

# James Connolly

## The Roots of Modern War

### 1898

Original Source/Publication  
The Workers Republic

.The Cabinets who rule the destinies of nations from the various capitals of Europe are but the tools of the moneyed interest. Their quarrels are not dictated by sentiments of national pride or honour, but by the avarice and lust of power on the part of the class to which they belong. The people who fight under their banners in the various armies or navies do indeed imagine they are fighting the battles of their own country, but in what country has it ever happened that the people have profited by foreign conquest?

The influence which impels towards war today is the influence of capitalism. Every war now is a capitalist move for new markets, and it is a move capitalism must make or perish. The mad scramble for wealth which this century has witnessed has resulted in lifting almost every European country into the circle of competition for trade. New machinery, new inventions, new discoveries in the scientific world have all been laid under contribution as aids to industry, until the wealth producing powers of society at large have far outstripped the demand for goods, and now those very powers we have conjured up from the bosom of nature threaten to turn and rend us. Every new labour-saving machine at one and the same time, by reducing the number of workers needed, reduces the demand for goods which the worker cannot buy, while

increasing the power of producing goods, and thus permanently increases the number of unemployed, and shortens the period of industrial prosperity. Competition between capitalists drives them to seek for newer and more efficient wealth-producing machines, but as the home market is now no longer able to dispose of their produce they are driven to foreign markets. So it is in China today. The great industrial nations of the world, driven on by their respective moneyed classes, themselves driven on by their own machinery, now front each other in the far East, and, with swords in hand, threaten to set the armed millions of Europe in terrible and bloody conflict, in order to decide which shall have the right to force upon John Chinaman the goods which his European brother produces. Laveleye says somewhere that capitalism came into the world covered with blood and tears and dirt. We might add that if this war cloud now gathering in the East does burst, it will be the last capitalist war, so the death of that baneful institution will be like its birth, bloody, muddy and ignominious.