

DEFENSE OF NEUTRALITY

V. I. Lenin
January 1917

<i>Collected Works, Vol. 23</i> Progress Publishers Moscow, 1960-70	Reproduced by <i>The Red Flag</i>
---	--------------------------------------

DEFENSE OF NEUTRALITY

Acceptance of the proposition that the present war is imperialist, that is, a war between two big freebooters for world domination and plunder, does not yet prove that we should reject defence of the Swiss homeland. We, Swiss, are defending our neutrality; we have stationed troops on our boundaries for the express purpose of avoiding participation in this robber war!

This is the argument of the social-patriots, the Grütlians, both within the Socialist Party and outside it.

It is based on the following tacitly accepted or dexterously manipulated premises.

Uncritical repetition of what the bourgeoisie says, and what it has to say, to maintain its class domination.

Complete trust in the bourgeoisie and complete distrust of the proletariat.

Disregard of the real, rather than imaginary, international situation resulting from the imperialist pattern of European relationships amid the imperialist «tie-up» of the Swiss capitalist class.

Did not the Rumanian and Bulgarian bourgeoisie give the most solemn assurances, over a period of many months, that their military preparations were dictated «solely» by the need to safeguard their neutrality?

Is there any serious, scientific basis for drawing a fundamental distinction, on this issue, between the bourgeoisie of the aforementioned countries and that of

Switzerland?

Certainly not. The Romanian and Bulgarian bourgeoisie, we are told, are notoriously obsessed by a lust for conquest and annexation, and this does not apply to the Swiss bourgeoisie. But that cannot be considered a fundamental distinction. Imperialist interests are manifested, as everyone knows, not only in territorial, but also in financial acquisitions. It should be borne in mind that the Swiss bourgeoisie exports capital, no less than 3,000,000,000 CHF a year, that is, imperialistically exploits backward nations. That is a fact, and another fact is that Swiss banking capital is intimately associated and intertwined with the banking capital of the Great Powers, that the Swiss *Fremdenindustrie*,ⁱ and so on, represent a permanent division of imperialist wealth between the Great Powers and Switzerland. More over, Switzerland has reached a much higher level of capitalist development than Romania and Bulgaria. There can be no question whatever of a popular «national» movement in Switzerland: that period in its historical development ended many centuries ago. This cannot be said of either of the Balkan States referred to above.

It therefore befits the bourgeois to try to instil in the people, in the exploited, faith in the bourgeoisie of their own country and use plausible phrases to conceal the realities of its imperialist policies.

Something quite different, however, is expected of the socialist, namely: merciless exposure that leaves no room for illusions about the real policies of their «own» bourgeoisie. And continuation of these real policies by the Swiss bourgeoisie, such as selling the nation to one of the imperialist coalitions of States, is much more probable and much more «natural» (that is, more in conformity with the nature of this bourgeoisie) than defence of democracy in the true sense of the word, which would be contrary to its profit interests.

«To each their own»: let the Grütlians, as servants and agents of the bourgeoisie, deceive the people with phrases about «defending neutrality».

Socialists, on the other hand, as fighters against the bourgeoisie, must open the people's eyes to the very real danger, proved by the whole history of Swiss bourgeois politics, of being sold by their «own» bourgeoisie!

ⁱ Industries catering to foreigners.