

# Why?

Augustin Souchy

1915

The great European war lasted a year. Up to now the situation is, on the whole, such that we cannot yet say when peace will be made. Thousands, millions of human lives: young, flourishing, hopeful people, along with millions and millions more material values, have been destroyed in the current war.

Countless victims have been made in the war. Unspeakable grief is weighing heavily and oppressively on thousands of families. Mothers, wives and daughters, on whom the war has imposed even more misery and deprivation than usual, are asking themselves: why must our fathers, sons and men let themselves be killed?

The misery is increasing, the national debts of the various countries are rising more and more, and soon Europe will be dependent on America. Now it is time to ask: why all this? Why this limitless destruction of human lives and material values? Now it is time for us, German workers and farmers, to ask ourselves this question. For it is we who have to bear the greatest and heaviest burdens during the war and after the war. The money to pay the enormous debts of the countries, the interest, the maintenance of invalids and widows, has to be taken out of taxes. And it is the working people, the workers and peasants, who have to pay for all this. Yes, one can safely say: have to pay for everything, because there are people in our country who earn money, and even a lot of money, through the war.

In 1912, Bertha Krupp-Bohlen, a major stakeholder in the Krupp company, had an annual income of no less than -21 million marks. Kaiser Wilhelm II, the largest shareholder in the Krupp company, therefore has an even larger dividend. Is this perhaps why he made so many warlike speeches before the war? Is it perhaps in order to increase its profits that the Krupp company paid large sums to the French press to publish warlike articles?

It also looks very dubious and strange with regard to patriotism when one knows that the "German Weapons and Ammunition Factories in Berlin" also had factories in France, at least before the war ("Société Française pour la fabrication de roulement à billes"), in order to manufacture weapons for the "hereditary enemy", the French! The same company delivered no less than 50% of the weapons produced in Berlin to foreign countries. In April the company delivered two hundred thousand rifles to Serbia. In the current war, we German workers and peasants are being shot with weapons made by Germans.

Is it true what the great iron industrialist Thyssen said when the imperial war speeches were discussed, that these were intended to persuade parliament to approve new orders for the Krupp

factories? The greater the war armaments, the greater the profits will naturally be. During the war, the Krupp company increased its share capital from 180 to 250 million marks. It is expensive to kill. Every soldier killed in the current war costs over 50,000 marks.

But what will happen to us, the propertyless workers and peasants? After the war, as before, we will have to work for a small wage if we get work and do not become unemployed. As before, we will have to make do with very low wages and on top of that we will have to pay increased direct and indirect taxes. If we demand better living conditions, our demands will not be granted, as before. And if we go on strike to get our rights, the authorities will turn the guns we now have in our hands against us, and these weapons will serve to maintain their rule in the future.

We are told that the current war is a defensive war. But all states say the same thing. Everyone is under attack, no one is the attacker. Who should we believe?

If we poor peasants and propertyless workers in the various countries of Europe have to keep killing each other in order to “defend” ourselves against each other, we must ask ourselves: are we enemies? Didn’t we all want to live in peace? Didn’t the French and Russian worker and peasant, just like the English worker and peasant, want to continue their work in the fields and in the workshop?

Are we, the working classes, enemies in the various countries? No, we must say to ourselves! We are not enemies! If it were up to us, war would be completely out of the question.

Despite all this, we have sacrificed everything and now have the right to have our voice heard. We ask ourselves: what is the government’s intention? The country’s borders are free of enemies. Is it the government’s intention to proclaim a war of conquest? We demand to be informed why the war is being continued! If any country can make an offer of peace, Germany’s position is so favorable because there are no enemies in the country.

It is high time that the senseless slaughter of people stopped! Workers of all countries long for peace. Everyone is now beginning to see that they are victims of a criminal policy, that we are all material for the money, honor and glory of the rulers.

We, the workers in Europe and throughout the world, are not enemies, but friends, we are not to blame for the war, the great crime against humanity and culture.

We wanted and want peace, freedom, humanity and justice, which we find in socialism and a free socialist stateless social order.

On to the fight for peace and freedom!

War on war!

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