Preparedness, the Road to Universal Slaughter

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Ever since the beginning of the European conflagration, the whole human race almost has fallen into the deathly grip of the war anesthesis, overcome by the mad teaming fumes of a blood soaked chloroform, which has obscured its vision and paralyzed its heart. Indeed, with the exception of some savage tribes, who know nothing of Christian religion or of brotherly love, and who also know nothing of dreadnaughts, submarines, munition manufacture and war loans, the rest of the race is under this terrible narcosis. The human mind seems to be conscious of but one thing, murderous speculation. Our whole civilization, our entire culture is concentrated in the mad demand for the most perfected weapons of slaughter.

Ammunition! Ammunition! O, Lord, thou who rulest heaven and earth, thou God of love, of mercy and of justice, provide us with enough ammunition to destroy our enemy. Such is the prayer which is ascending daily to the Christian heaven. Just like cattle, panic-stricken in the face of fire, throw themselves into the very flames, so all of the European people have fallen over each other...
into the devouring flames of the furies of war, and America, pushed to the very brink by unscrupulous politicians, by ranting demagogues, and by military sharks, is preparing for the same terrible feat.

In the face of this approaching disaster, it behooves men and women not yet overcome by the war madness to raise their voice of protest, to call the attention of the people to the crime and outrage which are about to be perpetrated upon them.

America is essentially the melting pot. No national unit composing it, is in a position to boast of superior race purity, particular historic mission, or higher culture. Yet the jingoes and war speculators are filling the air with the sentimental slogan of hypocritical nationalism, “America for Americans,” “America first, last, and all the time.” This cry has caught the popular fancy from one end of the country to another. In order to maintain America, military preparedness must be engaged in at once. A billion dollars of the people’s sweat and blood is to be expended for dreadnaughts and submarines for the army and the navy, all to protect this precious America.

The pathos of it all is that the America which is to be protected by a huge military force is not the America of the people, but that of the privileged class; the class which robs and exploits the masses, and controls their lives from the cradle to the grave. No less pathetic is it that so few people realize that preparedness never leads to peace, but that it is indeed the road to universal slaughter.

With the cunning methods used by the scheming diplomats and military cliques of Germany to saddle the masses with Prussian militarism, the American military ring with its Roosevelts, its Garrisons, its Daniels, and lastly its Wilsons, are moving the very heavens to place the militaristic heel upon the necks of the American people, and, if successful, will hurl America into the storm of blood and tears now devastating the countries of Europe.

Forty years ago Germany proclaimed the slogan: “Germany above everything. Germany for the Germans, first, last and always.
We want peace; therefore we must prepare for war. Only a well armed and thoroughly prepared nation can maintain peace, can command respect, can be sure of its national integrity.” And Germany continued to prepare, thereby forcing the other nations to do the same. The terrible European war is only the culminating fruition of the hydra-headed gospel, military preparedness.

Since the war began, miles of paper and oceans of ink have been used to prove the barbarity, the cruelty, the oppression of Prussian militarism. Conservatives and radicals alike are giving their support to the Allies for no other reason than to help crush that militarism, in the presence of which, they say, there can be no peace or progress in Europe. But though America grows fat on the manufacture of munitions and war loans to the Allies to help crush Prussians the same cry is now being raised in America which, if carried into national action, would build up and American militarism far more terrible than German or Prussian militarism could ever be, and that because nowhere in the world has capitalism become so brazen in its greed and nowhere is the state so ready to kneel at the feet of capital.

Like a plague, the mad spirit is sweeping the country, infesting the clearest heads and staunchest hearts with the deathly germ of militarism. National security leagues, with cannon as their emblem of protection, naval leagues with women in their lead have sprung up all over the country, women who boast of representing the gentler sex, women who in pain and danger bring forth life and yet are ready to dedicate it to the Moloch War. Americanization societies with well known liberals as members, they who but yesterday decried the patriotic clap-trap of to-day, are now lending themselves to befog the minds of the people and to help build up the same destructive institutions in America which they are directly and indirectly helping to pull down in Germany — militarism, the destroyer of youth, the raper of women, the annihilator of the best in the race, the very mower of life.
Even Woodrow Wilson, who not so long ago indulged in the phrase “A nation too proud to fight,” who in the beginning of the war ordered prayers for peace, who in his proclamations spoke of the necessity of watchful waiting, even he has been whipped into line. He has now joined his worthy colleagues in the jingo movement, echoing their clamor for preparedness and their howl of “America for Americans.” The difference between Wilson and Roosevelt is this: Roosevelt, a born bully, uses the club; Wilson, the historian, the college professor, wears the smooth polished university mask, but underneath it he, like Roosevelt, has but one aim, to serve the big interests, to add to those who are growing phenomenally rich by the manufacture of military supplies.

Woodrow Wilson, in his address before the Daughters of the American Revolution, gave his case away when he said, “I would rather be beaten than ostracized.” To stand out against the Bethlehem, du Pont, Baldwin, Remington, Winchester metallic cartridges and the rest of the armament ring means political ostracism and death. Wilson knows that, therefore he betrays his original position, goes back on the bombast of “too proud to fight” and howls as loudly as any other cheap politician for preparedness and national glory, the silly pledge the navy league women intend to impose upon every school child: “I pledge myself to do all in my power to further the interests of my country, to uphold its institutions and to maintain the honor of its name and its flag. As I owe everything in life to my country, I consecrate my heart, mind and body to its service and promise to work for its advancement and security in times of peace and to shrink from no sacrifices or privation in its cause should I be called upon to act in its defence for the freedom, peace and happiness of our people.”

To uphold the institutions of our country — that’s it — the institutions which protect and sustain a handful of people in the robbery and plunder of the masses, the institutions which drain the blood of the native as well as of the foreigner, and turn it into wealth and power; the institutions which rob the alien of whatever originality

The more reason for those who still have a spark of libertarianism and humanity left to cry out against this great crime, against the outrage now being prepared and imposed upon the American people. It is not enough to claim being neutral; a neutrality which sheds crocodile tears with one eye and keeps the other riveted upon the profits from war supplies and war loans, is not neutrality. It is a hypocritical cloak to cover, the countries’ crimes. Nor is it enough to join the bourgeois pacifists, who proclaim peace among the nations, while helping to perpetuate the war among the classes, a war which in reality, is at the bottom of all other wars.

It is this war of the classes that we must concentrate upon, and in that connection the war against false values, against evil institutions, against all social atrocities. Those who appreciate the urgent need of co-operating in great struggles must oppose military preparedness imposed by the state and capitalism for the destruction of the masses. They must organize the preparedness of the masses for the overthrow of both capitalism and the state. Industrial and economic preparedness is what the workers need. That alone leads to revolution at the bottom as against mass destruction from on top. That alone leads to true internationalism of labor against Kaiserdom, Kingdom, diplomacies, military cliques and bureaucracy. That alone will give the people the means to take their children out of the slums, out of the sweat shops and the cotton mills. That alone will enable them to inculcate in the coming generation a new ideal of brotherhood, to rear them in play and song and beauty; to bring up men and women, not automatons. That alone will enable woman to become the real mother of the race, who will give to the world creative men, and not soldiers who destroy. That alone leads to economic and social freedom, and does away with all wars, all crimes, and all injustice.
But the most dominant factor of military preparedness and the
one which inevitably leads to war, is the creation of group interests,
which consciously and deliberately work for the increase of arma-
ment whose purposes are furthered by creating the war hysteria.
This group interest embraces all those engaged in the manufacture
and sale of munition and in military equipment for personal gain
and profit. For instance, the family Krupp, which owns the largest
cannon munition plant in the world; its sinister influence in Ger-
many, and in fact in many other countries, extends to the press,
the school, the church and to statesmen of highest rank. Shortly
before the war, Carl Liebknecht, the one brave public man in Ger-
many now, brought to the attention of the Reichstag that the family
Krupp had in its employ officials of the highest military position,
not only in Germany, but in France and in other countries. Every-
where its emissaries have been at work, systematically inciting na-
tional hatreds and antagonisms. The same investigation brought to
light an international war supply trust who cares not a hang for
patriotism, or for love of the people, but who uses both to incite
war and to pocket millions of profits out of the terrible bargain.

It is not at all unlikely that the history of the present war will
trace its origin to this international murder trust. But is it always
necessary for one generation to wade through oceans of blood and
heap up mountains of human sacrifice that the next generation
may learn a grain of truth from it all? Can we of to-day not profit by
the cause which led to the European war, can we not learn that it
was preparedness, thorough and efficient preparedness on the part
of Germany and the other countries for military aggrandizement
and material gain; above all can we not realize that preparedness
in America must and will lead to the same result, the same barbar-
ity, the same senseless sacrifice of life? Is America to follow suit,
is it to be turned over to the American Krupps, the American mil-
itary cliques? It almost seems so when one hears the jingo howls
of the press, the blood and thunder tirades of bully Roosevelt, the
sentimental twaddle of our college-bred President.

he brings with him and in return gives him cheap Americanism,
whose glory consists in mediocrity and arrogance.

The very proclaimers of “America first” have long before this
betrayed the fundamental principles of real Americanism, of the
kind of Americanism that Jefferson had in mind when he said that
the best government is that which governs least; the kind of Amer-
ica that David Thoreau worked for when he proclaimed that the
best government is the one that doesn’t govern at all; or the other
truly great Americans who aimed to make of this country a haven
of refuge, who hoped that all the disinherited and oppressed peo-
ple in coming to these shores would give character, quality and
meaning to the country. That is not the America of the politician
and munition speculators. Their America is powerfully portrayed
in the idea of a young New York Sculptor; a hard cruel hand with
long, lean, merciless fingers, crushing in over the heart of the immi-
grant, squeezing out its blood in order to coin dollars out of it and
give the foreigner instead blighted hopes and stulted aspirations.

No doubt Woodrow Wilson has reason to defend these institu-
tions. But what an ideal to hold out to the young generation! How
is a military drilled and trained people to defend freedom, peace
and happiness? This is what Major General O’Ryan has to say of
an efficiently trained generation: “The soldier must be so trained
that he becomes a mere automation; he must be so trained that it
will destroy his initiative; he must be so trained that he is turned
into a machine. The soldier must be forced into the military noose;
he must be jacked up; he must be ruled by his superiors with pistol
in hand.”

This was not said by a Prussian Junker; not by a German bar-
barian; not by Treitschke or Bernhardi, but by an American Ma-
ior General. And he is right. You cannot conduct war with equals;
you cannot have militarism with free born men; you must have
slaves, automatons, machines, obedient disciplined creatures, who
will move, act, shoot and kill at the command of their superiors.
That is preparedness, and nothing else.
It has been reported that among the speakers before the Navy
League was Samuel Gompers. If that is true, it signalizes the great-
est outrage upon labor at the hands of its own leaders. Prepared-
ness is not directed only against the external enemy; it aims much
more at the internal enemy. It concerns that element of labor which
has learned not to hope for anything from our institutions, that
awakened part of the working people which has realized that the
war of classes underlies all wars among nations, and that if war is
justified at all it is the war against economic dependence and po-
litical slavery, the two dominant issues involved in the struggle of
the classes.

Already militarism has been acting its bloody part in every eco-
nomic conflict, with the approval and support of the state. Where
was the protest of Washington when "our men, women and chil-
dren" were killed in Ludlow? Where was that high sounding out-
raged protest contained in the note to Germany? Or is there any
difference in killing "our men, women and children" in Ludlow or
on the high seas? Yes, indeed. The men, women and children at
Ludlow were working people, belonging to the disinherited of the
earth, foreigners who had to be given a taste of the glories of Amer-
icanism, while the passengers of the Lusitania represented wealth
and station — therein lies the difference.

Preparedness, therefore, will only add to the power of the priv-
ileged few and help them to subdue, to enslave and crush labor.
Surely Gompers must know that, and if he joins the howl of the
military clique, he must stand condemned as a traitor to the cause
of labor.

Just as it is with all the other institutions in our confused life,
which were supposedly created for the good of the people and have
accomplished the very reverse, so it will be with preparedness. Sup-
posedly, America is to prepare for peace; but in reality it will be the
cause of war. It always has been thus — all through bloodstained
history, and it will continue until nation will refuse to fight against
nation, and until the people of the world will stop preparing for
slaughter. Preparedness is like the seed of a poisonous plant; placed
in the soil, it will bear poisonous fruit. The European mass destruc-
tion is the fruit of that poisonous seed. It is imperative that the
American workers realize this before they are driven by the jingoes
into the madness that is forever haunted by the spectre of danger
and invasion; they must know that to prepare for peace means to
invite war, means to unloose the furies of death over land and seas.

That which has driven the masses of Europe into the trenches
and to the battlefields is not their inner longing for war; it must
be traced to the cut-throat competition for military equipment,
for more efficient armies, for larger warships, for more powerful
cannon. You cannot build up a standing army and then throw it
back into a box like tin soldiers. Armies equipped to the teeth with
weapons, with highly developed instruments of murder and backed
by their military interests, have their own dynamic functions. We
have but to examine into the nature of militarism to realize the
truism of this contention.

Militarism consumes the strongest and most productive ele-
ments of each nation. Militarism swallows the largest part of the
national revenue. Almost nothing is spent on education, art, litera-
ture and science compared with the amount devoted to militarism
in times of peace, while in times of war everything else is set at
naught; all life stagnates, all effort is curtailed; the very sweat and
blood of the masses are used to feed this insatiable monster — mil-
itarism. Under such circumstances, it must become more arrogant,
more aggressive, more bloated with its own importance. If for no
other reason, it is out of surplus energy that militarism must act
to remain alive; therefore it will seek an enemy or create one ar-
tificially. In this civilized purpose and method, militarism is sus-
tained by the state, protected by the laws of the land, is fostered by
the home and the school, and glorified by public opinion. In other
words, the function of militarism is to kill. It cannot live except
through murder.