

# V I Lenin

## War and revolution

A lecture delivered on 14 May 1917

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The question of war and revolution has been dealt with so often lately in the press and at every public meeting that probably many of you are not only familiar with many aspects of the question but have come to find them tedious. I have not yet had a single opportunity to address or even attend any Party or for that matter any public meetings in this district, and therefore I run the risk, perhaps, of repetition or of not dealing in sufficient detail with those aspects of the question that interest you most.

It seems to me that the most important thing that is usually overlooked in the question of the war, a key issue to which insufficient attention is paid and over which there is so much dispute – useless, hopeless, idle dispute, I should say – is the question of the class character of the war: what caused that war, what classes are waging it, and what historical and historico-economic conditions gave rise to it. As far as I have been able to follow the way the question of the war is dealt with at public and Party meetings, I have come to the conclusion that the reason why there is so much misunderstanding on the subject is because, all too often, when dealing with the question of the war, we speak in entirely different languages.

From the point of view of Marxism, that is, of modern scientific socialism, the main issue in any discussion by socialists on how to assess the war and what attitude to adopt towards it is this: what is the war being waged for, and what classes staged and directed it. We Marxists do not belong to that category of people who are unqualified opponents of all war. We say: our aim is to achieve a socialist system of society, which, by eliminating the division of mankind into classes, by eliminating all exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, will inevitably eliminate the very possibility of war. But in the war to win that socialist system of society we are bound to encounter conditions under which the class struggle within each given nation may come up against a war between the different nations, a war conditioned by this very class struggle. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility of revolutionary wars, i.e., wars arising from the class struggle, wars waged by revolutionary classes, wars which are of direct and

immediate revolutionary significance. Still less can we rule this out when we remember that though the history of European revolutions during the last century, in the course of 125-135 years, say, gave us wars which were mostly reactionary, it also gave us revolutionary wars, such as the war of the French revolutionary masses against a united monarchist, backward, feudal and semi-feudal Europe. No deception of the masses is more widespread today in Western Europe, and latterly here in Russia, too, than that which is practised by citing the example of revolutionary wars. There are wars and wars. We must be clear as to what historical conditions have given rise to the war, what classes are waging it, and for what ends. Unless we grasp this, all our talk about the war will necessarily be utterly futile, engendering more heat than light. That is why I take the liberty, seeing that you have chosen war and revolution as the subject of today's talk, to deal with this aspect of the matter at greater length.

We all know the dictum of Clausewitz, one of the most famous writers on the philosophy and history of war, which says: "War is a continuation of policy by other means."<sup>[1]</sup> This dictum comes from a writer who reviewed the history of wars and drew philosophic lessons from it shortly after the period of the Napoleonic wars. This writer, whose basic views are now undoubtedly familiar to every thinking person, nearly eighty years ago challenged the ignorant man-in-the-street conception of war as being a thing apart from the policies of the governments and classes concerned, as being a simple attack that disturbs the peace, and is then followed by restoration of the peace thus disturbed, as much as to say: "They had a fight, then they made up!" This is a grossly ignorant view, one that was repudiated scores of years ago and is repudiated by any more or less careful analysis of any historical epoch of wars.

War is a continuation of policy by other means. All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within that state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed.

War is a continuation of policy by other means. When the French revolutionary townspeople and revolutionary peasants overthrew the monarchy at the close of the eighteenth century by revolutionary means and established a democratic republic – when they made short work of their monarch, and short work of their landowners, too, in a revolutionary fashion – that policy of the revolutionary class was bound to shake all the rest of autocratic, tsarist, imperial, and semi-feudal Europe to its foundations. And the inevitable continuation of this policy of the victorious revolutionary class in France was the wars in which all the monarchist nations of Europe, forming their famous coalition, lined up against revolutionary France in a counter-revolutionary war. Just as within the country the revolutionary people of France had then, for the first time, displayed revolutionary energy on a scale it had never shown for centuries, so in the war at the close of the eighteenth century it revealed a similar gigantic revolutionary creativeness when it remodelled its whole system of strategy, broke with all the old rules and traditions of warfare, replaced the old troops with a new revolutionary people's army, and created new methods of warfare. This example, to my mind, is noteworthy in that it clearly demonstrates to us things which the bourgeois journalists are now always forgetting when they pander to the philistine prejudices and ignorance of the backward masses who do not understand this intimate economic and historical connection between every kind of war and the preceding policy of every country, every class that ruled before the war and achieved its ends by so-called "peaceful" means. So-called, because the brute force required to ensure "peaceful" rule in the colonies, for example, can hardly be called peaceful.

Peace reigned in Europe, but this was because domination over hundreds of millions of people in the colonies by the European nations was sustained only through constant, incessant, interminable wars, which we Europeans do not regard as wars at all, since all too often they resembled, not wars, but brutal massacres, the wholesale slaughter of unarmed peoples. The thing is that if we want to know what the present war is about we must first of all make a general survey of the policies of the European powers as a whole. We must not take this or that example, this or that particular case, which can easily be wrenched out of the context of social phenomena and which is worthless, because an opposite example can just as easily be cited. We must take the whole policy of the entire system of European states in their economic and political interrelations if we

are to understand how the present war steadily and inevitably grew out of this system.

We are constantly witnessing attempts, especially on the part of the capitalist press – whether monarchist or republican – to read into the present war an historical meaning which it does not possess. For example, no device is more frequently resorted to in the French Republic than that of presenting this war on France's part as a continuation and counterpart of the wars of the Great French Revolution of 1792. No device for hoodwinking the French masses, the French workers and the workers of all countries is more widespread than that of applying to our epoch the "jargon" of that other epoch and some of its watchwords, or the attempt to present matters as though now, too, republican France is defending her liberty against the monarchy. One "minor" fact overlooked is that then, in 1792, war was waged in France by a revolutionary class, which had carried out an unparalleled revolution and displayed unmatched heroism in utterly destroying the French monarchy and rising against a united monarchist Europe with the sole and single aim of carrying on its revolutionary struggle.

The war in France was a continuation of the policy of the revolutionary class which had carried out the revolution, won the republic, settled accounts' with the French capitalists and landowners with unprecedented vigour, and was waging a revolutionary war against a united monarchist Europe in continuation of that policy.

What we have at present is primarily two leagues, two groups of capitalist powers. We have before us all the world's greatest capitalist powers – Britain, France, America, and Germany – who for decades have doggedly pursued a policy of incessant economic rivalry aimed at achieving world supremacy, subjugating the small nations, and making threefold and tenfold profits on banking capital, which has caught the whole world in the net of its influence. That is what Britain's and Germany's policies really amount to. I stress this fact. This fact can never be emphasised strongly enough, because if we forget this we shall never understand what this war is about, and we shall then be easy game for any bourgeois publicist who tries to foist lying phrases on us.

The real policies of the two groups of capitalist giants – Britain and Germany, who, with their respective allies, have taken the field against each other – policies which they were pursuing for decades before the war, should be studied and grasped in their entirety. If we did not do this we should not only be neglecting an essential

requirement of scientific socialism and of all social science in general, but we should be unable to understand anything whatever about the present war. We should be putting ourselves in the power of Milyukov,<sup>[2]</sup> that deceiver, who is stirring up chauvinism and hatred of one nation for another by methods which are applied everywhere without exception, methods which Clausewitz wrote about eighty years ago when he ridiculed the very view some people are holding today, namely, that the nations lived in peace and then they started fighting. As if this were true! How can a war be accounted for without considering its bearing on the preceding policy of the given state, of the given system of states, the given classes? I repeat: this is a basic point which is constantly overlooked. Failure to understand it makes nine-tenths of all war discussions mere wrangling, so much verbiage. We say: if you have not studied the politics of both belligerent groups over a period of decades – so as to avoid accidental factors and the quoting of random examples – if you have not shown what bearing this war has on preceding policies, then you don't understand what this war is all about.

These policies show us just one thing – continuous economic rivalry between the world's two greatest giants, capitalist economies. On the one hand we have Britain, a country which owns the greater part of the globe, a country which ranks first in wealth, which has created this wealth not so much by the labour of its workers as by the exploitation of innumerable colonies, by the vast power of its banks which have developed at the head of all the others into an insignificantly small group of some four or five super-banks handling billions of roubles, and handling them in such a way that it can be said without exaggeration that there is not a patch of land in the world today on which this capital has not laid its heavy hand, not a patch of land which British capital has not enmeshed by a thousand threads. This capital grew to such dimensions by the turn of the century that its activities extended far beyond the borders of individual states and formed a group of giant banks possessed of fabulous wealth. Having begotten this tiny group of banks, it has caught the whole world in the net of its billions. This is the sum and substance of Britain's economic policy and of the economic policy of France, of which even French writers, some of them contributors to *L'Humanité*,<sup>[3]</sup> a paper now controlled by ex-socialists (in fact, no less a man than Lysis, the well-known financial writer), stated several years before the war: "France is a financial monarchy, France is a financial oligarchy, France is the world's money-lender."

On the other hand, opposed to this, mainly Anglo-French group, we have another group of capitalists, an even more rapacious, even more predatory one, a group who came to the capitalist banquet table when all the seats were occupied, but who introduced into the struggle new methods for developing capitalist production, improved techniques, and superior organisation, which turned the old capitalism, the capitalism of the free-competition age, into the capitalism of giant trusts, syndicates, and cartels. This group introduced the beginnings of state-controlled capitalist production, combining the colossal power of capitalism with the colossal power of the state into a single mechanism and bringing tens of millions of people within the single organisation of state capitalism. Here is economic history, here is diplomatic history, covering several decades, from which no one can get away. It is the one and only guide-post to a proper solution of the problem of war; it leads you to the conclusion that the present war, too, is the outcome of the policies of the classes who have come to grips in it, of the two supreme giants, who, long before the war, had caught the whole world, all countries, in the net of financial exploitation and economically divided the globe up among themselves. They were bound to clash, because a redivision of this supremacy, from the point of view of capitalism, had become inevitable.

The old division was based on the fact that Britain, in the course of several centuries, had ruined her former competitors. A former competitor was Holland, which had dominated the whole world. Another was France, which had fought for supremacy for nearly a hundred years. After a series of protracted wars Britain was able, by virtue of her economic power, her merchant capital, to establish her unchallenged sway over the world. In 1871 a new predator appeared, a new capitalist power arose, which developed at an incomparably faster pace than Britain. That is a basic fact. You will not find a book on economic history that does not acknowledge this indisputable fact – the fact of Germany's faster development. This rapid development of capitalism in Germany was the development of a young strong predator, who appeared in the concert of European powers and said: "You ruined Holland, you defeated France, you have helped yourself to half the world – now be good enough to let us have our fair share." What does "a fair share" mean? How is it to be determined in the capitalist world, in the world of banks? There power is determined by the number of banks, there power is determined in the way described by a mouthpiece of the American multimillionaires, which declared with typically

American frankness and typically American cynicism: “The war in Europe is being waged for world domination. To dominate the world two things are needed: dollars and banks. We have the dollars, we shall make the banks and we shall dominate the world.” This statement was made by a leading newspaper of the American multimillionaires. I must say, there is a thousand times more truth in this cynical statement of a blustering American multimillionaire than in thousands of articles by bourgeois liars who try to make out that this war is being waged for national interests, on national issues, and utter similar glaringly patent lies which dismiss history completely and take an isolated example like the case of the German beast of prey who attacked Belgium. The case is undoubtedly a real one. This group of predators did attack Belgium with brutal ferocity, but it did the same thing the other group did yesterday by other means and is doing today to other nations.

When we argue about annexations – and this bears on the question I have been trying briefly to explain to you as the history of the economic and diplomatic relations which led up to the present war – when we argue about annexations we always forget that these, generally, are what the war is being waged for; it is for the carve-up of conquered territories, or, to put it more popularly, for the division of the plundered spoils by the two robber gangs. When we argue about annexations we constantly meet with methods which, scientifically speaking, do not stand up to criticism, and which, as methods of public journalism, are deliberate humbug. Ask a Russian chauvinist or social-chauvinist what annexation by Germany means, and he will give you an excellent explanation, because he understands that perfectly well. But he will never answer a request for a general definition of annexation that will fit them all – Germany, Britain, and Russia. He will never do that! And when *Rech* (to pass from theory to practice) sneered at *Pravda*,<sup>[4]</sup> saying, “These Pravdists consider Kurland a case of annexation! How can you talk to such people!” and we answered: “Please give us such a definition of annexation as would apply to the Germans, the English, and the Russians, and we add that either you evade this issue or we shall expose you on the spot”<sup>[5]</sup> – *Rech* kept silent. We maintain that no newspaper, either of the chauvinists in general, who simply say that the fatherland must be defended, or of the social-chauvinists, has ever given a definition of annexation that would fit both Germany and Russia, that would be applicable to any side. It cannot do this for the simple reason that this war is the continuation of a policy of annexations, that is, a policy of conquest, of capitalist

robbery on the part of both groups involved in the war. Obviously, the question of which of these two robbers was the first to draw the knife is of small account to us. Take the history of the naval and military expenditures of these two groups over a period of decades, take the history of the little wars they waged before the big war – “little” because few Europeans died in those wars, whereas hundreds of thousands of people belonging to the nations they were subjugating died in them, nations which from their point of view could not be regarded as nations at all (you couldn’t very well call those Asians and Africans nations!); the wars waged against these nations were wars against unarmed people, who were simply shot down, machine-gunned. Can you call them wars? Strictly speaking they were not wars at all, and you could forget about them. That is their attitude to this downright deception of the masses.

The present war is a continuation of the policy of conquest, of the shooting down of whole nationalities, of unbelievable atrocities committed by the Germans and the British in Africa, and by the British and the Russians in Persia – which of them committed most it is difficult to say. It was for this reason that the German capitalists looked upon them as their enemies. Ah, they said, you are strong because you are rich? But we are stronger, therefore we have the same “sacred” right to plunder. That is what the real history of British and German finance capital in the course of several decades preceding the war amounts to. That is what the history of Russo-German, Russo-British, and German-British relations amounts to. There you have the clue to an understanding of what the war is about. That is why the story that is current about the cause of the war is sheer duplicity and humbug. Forgetting the history of finance capital, the history of how this war had been brewing over the issue of redivision, they present the matter like this: two nations were living at peace, then one attacked the other, and the other fought back. All science, all banks are forgotten, and the peoples are told to take up arms, and so are the peasants, who know nothing about politics. All they have to do is to fight back! The logical thing, following this line of argument, would be to close down all newspapers, burn all books and ban all mention of annexations in the press. In this way such a view of annexations could be justified. They can’t tell the truth about annexations because the whole history of Russia, Britain, and Germany has been one of continuous, ruthless and sanguinary war over annexations. Ruthless wars were waged in Persia and Africa by the Liberals, who flogged political offenders in India for daring to put forward demands which were

being fought for here in Russia. The French colonial troops oppressed peoples too. There you have the pre-history, the real history of unprecedented plunder! Such is the policy of these classes, of which the present war is a continuation. That is why, on the question of annexations, they cannot give the reply that we give, when we say that any nation joined to another one, not by the voluntary choice of its majority but by a decision of a king or government, is an annexed nation. To renounce annexation is to give each nation the right to form a separate state or to live in union with whomsoever it chooses. An answer like that is perfectly clear to every worker who is at all class-conscious.

In every resolution, of which dozens are passed, and published even in such a paper as *Zemlya i Volya*,<sup>[5]</sup> you will find the answer, poorly expressed: We don't want a war for supremacy over other nations, we are fighting for our freedom. That is what all the workers and peasants say, that is how they express the view of the workingman, his understanding of the war. They imply by this that if the war were in the interests of the working people against the exploiters they would be for such a war. So would we, and there is not a revolutionary party that could be against it. Where they go wrong, these movers of numerous resolutions, is when they believe that the war is being waged by them. We soldiers, we workers, we peasants are fighting for our freedom. I shall never forget the question one of them asked me after a meeting. "Why do you speak against the capitalists all the time?" he said. "I'm not a capitalist, am I? We're workers, we're defending our freedom." You're wrong, you are fighting because you are obeying your capitalist government; it's the governments, not the peoples, who are carrying on this war. I am not surprised at a worker or peasant, who doesn't know his politics, who has not had the good or bad fortune of being initiated into the secrets of diplomacy or the picture of this finance plunder (this oppression of Persia by Russia and Britain, say) – I am not surprised at him forgetting this history and saying naïvely: Who cares about the capitalists, when it's me who's fighting! He doesn't understand the connection between the war and the government, he doesn't understand that the war is being waged by the government and that he is just a tool in the hands of that government. He can call himself a revolutionary people and write eloquent resolutions – to Russians this means a lot, because this has come into their lives only recently. There has recently appeared a "revolutionary" declaration by the Provisional Government. This doesn't mean anything. Other nations, more experienced than we are in the capitalist art of

hoodwinking the masses by penning "revolutionary" manifestos, have long since broken all the world's records in this respect. If you take the parliamentary history of the French Republic since it became a republic supporting tsarism, you will find dozens of examples during the decades of this history when manifestos full of the most eloquent phrases served to mask a policy of the most outrageous colonial and financial plunder. The whole history of the Third Republic in France is a history of this plunder. Such are the origins of the present war. It is not due to malice on the part of capitalists or the mistaken policy of some monarch. To think so would be incorrect. No, this war is an inevitable outgrowth of super-capitalism, especially banking capital, which resulted in some four banks in Berlin and five or six in London dominating the whole world, appropriating the world's funds, reinforcing their financial policy by armed force, and finally clashing in a savage armed conflict because they had come to the end of their free tether in the matter of conquests. One or the other side had to relinquish its colonies. Such questions are not settled voluntarily in this world of capitalists. This issue could only be settled by war. That is why it is absurd to blame one or another crowned brigand. They are all the same, these crowned brigands. That is why it is equally absurd to blame the capitalists of one or another country. All they are to blame for is for having introduced such a system. But this has been done in full keeping with the law, which is safeguarded by all the forces of a civilised state. "I am fully within my rights, I am a buyer of shares. All the law courts, all the police, the whole standing army and all the navies in the world are safeguarding my sacred right to these shares." Who's to blame for banks being set up which handle hundreds of millions of roubles, for these banks casting their nets of plunder over the whole world, and for their being locked in mortal combat? Find the culprit if you can! The blame lies with half a century of capitalist development, and the only way out of this is by the overthrow of the rule of the capitalists and by a workers' revolution. That is the answer our Party has arrived at from an analysis of the war, and that is why we say: the very simple question of annexations has been so muddled up and the spokesmen of the bourgeois parties have uttered so many lies that they are able to make out that Kurland is not annexation by Russia. They have shared Kurland and Poland between them, those three crowned brigands. They have been doing this for a hundred years, carving up the living flesh. And the Russian brigand snatched most because he was then the strongest. And now that the young beast of prey, Germany, who was

then a party to the carve-up, has grown into a strong capitalist power, she demands a redivision. You want things to stay as they were? she says. You think you are stronger? Let's try conclusions!

That is what the war boils down to. Of course, the challenge "let's try conclusions" is merely an expression of the decade-long policy of plunder, the policy of the big banks. That is why no one but we can tell this truth about annexations, a simple truth that every worker and peasant will understand. That is why the question of treaties, such a simple question, is deliberately and disgracefully confused by the whole press. You say that we have a revolutionary government, that there are ministers in that government who are well-nigh socialists – Narodniks and Mensheviks. But when they make declarations about peace without annexations, on condition that this term is not defined (because it means taking away German annexations and keeping our own), then we say: Of what value are your "revolutionary" cabinet, your declarations, your statements that you are not out for a war of conquest, if at the same time you tell the army to take the offensive? Don't you know that we have treaties, that these treaties were concluded by Nicholas the Bloody in the most predatory fashion? You don't know it? It is pardonable for the workers or peasants not to know that. They did not plunder, they read no clever books. But when educated Cadets preach this sort of stuff they know perfectly well what these treaties are about. Although they are "secret" treaties, the whole diplomatic press in all countries talks about them, saying: "You'll get the Straits, you'll get Armenia, you'll get Galicia, you'll get Alsace-Lorraine, you'll get Trieste, and we'll make a final carve-up of Persia." And the German capitalist says: "I'll seize Egypt, I'll subjugate the European nations unless you return my colonies to me with interest." Shares are things that can't do without interest. That is why the question of treaties, itself a clear, simple question, has touched off such a torrent of barefaced outrageous lies as those that are now pouring from the pages of all the capitalist newspapers.

Take today's paper *Dyen*. Vodovozov, a man absolutely innocent of Bolshevism, but who is an honest democrat, states in it: I am opposed to secret treaties; let me say this about the treaty with Rumania. There is a secret treaty with Rumania and it says that Rumania will receive a number of foreign peoples if she fights on the side of the Allies. The treaties which the other Allies have are all the same. They wouldn't have started to subjugate nations if they had not had these treaties. To

know their contents you do not have to burrow in special journals. It is sufficient to recollect the basic facts of economic and diplomatic history. For decades Austria has been after the Balkans with an eye to subjugation. And if they have clashed it is because they couldn't help clashing. That is why, when the masses demand that these treaties should be published, a demand that is growing more insistent every day, ex-Minister Milyukov and the present Minister Tereshchenko<sup>[6]</sup> (one in a government without socialist ministers, the other in a government with a number of near-socialist ministers) declare that publication of the treaties would mean a break with the Allies.

Obviously, you can't publish the treaties because you are all participants in the same gang of robbers. We agree with Milyukov and Tereshchenko that the treaties cannot be published. Two different conclusions can be drawn from this. If we agree with Milyukov and Tereshchenko that the treaties cannot be published – what follows from this? If the treaties cannot be published, then we've got to help the capitalist ministers continue the war. The other conclusion is this: since the capitalists cannot publish the treaties themselves, then the capitalists have got to be overthrown. Which of these two conclusions you consider to be correct, I leave it to you to decide, but be sure to consider the consequences. If we reason the way the Narodnik and Menshevik ministers reason, we come to this: once the government says that the treaties cannot be published, then we must issue a new manifesto. Paper is not so dear yet that we cannot write new manifestos. We shall write a new manifesto and start an offensive. What for? With what aims? Who is to set these aims? The soldiers are called upon to carry out the predatory treaties with Rumania and France. Send Vodovozov's article to the front and then complain that this is all the Bolsheviks' doing, the Bolsheviks must have invented this treaty-with-Rumania business. In that case you would not only have to make life a hell for *Pravda*, but even kick Vodovozov out for having studied history. You would have to make a bonfire of all Milyukov's books – terribly dangerous books those. Just open any book by the leader of the party of "people's freedom", by this ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs. They are good books. What do they say? They say that Russia has "a right" to the Straits, to Armenia, to Galicia, to Eastern Prussia. He has carved them all up, and even appends a map. Not only the Bolsheviks and Vodovozov will have to be sent to Siberia for writing such revolutionary articles, but Milyukov's books will have to be burnt too, because if you collected simple quotations from these books today

and sent them to the front, no inflammatory leaflet would have such an inflammatory effect as this would have.

It remains for me now, according to the brief plan of this talk I have sketched for myself, to touch on the question of “revolutionary defencism”. I believe, after what I have had the honour of reporting to you, that I may now be allowed to touch only briefly on this question.

By “revolutionary defencism” we mean vindication of the war on the plea that, after all, we have made the revolution, after all, we are a revolutionary people, a revolutionary democracy. But what answer do we give to that? What revolution did we make? We overthrew Nicholas. The revolution was not so very difficult compared with one that would have overthrown the whole class of landowners and capitalists. Who did the revolution put in power? The landowners and capitalists – the very same classes who have long been in power in Europe. Revolutions like this occurred there a hundred years ago. The Tereshchenkos, Milyukovs, and Konovalovs have been in power there for a long time, and it doesn’t matter a bit whether they have a civil list to pay their tsars or whether they do without this luxury. A bank remains a bank, whether capital is invested in concessions by the hundred or not; profits remain profits, be it in a republic or in a monarchy. If any savage country dares to disobey our civilised Capital, which sets up such splendid banks in the colonies, in Africa and Persia – if any savage nation should disobey our civilised bank, we send troops out who restore culture, order, and civilisation, as Lyakhov did in Persia,<sup>[7]</sup> and the French “republican” troops did in Africa, where they exterminated peoples with equal ferocity. What difference does it make? We have here the same “revolutionary defencism”, displayed only by the unenlightened masses, who see no connection between war and the government, who do not know that this policy is sanctioned by treaties. The treaties have remained, the banks have remained, the concessions have remained. In Russia the best men of their class are in the government, but the nature of the war has not changed a bit because of this. The new “revolutionary defencism” uses the great concept of revolution merely as a cloak to cover up the dirty and bloody war waged for the sake of dirty and outrageous treaties.

The Russian revolution has not altered the war, but it has created organisations which exist in no other country and were seldom found in revolutions in the West. Most of the revolutions were confined to the emergence of governments of our Tereshchenko and

Konovalov, type, while the country remained passive and disorganised. The Russian revolution has gone further than that. In this we have the germ of hope that it may overcome the war. Besides the government of “near-socialist” ministers, the government of imperialist war, the government of offensive, a government tied up with Anglo-French capital – besides this government and independent of it we have all over Russia a network of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies. Here is a revolution which has not said its last word yet. Here is a revolution which Western Europe, under similar conditions, has not known. Here are organisations of those classes which really have no need for annexations, which have not put millions in the banks, and which are probably not interested in whether the Russian Colonel Lyakhov and the British Liberal ambassador divided Persia properly or not. Here is the pledge of this revolution being carried further, i.e., that the classes which have no interest in annexations, and despite the fact that they put too much trust in the capitalist government, despite the appalling muddle and appalling deception contained in the very concept “revolutionary defencism”, despite the fact that they support the war loan, support the government of imperialist war – despite all this – have succeeded in creating organisations in which the mass of the oppressed classes are represented. These are the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies, which, in very many local areas in Russia, have gone much further than the Petrograd Soviet in their revolutionary work. It is only natural, because in Petrograd we have the central authority of the capitalists.

And when Skobelev<sup>[8]</sup> in his speech yesterday said: “We’ll take all the profits, we’ll take 100 per cent,” he was just letting himself go with ministerial *élan*. If you take today’s *Rech* you will see what the response is to this passage in Skobelev’s speech. They write there: “Why, this means starvation, death! One hundred per cent means all!” Minister Skobelev goes farther than the most extreme Bolshevik. It’s slandering the Bolsheviks to say that they are the extreme Left. Minister Skobelev is much more “Left”. They called me all the ugly names they could think of, saying that I wanted to take their last shirt from the capitalists. At any rate, it was Shulgin<sup>[9]</sup> who said: “Let them take our last shirt!” Imagine a Bolshevik going up to Citizen Shulgin and wanting to take his shirt from him. He could just as well and with greater justification accuse Minister Skobelev of this. We never went as far as that. We never suggested taking 100 per cent of profits. Nevertheless, it is a valuable

promise. If you take the resolution of our Party you will see that we propose there, only in a more closely reasoned form, exactly what I have been proposing. Control must be established over the banks, followed by a fair tax on incomes.<sup>[10]</sup> And nothing more! Skobelev suggests taking a hundred kopeks in the rouble. We proposed and propose nothing of the sort. Skobelev doesn't really mean it, and if he does he would not be able to do it for the simple reason that to promise such things while making friends with Tereshchenko and Konovalov is somewhat ludicrous. You could take 80 or 90 per cent of a millionaire's income, but not arm in arm with such ministers. If the Soviets had the power they would really take it, but not all of it – they have no need to. They would take the bulk of the income. No other state authority could do that. Minister Skobelev may have the best of intentions. I have known those parties for several decades – I have been in the revolutionary movement for thirty years. I am the last person, therefore, to question their good intentions. But that is not the point. It is not a question of good intentions. Good intentions pave the road to hell. All the government offices are full of papers signed by our ministers, but nothing has changed as a result of it. If you want to introduce control, start it! Our programme is such that in reading Skobelev's speech we can say: we do not demand more. We are much more moderate than Minister Skobelev. He proposes both control and 100 per cent. We don't want to take 100 per cent, but we say: "Until you start doing things we don't believe you!" Here lies the difference between us: we don't believe words and promises and don't advise others to believe them. The lessons of parliamentary republics teach us not to believe in paper utterances. If you want control, you've got to start it. One day is enough to have a law on such control issued. The employees' council at every bank, the workers' council at every factory, and all the parties receive the right of control. But you can't do that, we shall be told. This is a commercial secret, this is sacred private property. Well, just as you like, make your choice. If you want to safeguard all those ledgers and accounts, all the transactions of the trusts, then don't chatter about control, about the country going to ruin.

In Germany the situation is still worse. In Russia you can get grain but in Germany you can't. You can do a lot in Russia through organisation, but you can do nothing more in Germany. There is no more grain left, and the whole nation is faced with disaster. People today write that Russia is on the brink of ruin. If that is so, then it is a crime to safeguard "sacred" private property. Therefore, what do the words about control mean?

Surely you haven't forgotten that Nicholas Romanov, too, wrote a good deal about control. You will find him repeating a thousand times the words "state control", "public control", "appointment of senators". In the two months following the revolution the industrialists have robbed the whole of Russia. Capitalists have made staggering profits; every financial report tells you that. And when the workers, two months after the revolution, had the "audacity" to say they wanted to live like human beings, the whole capitalist press throughout the country set up a howl. Every number of *Rech* is a wild howl about the workers wanting to rob the country, but all we promise is merely control over the capitalists. Can't we have less promises and more deeds? If what you want is bureaucratic control, control through the same organs as before, our Party declares its profound conviction that you cannot be given support in this, even if there were a dozen Narodnik and Menshevik ministers in your government instead of half a dozen. Control can only be exercised by the people. You must arrange control by bank employees' councils, engineers' councils, and workers' councils, and start that control right away, tomorrow. Every official should be made responsible, on pain of criminal persecution, for any wrong information he may give in any of these institutions. It is a matter of life and death to the country. We want to know how much grain there is, how much raw material, how many work hands there are and where they are to be placed.

This brings me to the last question – that of how to end the war. The ridiculous view is ascribed to us that we are out for a separate peace. The German robber capitalists are making peace overtures, saying: "We'll give you a piece of Turkey and Armenia if you give us ore-bearing lands. That is what the diplomats are talking about in every neutral city! Everybody knows it. Only it is veiled with conventional diplomatic phrases. That's what diplomats are for – to speak in diplomatic language. What nonsense it is to allege that we are for ending the war by a separate peace! To end the war which is being waged by the capitalists of all the wealthiest powers, a war stemming from the decade-long history of economic development, by one-sided withdrawal from military operations is such a stupid idea that it would be absurd even to refute it. The fact that we specially drew up a resolution to refute it is because we wanted to explain things to the broad masses before whom we were being slandered. It is not a matter that can be seriously discussed. The war which the capitalists of all countries are waging cannot be ended without a workers' revolution against these capitalists. So long as control remains a mere phrase instead of deed, so long as the

government of the capitalists has not been replaced by a government of the revolutionary proletariat, the government is doomed merely to reiterate: We are heading for disaster, disaster, disaster. Socialists are now being jailed in “free” Britain for saying what I am saying. In Germany Liebknecht has been imprisoned for saying what I am saying, and in Austria Friedrich Adler is in jail for saying the same thing with the help of a revolver (he may have been executed by now). The sympathy of the mass of workers in all countries is with these socialists and not with those who have sided with their capitalists. The workers’ revolution is mounting throughout the world. In other countries it is a more difficult matter, of course. They have no half-wits there like Nicholas and Rasputin. There the best men of their class are at the head of the government. They lack conditions there for a revolution against autocracy. They have there a government of the capitalist class. The most talented representatives of that class have been governing there for a long time. That is why the revolution there, though it has not come yet, is bound to come, no matter how many revolutionaries, men like Friedrich Adler and Karl Liebknecht, may die in the attempt. The future belongs to them, and the workers of all countries follow their lead. The workers in all countries are bound to win.

On the question of America entering the war I shall say this. People argue that America is a democracy, America has the White House. I say: Slavery was abolished there half a century ago. The anti-slave war ended in 1865. Since then multimillionaires have mushroomed. They have the whole of America in their financial grip. They are making ready to subdue Mexico and will inevitably come to war with Japan over a carve-up of the Pacific. This war has been brewing for several decades. All literature speaks about it. America’s real aim in entering the war is to prepare for this future war with Japan. The American people do enjoy considerable freedom and it is difficult to conceive them standing for compulsory military service, for the setting up of an army pursuing any aims of conquest – a struggle with Japan, for instance. The Americans have the example of Europe to show them what this leads to. The American capitalists have stepped into this war in order to have an excuse, behind a smoke-screen of lofty ideals championing the rights of small nations, for building up a strong standing army.

The peasants refuse to give up their grain for money and demand implements, boots, and clothes. There is a great measure of profound truth in this decision. Indeed,

the country has reached a stage of ruin when it now faces the same situation, although to a less intensive degree, that other countries have long been facing, a situation in which money has lost its value. The rule of capitalism is being so strongly undermined by the whole course of events that the peasants, for instance, refuse to accept money. They say: “What do we want money for?” And they are right. The rule of capitalism is being undermined not because somebody is out to seize power. “Seizure” of power would be senseless. It would be impossible to put an end to the rule of capitalism if the whole course of economic development in the capitalist countries did not lead up to it. The war has speeded up this process, and this has made capitalism impossible. No power could destroy capitalism if it were not sapped and undermined by history.

And now we see this clearly demonstrated. The peasant expresses what everybody sees – that the power of money has been undermined. The only way out is for the Soviets to agree to give implements, boots, and clothes in exchange for grain. This is what we are coming to, this is the answer that life dictates. Without this, tens of millions of people will go hungry, without clothes and boots. Tens of millions of people are facing disaster and death; safeguarding the interests of the capitalists is the last thing that should bother us. The only way out is for all power to be transferred to the Soviets, which represent the majority of the population. Possibly mistakes may be made in the process. No one claims that such a difficult task can be disposed of offhand. We do not say anything of the sort. We are told that we want the power to be in the hands of the Soviets, but they don’t want it. We say that life’s experience will suggest this solution to them, and the whole nation will see that there is no other way out. We do not want a “seizure” of power, because the entire experience of past revolutions teaches us that the only stable power is the one that has the backing of the majority of the population. “Seizure” of power, therefore, would be adventurism, and our Party will not have it. If the government will be a government of the majority, it may perhaps embark on a policy that will prove, at first, to be erroneous, but there is no other way out. We shall then have a peaceful policy shift within the same organisations. No other organisations can be invented. That is why we say that no other solution of the question is conceivable.

How can the war be ended? If the Soviet were to assume power and the Germans continued the war – what would we do then? Anyone interested in the views of our Party could have read in Pravda the other day an

exact quotation of what we said abroad as far back as 1915, namely, that if the revolutionary class in Russia, the working class, comes to power, it will have to offer peace. And if our terms are rejected by the German capitalists or by the capitalists of any other country, then that class will stand wholly for war.<sup>[11]</sup> We are not suggesting that the war be ended at one blow. We do not promise that. We preach no such impossible and impracticable thing as that the war can be ended by the will of one side alone. Such promises are easy to give but impossible to fulfil. There is no easy way out of this terrible war. It has been going on for three years. You will go on fighting for ten years unless you accept the idea of a difficult and painful revolution. There is no other way out. We say: The war which the capitalist governments have started can only be ended by a workers' revolution. Those interested in the socialist movement should read the Basle Manifesto of 1912 adopted unanimously by all the socialist parties of the world, a manifesto that was published in our newspaper *Pravda*, a manifesto that can be published now in none of the belligerent countries, neither in "free" Britain nor in republican France, because it said the truth about war before the war. It said that there would be war between Britain and Germany as a result of capitalist competition. It said that so much powder had accumulated that the guns would start shooting of their own accord. It told us what the war would be fought for, and said that the war would lead to a proletarian revolution. Therefore, we tell those socialists who signed this Manifesto and then went over to the side of their capitalist governments that they have betrayed socialism. There has been a split among the socialists all over the world. Some are in ministerial cabinets, others in prison. All over the world some socialists are preaching a war build-up, while others, like Eugene Debs, the American Bebel, who enjoys immense popularity among the American workers, say: "I'd rather be shot than give a cent towards the war. I'm willing to fight only the proletariat's war against the capitalists all over the world." That is how the socialists have split throughout the world. The world's social-patriots think they are defending their country. They are mistaken – they are defending the interests of one band of capitalists against another. We preach proletarian revolution – the only true cause, for which scores of people have gone to the scaffold, and hundreds and thousands have been thrown into prison. These imprisoned socialists are a minority, but the working class is for them, the whole course of economic development is for them. All this tells us that there is no other way out. The only way to end this war is by a

workers' revolution in several countries. In the meantime we should make preparations for that revolution, we should assist it. For all its hatred of war and desire for peace, the Russian people could do nothing against the war, so long as it was being waged by the tsar, except work for a revolution against the tsar and for the tsar's overthrow. And that is what happened. History proved this to you yesterday and will prove it to you tomorrow. We said long ago that the mounting Russian revolution must be assisted. We said that at the end of 1914. Our Duma deputies were deported to Siberia for this, and we were told: "You are giving no answer. You talk about revolution when the strikes are off, when the deputies are doing hard labour, and when you haven't a single newspaper!" And we were accused of evading an answer. We heard those accusations for a number of years. We answered: You can be indignant about it, but so long as the tsar has not been overthrown we can do nothing against the war. And our prediction was justified. It is not fully justified yet, but it has already begun to receive justification. The revolution is beginning to change the war on Russia's part. The capitalists are still continuing the war, and we say: Until there is a workers' revolution in several countries the war cannot be stopped, because the people who want that war are still in power. We are told: "In a number of countries everything seems to be asleep. In Germany all the socialists to a man are for the war, and Liebknecht is the only one against it." To this I say: This only one, Liebknecht, represents the working class. The hopes of all are in him alone, in his supporters, in the German proletariat. You don't believe this? Carry on with the war then! There is no other way. If you don't believe in Liebknecht, if you don't believe in the workers' revolution, a revolution that is coming to a head – if you don't believe this, then believe the capitalists!

Nothing but a workers' revolution in several countries can defeat this war. The war is not a game, it is an appalling thing taking toll of millions of lives, and it is not to be ended easily.

The soldiers at the front cannot tear the front away from the rest of the state and settle things their own way. The soldiers at the front are a part of the country. So long as the country is at war the front will suffer along with the rest. Nothing can be done about it. The war has been brought about by the ruling classes and only a revolution of the working class can end it. Whether you will get a speedy peace or not depends on how the revolution will develop.

Whatever sentimental things may be said, however much we may be told: Let us end the war immediately – this cannot be done without the development of the revolution. When power passes to the Soviets the capitalists will come out against us. Japan, France,

Britain – the governments of all countries will be against us. The capitalists will be against, but the workers will be for us. That will be the end of the war which the capitalists started. There you have the answer to the question of how to end the war.

## Notes

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[1] See Clausewitz, *On War*, Vol. 1

[2] *Milyukov*. One of the leaders of the bourgeoisie, a member of the Cadet Party (Constitutional Democrats), he was Foreign Minister in the first Provisional Government set up after the February Revolution. At the time of this lecture, he had, however, been dropped in an attempt to placate the Soviets, who opposed his policy of continuing the imperialist war.

[3] *L'Humanité*. A daily founded by Jean Jaurés in 1904 as the organ of the French Socialist Party. During the First World War (1914-18) it was controlled by the extreme Right wing of the party and took a social-chauvinist stand.

In 1918, Marcel Cachin, a prominent leader of the French and international labour movement, became political director and head of the newspaper. In 1918-20 the paper came out against the imperialist policy of the French Government, which had sent its armed forces against the Soviet Republic. At the Tours Congress in December 1920, after the split in the French Socialist Party and the formation of the Communist Party of France, the newspaper became the Communist party central organ.

[4] *Pravda (Truth)*. A daily paper of the Bolshevik Party. Founded in April 1912 on the initiative of the St. Petersburg workers.

*Pravda* was a mass working-class newspaper published with a wide circle of worker correspondents/writers around the paper. It served as the voice of the Bolshevik party, bringing Marxist analysis of current events to Russia's literate workers and peasants. In a single year it published over 11,000 items from worker correspondents. *Pravda* had an average daily circulation of 40,000 issues, rising in some months to as high as 60,000 issues.

Lenin directed the newspaper while living abroad. He wrote for it almost every day, gave instructions and advice to its editors, and gathered around the paper the Party's best literary forces.

*Pravda* was subjected to constant police persecutions. During its first year of publication it was confiscated forty-one times, its editors were prosecuted 36 times and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment totalling four years for their articles. For two years and three months *Pravda* was closed down by the tsarist

government eight times, but reappeared under other names (*Rabockaya Pravda*, *Severnaya Pravda*, *Pravda Truda*, *Za Pravdu*, *Proletarskaya Pravda*, *Put Pravdy*, *Rabochy*, *Trudovaya Pravda*). The paper was closed down on 8 (21) July 1914, as a result of its constant agitation against the coming First World War.

The paper was unable to resume publication until after the February revolution. Beginning with 5 (18) March 1917 it came out as the Central Organ of the R.S.D.L.P. On 5 (18) April, on his return from abroad, Lenin joined the Editorial Board of *Pravda* and became its Editor-in-Chief. On 5 (18) July 1917 the newspaper offices were wrecked by the Cadets and Cossacks.

Between July and October 1917 *Pravda* was persecuted by the Provisional Government and repeatedly changed its name, coming out as *Pravda*, *Rabochy Soldat*, *Pistok Pravdy*, *Proletary*, *Rabochy*, *Rabochy Put*. Beginning 27 October (9 November) 1917, the paper came out under its old name of *Pravda*.

[5] See 'Blancism' by V. I. Lenin, *Pravda*, 8 April 1917, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 35-6.

[6] *Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom)*. A daily published by the Regional Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in Petrograd from 21 March (3 April) to 13 (26) October 1917.

[7] Tereshchenko had replaced Milyukov as Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government.

[8] *Lyakhov*, V. P. (1869-1919). A colonel of the tsarist army who made a name for himself as a result of the suppression of the national-revolutionary movement in the Caucasus and Persia.

[8] *Skobelev*. A Menshevik who was taken into the Coalition Government of 6 May at the time Milyukov was dropped.

[9] *Shulgin*. A member of the Nationalist Party.

[10] See 'Resolution on the current situation' by V.I. Lenin, delivered at the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P., 24-29 April (7-12 May) 1917, Supplement to *Soldatskaya Pravda* No. 13, 16 May 1917, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 311.

[11] See 'Statements about the war made by our party before the revolution' by V.I. Lenin, *Pravda*, 13 (26) May 1917, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 394.