growing out of this historic basis, even at the present time, can be of a bourgeois progressive nature, a war for national liberation.

One glance at the present war, conceived as a continuation of the policy of the "great" nations and their fundamental classes, shows that the opinion which justifies "defense of the fatherland" in the present war is false, hypocritical and in glaring contradiction to the historic facts....

WHAT IS SOCIAL-CHAUVINISM?

Social-chauvinism is adherence to the idea of "defending the fatherland" in the present war. From this idea follows repudiation of the class struggle in war time, voting for military appropriations, etc. In practice the social chauvinists conduct an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, because in practice they insist not on the "defense of the fatherland" in the sense of fighting against the oppression of a foreign nation, but upon the "right" of one or the other of the "great" nations to rob the colonies and oppress other peoples. The social-chauvinists follow the bourgeoisie in deceiving the people by saying that the war is conducted for the defense of the freedom and the existence of the nations; thus they put themselves on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

To the social-chauvinists belong those who justify and idealize the government and the bourgeoisie of one of the belligerent groups of nations, as well as those who, like Kautsky, recognize the equal right of the Socialists of all belligerent nations to "defend the fatherland." Social-chauvinism, being in practice a defense of the privileges, prerogatives, robberies and violence of "one's own" (or any other) imperialist bourgeoisie, is a total betrayal of all Socialist conviction and a violation of the decisions of the International Socialist Congress in Basle (1912, Ed.)....

MASS SUFFERING INCREASED

The war has undoubtedly created the acutest crises and has incredibly intensified the sufferings of the masses. The reactionary character of this war, the shameful lie of the bourgeoisie of all countries which covers its predatory aims with "national" ideology, all this inevitably creates, on the basis of an objective revolutionary situation, revolutionary sentiments in the masses. Our duty is to help make these sentiments conscious, to deepen them and give them form. The only correct expression of this task is the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into civil war." All consistent class struggle in time of war, all "mass action" earnestly conducted must inevitably lead to this. We cannot know whether in the first or in the second imperialist war between the great nations, whether during or after it, a strong revolutionary movement will flare up. Whatever the case may be, it is our absolute duty systematically and unflinchingly to work in that particular direction....

A mass sentiment for peace often expresses the beginning of a protest, an indignation and a consciousness of the reactionary nature of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to take advantage of this sentiment. They will take the most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration made on this basis, but they will not deceive the people by assuming that in the absence of a revolutionary movement it is possible to have peace without annexations; without oppression of nations, without robbery, without planting the seed of new wars among the present governments and the ruling classes. Such deception would only play into the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries and their counter-revolutionary plans. Whoever wishes a durable and democratic peace must be for civil war against the governments and the bourgeoisie.

Socialism and War, August, 1915.

Rosa Luxemburg

The Meaning of Pacifism

Rosa Luxemburg, co-leader with Karl Liebknecht of the German Spartakusbund, was one of that small, valiant band of revolutionary internationalists who raised their voices against the imperialist slaughter of 1914-18. For her devotion to the cause of the socialist revolution, her refusal to join the social-patriots of the Second International in aiding the imperialists to prosecute the robber war, Rosa paid with her life. Together with Karl Liebknecht she was foully murdered on January 15, 1919, by the German government at whose head stood the social-patriotic traitors Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann. The ideas embodied in the following brief article by Rosa Luxemburg, written three years prior to the commencement of the World War, must be assimilated by every worker who is anxious to struggle, and struggle effectively, against the new imperialist slaughter which is now impending.—Ed.

The friends of peace in bourgeois circles believe that world peace and disarmament can be realized within the framework of the present social order, whereas we, who base ourselves on the materialistic conception of history and on scientific socialism, are convinced that militarism can only be abolished from the world with the destruction of the capitalist state... From their point of view this is perfectly logical and explicable—to invent all sorts of "practical" projects for gradually restraining militarism, and are naturally inclined to consider every outward apparent sign of a tendency towards peace as the genuine article, to take every expression of the ruling diplomacy in this vein at its word, to exaggerate it into a basis for earnest activity.

The Social-Democrats (read revolutionary socialists—Ed.) on the other hand, must consider it their duty in this matter, just as in all matters of social criticism, to expose the bourgeois attempts to restrain militarism as pitiful half-measures and the expressions of such sentiments on the part of the governing circles as diplomatic make-believe, and to oppose the bourgeois claims and pretences with the ruthless analysis of capitalist reality....

Militarism in both its forms—as war and as armed peace—is a legitimate child, a logical result of capitalism, which can only be overcome with the destruction of capitalism, and hence whoever honestly desires world peace and liberation from the tremendous burden of armaments must also desire socialism. Only in this way can real Social-Democratic enlightenment and recruiting be carried on in connection with the armaments debate.

This work, however, will be rendered somewhat difficult and the attitude of the Social-Democrats will become obscure and vacillating, if, by some strange exchange of roles, our party tries, on the contrary, to convince the bourgeois state that it can quite well limit armaments and bring about peace and that it can do this from its own standpoint, from that of a capitalist class state.

—Leipziger Volkszeitung, May 6-8, 1911.

Karl Liebknecht

THE ENEMY IS IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY!

But to learn and not forget applies also, and above all, to the heroic struggle against the war which our Italian comrades waged and are still waging. They fight with their press, with meetings, with street corner gatherings. They fight with revolutionary strength and courage, opposing their bodies and their lives to the raging impact of the waves of nationalism whipped up by the government. Their struggle is worthy of our enthusiastic felicitations. Let their spirit be our model. May it become the pattern for the International....

The absurd watchword, "see it through," was disastrous; it can lead only deeper into the maelstrom of destruction. International proletarian class struggle against the international imperialist mangling of the people is the command of the hour.

The main enemy of the German people is in Germany: German imperialism, the German war party, German secret diplomacy. The German people must wage a political struggle against this enemy in its own country, in conjunction with the struggle of the proletarians of other countries against their own imperialists....

The enemies of the working class rely upon the forgetfulness of the masses; take heed, that their reliance may be groundless! They speculate on the forbearance of the masses—but we raise the stormy cry:

How much longer are the imperialist gamblers going to abuse the patience of the people? Enough of butchery! Down with the war-mongers on both sides of the border!

The slaughter of the people must end! Proletarians of all countries! Follow the heroic example of your Italian brothers! Unite for the international class war against the conspiracy of secret diplomacy, against imperialism, against the war, for a socialist peace!

The main enemy is in your own country! —From the leaflet issued on the occasion of Italy's into the war.

ism must first be got rid of.

Eliminate the Cause

If someone wishes to get rid of hangovers, it would do him no good to unite everyone who did not like hangovers. No one likes them. The only meaningful campaign against hangovers would be the campaign against getting too drunk the night before; to do away with the effect, you must eliminate the cause.

Just so with pacifism. At its very best, pacifism is completely and necessarily ineffectual in the struggle against war. Pacifism leaves the causes of war altogether untouched. It can do nothing therefore, to prevent or even to hinder war. All the idealism of all the pacifists—and some of them undoubtedly have, from a personal point of view, the highest ideals—is absolutely helpless.

Really Aids War-Makers

But this is the lesser half of the story. Pacifism is not merely ineffectual in the struggle against war; in practice it aids the war and the war-makers. This is, for many, a hard truth to digest, but

Leon Trotsky

DEMOCRACY, PACIFISM AND IMPERIALISM

(The following article on pacifism was written by Leon Trotsky in the third year of the imperialist world war and published originally in "Vperiod," a Russian revolutionary organ, on June 30, 1917. Its timeliness today, on the eve of a new world war, when the pacifists are playing their old game of sidetracking the workers from the revolutionary anti-war struggle, is more than apparent.—Ed.)



Leon Trotsky

There have never been so many pacifists as at this moment, when people are slaying each other on all the great highways of our planet.

Each epoch has not only its own technology and political form, but also its own style of hypocrisy. Time was when the nations destroyed each other for the glory of Christ's teachings and the love of one's neighbor. Now Christ is invoked only by backward governments. The advanced nations cut each other's throats under the banner of pacifism... a league of nations and a durable peace. Kerensky and Tseretelli shout for an offensive in the name of an "early conclusion of peace."

There is no Juvenal for this epoch, to depict it with biting satire. Yet we are forced to admit that even the most powerful would appear weak and insignificant in the presence of blatant baseness and cringing stupidity, two of the elements which have been released by the present war.

THE ROOTS OF PACIFISM

Pacifism springs from the same historical roots as democracy. The bourgeoisie made a gigantic effort to rationalize human relations, that is, to supplant a blind and stupid tradition by a system of critical reason. The guild restrictions on industry, class privileges, monarchic autocracy—these were the traditional heritage of the middle ages. Bourgeois democracy demanded legal equality, free competition and parliamentary methods in the conduct of public affairs.

Naturally its nationalistic criteria were applied also in the field of international relations. Here it hit upon war, which appeared to it as a method of solving questions that was a complete denial of all "reason." So bourgeois democracy began to point out to the nations—with tongues of poetry, moral philosophy and certified accounting—that they would profit more by establishment of a condition of eternal peace. Such were the logical roots of bourgeois pacifism.

From the time of its birth pacifism was afflicted, however, with a fundamental defect, one which is characteristic of bourgeois democracy; its pointed criticisms addressed themselves to the surface of political phenomena, not daring to penetrate to their economic causes.

THE IDEA OF "ETERNAL PEACE"

At the hands of capitalist reality, the idea of eternal peace, on the basis of a "reasonable" agreement, has fared even more badly than the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. For capitalism, when it rationalized industrial conditions, did not rationalize the social organization of ownership, and thus prepared instruments of destruction such as even the "barbarous" middle ages never dreamed of.

The constant embitterment of international relations and the ceaseless growth of militarism completely undermined the basis of reality under the feet of pacifism. Yet it was from these very things that pacifism took a new lease on life, a life which differed from its earlier

phase as the blood and purple sunset differ from the rosy-fingered dawn....

Theoretically and politically, pacifism stands on the same foundation as does the theory of the harmony of social interests. The antagonisms between capitalist nations have the same economic roots as the antagonisms between the classes. And if we admit the possibility of a progressive blunting of the edge of the class struggle, it requires but a single step further to accept a gradual softening and regulating of international relations. The source of the ideology of democracy, with all its traditions and illusions, is the petty bourgeoisie....

"IF WAR SHOULD COME..."

(William Jennings) Bryan rashly and noisily expressed the natural aversion of the farmers and of the "small man" generally to all such things as world-policy, military service and higher taxes. Yet, at the same time that he was sending wagon-loads of petitions, as well as deputations, to his pacifist colleagues at the head of the government, Bryan did everything in his power to break the revolutionary edge of the whole movement.

"If war should come," Bryan telegraphed on the occasion of an anti-war meeting in Chicago... "we will all support the government of course; yet at this moment it is our sacred duty to do all in our power to preserve the nation from the horrors of war."

These few words contain the entire program of petty bourgeois pacifism: "to do everything in our power against war" means to afford the voice of popular indignation an outlet in the form of harmless demonstration, after having previously given the government a guarantee that it will meet with no serious opposition, in case of war, from the pacifist faction.

Official pacifism could have desired nothing better. It could now give satisfactory assurance of imperialistic "preparedness." After Bryan's own declaration, only one thing was necessary to dispose of his noisy opposition to war, and that was, simply, to declare war. And Bryan rolled right over into the government camp. And not only the petty bourgeoisie, but also the broad masses of the workers, said to themselves: "If our government, with such an outspoken pacifist as Wilson as its head, declares war, and if even Bryan supports the government in the war, it must be an unavoidable and righteous war...." It is now evident why the sanctimonious, Quaker-like pacifism of the bourgeois demagogues is in such high favor in financial and war industry circles.

Pacifism Separates Anti-War Fight From Struggle Against Capitalism

In normal times, most people, in their own minds and wishes, are undoubtedly against war. How could it be otherwise? No one likes to get shot, mangled, gassed, drowned. No one likes to have his friends and family killed or wounded. No one likes all the interferences with private life and liberty which war brings about.

This almost universal feeling is the starting point and the strength of pacifism. And, since this feeling against war is "good" and "right," since it corresponds to man's hopes and ideals, it is also the reason why the pacifist movement is felt to have a kind of "moral superiority," why pacifists are usually looked upon as "high-minded" and "noble."

The Pacifist Argument

Pacifism argues as follows. Most men are against war and for peace; therefore, if we can unite in an organized movement all those who are against war and for peace, we will be able to prevent war and maintain peace. We will not ask agreement on any other point. We will not demand a common point of view toward the class struggle of trade unions, toward religion or philosophy or morality. We will get everyone together who is for peace and against war.

On this basis, large pacifist movements arise. There are many

in this country and they are increasing in size as the crisis deepens.

In the first place, there are the organizations which are directly bourgeois in origin, control and financing. These include such groups as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Peaceways, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, etc. Many of these groups have large memberships and wealthy backers. They have lobbies in Washington, and carry on large scale propaganda.

In The Labor Movement

There are, secondly, the organizations which are partly working-class in origin, composition, financing and control—though the membership of these is seldom if ever predominantly proletarian. These include conspicuously the Stalinist dominated American League for Peace and Democracy (formerly the American League against War and Fascism); and more recently the Keep America Out of War Committee, sponsored by the Socialists and the Lovestonites.

There is a common feature in all of these organizations, whoever originates or controls them: All of them advocate a program against war which is separated from a program against capitalism.

This is the key to an understanding of the nature of paci-

fism: Pacifism divorces the struggle against war from the struggle against capitalism. Pacifist organizations differ among themselves in innumerable other features, but they are all alike in this.

This fundamental characteristic is likewise the explanation of the fatal, hopeless, and in the last analysis treacherous error of pacifism.

The Roots of War

Wars are not fought in the modern world because "people want war." If so the problem would be simple. Indeed, the problem would already be solved, since people do not want war. But wars come nonetheless.

Wars are fought because the great powers cannot sustain their national boundaries; because they must seek new commodity markets, new sources of raw materials, new fields for investments, or must go down to economic destruction.

But these inescapable needs, operating within all of the great imperialist powers, flow necessarily from the inner conflicts of capitalist economy itself. The causes of war are an inseparable part of capitalism. So long as causes are present, the effect will follow. So long then, as capitalism endures, wars will periodically be fought. To remove the effect, the cause must be eliminated. To get rid of war, capital-

Sowing Illusions, Pacifism Leaves Masses Helpless In Face of War

there is no getting around it.

The people want to struggle against war. The truth is that the only way to fight against war is to fight against the capitalism which causes it; and to fight against capitalism means to carry on the class struggle for workers' power and for socialism.

Pacifism hides this truth. It exploits the anti-war feelings of the masses by leading those feelings into illusory and ineffective paths, thus away from the only path of genuine struggle against war. As a result of this, further, when the war comes—as it will in spite of the pacifists—the masses believing in pacifism are left helpless in the face of the war. The whole pacifist movement collapses with the first strong breath of the war machine. The imperialists find no resistance, and they ride ahead roughshod.

Turn Into Support

Still worse. Pacifism itself often, indeed usually, by an almost insensible transition, is transformed into patriotism and social-patriotism, into support of the war. The experience of the last war shows that this is what happens. The imperialists themselves take over the pacifist slogans as the means for justifying—not war "in general"—but the particular war which they plan to fight.

It becomes a war of "defense against aggression," a war to uphold the "sanctity of treaties" or "international morality." Most ironic of all, it becomes a war to defend Peace! Since pacifism has made no analysis of the true causes of war, does not face the fact that all imperialist wars are fought to serve one or another set of imperialist interests, it and those who follow its ideas, accept and advocate the war in the light of these slogans.

The pacifists in England were organized into the "League of Nations Union." Since the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, this Union has been the loudest force in England demanding, in effect, war against Great Britain's rival imperialism—in the name, of course, of the League, security, and the maintenance of peace.

The same thing is happening rapidly in this country. The bourgeois pacifist organizations "object" to the Big Navy Bill; but their representatives all protest their willingness to "defend" the country against "aggression."

The Social Patriots

There was more than symbolism in the change of name of the American League. The Stalinists were thereby preparing the minds of members, who had joined in order to work "against war and fascism," to support positively a war declared ostensibly under the slogan of "for

peace and democracy"—which is, of course, the slogan under which Roosevelt also prepares for war.

The Keep America Out of War Committee shows and must show the same tendency. From its platform, major generals and Congressmen and labor bureaucrats, ostensibly talking against war in general and "wars of aggression," end up their speeches with declarations of loyalty to the imperialist government of the United States, and promises to defend that government when the time comes.

This is why revolutionary socialists are compelled not to be indifferent to pacifism. In spite of the individual good will of many or most pacifists, pacifism as a movement and a program is reactionary, is a servant of imperialism. It is not a weapon against war, but a dangerous and bitter enemy of the revolutionary struggle against war. It must be exposed and fought against. We must tell the truth about war. There is no other way.

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Isolation?
Collective Security?
Relentless Class Struggle!
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