

WAR

The game of patriotism. Whom do you protect when you go to war? Your love of home and country exploited to make profits. Does war develop personal courage? Modern war cowardly. Why it requires more bravery to refuse obedience than to obey. The conscientious objector needs courage. How the people of the United States were tricked into the World War by a President elected to keep them out of war. Your patriotism coined into money.

WAR



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W A R

War! Do you realise what it means? Do you know of any more terrible word in our language? Does it not bring to your mind pictures of slaughter and carnage, of murder, pillage, and destruction? Can't you hear the belching of cannon, the cries of the dying and wounded? Can you not see the battlefield strewn with corpses? Living humans torn to pieces, their blood and brains scattered about, men full of life suddenly turned to carrion. And there, at home, thousands of fathers and mothers, wives and sweethearts living in hourly dread lest some mischance befall their loved ones, and waiting, waiting for the return of those who will return nevermore.

You know what war means. Even if you yourself have never been at the front, you know that there is no greater curse than war with its millions of dead and maimed, its countless human sacrifices, its broken lives, ruined homes its indescribable heartache and misery.

'It's terrible', you admit, 'but it can't be helped'. You think that war must be, that times come when it is inevitable, that you must defend your country when it is in danger.

Let us see, then, whether you really defend your country when you go to war. Let us see what causes war, and whether it is for the benefit of your country that you are called upon to don the uniform and start off on the campaign of slaughter.

Let us consider whom and what you defend in war: who is interested in it and who profits by it.

We must return to our manufacturer.* Unable to sell his product at a profit in his own country, he (and manufacturers of other commodities likewise) seeks a market in some foreign land. He goes to England, Germany, France, or to some other country, and tries to dispose there of his 'over-production', of his 'surplus'.

* I.e. In earlier chapters of Berkman's book *What is Communist Anarchism?*

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But there he finds the same conditions as in his own country. There they also have 'over-production'; that is, the workers are so exploited and underpaid that they cannot buy the commodities they have produced. The manufacturers of England, Germany, France, etc., are therefore also looking for other markets, just as the American manufacturer.

The American manufacturers of a certain industry organise themselves into a big combine, the industrial magnates of the other countries do the same, and the national combines begin competing with each other. The capitalists of each country try to grab the best markets, especially new markets. They find such new markets in China, Japan, India, and similar countries; that is, in countries that have not yet developed their own industries. When each country will have developed its own industries, there will be no more foreign markets, and then some powerful capitalistic group will become the international trust of the whole world. But in the meantime the capitalistic interests of the various industrial countries fight for the foreign markets and compete with each other there. They compel some weaker nation to give them special privileges; 'favoured treatment'; they arouse the envy of their competitors, get into trouble about concessions and sources of profit, and call upon their respective governments to defend their interests. The American capitalist appeals to his government to protect 'American' interests. The capitalists of France, Germany, and England do the same: they call upon *their* governments to protect *their* profits. Then the various governments call upon their people to '*defend their country*'.

Do you see how the game is played? You are not told that you are asked to protect the privileges and dividends of some American capitalist in a foreign country. They know that if they tell you that, you would laugh at them and you would refuse to get yourself shot to swell the profits of plutocrats. But without *you* and others like you they can't make war! So they raise the cry of 'Defend your country! Your flag is insulted!' Sometimes they actually hire thugs to insult your country's flag in a foreign land, or get some American property destroyed there, so as to make sure the people at home will get wild over it and rush to join the Army and Navy.

Don't think I exaggerate. American capitalists are known to have caused even revolutions in foreign countries (particularly in South America) so as to get a more 'friendly' new government there and thus secure the concessions they wanted.

But generally they don't need to go to such lengths. All they have to do is appeal to your 'patriotism', flatter you a bit, tell you that you can 'lick the whole world,' and they get you ready to don the soldier's uniform and do their bidding.

This is what your patriotism, your love of country is used for. Truly did the great English thinker Carlyle write:

'What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge, usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain 'natural enemies' of the French there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men. Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed

expression of opinion. Dire punishment was meted out to every objector. From the Atlantic to the Pacific hundred-percenters, drunk with murderous patriotism, spread terror. The whole country went mad with the frenzy of jingoism. The nation-wide militarist propaganda at last swept the American people into the field of carnage.

Wilson was 'too proud to fight', but not too proud to send others to do the fighting for his financial backers. He was 'too proud to fight', but not too proud to help the American plutocracy coin gold out of the lives of seventy thousand Americans left dead on European battlefields.

The 'war for democracy', the 'war to end war' proved the greatest sham in history. As a matter of fact, it started a chain of new wars not yet ended. It has since been admitted, even by Wilson himself, that the war served no purpose except to reap vast profits for Big Business. It created more complications in European affairs than had ever existed before. It pauperised Germany and France, and brought them to the brink of national bankruptcy. It loaded the peoples of Europe with stupendous debts, and put unbearable burdens upon their working classes. The resources of every country were strained. The progress of science was registered by new facilities of destruction. Christian precept was proven by the multiplication of murder, and the treaties were signed with human blood.

The World War built huge fortunes for the lords of finance - and tombs for the workers.

And today? Today we stand again on the brink of a new war, far greater and more terrible than the last holocaust. Every government is preparing for it and appropriating millions of dollars of the workers' sweat and blood for the coming carnage.

Think it over, my friend, and see what capital and government are doing for you, doing *to* you.

Soon they will again be calling on you to 'defend your country!'

In times of peace you slave in field and factory, in war you serve as cannon fodder - all for the greater glory of your masters.

Yet you are told that 'everything is all right', that it is 'God's will', that it 'must be so'.

Don't you see that it is not God's will at all, but the doings of capital and government? Can't you see that it is so and 'must be so' only because you permit your political and industrial masters to fool and dupe you, so *they* can live in comfort and luxury off your toil and tears, while they treat you as the 'common' people, the 'lower orders', just good enough to slave for them?

lage, and destroy; to give up your father and mother, wife and child, and all that you love, and proceed to slaughter your fellow-men who never did you any harm - who are just as unfortunate and deluded victims of their masters as you are of yours.

Only too truly did Carlyle say that 'patriotism is the refuge of scoundrels.'

Can't you see how you are fooled and duped?

Take the World War, for instance. Consider how the people of America were tricked into participation. They did not want to mix in European affairs. They knew little of them, and they did not care to be dragged into the murderous brawls. They elected Woodrow Wilson on a 'he kept us out of the war' slogan.

But the American plutocracy saw that huge fortunes could be gained in the war. They were not satisfied with the millions they were reaping by selling ammunition and other supplies to the European combatants; immeasurably greater profits were to be made by getting a big country like the United States, with its over 100 millions of population, into the fray. President Wilson could not withstand their pressure. After all, government is but the maid-servant of the financial powers: it is there to do their bidding.

But how get America into the war when her people were expressly against it? Didn't they elect Wilson as President on the clear promise to keep the country out of war?

In former days, under absolute monarchs, the subjects were simply compelled to obey the king's command. But that often involved resistance and the danger of rebellion. In modern times there are surer and safer means of making the people serve the interests of their rulers. All that is necessary is to talk them into believing that they themselves want what their masters want them to do; that it is to their own interests, good for their country, good for humanity. In this manner the noble and fine instincts of man are harnessed to do the dirty work of the capitalistic master class, to the shame and injury of mankind.

Modern inventions help in this game and make it comparatively easy. The printed word, the telegraph, the telephone, and radio are all sure aids in this matter. The genius of man, having produced those wonderful things, is exploited and degraded in the interests of Mammon and Mars.

President Wilson invented a new device to snare the American people into the war for the benefit of Big Business. Woodrow Wilson, the former college president, discovered a 'war for democracy' a 'war to end war'. With that hypocritical motto a country-wide campaign was started, rousing the worst tendencies of intolerance, persecution, and murder in American hearts; filling them with venom and hatred against everyone who had the courage to voice an honest and independent opinion; beating up, imprisoning, and deporting those who dared to say that it was a capitalistic war for profits. Conscientious objectors to the taking of human life were brutally maltreated as 'slackers' and condemned to long penitentiary terms; men and women who reminded their Christian countrymen of the Nazarene's command, 'Thou shalt not kill', were branded cowards and shut up in prison; radicals who declared that the war was only in the interests of capitalism were treated as 'vicious foreigners' and 'enemy spies'. Special laws were rushed through to stifle every free

them; she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red; and shipped away, at public charge, some two thousand miles, or say only to the south of Spain, and fed there till wanted.

'And now to that same spot in the south of Spain are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending, till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. 'Straightway the word 'Fire!' is given, and they blow the souls out of one another, and in the place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anon shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entrest strangers; nay, in so wide a universe, there was even, unconsciously, by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! Their governors had fallen out; and instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot.'

It is not for your country that you fight when you go to war. It's for your governors, your rulers, your capitalistic masters.

Neither your country, nor humanity, neither you nor your class - the workers - gain anything by war. It is only the big financiers and capitalists who profit by it.

War is bad for *you*. It is bad for the workers. They have everything to lose and nothing to gain by it. They don't even get any glory from it, for that goes to the big generals and field marshals.

What do *you* get in war? You get lousy, you get shot, gassed, maimed, or killed. That is all the workers of any country get out of war.

War is bad for your country, bad for humanity: it spells slaughter and destruction. Everything that war destroys - bridges and harbours, cities and ships, fields and factories - all must be built up again. That means that the people are taxed, directly and indirectly, to build it up. For in the last analysis everything comes from the pockets of the people. So war is bad for them materially, not to speak of the brutalising effect war has upon mankind in general. And don't forget that 999 out of every 1,000 who are killed, blinded, or maimed in war are of the labouring class, sons of workers and farmers.

In modern war there is no victor, for the winning side loses almost as much as the defeated one. Sometimes even more, like France in the late struggle: France is poorer today than Germany. The workers of both countries are taxed to starvation to make good the losses sustained in the war. Labour's wages and standards of living are much lower now in the European countries that participated in the World War than they were before the great catastrophe.

'But the United States got rich through the war,' you object.

You mean that a handful of men gained millions, and that the big Capitalists made huge profits. Surely they did: the great financiers by lending Europe money at a high rate of interest and by supplying war material and munitions. But where do *you* come in?

Just stop to consider how Europe is paying off its financial debt to America or the interest on it. It does so by squeezing more labour and profits out of the workers. By paying lower wages and producing goods more cheaply, the European manufacturers can undersell their American competitors, and for this reason the American manufacturer is compelled also to produce at lower cost. That's where his 'economy' and 'rationalisation' come in, and as a result you must work harder or have your wages reduced, or be thrown out of employment altogether. Do you see how low wages in Europe directly affect your own condition? Do you realise that you, the American worker, are helping to pay the American bankers the interest on their European loans?

There are people who claim that war is good because it cultivates physical courage. The argument is stupid. It is made only by those who have themselves never been to war and whose fighting is done by others. It is a dishonest argument, to induce poor fools to fight for the interests of the rich. People who have actually fought in battles will tell you that modern war has nothing to do with personal courage: it is mass fighting at a great distance from the enemy. Personal encounters, in which the best man may win, are extremely rare. In modern war you don't see your antagonists: you fight blindly, like a machine. You go into battle scared to death, fearing that the next minute you may be shot to pieces. You go only because you don't have the courage to refuse.

The man who can face vilification and disgrace, who can stand up against the popular current, even against his friends and his country when he knows he is right, who can defy those in authority over him who can take punishment and prison and remain steadfast - that is a man of courage. The fellow whom you taunt as a 'slacker' because he refuses to turn murderer - he needs courage. But do you need much courage just to obey orders, to do as you are told and to fall in line with thousands of others to the tune of general approval and the 'Star Spangled Banner'?

War paralyses your courage and deadens the spirit of true manhood. It degrades and stupefies with the sense that you are not responsible that 'tis not yours to think and reason why, but to do and die', like the hundred thousand others doomed like yourself. War means blind obedience, unthinking stupidity, brutish callousness, wanton destruction, and irresponsible murder.

I have met persons who say that war is good because it kills many people, so that there is more work for the survivors.

Consider what a terrible indictment this is against the present system. Imagine a condition of things where it is good for the people of a certain community to have some of their number killed off, so the rest could live better! Would it not be the worst man-eating system, the worst cannibalism?

That is just what capitalism is: a system of cannibalism in which one devours his

fellow man or is devoured by him. This is true of capitalism in time of peace as in war, except that in war its real character is unmasked and more evident.

In a sensible, humane society that could not be. On the contrary, the greater the population of a certain community the better it would be for all, because the work of each would then be lighter.

A community is no different in this regard than a family. Every family needs a certain amount of work to be done in order to keep its wants supplied. Now the more persons there are in the family to do the necessary work, the easier for each member, the less work for each.

The same holds true of a community or a country, which is only a family on a large scale. The more people there are to do the work necessary to supply the needs of the community, the easier the task of each member.*

If the contrary is the case in our present-day society, it merely goes to prove that conditions are wrong, barbaric, and perverse. Nay, more: that they are absolutely criminal if the capitalist system can thrive on the slaughter of its members.

It is evident then that for the workers war means only greater burdens, more taxes, harder toil, and the reduction of their pre-war standard of living.

But there is *one* element in capitalist society for whom war is good. It is the element that coins money out of war, which gets rich on your 'patriotism' and self-sacrifice. It is the munitions manufacturers, the speculators in food and other supplies, the warship builders. In short, it is the great lords of finance, industry, and commerce who alone benefit by war.

For these war is a blessing. A blessing in more than one way. Because war also serves to distract the attention of the labouring masses from their everyday misery and turns it to 'high politics' and human slaughter. Governments and rulers have often sought to avoid popular uprising and revolution by staging a war. History is full of such examples. Of course, war is a double-edged sword. Often it, in turn, leads to revolt. But that is another story to which we shall return when we come to the Russian Revolution.

If you have followed me thus far, you must realise that war is just as much a direct result and inevitable effect of the capitalist system as are the regular financial and industrial crises.

When a crisis comes, in the manner in which I have described it, with its unemployment and hardships, you are told that it is no one's fault, that it is 'bad times', the result of 'over-production' and similar humbug. And when capitalistic competition for profits brings about a condition of war, the capitalists and their flunkies - the politicians and the press - raise the cry 'Save your country!' in order to fill you with false patriotism and make you fight their battles for them.

In the name of patriotism you are ordered to stop being decent and honest, to cease being yourself, to suspend your own judgment, and give up your life; to become a will-less cog in a murderous machine, blindly obeying the order to kill, pil-

* There never need be any danger of over-populating the earth. Nature provides her own checks against it. What we need is a more rational distribution of population, intensive agriculture and a more intelligent control of our birth rate.