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LENIN AND THE WAR

(Contribution to the centenary of the Zimmerwald Conference)

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INTRODUCTION: LENIN AND CLAUSEWITZ

The few works I am responsible for on the connections between Clausewitz, theoretician of war and contemporary of Napoleon, and revolutionary military doctrines earned me this invitation to speak about the links between Lenin and the war. The connection between the theories set out by Clausewitz in *Vom Kriege* and Lenin's choices will be my main thread. This may look like the failing of a monomaniac, but I would rather say that it is a rightful and productive angle of attack, the influence of the first on the second being so significant.

A trivial detail gives an idea of this importance. Three weeks before the October Revolution, following insurrectional demonstrations in Petrograd, Kerenski's Provisional Government issued a warrant for arrest against Lenin. He then left the capital city and illegally crossed the Finnish border, only taking with him a small bag and two books: *The Civil War in France* by Karl Marx and *Vom*

Kriege by Clausewitz. The influence of Clausewitz on Marxism-Leninism started with Lenin's reading, got deeper with Mehring's reading and became decisive with Lenin's interpretation.

Everything may seem to separate the monarchist and patriotic Prussian soldier from the Russian professional revolutionary. But a deep affinity of thoughts united them: a dialectic, methodical, caustic, creative thought based on a firm philosophical culture. Lenin detected right away the novelty and the richness of Clausewitz's thought which was then little-known, distorted and weakened by a military cast which, both in France and in Germany, let the art of war fall to its most mediocre level during the First World War. And if Clausewitz has been very important to Lenin, Lenin has also been important to Clausewitz as he was the first statesman who put forward his thought in the field of political action.

Clausewitz's thought constitutes, in his field, the like of Hegel's thought in the philosophical sphere, or Adam Smith's thought in the economic sphere: a constituent source of Marxism-Leninism. One had to wait Mao Zedong's military pieces of writing, being himself a serious reader of Clausewitz, for the complete and the coherent theorization of a revolutionary military policy; neither Marx, nor Engels, nor Lenin, nor Stalin undertook the work which would have surpassed *On War* just as *Capital* surpassed *The Wealth of Nations*.

The question whether it is Mehring's writings which brought Lenin to Clausewitz is still open. What makes no doubt is that Lenin read the pieces in which Mehring praised Clausewitz's thought before starting reading *Vom Krieg* in Bern's library during his second exile between autumn 1914 and spring 1915. He copied out extensive extracts (In German) in his notebook with a few remarks (in Russian). Those extracts, revealing detail, became more and more numerous and longer as he advanced in his reading.

FIRST PART: THEORY OF WAR

1.1 War as political instrument

The first thesis of Clausewitz Lenin noted down is the famous phrase of the war as *the continuation of politics by other means*. He noted it down in his *Note of 1827 on the state of the manuscript* before fully noting down paragraph 24 of the first chapter of the first book. And when Clausewitz broaches the issue once again in chapter 6B of Book VIII, Lenin copied out very long extracts, noting down in the margin: *most important chapter*.

Of which politics is war the continuation? Firstly of the object-politics, or politics, namely the entire historic, social, economic, technical, cultural and ideological factors constituting the social conditions of war which make it a social-historical product. Secondly of the subject-politics, or policy, namely the political action, the « affairs' management » inspired by motives and guided by an aim. In that sense, the Clausewitzian concept of « continuation » implies:

1° The specificity of war, this is the use of armed forces, creating a specific situation governed by specific laws.

2° The inclusion of war in a whole which is politics. War is only one of the means to do politics.

3° A complex relationship of purpose *in* the war (*Ziel* - destruction of the enemy's army, capture of the capital city or of a province) and of the purpose *of* the war (*Zweck* - the new situation created at the end of the war: conquest of a province, setting up of a new regime, annexation of the enemy's country).

Clausewitz observed that if one divides war from politics, it would only be an expression of hatred between two peoples. But war cannot be reduced to mere hostility, to a fight to the death blindly throwing two peoples against each other: as Lenin summed it up in a marginal note: war is part of a whole and this whole is politics. In instituting this connection, Clausewitz transformed the war into a theoretical object. In this light, all wars become phenomena of the same nature.

1.2 War and antagonism

A commonplace of the counter-revolutionary talking, either from left or right, reduces those who make use of violence to a single purpose. One can find a learned form of it in the assertion that for Lenin, politics is the continuation of war. These accusations have been formulated against Lenin, Marxism and USSR as a State. One finds a strenuous formulation of it in J.F.C. Fuller, sometimes described as « the most important military thinker of the 20th century » who wrote (in 1961!) « *The Soviet politics, both internal and foreign, is similar to politics of primitive tribes (...) For the man of the tribe as for the revolutionary, 'destroy or being destroyed', such is the government's motto and as in the animal world, there is no distinction between peace and war* ».

This assessment comes in numerous versions, one of the most decent being the one given by Jean-Vincent Holeindre: « *Politics -of Lenin- is thought from the class struggle, which necessarily has a violent nature, and by the prospects of the peace that will be established with the fulfillment of the communist idea. It is here the Clausewitz's Formula inverted: in the eyes of Lenin, violence precedes and institutes politics. In leninist theory, violence has to be conceived and implemented by the vanguard party. Politics has no authority to domesticate violence, but its vocation is to organize it in the revolutionary moment in order to put an end to it once and for all as soon as the objectives of the revolution will be achieved* »

Considering that the domesticating of violence is the vocation of politics is a Hobbesian and liberal vision, extraneous not only to Lenin, but also to Clausewitz, Machiavelli and a lot of others for whom war is not the failure of politics but one of its expressions.

The Marxist-Leninist conception of history is based on contradiction, which can take the form of social antagonism - thinking of the incipit of *The Communist Manifesto*: « *The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes* »

You, German speaking people ignore this problem, but in French, we have long been facing a recurring translation error which, a contrario, reveals the relative complexity of the question. The classical French translation translates *Kampf* into « war » (*Krieg*) instead of translating it into « struggle » or « fight ». This mistake seriously distorts the meaning because the antagonism is not belligerence, all the more that this struggle is « *now hidden, now open* » - basic precision which doesn't mean that the historic agents conceal their intentions but that sometimes, the antagonism is concealed from their own eyes.

Besides, for Marxism-Leninism, the political field is larger than the field of the struggle between antagonist classes. If societies are penetrated by class contradictions fixing the historic disruptions, they are also penetrated by countless clash of interests between peoples, nations, classes, specific social levels, class factions, etc. These clashes of interests do not all imply a logic of war, firstly because they might be offset by a community of bigger interests and secondly because a war is expensive and its result uncertain: the game of war might seem not worth the effort. In the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy in England, the war phase of Cromwell was minor in the eyes of the conversion of an important portion of the English aristocracy to the delights of capitalism. Today, the USA and China are facing numerous clashes of interests commanding unfriendly acts of various sorts (spying, disinformation, taxation or restriction on imports, etc.); but the USA and China are fundamentally at peace. In politics, peace is not the exception. Peace doesn't suppose an absence of contradictions, it is the condition in which armed violence is not taken as an instrument of settlement of clashes of interests.

In the case of contradictions opposing antagonistic classes, a certain war relationship remains, even tenuous, in peacetime. First, because the past violent episodes remain present in peaceful periods (as the historical memory weight of the Paris Commune). Secondly, because some political forces

having a high class consciousness and without any illusion about the collaboration of classes having antagonistic interests, convinced of the inescapability of confrontation, accomplish acts of war during peaceful stages as preparation/anticipation of war stages.

The notion of peacetime between antagonistic classes brings back to the way by which the *Manifesto* presented a sometimes hidden, sometimes open struggle. When the power of a class is well secured, its coercion mechanisms are only exceptionally used. Its ideological omnipotence manages if not to prevent any expression of specific interests of the dominated class, at least to keep them below antagonism. At this stage, the majority of the dominated class does not see itself as such, but pads out or splits up their identity according to other cleavages (national, ethnic, religious). In these periods, through lack of sworn enemy and deluded by its own ideological categories, the dominant class often sees itself as a mere part of a national or religious community. This is not a hidden war situation, it is a peaceful situation between classes which continues until historic, objective (was, economic crisis) and subjective (political action) transform the class in itself into a class for itself.

For Lenin, peaceful strategies are pacifist illusions and the only thing that can cut the social contradictions knot is revolution. The class struggle looks likely to transform into a class war because of the passage from an accumulation of quantitative changes (more class consciousness, more organisation, more revolutionary theory and practice) to a qualitative change (passage from peaceful struggle to arm struggle): « *Marxism holds onto the field of class struggle, and not social peace. In certain periods of economic and political acute crisis, the class struggle ends up in its development in a real civil war, that is to say to an armed struggle between two sections of the population* »

The proletariat forms itself in a class for itself thanks to partial struggles, with an effort of organisation and awareness - and this still does not makes it a belligerent. The conscience of a radical contradiction between class interests does not inevitably induce the firm belief of the necessity of war. The idea that the parliament or the State are above classes, or at least that they may be used to transform society, will result in a peaceful politics. War is expensive and risky, it goes against old moral value: it is inevitable that non-violent strategies be favoured as soon as they seem to be able to succeed. Moreover, the process leading from the class in itself to the class for itself, then from class struggle to class war, is not linear. It goes through abrupt progress and so abrupt declines. This is the reason why Lenin criticised the armed actions of the *narodnikis* when, according to him, the proletarian politics were commanding an awareness and organisation work which had an antagonistic dimension (strikes, etc.) but which didn't need armed violence yet.

1.3 War as a historic project

In chapter 3B of Book VIII, Lenin re-transcribed extracts dealing with the transformations of war, according to historic changes, in particular those induced by the French Revolution. According to Clausewitz, it is not in the new ideas and in the new process introduced by the French Revolution in the art of war that one has to search for the causes of the wonders accomplished by its armies but indeed in the new social state and its national nature.

Only a power relieved of all its special rights, privileges, internal barriers, monopolies and specific idiosyncrasy, which characterized the Ancien Regime could set up a real national mobilisation and a real economy of war. All French resources were mobilised to serve the war, and the resulting power far exceeded the cumulative power of the dynastic armies they were fighting. Unlike the armies of the Princes, mercenary armies made up of vagrants outlawed of society, trained by the drill and ruled with a rod of iron, the French army was a national and citizen army, its recruiting and cadre's promotion being made on the basis of merit and not by birth.

With the Revolution's armies (which Napoleon inherited), the war had been subjected to important changes and it changed of form. Not that the French government had liberated itself from the constraints of politics, but because the Revolution had changed the very basis of politics and had woke the forces and revealed the means that would allow to raise the energy of war and to lead it by other

paths. The changes introduced in the military art were the consequence of those which occurred in politics.

In the chapter entitled *Of the Magnitude of the Object of the War and the Efforts to be made*, Clausewitz comes back to the historic changes in the nature of wars (Tartar hordes, small republics of antiquity. Rome, vassals of the Middle Age; end of XVII and XVIII centuries):

The people, therefore, who in the Tartar invasions were everything in war, who in the old republics, and in the Middle Ages (if we restrict the idea to those possessing the rights of citizens) were of great consequence, were in the eighteenth century, absolutely nothing directly, having only still an indirect influence on the war through their virtues and faults. Those matters stood when the French Revolution broke out (...) a whole nation with its natural weight came in the scale (...) Therefore, since the time of Buonaparte, war, through being first on one side, then again on the other, an affair of the whole nation, has assumed quite a new nature, or rather it has approached much nearer to its real nature, to its absolute perfection. The means then called for had no visible limit, the limit losing itself in the energy and enthusiasm of the Government and its subjects (...) Thus, therefore, the element of war, freed from all conventional restrictions, broke loose, with all its natural force. The cause was the participation of the people in this great affair of State, and this participation arose partly from the effects of the French Revolution on the internal affairs of countries, partly from the threatening attitude of the French towards all nations. Now, whether this will always be the case in future, whether all wars hereafter in Europe will be carried on with the whole power of the States, and, consequently, will only take place on account of great interests closely affecting the people, or whether a separation of the interests of the Government from those of the people will gradually again arise would be a point to settle (...) -Our purpose-: show how each period has had its own peculiar form of war, its own restrictions and its own prejudices. Each period would, therefore, also keep its own theory of war, even if everywhere, in early times as well as later, the task had been undertaken by working out a theory on philosophical principles. The events in each age must, therefore, be judged in connection with the peculiarities of the time, and only he who, less through an anxious study of minute details than through an accurate glance at the whole, can transfer himself into each particular age, is fit to understand and appreciate its generals.

Lenin copied out this passage, described it as important and summed up: *To each era its wars*. So will it be the case for revolutionary wars.

1.4 Rise towards the extremes and clausewitzian trinity

Lenin also showed his interest in the analysis of the political cause of the rise towards the extremes or of the de-escalation, as weak motives and tensions takes war away from its « ideal », « abstract » model, the absolute war, the boundless outburst of violences aiming at forcing the enemy into submission.

Considering the wars differences of nature, Clausewitz developed an outstandingly dialectic thought. Lenin copied it out neatly: « *The greater and the more powerful the motives of a war, the more it affects the whole existence of a population. The more violent the excitement which precedes the war, by so much the nearer will the war approach to its abstract form, so much the more will it be directed to the destruction of the enemy, so much the nearer will the military and political ends coincide, so much the more purely military and less political the war appears to be; but the weaker the motives and the tensions, so much the less will the natural direction of the military element - that is, force - be coincident with the direction which the political elements indicates; so much the more, therefore, the war is diverted from its natural direction, the political object diverges from the aim of an ideal war, and the war appears to become political* »

Thus, even when appearances show an image of absurd and indiscriminate war, drawing the reasons of its rise towards the extremes from itself, hurling wild peoples against each other, the determinant of war remains politics - the war being itself more decisive than ever. It is when the war lets itself be moderated by political power that it betrays the weakness of its political stakes and determinants.

Lenin synthesized: « *Appearance is not reality yet. War seems all the more 'warlike' since it is more deeply political; all the more 'political' since it seems less deeply political* ».

Lenin could appreciate, at the time of the crushing of the 1905 revolution and of the following repression the value of Marx' lessons on the Paris Commune. These lessons, stated in *Civil War in France* can be summed up like this: centralisation, initiative and use of force. Yet, the Bolsheviks only allowed themselves the means of a civil war gradually, commensurate to the perils' escalation: the setting up of the Cheka was improvised and it only played a real role after the assassination of the Bolshevik leader Volodarski. the death sentence itself, terrorist measure par excellence, was only instituted in Spring 1918. Despite this hesitations and improvisations, the Bolsheviks could assume the « rise towards the extremes » of violence and so, save the revolution from the dangers which brought it down in Finland, in Poland, in Hungary and in Germany.

According to Clausewitz (Lenin also copied out this passage, wars are as different as the motives which initiate them and the political relationships which precedes them. The war is a real chameleon, not only because of these differences, but also by the combination of factors, tendencies and phenomena which are peculiar to them. Clausewitz set them out in a trilogy from: feeling of hatred and hostility (which drives the people), probability game (which have to be sorted out by the general-in-chief) and rational objectives (of which the government is judge).

1.5. Lenin and a few other aspects of the clausewitzian thought

While reading and commenting Clausewitz, Lenin also lingered over the role of the population in the war, over the role of the general staff, over the critic of the key positions' doctrine (Clausewitz says that the key position of the enemy territory is its army - and Lenin noted in the margin: « *witty and clever!* »), over the management and the nature of a professional army, over the concept of « decisive battle », over the benefits of the defensive, over the short-sightedness of the general staffs, etc.

He lingered over the issue of being brave (the bravery of the fighter facing physical dangers and of the warlord facing responsibilities) and over Clausewitz' digression relating to the legitimacy of theoretical activities, to the dialectics between the particular and the general that has to characterize it.

Lenin's notes on Clausewitz revealed his specific interest in the thesis relating to the « war virtue », these qualities which have been peculiar to a professional army hardened by victories and defeats. In fact, Clausewitz theorized about the « military virtue » of the regular rank and file to set it apart from the warlike qualities of a nation in arms, to examine their respective merits, the situations in which each one finds the best way of devoting themselves to doing things, etc.

Insofar as one is never free to choose the confrontation's forms, some conditions require that the revolutionary forces allow themselves with the peculiar means to « war virtue », because the peculiar qualities of a nation in arms (enthusiasm, fighting spirit, creativity) can't meet all problems. It was Lenin who, the first in the proletarian military thinking, understood that arming the masses could be, in certain conditions, insufficient and that the revolution might have to endow itself with a professional army. This was running counter a lot of prejudices stemming from the antimilitarist tradition of the working class movement, and anticipating a people's power difficulties facing a conventional warfare (Russia, 1918-1921, Spain 1936, etc.)

PART TWO: IMPERIALIST WAR, LIBERATION WAR

2.1. The class nature of the war

Clausewitz, evoking the new nature of the war brought by the French Revolution, wrote « *every citizen, thus taking part in the war -was- the nation itself which pressed with all its weight in the scale pan* ». According to Lenin, who introduced here the class analysis, it is in fact the matter of the war « *of the French bourgeoisie and maybe of the entire bourgeoisie* » - even if the Revolution and the Empire's wars could have quite a national nature inasmuch as they also expressed the mass struggles against absolutism, national oppression and feudalism.

In the same chapter, Clausewitz stated that if « *everybody knows that the war is one of the consequences of the political relations between the governments and the people, we generally imagine that these relations break off by the very fact of the war and that a different situation becomes immediately established, governed by specific laws* ».

Far from stopping with the war, politics continues with it and determines it. It is on this basis that Lenin could attack Kautsky and other Plekhanov who denounced the imperialist designs of their governments in peacetime but who took part in the union sacrée in times of war. As early as May-June 1915, in his leaflet aimed at the leaders of social-chauvinism, Lenin used his recent reading of Clausewitz

to be able to assess the concrete situation, he -Plekhanov- says that we must first of all find out who started it and punish him, all other problems will have to wait until another situation arises (...) Plekhanov has plucked out a quotation from the German Social Democratic press: the Germans themselves, before the war, admitted that Austria and Germany had « started it », he says, and there you are. He does not mention the fact that the Russian socialists repeatedly exposed the tsarist plans of conquest of Galicia, Armenia, etc. He does not make the slightest attempt to study the economic and diplomatic history of at least the past three decades, which history proves conclusively that the conquest of colonies, the looting of foreign countries, the ousting and ruining of the more successful rivals have been the backbone of the politics of both groups of the now belligerent powers. With reference to wars, the main thesis of dialectics, which has been so shamelessly distorted by Plekhanov to please the bourgeoisie is that « war is simply the continuation of politics by other -i.e. violent- means ». Such is the formula of Clausewitz, one of the greatest writers of the history of war, whose thinking was stimulated by Hegel. And it was always the standpoint of Marx and Engels, who regard any war as the continuation of the politics of the powers concerned - and the various classes within these countries - in a definite period. Plekhanov's crude chauvinism is based on exactly the same theoretical stand as the more subtle and saccharo-conciliatory chauvinism of Kautsky, who uses the following arguments when he gives his blessing to the desertion of the socialists of all countries to the side of their « own » capitalists. « It is the right and duty of everyone to defend his fatherland; true internationalism consists of this right being recognized for the socialists of all nations, including those who are at war with my nation... » (...) True internationalism, we are told, means that we must justify German workers firing at French workers, and French workers firing at German workers, in the name of « defense of the fatherland »! However, closer examination of the theoretical premises in Kautsky's reasoning will reveal the selfsame idea which Clausewitz ridiculed about eighty years ago, viz., that when a war breaks out, all historically created political relations between nations and classes cease and that a totally new situation arises! There are « simply » those which attack and those which are defending themselves, « simply » the warding off the « enemies of the fatherland »! The oppression of a number of nations which comprise over half the population of the globe, by the dominant imperialist nations; the rivalry between the bourgeoisie of these countries for a share of the loot; the desire of the capitalists to split and suppress the working-class movement - all these have suddenly disappeared from the pen of Plekhanov and Kautsky, although they themselves were describing these very « politics » for decades before the war.

There had indeed been debates in the Second International to find out if the increasing number of wars (Boer war, Spanish-American war, Russo-Japanese war) was a combination of circumstances or the expression of a historical trend. Lenin's analysis of the World War as « imperialist » accompanied his works on imperialism. The word does not only denounced the annexationist aims of the belligerents: it expressed the historical content of the war arising when the capitalist production mode has extended to the entire world, when there is no more « virgin » areas to colonise and when the expansion of a power can only happen at the expense of another.

Lenin took the class nature into account. This widened Clausewitz' theory's outlook. Lenin started off from the point of view that a policy (and the war it determines) serves the interests of one class and harms the interests of another. This view contrasted with the views of the Second International's bigwigs, who were quick to insist upon the « national » nature of the war. If the war seems to assume a national nature because of the enthusiasm of a part of the population, the war's real nature has to be found in its political cause, and in this case, in the imperialist designs of the belligerent powers. The causes of the war are the imperialist politics, they give it its significance, determine its nature as well as its revolutionary potentialities. As Lukács stressed it: « According to Clausewitz definition, war is only the continuation of politics, but it is in fact the case in all respects. That is to say that for the foreign policy of a State, there was not only means that the line followed until then by the country in « peacetime » is carried through to its ultimate consequence, but that the war intensifies to the highest degree in the classes' differentiation of a country (or of the entire world) the trends that emerged actively within the society, yet in « peacetime ».

The issue of the people's craze for the war, the issue of the « warmonger » (that is which power has « provoked » the inter-imperialist war) or the question of the motives put forward by the powers (fight for freedom, for the civilisation, etc.) occult instead of shedding light on the real nature of the war.

2.2. The political subject of the war

For Clausewitz, the political subject is the State, and the war is the war between nations. He understood the specific interests, individual or collective but for him, politics is « *nothing by itself, but simply the administrator of these interests -the State and the citizens' rational interests- against the foreigner. We do not have to consider if, following a wrong direction, it serves preferably the rulers' ambitions, private interests and vanity because, on no account, the military art can be assigned to tell it what to do. Here, we only have to look at it as the representative of the interests of all the society* ». In short, somehow or other, the State « represents » the nation it governs. It can lead this nation to war, he is thus the political actor par excellence. In his inventory of the conflicts that succeed one another from antiquity to the Napoleonic Empire, Clausewitz doesn't list the peasants' war in Germany, no the religious war in France or in England, no any civilian war. There is, in *Vom Krieg* an obvious embarrassment as to these events.

According to Lenin, there is in this passage (which he copied out neatly) an « approach of Marxism ». But only an approach. For Marxism, politics is the complex set of the manifestations of classes' interests. It is the organised and more or less coherent action of the classes (and the fractions of classes) for the fulfillment of their interests. At a higher stage, it is the action of the authorities they endowed themselves with (party, State, soviet, trade-union, army, etc.) Lenin himself looked at things from the point of view of a non-state politico-military force: the Russian workers' movement organised by the Bolsheviks. From this new conception of the political subject, larger and deeper, Lenin adopted the clausewitzian analysis point by point: the war (as the negotiation) has the logic of war, but it has its own « grammar » (just as diplomacy has its « grammar » too). The analysis of the war shows specific laws, and amongst them, its tending towards the extremes (and the fact that this tendency is tempered by the political stake) or its Trinitarian nature (political rationality, art of war and hostility feeling).

The appropriateness of the use of Clausewitz' thesis for non-state forces is still much debated. According to Martin Van Creveld, the Israeli military essayist who wrote a reference book on the substitution of classical wars for asymmetrical wars, « *the assertion that the war is a continuation of politics means, strictly speaking, that it represents a tool in the hands of the State insofar as it uses violence for political purposes: this doesn't in any way amount to uphold that the war serves any kind of interest in any kind of community; or if it is the case, it only remains as a meaningless cliché* » For Van Creveld, this type of war does not only appears very late in history, but it is on its way to disappear, and Clausewitz's lessons with it.

An American military current of thought reacted to this so-called « discovery » asymmetry. For this current, the basic points of strategy consisted precisely in making the most of one's advantages and of the enemy's weaknesses, which led Conrad Cranc to distinguish two ways of waging war: « *the asymmetrical way and the stupid way* ». If we consider that asymmetrical war would be specific, not as a war from the weak against the strong (which is just the unsymmetrical war), but the strategy (targeting the population and civil public services instead of the armed forces, and/or considering the population as the medium and the stake of the war), we would notice that here neither, there is nothing new under the sun.

All the more so as the non state players of the wars called « asymmetrical » (Maoist guerrilla in the Philippines, the PKK in Kurdistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, etc.) have an equal, and even sometimes greater political rationality as the one of the States they fight against. Interstate wars, revolutionary wars, national liberation wars come under the same political rationality Van Creveld loosed his way in reserving for the State the political rationality able to use the war as a tool. There are armed groups having an extra-political rationality (gangs, religious sects, racist groups, street gangs) but they only exceptionally position themselves as belligerents which the importance of the jihadist phenomenon may occult.

2.3. Fair war, unfair war

In Clausewitz' system linking war and politics, one had only held the primacy of the authority of politics over military. While adding the consideration of the political nature of a war, in utter analysis of its class nature, Lenin could bring out its historical and moral nature, thus distinguishing fair wars and unfair wars: « *Recognizing the defense of the homeland, it is recognizing that a war is fair and legitimate. Fair and legitimate to which point of view? Exclusively from the socialist proletariat's point of view and of its struggle for emancipation; we do not admit any other point of view. If it is the exploiting class which wages the war to strengthen its class domination, it is a criminal war and the « defense of the homeland » in this war is an infamy and a betrayal towards socialism. If it is the proletariat which, after its triumph over the bourgeoisie in its own country, wages war to consolidate and develop socialism, it is a legitimate and « sacred » war* »

It is a noteworthy enrichment of Clausewitz' set of themes because the latter, apart from the moral benefits he assigned to the aggressed nation, only put forward moral factors strange to the nature of war, thus likely to benefit both belligerents (so the troops' « military virtue »). The military impact of the Marxist-Leninist distinction lies in the fundamental adherence of the masses to fair war, and so a higher degree of mobilisation, of endurance and of fighting spirit.

Mehring had opened up the way by rejecting the « defensive war » concept in favour of « fair war » concept. In fact, the « defensive war » concept can hide the imperialist nature of a war. It is in the name of self-defense that, in 1914, Germany mobilized against Russia and France. It is on this basis that German and French social-chauvinists rallied their bourgeoisie. The concept of fair war, revolutionary wars and national liberation wars, which sees the populations fight for their real interests is altogether different.

« *it is not the defensive of offensive nature of the war, but the interests of the proletariat's class struggle or, even better, the interest of the proletariat's international movement which constitutes the only possible criterion from which one can examine and decide how the social-democrats have*

to behave towards some events or other affective international relations ». This thought by Lenin dates from 1908, but the issue resurfaced strongly in 1914, when the Second International leaders conformed to the line of their bourgeoisie, stating that the enemy power had declared war.

2.4 National liberation war

On this point, Lenin is a real « purifier » of Marxism. We were coming from afar! In 1848, political, social and national questions intermingled in the eyes of every player: liberal bourgeois and proletarian vanguard were in favour of « national liberation » (which took here the form of German unity - in opposition to the dust of reactionary principalities), the reaction mixed up and fought as one same enemy the supporters of German unity and the ones of democracy.

Thus we understand the democratic party's enthusiasm during the Second Schleswig War (which would end in the annexation of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia) and above all, Marx and Engel's hostility towards the Czech national cause. Marx and Engels' position was tinged with a « great German » position, even if the criterion of the revolutionary cause upper interest determined it since the main reason for this hostility was that the Slavic nationalist current (and in particular Pan-Slavism) favoured the Russian Empire's politics. Being the main reactionary force of the time, the Russian Empire intervened militarily not only within its borders (in Poland) but also outside (in Hungary) without any questioning of the established order in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna.

Marx and Engels refined their position but it is Lenin who, while justifying/contextualizing Marx and Engels' positions about South Slaves freed the national question of its pre-Marxist strait-jacket. Raymond Aron thought he flushed out a contradiction in Lenin's thinking: « *To define the nature of war, Lenin set out indifferently national passions and sticks to Marxism analysis of the State's society. On the other hand, to define annexation, he refers to the people's will. He condemns the patriotic enthusiasm of 1914, he approves in advance the division will of Finland, Poland or even Ukraine* » All in all, Lenin would judge the masses national feeling relevant when it is a matter of obtaining Poland's independence, and insignificant (product of the bourgeois propaganda) when it is a matter of « liberating » Alsace-Lorraine.

The *Assessment of a debate on the right of nations to self-determination* is a remarkable text because it defines the Leninist position against the chauvinist right, but also against the Zimmerwaldian Marxist left which stated that « *socialism will abolish all national oppression given that it abolished the class interests leading to this oppression* ».

« *Why does this argument on economic conditions - objected Lenin - known for a long time and indisputable, of the abolition of national yoke, come along here, whereas the discussion turns on one of the forms of political yoke, that is the maintenance with violence of a nation within the borders of the State of another nation? That is just a bid to evade political issues!* ».

« *In a capitalist system, it is impossible to break the national yoke (and the political yoke in general). For that, it is necessary to suppress classes, that is to say establish socialism. But while relying on the economy, socialism doesn't amount only to this factor alone. The elimination of the national yoke requires a foundation, socialist production, but on this foundation, it is still necessary to build a democratic organisation of the State, a democratic army, etc. In transforming capitalism in socialism, the proletariat makes possible the complex abolition of national oppression, but this possibility will « only » - « only »! - come true with a complete establishment of democracy in every field, up to and including the full freedom of partition. From there, in its turn, will in practice be achieve the absolute withdrawal of the slightest national bones of contention, the slightest national suspicions, and will occur the accelerated rapprochement and merging of the nations which will end up in the dying out of the State. Such is Marxism's theory* »

What about the class nature of the national liberation struggles? Lenin is clear: the right to self-determination (even up to armed insurrection) of national minorities and oppressed nations had to be supported -even- if they don't have a progressive character, -except- when they become the in-

strument of international reaction. For instance, (the article was written in 1916), Marxists should support a potential uprising of the Belgians against the Germans, of the Armenians against the Russians, of the Galicians against the Austrians, even if these movements are led by the national bourgeoisie. Marxists can't become accomplices, even passive, of a violation of people's rights to self-determination. One exception; *« it can't be an uprising of the reactionary class » « Democracy's various demands, including the nations' right to self-determination, are not an absolute, by a fragment of the whole world democratic movement (today: socialist). It is possible, in some concrete cases, that the fragment be in contradiction with the whole; it is then to be rejected. It can happen that a country's republican movement is only the tool of clerical, financial or monarchic intrigues; then, our duty is not to support this given concrete movement, but it would be ridiculous, under this pretext, to wipe off the international social-democracy's agenda, the watchword republic »*

PART THREE: WAR AND REVOLUTION

3.1 War and revolution

The relationship between (imperialist) war and (proletarian) war is a central issue of the Leninist experience, and this ever since his analysis of the Russo-Japanese War (1905) and the Balkan War (1912-1913). This relationship appears under two forms:

1. The imperialist war is, if not mainly, at least secondarily, a counter-revolutionary instrument. At the ideological level, the classes' struggle positions and the international workers' movement unity are attacked by a nationalist and chauvinist propaganda. At the concrete level, the state of war allows to break the class trade union and political organisations.
2. In an opposite way (but dialectically linked), the imperialist war heightens the contradictions thanks to its trail of massacres, slave labour, misfortunes and destructions.

The international workers' movement was focused on the first aspect. The struggle against the war was a humanitarian necessity but also, for the Second International, the required condition to follow the « old proven tactic »: time, the sense of history, historical determinism, development of capitalism and of its contradictions favouring socialism. The peaceful advances of the workers' movement seeming irresistible, protecting peace is protecting the certainty of victory. In 1907, while the leaders of the social democracy, at the International Congress of Stuttgart, were trying to find ways to prevent the war, Lenin got out of tune in stating that it was not only necessary to set the prevention of war as a target, but if the need arose, to use the crisis provoked by the war to overthrow the bourgeoisie. While considering the role of the war as a catalyst of social contradictions, Lenin distinguished himself from those who only considered war from the angle of a disaster for the workers' movement. His amendment hit the rightist direction of the Second International. Bebel feared that such a revolutionary statement gave cause for a lawsuit. He made it reformulated in « irrefutable legally' forms but, by these very forms, ambiguous.

Yet, Lenin didn't theorize about the war as inevitably in favour of the revolutionary process. He then distinguished himself from Radeck and the German far left. They thought that « the wars turmoils were the shortest way towards revolution. Lenin thought that wars were inevitable because of the development of imperialism, but that it was the concrete historical conditions, extremely hard to untangle, that would determine if a war will be a brake or an accelerator for class struggle: this one would hone the revolutionary contradictions, that one would bring the workers' movement back. The important thing for Lenin was that the purpose of Revolution was preserved in the war: *« we have to bring into the masses' minds the awareness that revolutionary means of action are necessary in relation with the crisis of the war is not without carrying with itself »* During Zimmerwald and Khienthal Conferences, he led a double battle: towards the outside world, against the social-chauvinists who rallied their bourgeoisie and inside, against the Zimmerwaldians who had no other purpo-

ses than peace, immediate peace, a peace without annexation. This pacifist line was the majority in Zimmerwald, even Clara Zetkin or Angelica Balabanov adhered to it. Lenin's revolutionary thesis gathered only seven or eight votes out of forty mandates.

Lenin didn't wait for the Zimmerwald conference to denounce pacifism: « *War is not an accident, it is not a 'sin', as the Christian priests think (they preach for patriotism, humanism, and peace not less well than opportunists) but an unavoidable step of capitalism, a form as natural as peace for the capitalist life. Nowadays, the war is a people's war. This truth doesn't involve that one has to get carried away by the « popular » current of chauvinism, but it means that the classes' contradictions tearing people apart persist and will also arise in war times, in the war within the context of war. The refusal of the military service, strike against the war, etc. are pure foolishness, a miserable and timid dream of an unarmed struggle against an armed bourgeoisie, a wish hoping for the destruction of capitalism without one or several fierce civil wars. In the army too, the duty of a socialist is to be the propagandist of the class struggle; the action aiming at converting the people's war in a civil war is the only socialist action in the era of armed imperialist conflict of the bourgeoisies of every nation. Down with the silly sentimentality of pious vows on « peace at any price »! Let's wave the flag of civil war!* »

3.2. The Road to Power by Kautsky

Lenin was disgusted by Kautsky's reversal at the triggering of the World War. The Resolution adopted in Stuttgart in 1907 (confirmed in Copenhagen in 1910 and in Bale in 1912) engaged the socialists to « *if a war breaks out (...) act to make it stop quickly and apply themselves at all costs to exploiting the economic and political crisis provoked by the war, to set the people in motion and in that way hasten the abolition of capitalist domination* ». But in the *Neue Zeit* dated the 2nd October 1914, Kautsky wrote: « *If, despite all the efforts of the social-democracy, a war breaks out, every nation has to defend itself. It ensues for the social democracy that all the nations have the same duty of taking part in the national defense, none being allowed to criticize another one about it* ». In short, proletarian of all countries, kill one another...

The extraordinary spiteful anger of Lenin towards « Kautsky, the renegade » is explained by the role played by Kautsky in the definition of the proletarian politics relating to the war: as soon as 1887, in an article published in *Neue Zeit* entitled *Modern nationality*, Kautsky had laid the foundations of a Marxist theory of the national question and of its interaction with the social question. He intervened several times on these issues (particularly in 1886 and 1905). In 1907 while the war was already threatening because of the Moroccan crisis he published a leaflet called « *Patriotism and social-democracy* » in which he rejected any « sacred union » between proletariat and bourgeoisie: « *The present oppositions between States cannot produce anymore any war about which the proletarian patriotism wouldn't oppose itself the more resolutely* ».

In 1909, Kautsky himself broached the issue of the correlation war-revolution in a piece of work put forward by Lenin: *The Way to Power*. Since its publication, this booklet has been a central reference for Lenin - and will always be. And if, in October 1914, Lenin wrote to Shliapnikov: « *From now on, I hate and despise Kautsky more than anyone else, with a petty, vile and presumptuous hypocrisy* » four days later, he wrote him: « *Get and read again absolutely (or ask someone to translate it for you) « Weg zur Macht » by Kautsky. What has he been able to write in this about the revolution today!! And now, what a cowardice to disown all this* ».

Kautsky considered that the war could be produced by war in three cases:

1. When the country coming off worst in the war, trying to launch all its national forces in the balance, calls the proletariat in power;
2. When the beaten army, exhausted, turns against the government and the people rises up to put an end to the disastrous war;
3. When the army and the people rise up against a government which has signed a shameful peace.

According to Kautsky after a generation of progress and stability, Europe and the world entered a new era of war and revolutions of an unknown magnitude (because of its world dimension and of the progress of techniques, trade and communications). These disruptions would cause as well socialist revolutions in Europe as democratic and national liberation revolutions in the dominated countries. This transition from a non-revolutionary situation to a revolutionary situation would require completely new tactics. In this sense, when the intensification of the class antagonisms showed the topicality of the socialist revolution, any class collaboration would be a political suicide: « *It is advising the Socialist Party its political abdication to demand its participation in a coalition policy or a bloc policies at the right time when the reactionary mass' expression becomes a truth. It is demanding its moral abdication to ask its alliance with bourgeois parties when the latter just prostituted themselves and compromised themselves in the most vile way* »

The interaction between socialist, democratic (anti-absolutist), national liberation and anti-colonial revolutions imply the rejection of simplistic patterns in which « advanced » countries show the way to « backward » countries. Kautsky states that in Russia and in the Eastern dominated countries, the interaction between different forms of revolution can open new paths. The SPD was so undermined by opportunism that the first version of this booklet by Kautsky was pulped, by order of Bebel, because it stated that « *No one would be naïve enough to pretend that we will peacefully and imperceptibly pass fro a militaristic State to democracy* ». Kautsky accepted to re-write his booklet, deleting everything that could cause a trial, but it kept its revolutionary nature: « *Once again, we insist on the fact that there is no question of knowing if workers protection laws and other measures taken in the interest of the proletariat, if the trade unions and the cooperatives are necessary and useful or not. On this point, we all share the same view. We only contest one thing; the fact that the exploiters classes having political power can allow these elements to grow in a way amounting to a liberation from the capitalist yoke, without opposing at all costs first a resistance that would only be broken by a decisive battle* ».

In brief, as Lenin summed it up: « *Kautsky voiced, in 1909, the indisputable opinion of all revolutionary social-democrats, saying that there couldn't be from now on in Europe, a premature revolution and that war meant revolution* »

3.3. The conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war

At its beginning, the World War brought actually the workers' movement to a standstill: in July 1914, there was an outburst of political wars in Russia with insurrectional demonstrations that would be broken after the declaration of war, a month later. The Bolshevik deputies who had voted against the war credits at the State Duma were deported to Siberia, most of the companies passed under the control and supervision of the army. All social rights won after brave struggles since the beginning of the century were « suspended » during the conflict.

However, as early as summer 1914, in the midst of chauvinistic hysteria, Lenin, being sure that the reactionary propaganda would dissipate in front of war's woes, devoted himself to « transform the imperialist war into a civil war ».

Georges Haupt noted that studying Lenin's pieces of writing was hard because they mix together the requirements of a revolutionary educational method and of tactical manoeuvres. Haupt stated, for instance, that the slogan of « transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war » changed in nature during the war: simple reaffirmation of revolutionary principles faced with the opportunism of the Second International and the Mensheviks, without any real possibility of achievement in 1914; concrete possibility possibly feasible at the time of Zimmerwald and Kienthal; immediate and concrete purpose in 1917.

This thesis by Haupt is doubtful. As soon as 1914, Lenin gave a concrete content to this slogan. He knows that time was not ripe yet for the civil war, but more than a principle to reassert, it's a concrete purpose requiring a concrete organisation and concrete actions, namely « *a vast propaganda, in the army as well as on the theatre of operations, in favour of the socialist revolution and the ne-*

cessity not to turn the arms against one's brothers, the wage-earning of other countries, but against the governments and the reactionary parties and bourgeois of all countries. The absolute necessity of organising illegal cells and groups in the armies of all nations in order to make this propaganda in every language. Merciless struggle against chauvinism and 'patriotism' of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois of all countries, without exception. Absolutely appeal against the leaders of the present International who betrayed socialism, to the revolutionary consciousness of the workers' masses on which fall all the weight of the war and which, in most cases, are hostile to chauvinism and opportunism »

In fact, it was, from the first moment indeed, a strategic plan. It was built on theory, on objective and subjective conditions (such as they were, and such as they would evolve) but also, what Haupt disregarded, on historical precedents set by the Paris Commune and the 1905 Revolution. This two great experiences of revolutionary civil war, to which Lenin referred so many times, stemmed both from an imperialist war; the Franco-Russian War in 1870 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

From 1914, Lenin envisaged in very concrete terms the prospect of the transformation of imperialist war into civil war: « *The bourgeoisie is duping the masses by disguising rapine with the old ideology of a 'national war'. The decent is being shown up by the proletariat, which has brought forward its slogan of the Stuttgart and Basle resolutions, which had in mind, not a war in general, but precisely the present war and didn't speak about 'defense of the fatherland', but about 'hastening the downfall of capitalism', of using the war-created crisis for this purpose and of the example provided by the Paris Commune. The latter was an instance of a war of nations being turned into a civil war.*

Of course, such a conversion is no easy matter and cannot be accomplished at the whim of one party or another. That conversion, however, is inherent in the objective conditions of capitalism in general, and of the period of the end of capitalism in particular. It is in that direction, and that direction alone, that socialists must conduct their activities. It is not their business to vote for a war credits or to encourage chauvinism in their « own » country (and allied countries), but primarily to strive against the chauvinism of their « own » bourgeoisie, without confining themselves to legal forms of struggle when the crisis has matured and the bourgeoisie has itself taken away the legality it has created. Such is the line of action that leads to civil war, and will bring about civil war at one moment or another of the European conflagration ».

We can see that the question is not about getting ready for a potential civil war. It's a matter of following a *line of action leading to it*. Within this context, Lenin's thought stuck to the reality: he was on the lookout for developments, repercussions, flash of process, as well as their concrete expressions. For instance, he noted a phenomenon unknown during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905: fraternizing with the trenches: « *Clearly, fraternisation tends to develop, strengthen and consolidate fraternal confidence between the workers of different countries. Clearly, it is beginning to wreck the hateful discipline of the barrack prisons, the discipline of the blind obedience of the soldier to 'his' officers and generals, to his capitalists (for most of the officers and generals either belong to the capitalist class or protect its interests). Clearly, fraternisation is the revolutionary initiative of the masses, it is the awakening of the conscience, the mind, the courage of the oppressed classes; in other words, it is a rung in the ladder leading up to the socialist proletarian revolution (...). But it is not enough. The soldiers must now pass to a form of fraternisation in which a clear political program is discussed (...). And so, in our appeal to the soldiers of all the belligerent countries, we have set forth our program for a workers' revolution in all countries, namely the transfer of all state power to the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies. Comrades soldiers! Discuss this program among yourselves and with the Germans soldiers ».*

Lenin devoted himself to editing the material destined for the soldiers in Russian and German languages, to organising common meetings with interpreters, etc. Bolsheviks massively published a *Pravda of the Trenches* calling for fraternisation.

Unravelling tactics and ideology is an almost impossible task in Lenin's writings as he brought to its top-level the art of dialectizing theory and practice, synthetizing this dialectics in a flexible strategy because strong, strong because flexible and formulating it for controversy, agitation and propa-

ganda. If one doesn't understand the depth and the richness of this dialectic, one turns to talking about Lenin either as an obtuse ideologist hacking the century to make it conform to its ideals, either, on the contrary, as an absolute empiricist constantly changing his line and speech as soon as it seems to serve his purposes.

PART FOUR: THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

4.1. Uprising

Lenin's interest in military issues was of course also bound to the military importance of the revolutionary struggle. From January 1905, before the insurrectional wave, Bolsheviks worked to form a military organisation. At the Second Congress held in London (12-27 April 1905), a military-technical committee was set up close to the Central Committee and the local committees were charged to draw the uprising plan and to get ready for it.

However, the 1905 insurrectional wave surprised the RSDLP which had no real military apparatus and no other military doctrine than Engels' pieces of work on uprisings. The military-technical committee really devoted itself to raising the level of the masses' revolutionary struggle. It led intelligence operations, actions against the leaders and the forces of the regime, and expropriations to finance the whole, but its forces and the effect of its action were insufficient. Bolsheviks - and Lenin in particular - immediately began to learn from experiences to improve efficiency of their fighting groups. In October, Lenin wrote to the fighting organisations: « *To my horror, really to my horror, I see that we talk about bombs since more than six months without making just one (...) Go towards youths! Form, right away, everywhere, fighting groups amongst students, and above all amongst the workers, etc., etc. Let immediately detachments of 3, 10, 30 men and more be formed. Let them get armed themselves straightaway as best as they can, one with a gun, one with a knife, another with a piece of rag soaked with oil to serve as a firebrand. These detachments will right away name their leaders and, as far as possible, get in touch with the fighting committee to Petersburg's committee. Do not demand any formality, for God's sake, do not care about all plans of action, for God's sake, tell all 'functions, rights and privileges' to go to the devil. Don't demand a compulsory affiliation to the RSDLP, it would be an absurd demand for the armed uprising. Do not refuse to set up a contact with any group, even only made up of three men, the only condition being that the group is free of all police infiltration and ready to fight against the troops of the tsar ».*

In her souvenirs, N.K. Krupskaya evoked the application that Lenin brought then to the study of the military art: « *He dealt with this subject far more than we know and his talks about shock groups during the partisans' war, about 'groups of five and ten' had nothing in common with the speaking of a lay person. They revealed a plan well-thought-out in every detail* ». In January 1905, Lenin read again Marx's articles on uprisings. He translated the chapter in Cluseret's memoirs, the general of the Paris Commune, on street fights. Cluseret's memoirs were published in *Vperiod* with a preface and a biographical note written by Lenin.

On 5 December, the Bolshevik Conference in Moscow decided, unanimously, to launch the insurrectionary general strike. It was followed on 7 December by the Soviet of Moscow (by a majority Bolshevik). The strike and demonstrations became an armed confrontation, but the coalition committee of the fighting groups, where the Bolsheviks are a minority, revealed itself to be incapable to play the insurrectional staff's role. The Muscovite workers resisted but they are only 8000 being military organised. The RSDLP sought by all means to help the uprising (among others by trying to stop the trains bringing troops into Moscow) but on 18 December, the area of Presnia, West of Moscow, where the last fighters were entrenched, fell.

The lesson learnt by the Mensheviks, especially Plekhanov, from the backward surge of the revolutionary movement of 1905, and in particular of Moscow's uprising, was that it was a « tactical insa-

nity » of an « incredible lightness ». On the other hand, the Bolsheviks, even after the defeats in Moscow, of the Donets and of Rostov, stated that the problem was the lack of forces, and of organizational, military and doctrinal preparation: « *Thus, nothing could be more short sighted than Plekhanov's view, seized upon by all the opportunists, that the strike was untimely and should not have been started and that 'they should not have taken to arms'. On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary. And now we must at last openly and publicly admit that political strikes are inadequate; we must carry on the widest agitation among the masses in favour of an armed uprising and make no attempt to obscure this question by talks about 'preliminary stages' or to befog it in any way. We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed from the masses the necessity of a desperate, bloody war of extermination, as the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action* »

Lenin also learned some tactical lessons, closely related to the lessons sketched out by Kautsky in *Chances of the Russian Revolution*. The fact that Moscow's insurgents offered such a resistance to the elite troops of the regime showed that Engels' condemnation of the barricades' struggle had to become more refined. It is a kind of tactics of the barricades that has been condemned by the cannon's arrival, etc. On the other hand, a new tactic could be brought out from Moscow's experience. The lessons learnt gradually led to the insurrectional doctrine put into practice in October 1917. This doctrine didn't rely anymore on barricades' struggle neither on masse spontaneous demonstrations, but on the offensive, concerted and planned action of workers' armies unities well-trained and disciplined, on the mastery of military techniques, and on a breakup work of the bourgeoisie's army by agitation and propaganda. Finally, this doctrine relied on a precise analysis of the subjective and objective conditions required for its implementation: political crisis of the system, masses' dissatisfaction, the existence of a recognized revolutionary vanguard and peasant's support to the proletarian revolution. This doctrine implies a long work of preparation, of accumulation and qualification of the military forces. The final act, insurrection, is preceded by a long politico-military phase studied at length by Lenin in « *Partisans' War*. This doctrine imputed three roles to the armed struggle: a subjective role of masses and militants' political mobilization, the role of accumulation of forces in non-revolutionary periods and the final and decisive role of the armed insurrection.

4.2. Guerilla Warfare

Lenin had to wage a battle against Plekhanov who wanted to dissolve the fighting groups and only make politics through the action of the Duma's deputies. Bolsheviks approved and practiced attacks on banks (their product was a necessity to the running of an underground party) and armed actions against members of the repressive apparatus, especially spies.

A school for military instructors was built up in Kiev and another opened in Lemberg for bomb's use. In November 1906, Lenin convoked, via the militaro-technical committee a conference of the fighting groups in Tammerfors, in Finland. To prepare this conference, Iaroslavski, one of the more important Bolshevik military leaders, met Lenin: « *When I arrived in Finland, I saw Vladimir Ilitch who assailed me with questions. I immediately sensed that I was dealing with someone who knew our work in depth and was seriously interested. Vladimir Ilitch didn't content himself with general answers, he wanted to know the details, the mechanics of our work, our plans, our contacts. He took a strong interest to the military instructor's school we had organised, and where we taught our militants how to handle and make explosives, how to handle machine guns and other arms, where we taught the profession of minor-sapper, street fight's tactics, in a word, where we prepared the commandant cadres of our fighting detachment for the future revolution* »

In the leading governing bodies of the RSDLP, besides the official Central Committee (controlled by the Mensheviks), there was a Bolshevik center (the Board of the Majority Committee) which mi-

lilitary organisation (the Committee for Financial and Military Affairs) which was led by Lenin, Krasin and Bogdanov.

Faced with the perspective of Stockholm's congress, (10-20 April 1906), Lenin wrote the following resolution draft:

« *Whereas:*

1. scarcely anywhere in Russia since the December uprising has there been a complete cessation of hostilities which the revolutionary people are now conducting in the form of sporadic guerrilla attacks upon the enemy;

2. these guerrilla operations which are inevitable when two hostile armed forces face each other, and when repression by the temporarily triumphant military is rampant, serve to disorganise the enemy's forces and pave the way for future open and mass armed operations;

3. such operations are also necessary to enable our fighting squads to acquire fighting experience and military training, for in many places during the December uprising they proved to be unprepared for their new tasks;

We are of the opinion and we propose that the Congress should agree:

1. that the party must regard the fighting guerrilla operations of the squads affiliated to or associated with it as being, in principle, permissible, and advisable in the present period;

2. that the character of these fighting guerrilla operations must be adjusted to the task of training leaders of the masses of workers at a time of insurrection, and of acquiring experience in conducting offensive and military operations;

3. that the paramount immediate object of these operations is to destroy the government, police and military machinery, and to wage a relentless struggle against the active Black-Hundred organisations which are using violence against the population and intimidating it;

4. that fighting operations are also permissible for the purpose of seizing funds belonging to the enemy, i.e. the autocratic government, to meet the needs of insurrection, particular care being taken that the interests of the people are infringed as little as possible;

5. that fighting guerrilla operations must be conducted under the control of the party, and furthermore, in such a way as to prevent the forces of the proletariat from being frittered away and to ensure that the state of the working class movement and the mood of the broad masses of the given locality are taken into account.

But the congress, which gathered a sharp majority of Menshevik delegates didn't discuss the issue. Lenin returned to the attack which took place in September 1906 stating that « *Guerrilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the « big engagements » in the civil war (...) It is therefore absolutely natural and inevitable that in such a period, a period of nationwide political strikes, an uprising cannot assume the old form of individual acts restricted to a very short time and to a very small area. It is absolutely natural and inevitable that the uprising should assume the higher and more complex form of a prolonged civil war embracing the whole country, i.e., an armed struggle between two sections of the people. Such a war cannot be conceived otherwise than as a series of a few big engagements at comparatively long intervals and a large number of small encounters during these intervals. That being so - and it is undoubtedly so - the Social-Democrats must absolutely make it their duty to create organisations best adapted to lead the masses in these big engagements, and as far as possible, in these small encounters as well. »*

But the Menshevik majority decided to disband the fighting groups at the Third London Congress (13 May - 1 June 1907).

4.3. Lenin, warlord

Lenin's action as a warlord is underrated, and Adam Ulam's opinion in this connection is widely shared. Driven by obvious political interest, Kremlinologists and Trotskyites credited Trotsky with all the military merits of the civil war. No less obvious interest led Soviet historiography to increase

excessively the prestige of Stalin, Voroshilov and Frunze's role. All agreed to recognize that Lenin held the first political role, all disregarded his military role. He himself didn't do anything to show an interest in military issues: he neither visited the headquarters nor the trenches, he only met red commandants and soldiers when it was necessary - no military imagery is attached to him.

Yet, between 1st December and 24th December 1918, he presided over 143 out of the 175 sessions of the Party's Central Committee and 40 sessions of the Politburo which examined the military issues. On the occasions, Lenin examined thousands of military issues. Lenin sent at least six hundred letters and telegrams devoted to defense issues.

The Trotskyit's version of history, presenting Lenin giving a free hand to Trotsky on military issues is refuted by several incidents. The most famous is the replacement of the commander-in-chief of the Red Army, J. Vatsetis, by S.S. Kamenev.

It is true that Lenin delegated most of the leading of the war to the commandants and the commissars whom he had contributed to choose, especially the war commissar himself. His activity seldom interfered with his commandants'.

It is in November 1917, when Kerensky joined the armies which remained loyal to the provisional government to march against Petrograd, and that they had captured Gatchina and were threatening Tsarkoïe-Selo, 25 kilometers away from the capital city, that one more often saw Lenin « come down » to the tactical level, provoking an incident with Nikolai Podoisky, the Red Guard's organizer and first Defense People's Commissar. Several testimonies, different but which agreed, report how Lenin viewed using the fleet as a fire support on Tsarkoïe-Selo's front.

L. Vakhrameev, representative of the Baltic fleet had been called by Lenin to the Command Direction of Petrograd's military district. « *The map of Petrograd and its surroundings was spread out on a big table. We discussed the destruction plan of Kerensky's bands. Vladimir Ilitch asked me what the fleet could give, on top of its detachments, to help the land units. When I became acquainted with the enemy's forces layout, I explained that the fleet could bombard Kerensky's bands waiting in ambush in Tsarkoïe-Selo. We could bombard from both sides, with long-range naval guns. For that, we had to bring the cruiser Oleg into the Moskoi Canal. He would be able to bomb the entire area of Tsarkoïe-Selo in the North-West with its 130 mm cannons. Besides, two or three Novik torpedos could go upstream the Reva near the village of Rybatskoïe and bombard Tsarkoïe-Selo from the East, with their 100 mm cannons. No unit would resist such a bombing* ».

Comrade Lenin took a great interest in this proposal. He asked me details, meticulously checked how it would be possible to execute the proposed operation. After persuading himself of its real and national nature, he ordered me to immediately start its execution and to regularly inform him about the course of tasks »

But Lenin took (at least) a second advice, from another Bolshevik of the fleet, F. Raslkolnikov, who tells quite a similar story: closely-argued discussion around the map, depth of the canals' study, the effects of the tides, firing plans, etc.

The third story is told by N. Izmailov, vice-chairman of the Baltic fleet's Central Committee who reported his telegraphed conversation with Lenin. The latter asked him how many vessels he could get under way and within which time limit, if they were provided with provisions, equipped with wireless telegraphy, etc. The operation took place, the fleet moored fore and aft near Tsarkoïe-Selo and observers took place on the hills of Poulkovo to direct the firing. But the sudden retreat of Kerensky's troops made the deployment useless.

It is difficult to appreciate the military pertinence of Lenin's decisions. Trotsky's testimony on this point is often suspect. It has the weakness of making a thing of so-called « military errors of judgment » made by Lenin to play the good guy.

Lenin's military activity basically consists of gathering means, galvanizing the energies, sending the right person to the right place and giving a telling-off whoever is concerned. A good instance is the telegram sent to Goussev dated the 16th September 1919: « *In actual fact, the status quo pervades among us, and nearly the collapse. On the Siberian front, we placed a kind of scoundrel, Olderogge, and this coward Posern and we 'calmed down'; it is very shameful! And we begin to get beaten!*

If the Republican Revolutionary War Council doesn't act energetically, we will hold it responsible! It is a shame to let victory slip away from our hands.

Status quo with Marmontov. Apparently, a delay after the other. Troops' delay going to the North, to Voronej. Delay in the transporting of the 21st Division towards the South. Delay for the delivery of machine guns. Delay in the Intelligence Services (...) The result is the status quo, with Marmon-tov and Selivatchov alike (instead of the expected victories day after day, as one promised in chil-dish drawings - do you remember you had showed me these drawings and I had said 'We have for-gotten the enemy!'. If Selivatchov escapes, or if his chief of division betrays, the Republic Revoluti-onary War Council will be the cause, because he was sleeping and was putting everyone's mind at ease, but it didn't see to it. It is necessary to send our best commissars to the South, the most vi-gorous, not wet blankets.

We are getting ourselves behind schedule for the formation of divisions. We are letting Autumn pass, but meanwhile, Denikin will triple his forces, he will receive tanks, etc. This cannot continue like this. We have to get rid of this sleepy way of working and move on at a lively pace ».

In a passage also copied out by Lenin, Clausewitz wrote that « *where this energy will meet this mo-ral strength united with a wise restraint in the much sought-after results, we'll generally see occur-ring this alternative of outstanding battles and advisable caution we admire so justly in the cam-paigns led by the great Frederik* ». At that time, Lenin showed this balance of qualities: daring at the moment of the launching of October Revolution, caution during Brest-Litovsk's peace talks. And if we see Lenin pushing his commandants and commissars to have initiative, to show daring and fighting spirit, he never pushes them to foolishness - since foolhardy as well as apathy are twin expressions of this lack of seriousness he abhorred. Proof of this being this telegraph sent to Trotsky on 3rd June 1920 concerning an offensive plan: « *This is obviously an utopian view. Will this not cost too much victims? We will lead countless soldiers to death. We have to think about it ten times, and assess; I propose the following answer to Stalin: 'Your proposal of an attack on the Crimea is so grave that we need some more information and to think about it very seriously. Wait for your re-ply. Lenin; Trotsky* ».

4.4. Attack and defense

Clausewitz noted, in passages amply annotated by Lenin, that it is easier to retain than to take, that the defensive is the strongest form of the war. If the offensive, on top of having a positive end (the conquest of a province, for instance) war greater in itself than the defensive, no belligerent would adopt the defensive. The one who seeks a positive end can't do without the offensive and so, has to find higher means than the ones of the enemy to make up for the inherent superiority to the defensi-ve. When one is inferior to the enemy, this choice of the defensive allows in itself to make good, partly or totally, this inferiority.

The defender takes advantage of all unexpected events, of time, of the enemy's wearing out. The at-tacker admittedly has the advantage of overall surprise (thus, the choice of the moment of the war) but the defender can benefit by the surprise at the tactical level. The defender has the advantage of the ground: he knows it, settled himself, occupies the fortress and the most profitable points, he can adopt a wrapped position that allows him to play the interior lines, etc. The defender's position wears out slower than the attacker's position, the defender has the help of the population, he enjoys the sympathies and the moral advantages resulting from his status of the one being assaulted.

Some advantages intrinsic to the defense operate even before the defender retreats in the depth of his territory, but they increase on the basis of the depth of the retreat. As this retreat is expensive (since it implies a desertion of territory), it has to be chosen only when the initial balance of forces is such that all the advantages of the defense are necessary to overcome it. The defender, according to the importance of this imbalance, can choose to confront the enemy when he crosses the border. If he is not strong enough for that, he can choose to wait a little more and to confront the attacker when the latter entered his territory to the point chosen to wage the battle to his advantage (on a ri-

ver's line, for example). He may also, if he still considers himself too weak, wait for the enemy's attack on that position. If the imbalance is still too important to allow this choice, the defender can extend his waiting position until the enemy's offensive reaches its climax. Defense doesn't mean passivity. Keeping up the initiative, the defender can, while retreating, make repeated attacks, launch his guerrilla against the enemy's back lines.

In 1918, Lenin applied this doctrine point by point. He had been a fierce opponent of the « revolutionary war » against Germany in 1918. But his opposition was a minority in his party: half of the Bolsheviks were in favour of the war, a quarter for peace, and a quarter for « neither war or peace », advocated by Trotsky. He imposed his line during the talks, prompting their breaking off and a new disastrous German offensive for Soviet Russia. On 3rd March 1918, the latter had to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk by which Germany seized Poland and the Baltic States and imposed independence on Ukraine, Finland and the three Transcaucasian Republics. The Red Army's creation on 15th January 1918 had permitted the first victories against the white armies in the Ural, on the Don River, the Donets, the Kuban River and in the Crimea, but in May 1918 (in response to the call of the bourgeois nationalists threatened by the revolutionary movement's development in Ukraine and Finland), the German and Austrian armies irresistibly entered in Ukraine and Finland: *« As we became representatives of the leading class which started to organize socialism, we demand a serious attitude from everyone towards the defense of our country. And this serious attitude consists of getting actively ready for the country's defense and to strictly take the balance of power into account. If it is obvious that our forces are insufficient, the retreat in the heart of the country is the main mean of defense (the one who only wants to see there a circumstance phase, made up for the purpose in hand, can read the old Clausewitz, one of the great military writers, the appraisal of the teachings of history he brought out about this) (...) Our duty becomes to weigh up our forces with the greatest caution, to meticulously look into the possibilities of receiving in time reinforcements from our ally (the international proletariat). The capital's interest is to beat its enemy (the revolutionary proletariat) by parts as long as the countries are not united yet (in action, that is to say, at the beginning of the revolution). Our interest is to do our utmost, to use all the chances, how modest they may be, to postpone the decisive battle until (or « until just after » the moment) the time when this merging of revolutionary detachments occurs within the great and indivisible international army »*

Lenin wrote these lines at the time when the balance of force was greatly unfavorable to Soviet power: the German and (to a lesser extent) Austro-Hungarian are clearly stronger, better armed, better trained and better managed than the young Red Army. The revolutionary war against Germany had been sheer voluntarism. His first supporter, Bukharin, admitted it ten years later.

By implementing this principle of retreat in the heart of the territory, Lenin opted for the higher form of the defensive. This defensive would allow the revolution to develop its forces (the Red Army was in the middle of its formation), the Red Army would be able to play the inside lines (one would be able to send units from North to South, from East to West according to the needs and priorities, and thus get by turns the requisite superiority to win the decisive battles), the German forces would move away from their resupplying bases and would more and more expose themselves to the intense activity of the Ukrainian Red Guerrillas, and the pacifist and revolutionary thesis would spread into Germany and German army. Lenin counts mainly on this last factor. In January 1918, revolutionary political strikes, with the creation of workers' Soviets, had already broken out in Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, Kiel, Dusseldorf, Leipzig, Essling and elsewhere, but the revolutionary tide only set fire to Germany in November: more than 10.000 workers and soldiers' Soviets were formed and gained control of Berlin. The revolution was crushed but its effects, combined with those of the armistice, led to the German's troops retreat from Ukraine and the Crimea.

4.5. A « militarisation » of Marxism?

The accusation of a « militarisation » of Marxism by Lenin knows two indictments

1. The one who considers it as innate, consubstantial, as with Anibal Romero: « *For Clausewitz, politics don't necessarily require war; for Lenin, politics is the class war, the State is only an oppression instrument, and the proletariat's triumph - which can only come from an act of force, the extreme violence having to lead to the suppression of the State, and finally, to the suppression of politics itself* »

2. The one who considers it as established, historic, as with Jacob Kipp who said that the « militarisation » of Marxism by Lenin is a tendency activated by the World War, Clausewitz' reading and the October Revolution. It found its outcome in 1922-1923: « *Lenin did a complete circle. War and politics substituted one for another as object and subject. Here politics became the continuation of war by other means. The NEP was a tactical plan to restore national economy and win back the peasants' support against the armed uprisings of Kronstadt and Tambov's area* »

Kipp is wrong in general, and in particular on the calendar, because Lenin's position « demilitarised » itself clearly at the end of the civil war, as shown by its report at the XIst Congress of the Communist Party (1922): « *At the previous stage of our revolution, when all our attention and all our forces were mainly attracted on nearly entirely absorbed by the struggle against the invader, we could not seriously deal with this alliance (with the peasant economy), we had other things to do. To a certain extent, we could and had to neglect this alliance, since another task, being an absolute urgency imposed directly upon us: push away the danger of being immediately strangled by the huge forces of world imperialism (...) Build up the communist society with communist hands is a childish idea, if there ever was. Communists are a drop in the ocean, a drop in the popular ocean (...) We have essentially learned how to render the exploiter harmless (...) Here, one has to put some pressure, but it's easy. The second part of victory - to build up Communism with non-Communist hands, to be able to do in practice what we have to do at the economic level - consists in finding the contact with peasant economy, in satisfying the peasant* ».

The civil war against the bourgeoisie for the conquest of State powers is consubstantial with Leninism, but not more than the joining of the small and middle peasantry and the intelligentsia to the proletariat. The openings towards these classes and social groups are as much political as hostilities against local squires and capitalists. Peace with some and war with others forms a general politics, they also are part of the Leninist project.

The Kronstadt Rebellion and the crushing of Tambov's or Makhnovchchina's uprisings are of a different kind compared to the war against the white and interventionist armies. For Lenin, whose main reference was Paris Commune, a war against the dominant class' forces of the Ancient Regime against the inhabitants of Versailles, had to happen.

Nothing like this with Kronstadt, Tambov or Makhnovchchina, which are « imposed » wars on Bolsheviks, in the sense that they were not, so to speak, on the agenda. Of course, the commissars' decisions were decisive in the conflicts' genesis and especially the conscription and the *prodrazverstka*, the requisitioning of agricultural surplus to feed the cities, but the Bolsheviks could hope not to have to wage such wars. Apart from the counter-revolution's agents who added fuel to the flames, the enemies of the Bolsheviks in Kronstadt, Tambov and in Ukraine were social groups, especially the middle peasants with whom Lenin hoped to become allied. The insurgents positioned themselves as enemies of Soviet power because they saw themselves as an antagonistic force. As soon as they took arms, they were treated as enemies, but the harshness with which they were repressed did not ensue from a general antagonistic politics.

For the insurgent shot by a Cheka, the distinction is only half comforting. But it is crucial for the theoretical question about the Leninist relation to the war. Whereas the opposition to autocracy, to big landlords and to capitalists was considered irreconcilable, the Bolshevik authority took measures to spare the class interests of the middle peasantry: soon after the crushing of Tambov's uprising, the Council of Commissars replaced *prodrazverstka* by *prodnalog*, a fixed tax payable in nature (with grain) which was far more acceptable by the peasants. So, even if Lenin recommended Clausewitz' reading to the Party cadres because political and military tactics were connected fields, even if the rhetoric remained warlike, in 1922, contrary to Kipp's thesis, Leninist politics in Russia is losing the belligerency characters.

Reducing Leninist politics to war, it is thus not only dishonoring everything that comes before the war (working class organisation and conscientisation at the national and international level, revolutionary organisations and unification over a strategic plan, the coming together of classes and social groups having an objective interest in revolutionary change, etc.) but also everything that comes after the war (organisation of the new power, development of new social relationships, reorganisation of production and laying-out of the territory, cultural revolution, etc.) And if, in fact, the objectives of the pre-revolutionary politics have to allow to wage and to win the revolutionary war, they also have to allow to win the peace.

According to Clausewitz, « *one must always consider that the end is reached with peace, and that then the war business is over* » And it is clearly Lenin's option: once the class enemy (Russian reactionaries and imperialist interventionists) is beaten, it is the peaceful building of Socialism. This construction is also a struggle: struggle for production, for culture, for improvement in social relations and in social consciousness, struggle against laziness, slovenliness, selfishness, routine and bureaucracy, and what Lenin called « *oblomovism* ». But these struggles are not wars in any way. It is definitely peace (which takes here the form of Socialism building) which is, in conformity with Clausewitzian concept, the truth of Leninist war.

It goes also like this in foreign politics. At the VIIIth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, talking about the peace offers made by Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson to the Kremlin, Lenin invited the shorthand typists to put their pencils down so that he could say, without fear of indiscretion, what he thought. For Lenin, these offers were dictated by the failure of the military intervention in Russia and by the revolutionary agitation in Europe and not by the desire of finding a *modus vivendi* with the Bolsheviks. For Lenin, the contradiction with the bourgeois States is antagonistic; the interventionists' fierceness showed all their hostility towards the first Socialist State. If the white's exhaustion, internal contradictions (mutinies, strikes, etc.) and collapse made them give up the idea of an intervention, they did not put an end to hostility. Peace, international treaties are consequently only a postponed war. No matter here if the tool of the revolutionary war is the insurgent native proletariat or the Red Army: the Leninist international politics is a politics of war tempered by the belief that the enemy's internal contradictions will play the biggest part in its defeat. Lenin didn't believe that the establishment of normal relations between Soviet Russia and capitalist States was possible. He was among those who, like Wynn Catlin, see diplomacy as being the art of saying « *good doggie* » while searching for a good stone...