

## Pacifism in the Service of Imperialism

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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 forms, 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 banners of pacifism. Wilson plunged the United States into war in the name of 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 satire 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.

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 rationalistic 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 the tongues of poesy, moral philosophy, and certified accounting—that they would profit more by the 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. 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 of life, a life which differed from its earlier phase as the blood and purple sunset differs from the rosy-fingered dawn.

The decades preceding the present war have been well designated as a period of *armed peace*. During this whole period campaigns were in uninterrupted progress and battles were being fought, but they were in the colonies.

Proceeding, as they did, in the territories of backward and powerless peoples, these wars led to a division of Africa, Polynesia and Asia and prepared the way for the present world war. As, however, there were no wars in Europe proper after 1871—in spite of a long series of sharp conflicts—the general opinion in *petit bourgeois* circles began gradually to behold in the growth of armies a guarantee of peace, which was destined ultimately to be established by international law with every institutional sanction. Capitalist governments and munitions kings naturally had no objections to this "pacifist" interpretation of militarism. But the causes of world conflicts were accumulating and the present cataclysm was getting under way.

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 eco-