

DOCUMENT 16:
'The Call of the Bolsheviks – League Manifesto', published in *The International*, March 1, 1918.

WORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA!

It is time you knew what game is afoot. It is time for you to realise that your fellow workers in Russia need your voice and help. The Capitalist Press hides the real state of affairs behind foul slanders. It hides the fact that the Bolshevik Government is only the Government of the workers by the workers for the workers. It hides the fact that Lenin and Trotsky are only the delegates of the Russian Federation of Labour, otherwise the Council of Workmen, or the Soviet. It is your fellow workmen they are slandering. It is your fellow workmen who are calling upon you to hurl these slanders back into the teeth of your and their capitalist enemies.

What are they up to now, these International Capitalists? Labour having conquered power in Russia is occupied in quelling the rebellion of the 'bourgeoisie class,' that is, the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie are opposing the workers by force wherever there is a hope of saving their precious private interests from being captured by Labour for the common weal. In some cases they have massacred the working men by the hundreds. What will they not do when, with the help of

German arms, they get all the workers of Russia under their heels again? They will massacre them by the HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS.

The tiger of capitalism will show no mercy when his hide is threatened by Labour. You know that. You found that out in Commissioner Street in 1913, when even your parsons took up arms against you. Consider then the position of your Russian fellow workmen.

You say: the Russian workmen should not have dissolved their army. We say: that the victory of Labour means the dissolution of all armies. You cannot have Labour triumphant and militarism on top at the same time.

Make no mistake: this is not the crime of German militarism alone, this attack on the Russian revolution. Lenin has declared that the Allied Governments are silently backing the German Government against the Bolsheviks. No matter what family quarrels International Capital may have, they are all united against the Bolsheviks, that is, the working men of Russia. And they will unite against you too when you dare to assert your rights as the producers of all wealth.

Balfour the other day would not deny that the British Government had negotiated directly with Austria. What did they negotiate about if not to protect their common capitalist interests in Russia?

A gathering of International Financiers was held at Switzerland last year from all belligerent countries, Germany and Britain, America and Austria, and all the family cats of capitalism were there to arrange how to stem the rising tide of working class revolution in all countries.

Remember that once, only once before, have the workingmen held power as workers, – in the Paris Commune of 1871. Remember how Bismarck, at the very time he was imposing harsh terms upon the French Government, co-operated with that Government to crush the workers of Paris by releasing drafts of French prisoners of war for the purpose. And the greatest massacre in all history was the result. Remember that it was a massacre of the workers. If they can they will do the same with the Russian workers, but on a still vaster and more horrible scale.

While the Capitalist Governments are quarrelling over the booty they have stolen from Labour, they are keeping alive a family understanding against any sign of working class unity. They are all united when Labour shows signs of coming into its own.

What can we do? It is our part as workers to denounce these capitalist slanderers of the Russian proletariat. It is our part to help in the great class struggle of the toilers of all lands that is now beginning. The humbug of national wars is being exposed. Behind it all the exploitation of the workers of all lands stands out as their chief aim, their dearest treasure. The great war of Germany versus the allies may go on. It is the only hope of Capital that it should go on. In any case it is only the working masses that are slaughtered. Capital thrives on it. But the class war of international Capital against the rising working class is also waging today.

Workers of South Africa! Arouse from your submissiveness and lethargy, and show that you see through this foul conspiracy of International Capital against the Russian workmen. The cause of the Russian workmen is your cause. Workers of the world UNITE. You have a world to win.

Editorial Note:

The early statements of the objects of the International Socialist League had revolved round the formula: 'To propagate the principles of International Socialism, Industrial Unionism and anti-militarism, and to maintain and strengthen International Working-class Organisation'. At the annual conference of the ISL held in Johannesburg on January 5 and 6, 1919, this formula was replaced by: 'To establish the Socialist Commonwealth', the significance of which was amplified in a 'Declaration of Principles' which represents the first attempt to draw up a formal Marxist analysis of the political situation at home and abroad. The declaration, which was circulated before the conference was held, was stated to have been suggested by the Benoni branch of the ISL but is believed to have been drafted mainly by D. Ivon Jones. The Declaration was adopted by the conference and endorsed by the annual delegate meeting in 1920 which adopted the ISL constitution in its final form.