

determine the socialist position of the world war as a historic occurrence.

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Imperialism is not the creation of any one or any one 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 recognizable only in its relationships, and from which no nation can voluntarily withdraw. From this point of view only is it possible to understand the question of "national defense" in the present war correctly.

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 defense. Military success would immediately demand the occupation of foreign territory. But the existence of influential capitalist groups, interested in imperialistic annexations, will awaken expansionistic 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 alliances 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-defense. 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 Mexico 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 realize 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. 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 defense, 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.

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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 imperialistic war, since we do not enjoy 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 extend. That is the role that the Social Democracy must play as the leader of the fighting proletariat. Instead of covering this imperialistic war with a lying mantle of national self-defense, the Social Democracy should have demanded the right of national self-determination seriously, should have used it as a lever against the imperialistic war. Yes, Socialists should defend their country in great historical crises. And here lies the great fault of the