How is it that the proletariat can so totally deny its own interests and enter so completely into the service of the bourgeoisie?

If we look for the reason, our first finding will be that the proletariat does not yet know how to intervene against the bourgeoisie as a single, international entity. And our second will be that the proletariat does not yet know how to fight for major, long-term objectives, but only for minor, short-term ones.

This is why it was incapable of acting on an international scale in pursuit of long-term objectives when it became necessary to do so. It did not know what to do.

In a word, international struggle for the ultimate objective, for socialism, meant nothing to it.

For the struggle against the imperialism that dominates the world is the struggle against the expansion of capital, it is the struggle against the essence of capitalism, it is the struggle for socialism.

It is thus the international proletariat's lack of understanding that is to blame for the way it has acted. First and foremost, its lack of understanding.

The working class as a whole and the individual worker must have a high level of awareness in order to take action on an international scale.

The nationalism of the proletarian is quite different in nature from that of the bourgeois. For the bourgeois, the nation is the politico-economic organisation the unity and strength of which enable him to make his capital productive both at home and abroad. At home, the nation governs the workers in his interest: abroad, it

* This is a section of Gorter's Der Imperialismus, der Weltkrieg und die Sozialdemokratie, translated by the author into German, Amsterdam, 1915.
defends his interests by force of arms and for his sake extends its influence.

This is the basis of bourgeois nationalism, which is thus highly active in character, just as the bourgeois' capital is.

The worker, on the other hand, has no capital, he only receives wages. His nationalism is therefore passive, just as to receive wages is passive.

But the great majority of workers nevertheless live by the national capital.

The national capital is indeed their enemy, but it is an enemy that they live by, an enemy which feeds them. Thus, although the worker is only passively nationalistic, he is nationalistic and cannot help being nationalistic so long as he is not a real socialist.

Because the nation, the nation's capital, is the foundation of his existence.

And therefore, so long as he is not a socialist, he cannot help believing that the interest of the national capital is his own and that he must defend it against enemies, because the welfare of this capital is also his own welfare.

The worker's nationalism consists of a series of generally primitive feelings and instincts which are related to the drive for self-preservation and structured around it. In the first place, the instinct to preserve his existence by working, by his wages. And connected with this, the sentiments attaching to his home, to the parental house, to his family, to tradition, to custom, to comradeship, to the immediate locality, to his people, to his party -- and the instinct to preserve all these, which all relate directly to the ego, and which are thus intimately bound up with the drive for self-preservation. Almost moribund in day-to-day life, the threat or semblance of danger arouses them with elemental force, precisely because of this connection with the drive for self-preservation.

And they flare up in a fire of passion, of hatred towards the enemy, of fanatical love for one's country, when the drive for self-preservation allies itself with the social instincts of attachment to and unity with one's peers -- in this case, one's fellow-countrymen, those who are of the same class and nation. It takes a high degree of
awareness for this instinct, these sentiments, to be overcome at a given moment, at every moment, always, and for the class struggle not to be abandoned for struggle on behalf of the nation.

And so the worker must know that under capitalism nationalism is now doing him a great deal of harm, far more harm than the advantages it confers. He must know what the harm is, and what the advantages. He must have weighed them against each other. And this process of thought, this knowledge, must be of such a kind, must have penetrated his consciousness so completely, that it not only overcomes the instincts of nationalism, but takes their place. This is a task which is extraordinarily difficult and which demands a very long time.

For it demands a high degree of knowledge and understanding of imperialism in the working class, in the individual worker. Capital confronts the worker in his place of work, in his trade association, in the state. It is thus a national phenomenon. Imperialism confronts him through the foreign policy of the state, in high finance, in the capitalist syndicate, in the international trust, in world politics. It requires a great deal of understanding if the worker is always, constantly, to grasp the connection of every issue in the struggle, both trade-union and political, with world politics, with international imperialism.

The worker must therefore know that imperialism governs the whole of politics, and how: that it threatens the working class with ruin and fragmentation by causing endless wars, that defensive wars can no longer be waged under imperialism, and last and most important, that imperialism – and here it so nearly coincides with nationalism as to fuse with it – unites all national capitalists against the world proletariat, which must be united against them. And that the struggle against imperialism is therefore the struggle for socialism.

The worker must know all this. And not with hollow words and phrases, with a hollow, superficial, fleeting understanding, but with profound, complete knowledge – the concept must have entered his very bones.

This too is a long and weary task. The demystification of
imperialism and the corresponding eradication of nationalism is a mighty step up, a tremendous increase in the consciousness and thus in the development of the militant proletariat.

The new propaganda necessary to achieve this in this new phase of capitalism is one of the loftiest, finest and most fruitful tasks which can be performed in the service of the proletariat.

Against nationalism, against imperialism, for socialism.

The proletariat had never done any of this before. It had always taken action on the national scale, never before on the international scale.

And it had never before taken action against international imperialism.

The national proletariat and hence the international proletariat had never experienced struggle against international imperialism.

There were of course groups and individuals among the workers of every country, and especially in Germany, who had overcome national instincts through knowledge and insight.

Social democracy had of course eradicated these instincts from certain hearts. And these groups and individuals would gladly have fought against war with all their might. But in the first place these groups and individuals were, in our estimation, very few in number. Even in Germany. In England they were hardly to be found.* Similarly in France.

Secondly, they did not see how they could combat war. Even those who recognised the means to be used against war still did not see how to put them into practice.

As we shall see, the only means to combat imperialist war is national action on a mass scale by the proletariat undertaken simultaneously by the entire international proletariat.

If these groups of workers had recognised the way to engage in such a course of action, clearly seen it before them, they would have

* The reasons for the opposition of the Independent Labour Party in England to the war are of a petty-bourgeois nature. They are little-Englanders. They believe that England has enough colonies.
opted for it, and not only that, they would have carried the great masses of the workers with them.

We will explain below the reasons why they did not see the way forward, why they did not recognise it.

For what was the previous history of the International?

At first it was a federation of trade unions and progressive and socialist groups. Which brilliantly expressed the thoughts and feelings of the most developed, most militant groups in the working class, particularly in the sphere of foreign policy, of European political issues; which, for the first time in the history of the world and to the amazement of the workers and the terror of the bourgeoisie, supported each other on an international scale; which, for the first time in the history of the world, wove a bond around the entire proletariat; which openly declared communism as their goal; which were a shining light for the workers and the first great challenge to the international bourgeoisie; and which sowed the seed for the parties of the future.

A genius went before them, a sower went through the countries of Europe and America.

They had one programme and one executive, sending them the addresses that issued from Marx’s brain and which lit up the path of the future like bright torches; one executive to give them leadership. But the only joint actions they engaged in were demonstrations.

After 1872 this International collapsed through internal fragmentation, long before it could do anything more as a whole, as an entity. It was still too weak for practical, international struggle; the time was not yet ripe for this. It had merely sown the seed in different countries.

From this there then slowly grew the national parties and trade unions.

A great epoch now began for the workers.

Thousands of men and women, inspired by the thought of Marx and the International, plunged among the workers in every country and preached communism and socialism. Theirs were the best brains and the warmest, most impassioned hearts, the highest and most noble characters. For the struggle was hard and full of
danger; the resistance of the bourgeoisie obdurate; the material reward little or none.

And the workers who listened were the best.
The most militant; the most intelligent; the bravest.
And at the same time, all of them plunged into theory as well as practice.

Workers' politics were carried on with one great theoretical goal — revolution. Thus it was in many countries of Europe: in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Spain, Italy.

We could call this the period of revolution in theory and practice.

The numbers taking part were still few. But it was during this period that the most was achieved in the most countries. Even in terms of reforms. The assault was so wild and furious, the amazement and terror of the ruling class so great, that they conceded some reforms. The best reforms in suffrage and social legislation date from this period in many countries. But this International in its turn, these national parties, concerned themselves only with national issues, with short-term, minor objectives.

All the national parties threw themselves into legislation, into parliamentary activity, into elections: all the trade unions into improvements in wages and working hours, protection of their members, etc. Of course, they had a lofty socialist programme, still based on the genius of Marx.

But that was only theory. That was only internal propaganda, not action.

Nothing ever happened within the national parties to pose the question — capitalism or socialism: reform or revolution.

This state of affairs lasted for years.
So revolution became theory and reform became practice.
And nothing happened in that period to demand internationalism on the part of the national parties. In deeds. To demand that they cast their nationalism aside.
And so, despite all the theory, despite all the finest and most sincere propaganda, despite all the fine words, the International
became a complex of parties striving for improvements, striving for themselves, on the national scale.

But only action demonstrates the truth of a theory or slogan. The great mass of the international party was composed of men who desired improvements in living conditions for themselves, for those in the same trade as themselves, for their class comrades, for their fellow countrymen. No more than that. International socialism was only a grand slogan. Their internationalism had no practical aspect.

Thus, even in the great, heroic period of the pupils of Marx and the old International, that period revolutionary both in theory and practice which began with Lasalle and, gradually declining, came to an end in the nineties, the International was a complex of parties in which each existed for itself, and which were therefore soon not even held together by any external bond.

A new period succeeded the period of revolution in theory and practice in the European countries with which we are concerned. Attracted by the success of the workers’ parties, the great masses of workers thirsting for reforms were drawn in. Those who were not the most militant, not the best, not the bravest. The average. The masses.

Under capitalism, the masses are over-worked and deprived of intellectual development. The great majority of them were only concerned, could only be concerned, with everyday issues, work, bread, little gains. The masses were drawn in.

The struggle had also become easier. The workers’ parties had at last secured recognition. Governments and capitalists had ceded a little ground, had made concessions here and there.

The great national masses were drawn in, thirsting for reforms. Solely for reforms. And this great number began to make its influence felt.

With such great numbers, power could be gained. With so many votes, seats in parliament. The quality of the voters now mattered less.

Among these masses, in the national trade unions and the national parties, reform became everything.
An improved standard of living the goal. Theory, the revolutionary theory, went by the board. And with it the entire International. Such things became just noise and hollow words.

Then, making a theory of this practice, revisionism emerged: the doctrine that cries, 'Workers! Workers of the nation, unite for reforms! Reform, the path to the goal, is everything. Unite with the bourgeoisie too, with a section of it, then you will obtain many more reforms.'

And this doctrine put down roots in the minds of these masses, these workers already so receptive to it, especially since times of prosperity were then coming, since a stream of gold was flooding over Europe, after the waves of Californian and Australian gold the wave of gold from the Transvaal, and thoughts of revolution shrank more and more in their minds, and thoughts of reform displaced them. This is how the masses evolved.

Then there arose another kind of leader.

At first there had been men of principle. Men inspired with the ideal of socialism, who spared no exertion for it and had the highest expectations of realising it. Who had the greatest courage, genuinely revolutionary spirit and determination, genuinely revolutionary energy. Who also, in so far as they were not workers, tried to shake off the bourgeois in them and to think and feel themselves completely into the masses, into the working class.

Who lived out or tried to live out the highest ideal that could be formed of a working class emancipating itself. Who directed all their deeds and words and proposals towards this ideal.

With greater or lesser clarity they proclaimed the revolution to the workers.

Such were Bebel, Guesde, Liebknecht, Plekhanov, Axelrod, Kautsky, Mehring, Labriola, Hyndman, Quelch, Domela Nieuwenhuis in his first period, and many others.

But when power came, others came along.

Philanthropists, moralists, well-educated bourgeois, the ambitious, the unscrupulous, those who deceived the masses. Many with good intentions and weak minds, who knew nothing of socialism and its theory. People who deceived themselves, career
politicians, who made socialism their business, their source of profit, their means of subsistence.

And moved by philanthropic motives, bourgeois ethics, great learning, ambition, stupidity, ignorance, lack of character and scruple, or common sense, they all embraced revisionism.

Revolution was something evil or impossible or too distant: reform possible and immediate and good and advantageous. But the workers were so weak, so uncomprehending, their vote in parliament and in the municipal councils too small. So compromises had to be made with the bourgeoisie!

The old guard, the radicals, who recognised that the high revolutionary ideals were fading, voiced their opposition.

But what good did it do? The masses themselves were everywhere so anxious for reform, reform first and foremost, often reform alone, that they listened to the reformists, and the arguments of the radical idealists, who were in fact unable to bring revolution, were lost to the four winds.

And so it came about that the theory, the revolution, became more and more a thing of the intellect, which the best comrades now and then thought of as something fine and great, a thing of the heart, which now and then beat faster for it — but everyday reality, what was always present, what the masses constantly thought of, day and night, became practice — reform, in other words.

The trade-union movement, which fights only for small gains, which wins only small concessions from the employers by making contracts with them, hastened this process considerably.

Reformists were now elected to the executives of all the trade unions. They appeared everywhere in party executives, newspaper editorial boards, in municipal councils and parliaments. They soon formed a majority everywhere, and in most countries the sole leading force.

But both in the trade-union movement and in the political parties it is the leaders, the members of parliament and the chairmen, that is to say individuals, who gain the victories in parliament, in the municipal councils, in the face of the other parties and in negotiations with the employers, even if such victory is only apparent.
The centre of gravity thus shifted from the masses to the leaders. A worker-bureaucracy formed.

And bureaucracy is conservative from the outset.

The masses, completely preoccupied with desire for gain instead of revolution, were reinforced in this by their leaders. They left the latter to pursue such advances, and themselves became slack and torpid. And the less active the masses became, the more they lost sight of their goal, the more the leaders regarded themselves as the real bearers of the movement. The more they began to believe that the proletarian action of the workers consisted primarily in the tactics and compromises that they thought up, and that the only means available to the workers themselves was the ballot, counting subscriptions, with an occasional trade-union struggle or demonstration. That the masses were really passive and led, and they themselves the active force. This is the second phase of the socialist movement, which follows the first phase of revolution in theory and practice. It could be called the period of reform in theory and practice.*

* As we have already said, it was during this phase, coinciding approximately with the rise of imperialism, that the least reforms occurred, at least in the powerful imperialist countries, i.e. in Germany, France, Holland, Belgium: England, as we shall see, forms an exception. Although significant improvements in legislation were achieved during revolutionary periods, they now occurred only rarely.

Holland is a good example of this. The first tide of revolution brought a significant improvement in electoral law. The propagation of revolution in theory and practice secured the accident insurance legislation which guarantees workers invalided by their work 70 per cent of their wages without any contributions on their part. In the period of reform, the poor — not the workers, but the poor — obtained the promise of two guilders a week, provided that they are very poor and behave themselves well and that the parish recognises this. A form of poor relief, in other words. From rights to alms, this is what the shift from revolution to reform means.

The same thing is to be seen in Germany: social legislation was secured by using radical tactics, and nothing by the use of reformist tactics.

Similarly in Belgium. The extension of suffrage through revolutionary tactics, and nothing through reformist tactics.

And what did Millerand, Briand, Viviani achieve in France?

It might be asked how it is that reformism flourishes under imperialism when imperialism in fact renders reform impossible. (Continued overleaf.)
This is what happened in England in the Labour Party. This is what happened in France, where socialists even became ministers. This is what happened in Belgium, where the mass campaign for universal suffrage was stifled, in Holland, where links with liberalism were forged, in Italy, where socialists sold themselves to the radicals. This is what happened in Germany, where a policy of moderation was pursued and the mass campaign for suffrage in Prussia strangled. This is what happened in Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, everywhere in a particular manner determined by the political and economic conditions, but everywhere with the same result — the diversion of the proletariat on to the path of minor reforms. Subjection to the leaders, renunciation of autonomous mass action.

The workers' parties in France, England, Germany, in every country, became mass parties interested only in minor, national issues, concerned only with minor, national issues.

But because of militarism and imperialism, which demanded all the available money, minor reforms could no longer be gained.

But the reformists promised reforms all the more. And this demoralised the masses all the more. For nothing is so demoralising and destructive as to make false promises to the masses. While nothing actually happens, and the masses still wait credulously for reforms.

But international imperialism grew more and more haughty. And it became more and more necessary to take up international, global issues instead of minor, national ones.

And so, without really wanting it, more by instinct than lucid awareness, all these parties already tainted with reformism acquired the new International, the hollow shell that we all know so well and

The answer is this: as far as the reformists are concerned, socialism and the workers' movement consist solely in the struggle for reforms. They cannot imagine any other workers' movement. The less reforms are achieved, the more they must conjure up fake reforms, the more reforms they must drum up and fight for. Otherwise their whole existence, together with the workers' movement as they conceive it, would be pointless, would be nothing.

And all the more under imperialism, precisely because it renders reform impossible.
which has now collapsed. The gaze of that mighty world class which will subject all the forces of the earth, of nature and of society to itself was directed by the reformists to the achievement of a few pence more pay and infrequent and inadequate labour legislation — this as its sole objective. They directed the attention of the workers, of the class which is to overcome the mightiest world power there has ever been — capitalism and its bearers, the banks, the trusts, imperialism — to the fine words which their enemies use to fool them, and told them to believe these words and to form alliances with these people.

This mighty class was tamed by a few ambitious, weak-minded and ignorant leaders. It fell victim to its own lack of understanding and servile mentality.

Something which has already happened a thousand times in the past happened again: the masses were fooled into becoming the servants of their rulers. It should not have succeeded, because this class must now really conquer undisputed, unqualified power.

Yet it did succeed again, the bourgeoisie was able to achieve it — by means of the reformists: by means of the Social-Democratic Party.

There are reformists who go so far as to say that they are in favour of capitalist expansion, in favour of colonies and spheres of influence, in favour of colonial policies. They do not stop to think whether this is the way for the proletariat to become class-conscious, ripe for revolution, revolutionary and socialist in its innermost feelings.

They are concerned only with temporary expedients: with capitalism. Colonialist policies, nationalistic colonialism, imperialism in other words, and hence in its turn imperialist war, can, as we have shown, bring the nation, the national bourgeoisie, enormous profits through the expansion of capital which it generates. It generates new capital investment, stimulates industry, increases wealth. It improves trade, transport, in short the whole economic life of the nation, to an extraordinary degree. Of course, if the proletariat goes along with it, it also means a decline in the class-consciousness of the masses, and thus, in the long run, the defeat of the proletariat; for the proletariat it means stern oppression, taxes
and militarism, war and division; but this does not deter the reformists.

So long as capital is growing and flourishing.

This is why many reformists, the big-bourgeois reformists, are supporters of colonialist policies, and thus imperialists.

Schippel and Calwer in Germany, for example, Vandervelde, who endorsed the annexation of the Congo by Belgium, Van Kol, who accepted a mission furthering imperialism from the Dutch government, and so on.

Other reformists are in favour of colonialist policies for the sake of the immediate, minor benefits they bring the proletariat, without heed to the consequences for the future.

We have seen that colonialist policies, and thus imperialism, can bring short-term, small-scale benefits to individuals groups of workers. They bring work and pay. The petty-bourgeois too, the small masters and shop-owners, receive crumbs from the profits of imperialism.

This is why the German petty-bourgeois reformists Bernstein, Noske, etc. etc. are in favour of colonialist policies.

This is why in Holland petty-bourgeois reformists like Troelstra, Vliegen, the parliamentary group, the entire leadership and almost the whole membership of the SDAP are in favour of colonialist policies and oppose autonomy and unconditional freedom for the Indies.

This is why, in every country of the world that possesses colonies, England, Germany, Holland, France, Belgium, and even in those which seek world trade, world influence, world power, Italy, America, Australia, etc. etc. a number of the leaders and the majority of the workers are in favour of colonialist policies, in favour of imperialism, that is.

Thus, it was precisely colonialism that the revisionists fostered.

And from colonialism that they promised the workers great advantages.

And the workers, concerned with their own advantage, fell in with them!

The precise area of policy upon which imperialism depends,
colonial policy – imperialism – was taken up by the workers from the reformists, was accepted by the workers.

But imperialism means nationalism.

From the reformists; from the social democrats; from the national social-democratic parties; from the International itself, the workers accepted the imperialism that crept ever nearer, that threatened them with war, death, defeat and division, that was to murder, destroy and infinitely weaken them as individuals and as a class – this imperialism, these colonialist policies, which, by fostering militarism and a probably endless succession of wars, was to take away all reforms for the present and for years to come.*

And so, in the years of imperialism preceding the war, the International accepted its downfall from the bourgeoisie and from itself.

Workers who desire only immediate advantages must agree to colonialist policies, and so agree to imperialism and nationalism. For it is these that promise immediate advantages.

Only those who see further, who recognise that colonialist policies ultimately bring more harm than profit, and especially those who realise that they split and fragment the proletariat – in short, only those who think and feel in a truly revolutionary socialist manner – can oppose nationalistic imperialism despite the advantages which it brings.

Only those who penetrate still deeper and recognise that imperialism unites all the capitalists of the world against the proletariat, only they can entirely eradicate nationalism from their hearts and unite with the world proletariat in a single fraternity, in a single revolutionary struggle against world capital.

But reformism and revisionism had meant that all lucid, profound, theoretical insight and all revolutionary, internationalist sensibility had been dissipated.

It was thus reformism which caused the workers, already too

* There were social democrats who wanted to vote for the war budget just to obtain reforms, reforms that imperialism in fact denies them; thus, for example, the SDAP in Holland.
concerned with minor issues, to become even more attached to the latter.

It was thus reformism, the pursuit of minor reforms, that caused the workers, already so nationalistic, to become even more nationalistic.

It is what caused the workers to give in to colonialist policies even as imperialism crept nearer.

It is what caused the workers' attention to be diverted as imperialism crept nearer, so that they remained unaware of it.

*It is thus, through reformism, that the international leadership of the International in every country and the workers themselves — whatever their own self-conceptions, whatever their protests — became in reality nationalists, imperialists, and even, with the threat of war, chauvinists.*

The reformists, reformism, together with ignorance, are to blame for the proletariat's surrender to imperialism, to world war, to its own downfall. For its failure to defend itself and strengthen itself by resisting, and instead welcoming its own enfeeblement with joy and even enthusiasm.

They went for reforms alone, and it was precisely because they no longer sought revolution that they brought weakness, downfall and division upon themselves.

They concerned themselves only with national issues, and it was precisely because of this that they became nationalists and imperialists.

They concerned themselves only with reform within the nation, and precisely because of this they were overtaken by the international violence of imperialism.

When we consider that all these various parties only took action on a national scale — that no opportunity had ever yet presented itself for joint, international action, as a whole, against capital — that the struggle for national objectives was therefore only carried on in the small, confined arena of the nation, which did not accustom the eye to perceiving the struggle of the whole proletariat against capital as a whole — that this struggle was the only one being waged — then we recognise that as that great world cataclysm
between capital and labour drew near, brought on by imperialism, which sets the whole working class against the whole of world capital in a single front - the working class remained unaware of this, and still carried on looking at its own petty interests within its own little national sphere.

Only a very few party publications in Germany taught the proletariat what imperialism is.

The majority, the main publication *Vorwärts* and also the scientific journal *Die Neue Zeit*, did their best *not* to show imperialism as the axis around which politics turns, and thus not to make it the axis, not to make it the central focus of the proletariat's attention and action. And, so far as we know, there was no single organ in other countries, with the exception of the *Tribune* in Holland, which did so.

The revisionists — the Bernsteins, the Adlers, the Vanderveldes, the Jaurès, the Vliegens, the Brantings,¹ to name only the best among them — had concentrated the attention of the proletariat on minor issues. The workers were preoccupied with these.

With more favourable taxation, with old-age pensions for workers — often only the hope of them — with the possibility of an alliance with the liberals or the progressives or the radicals to obtain better electoral legislation. . . .

They looked to their leaders, to parliaments, and did nothing themselves. Salvation was to come from the leaders, from the parliaments. Slowly, inexorably, imperialism crept nearer.

First Egypt was occupied, then the Transvaal, then China.² Germany, the homeland of capital, was circled around with hostile powers.

The workers did not notice.

Do you know, reader, what imperialism is? It is the highest form of class struggle there has ever been.

That is why it is also the most complete, most unambiguous refutation of revisionism, the refutation with the knock-out punch.

Revisionist theory has never been of any moment. Kautsky
disposed of it briefly and for good. Nothing has come of the moderation of class struggle which it foresaw, its theory of undermining capitalism, the great expectations that it cherished of trusts of disarmament, of the middle classes, of neo-liberalism. Its theory was without foundation. The revisionists retreated to the domain of practice simply to fool the workers and poison them with the opium of vain hopes.

But this practice, the only thing remaining to them, this practice of imperialism came up and seized them by the throat and struck them dead.

Just consider how the process developed, reader.

There were the workers of all lands busy with the fine plans drawn up for them by the reformists. With their national insurance and taxation proposals and electoral legislation and the pensions that the liberals were to help them obtain. What was not done to achieve even the least step forward! Socialists became ministers, pacts were formed with the liberals, social democracy crawled in the dirt, toned down its own campaigns, drove the marxists out!

Everywhere was seething with small-scale activity. Like little gnomes, the thousands of members of parliament busied about their work; and the masses, in their millions, waited expectantly.

And what was approaching? Downfall. Death.

For millions of workers, for their children, wives, fathers and mothers. It was stagnation, decline, the death of their organisation, for a long time to come.

The revisionists, the Troelstras, the Südekums, the Scheidemanns, the Anseeles, the Turatis, the Franks, the Macdonalds, paraded in front of the bourgeoisie, promised to vote for anything – even war budgets! – visited princes, army leaders, promising the workers golden mountains, awe-inspiring progress, democracy, provided the workers elected them municipal councillor, minister, member of parliament, and gave them a free hand; and slowly but inexorably the first true world war between great imperialist powers crept nearer.

The revisionists had promised reforms for the present. Reform came: death. The revisionists promised the workers democracy;
equality was to come. It came, in the equality of death: for capitalists and workers are truly equal in death. The revisionists promised universal suffrage if the masses would only trust the liberals. The liberals granted the workers suffrage: in death! The dead, the thousands of dead workers, raised their voices in protest.

The revisionists promised class reconciliation, if only the socialists would follow their tactics. War unites all classes in death.

Revisionism had also promised the reconciliation of humanity and disarmament! The peoples of the earth face each other in lines thousands of kilometres long, bristling with weapons and dripping blood.

The revisionists promised moderation of the class-struggle: world war, imperialism practised by every country, is the most acute form of class struggle there has been since capital came into existence.

The revisionists promised advantages from colonialist policies: it was colonialism that brought downfall.

The revisionists promised reform for the future: after this war there is the threat of new war, new arms-races. And hence disruption and downfall. And hence no reform.

A class which has for twenty years been taught to trust the bourgeoisie can no longer combat it.

While the revisionists, together with the bourgeois parties, promised the workers progress, they paved the way for the downfall of the proletariat by dazzling the workers.

This is the culmination of revisionist deception, and there was no avoiding it.

But it also means the downfall of revisionism, of struggle directed solely towards immediate gains.

It is the downfall of this second, reforming phase of the workers’ struggle.

For the reformists do not merely share with the capitalists and with the workers’ ignorance the blame for our present impotence, confusion, cowardice, for the proletariat’s current nationalism, chauvinism and imperialism, for the present misery, fragmentation, weakness, they also share the blame, the responsibility, the guilt, for
everything that will come after the war — weakness that will last for years, misery, the impossibility of reform, the necessity of beginning the struggle for the revolution anew with a very weakened and perhaps demoralised proletariat.

If only the waste and destruction and misery and all the consequences of this war meant that the working population would be purged of the reformists and all their kind!

The author of this article and the party to which he belongs warned the proletariat of their country many years ago. He and the members of his party maintained right up to the outbreak of war in countless meetings, publications and newspaper articles on imperialism that all the fine promises of the bourgeoisie and the revisionists would come to nothing because militarism and colonialist policies — imperialism, in other words — would swallow up all the available money, put a stop to all progress, make the burdens more onerous, and that in all probability world war would come, a period of world wars would set in.

This is why we particularly condemned fraternisation with bourgeois parties which could achieve nothing.

This is why we were thrown out of the Dutch Social-Democratic Party and obliged to found a party of our own.

It was because of the imperialism that we sought to combat, but which they supported, that we were thrown out of the Social-Democratic Party.

The workers can now see who was in the right.