PREPAREDNESS, MILITARISM AND WAR.

With most of the world's nations plunged into destructive war, it is natural that we should seriously consider the question of military preparedness. The militarist points out that in the world of today only those nations are safe, who are armed to defend themselves, and urges, that we should create an army and a navy, second to none in the world. But the pacificist claims that preparing for war inevitably leads to war, and points to the world's war as the result to which their military preparedness has led the European nations, points to the impossibility of escaping the ravages of war by armament, and urges that fair dealing with the nations and between the nations is a far better safeguard of peace than military preparedness. Against this, the militarist shows that those European nations which had been best prepared, are suffering least from the war, and points to China as the nation which has always been peaceful and unprepared, and as the result has continuously been abused by the military nation.

Pacificism or militarism? It is a matter of opinion, of tempermental judgment, but no logical reasoning from cause to effect can decide, which is right.

There is a proverb, centuries old: "Pray for Peace, and keep your Powder dry".

Is war ever justified? Practically everybody will agree, that an offensive war, a war of aggression and conquest, is not justified, is immoral. But a defensive war, that is another matter! Every individual, every nation has the right, nay the duty of self-defense, and if a nation's existence is threatened by an aggressor, a war for the defense of its national existence and integrity, against the aggressor bent on conquest, certainly is morally justified.

Unfortunately, this justifies every war, because there never has been a great war ~~since a~~ in the past century, in which every one of the warring nations was not fully and wantonly satisfied, that it was fighting in self-defense. Thus in the present European war, the central powers are just as fully convinced that they are fighting a defensive war, and the Allies are the aggressors, as the Allies are satisfied that the central powers are the aggressors. Thus

from their own point of view, every nation is justified in the war, from its enemies' point of view, none is.

To base the decision, whether a war is aggressive or defensive, on the incidental feature, which nation strikes first, naturally is meaningless, if not hypocritical. If war is inevitable, the one who strikes first, has the advantage, and it thus would be criminal for the leaders of a nation, to forego this advantage and thereby endanger their nation's safety. To illustrate: if ever there was a war of national defense justified as such, it was Japan's war against Russia in 1904. At the same time, Japan was the formal aggressor: in deepest peace the Japanese Destroyers sank the Russian Cruisers in Korea's harbor - and thereby decided the war by giving Japan control of the sea. Incidentally, if any war was an aggressive war, it was our war against Mexico, in 1846, and neverthless, nobody in the Mexican Provinces of California, Argone etc., which we then annexed, would today like to change with the conditions in the Mexican Provinces which in 1846 had the misfortune not to be annexed.

Defensive and offensive thus means nothing in deciding between just and unjust war, because every war is now-a-days defensive, in the opinion of either side, and usually both sides are right: the war is the final decision between conflicting vital interests of two nations, just like the present European war, and both sides defend their national existence. Which side is right? Is there any absolute right in history? Was the white man right to exterminate the American Indian? Were the Anglo-Saxons right to overrun England and destroy the Celto-Roman civilization? The Normans, in conquering and subjugating the Anglo-Saxons? What does this mean, but that in history, the victor is right, because the victor writes the history. Thus Nero is known throughout the ages as the monster, and Constantine as the great Emperor: because Nero persecuted the Christians, and Constantine adopted Christianity, and the Christians wrote the history. But if Christianity had not conquered, but failed, probably Nero would now be praised as the great Emperor, who in addition to his administrative duties was interested

in art and sciences, and was troubled by the anarchists who set his capitol on fire; Constantine would have gone down in history as the monster, who attempted to betray the civilized world to the anarchists - when the Persian nomads overwhelmed Babylon's ancient civilization, they were the "liberators" because they set the competitive Jews free, and the Jews wrote the history. But when the same Persians invaded Greece, they were the barbarian hordes threatening civilization: it all depends on which side you are when writing history. The plundering of Rome by the Vandals was no more wrong than the destruction of Carthage by the Romans, or the burning of Alexandria by the British fleet in our generation. Thus right and wrong are relative terms in history: there is no absolute right and wrong, and it is either hypocrisy, or the narrow mind hopelessly bound by prejudice, which can believe to judge between the nations on right or wrong, on defensive or aggressive, on just or unjust.

There were wars justified by history as constructive wars, leading to an advance of the status of Roman society, and these were by no means always just wars;

on the contrary, usually they were unjust and aggressive wars, such as the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans, which made the English nation, Alexander's conquests, which brought Palaestine within the sphere of Greek civilization and thereby later opened the ancient world to Christianity, or our own Mexican war, which made the Southwest a part of a civilized community. Such constructive wars, whether "right", "moral" or not, are the ones which history justifies.

A large army endangers the peace of the nation, inevitably leads to war and therefore is harmful, says the pacificist. This is true, and at the same time it is not true. There are armies and armies: the mercenary armies, consisting of men making soldiering a profession, serving for pay, as the federal army of America, the standing army of England; Volunteer armies, as our own militia; popular armies based on universal military service, either compulsory, as the armies of Germany and France, or educational, that is, military training being a part of the education of every able bodied citizen, as in Switzerland. With a popular army, war means that the citizen gives up his trade

or occupation, leaves his family and all his regular life and surroundings to go to a doubtful fate, uncertain whether even when returning he will be able again to take up the threads of his existence where he dropped them in going to war. Every interest thus is against going to war, war immediately is brought home to every citizen as threatening and interfering with his existence, would thus be considered and approved only in the last extremity of national necessity, and such a popular army based on universal military service thus is one of the most powerful factors against war, especially in a democratic and peaceable nation as ours. Entirely the reverse is the case with a mercenary army. The professional soldier is hired to fight, his purpose is war, and all inducements, all desires of earning his pay, of advances and success in his profession is based on the chances of war. Thus a mercenary army desires war, its existence in a nation is a factor tending towards war, and if the pacificist claims that a large army is a menace to a nation, by leading to war, this is entirely true for a mercenary army, that is, an army of professional soldiers, whose business is war, but it is not true of a popular army comprising all the citizens, but for the latter, the reverse applies.

This sharp distinction between the mercenary army of professional soldiers and the popular army based on universal military service, the one making for war, the other for peace, is very little realized; thus it is of fundamental importance in the consideration of the nation's welfare, whether the popular army recruited by compulsory military service, or by military training as a part of universal education, making no difference in this respect, but is rather the result of the national temperament: in monarchical nations, as Germany or France, compulsory service would be the natural method; in a democratic nation as ours, compulsory military service is impossible, and educational military training thus the only feasible method.

A mercenary army stands very low in popular estimation. The professional soldier or sailor is a "hero" in the newspapers, in war time, but in peace we find quite commonly, in our country as well as in England - the only two civilized nations which still maintain standing armies of mercanaries - that soldiers and sailors are excluded from places such as pleasure resorts, where even the uneducated foreign laborer is admitted. Small wonder however,

if even now, with the present great interest in military preparedness, we read almost daily in papers of judges suspending sentence for misdemeanors and smaller crimes, under condition that the culprit enlists in the army, or in the navy!

It is interesting to note, that this low estimation does not apply to the militia man, nor does it apply to the officer in the regular army, but the army officer, the navy officer, the militia man are highly esteemed in every day life, more so than the mere civilian, and the opprobrium is entirely limited to the private soldier in the regular army. Why? Is it the innate contempt for the profession of killing and being killed for pay, which makes the masses of people look down on the professional soldier, while the militia man, who sacrifices his leisure time to prepare himself to be able to defend his country in time of necessity, or the army officer, who organizes and directs the military machine of national defense, is highly esteemed? No such opprobrium attaches to the military service in a popular army, under universal military service, but there also, the man capable of serving in the armies of his nation is

esteemed beyond the one unfit for military service. There is some justification in this attitude of the popular mind, in highly esteeming the man who as a part of his duty as citizen, serves in the defense of his country, and despising the professional who for pay agrees to kill or be killed. However, applied to our standing army, this is an injustice, because our so-called federal army is not an army of mercenary soldiers, but is in reality a federal police force, whose duty it is to police our unruly possessions, our frontiers etc., but its function in war is not that of a national army: even as enlarged, it is altogether too insignificant in numbers. Its function in war is analogous to that of a local police force, to hold back out laws or rioters, until a posse comitatus can be assembled. But a real standing army our nation does not have, and never will have, as long as its democratic temperament remains.

The State Militia, as we all realize, and as the events in the recent Mexican trouble have again demonstrated,

is in most States a dismal failure, would be a huge joke - if it were not a rather serious matter in case we once had to rely on it for the nation's defense, and even in those States, where it is at its best, it is so utterly insignificant in numbers, that it hardly can be considered a national army, as armies are counted in the European war. And there is no possibility to materially increase it, as long as there remains the unfortunate antagonism between the militia and the labor interests, resulting from the use of the militia on strike duty.

Organized labor as well as unorganized labor, following the lead of organized labor, are hostile to the militia, and as the events of the last months have shown, this hostile attitude has in no way been shakened or decreased by all the preparedness campaigns and other attempts to create interest amongst the masses for military matters. The reason ~~of~~ for this hostility, which is increasing rather than decreasing, is based solely and only on the use of the militia on strike duty, and it assumes all forms, from the uncompromising radical, who claims that the whole purpose of the militia is to be a tool

of capitalism to oppress labor, to the conservative who realizes that riots and disorders must not be permitted in orderly society, that the use of the militia to maintain order was justified and fair, but believes that there might be conditions or circumstances, where the militia might be used against the best interests of labor, and who therefore, and until that time when such partisan abuse is made impossible, is opposed to the militia.

It is entirely immaterial whether there has been any reason for the hostility of the labor interests against the militia, or whether this hostility is entirely unjustified: the fact is, that it exists, and the militia can not become the beginning of a popular army, until the causes or alleged causes of the hostility are removed: the argument is:

Against foreigners, the militia can not be used except by order of congress declaring that a state of war exists. Against our own citizens however, the militia can be used by any local politician who is elected by corrupt interests, claims that disorder exists which the police force can not suppress, and asks for the militia. Let our own citizens have the same rights as foreigners: that the militia can be used against them only by act of congress, by congress

declaring that a state of civil war exists and authorizing the President to use the armed forces of the nation to restore order, and the hostility against the militia will soon cease, and the militia indeed become a national and popular army, in which the labor union man would take as much interest and pride as the office clerk.

This means, that the militia could not be used any more as a State police force in case of disorder or riot, whether due to strikes or any other cause, except when such disturbances have assumed a magnitude of civil war.

It would mean, that State police forces have to be established and organized, and this would cost the nation millions of dollars. But it should make the militia available as popular organization for national defense, and when we are now discussing and preparing for national defense, it is not millions we consider, but hundreds of millions or billions, that the cost of State police forces would be very insignificant.

State police forces have been organized in some States, and have in no way reduced the hostility against the militia. Naturally not, because they were

additional to the militia, still left to the militia the duty to be called out to maintain order, in case the State Police Force failed, and thus left to the militia the odium resulting from such police duty.

We must realize, that there is no such odium against a police force doing police duty - except in the mind of the law breaker - as there is against a "voluntary army of national defense" doing police duty, and even if the police should be misused by the officials, the odium would attain to the officials, not the force.

As the result of the European war, and the unpreparedness of our nation shown by it, there has been a very general and wide spread interest in military preparedness, a demand that effective and prompt steps be taken to improve our nation's defense.

We do not consider the broader issue, which no discussion can decide, whether as a nation we would not be safer by being entirely unprepared and realizing our unpreparedness than by whatever preparedness we can accomplish.

Our present preparedness movement is handicapped by two serious difficulties: the labor interests refuse to take any active interest in favor of national preparedness, until by the passing of laws forbidding the use of military organization for police duty it is proven to them that the movement is in good faith for national defense, and not for use against labor in strikes.

Then there has been a good deal of loose talk about extremists whose sentiment in favor of foreign nations has outrun their discretion as American citizens, giving the impression that their conception is preparedness for national aggression in defense of England, rather than preparedness for our own national defense, talk about our nation's duty to plunge into the maelstrom of the European war as partisans, and naturally such talk must make those suspicious, who believe in real and permanent preparedness for national defense, but who believe that it is not in the interest of our nation's present and future welfare, to be anything but strictly neutral and non partisan in the present war.

The present preparedness movement shows the energy and initiative, but unfortunately the muddling and the inability of reasoning towards any permanent result, which are the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon mind, and thus far, there is no indication that anything permanent will result: but preparedness means organizing so that in times of peace, when nobody expects war or is interested in military matters, the nation is ready. It is easy enough during the present times of hysterical excitement to start military matters. But all this is worse than useless, if it is not organized so as to remain as a permanent part of our nation, after the present excitment is over.

We are well able to remember the attitude of our country, and of our administration, towards military matters three years ago, at the time when no war was thought of. This is the attitude, which we must consider in our preparedness organization, not our present excited state of mind, where we are willing to do everything.

Thus real preparedness means limiting ourselves to all those things, which would persist and not be interfered with by our normal national attitude, which is the attitude of three years ago. How little of our present preparedness attempts will outlive such attitude!

We have not been able to enlist enough men to complete our small army, to man all our ships: and still we authorize an increased army, and build more ships! We authorize a larger militia, while the present has never even been approximately complete! We glibly talk about compulsory military service to fill our larger army, incase of voluntary enlistment failing, while ordinary common sense must show us, that with the normal attitude of our nation, as it was before the present military excitement, and will be again when this excitement is gone, no administration would dare to hint at compulsion, still less try to enforce it, unless it had made up its mind to commit political suicide. And even if we had compulsory enlistment, how would it be worked? If every citizen had to serve a year, or six months in the army, how long would

it last, until those of well-to-do or of prominent families, disinclined to "waste the time" in military service, would by an obliging private physician and an obliging military physician manage to be declared "unfit" for military service and so escape? Or if only a part of the nation, drawn by lot, are trained: those ~~which~~ who can afford to pay for it, will be declared "unfit" and escape, if not by legislation an arrangement is made that they can hire a substitute. And then the result is: only those serve in the army, who are too poor to hire a substitute or to pay a physician to declare them unfit; hence the army again drops to the low estimation of the mercenary army.

The only way to produce permanent results is to popularize military service. The militia appears the most promising starting point. But first then, the State Militia must be taken out of industrial strife, by legally forbidding its use as police force. If this can not be done, ~~and~~ a federal militia will have to be created, under a law making it available only in case of war by act of congress, and the State Militia abandoned and left to die its natural death.

Then military training would be attached to the school organization, as part of the universal education.

(Signed) Charles P. Steinmetz

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