
The Truth About “Preparedness.”

by John Spargo

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The present widespread and cunningly organized campaign for “Preparedness” illustrates in a remarkable manner the sinister character of militarism and its menace to democracy.

Let there be no mistake about it: This great and costly campaign really partakes of the nature of an investment from which a certain important section of the capitalist class hopes and expects to derive extraordinary profits.

The average worker has very little conception of the way in which the great military systems of the world have been fostered by cunning capitalist enterprise. It is our business as Socialists to make that clear, to expose the secret.

In 1913 Karl Liebknecht, heroic son of heroic sire, from his place in the German Reichstag exposed the innermost secrets of German militarism. He showed how the official military caste was supported by the makers of armaments and ammunition, the makers of armor plates and battle-ships, the steel trust, the manufacturers of electrical machinery — in a word, of a group of economic interests broadly designated as “the steel group,” with the great Krupp firm as its center, each of which found that its greatest profits could be derived from military preparation.

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The methods pursued to win the German

people’s assent to the ever increasing demand for military expenditures were as immoral as they were ingenious. *Large sums of money were spent by these good German*

“patriots” to subsidize and control French newspapers in which bitter attacks on Germany and the Germans were made. Then, in the German newspapers which they controlled, these “patriots” reproduced the “French attacks on Germany,” saying to the German people, “You see, the French hate us and mean to attack us.”

In the German newspapers which they controlled they cause the publication of frequent attacks upon France and insulting references to the French people. And these they cause to be reproduced in the French newspapers

which they owned wholly or in part. The uninformed Frenchman reading these things in a supposedly loyal French newspaper, said reluctantly, “The Germans still hate us, we must be prepared to defend ourselves against them.”

No gentle reader, these tactics are not specially characteristic of “German militarism.” They are, indeed, common to the whole military and capitalist



combinations of the world.

Being neither pro-Ally, nor pro-Teuton, but pro-Human, pro-Internationalist, and pro-Socialist, I am in duty bound to point out that *France has long had a similar combination, with the great firm of Creusot as its center.*

This group has made it its business to foster fear and hatred of Germany by France and of France by Germany.

And England has had its similar economic group with the great firm of McVickers as its center. It has done everything in its power to foster fear and hatred of her neighbors by Great Britain and to make Great Britain feared and hated by her neighbors.

(And McVickers being a highly profitable concern, the good ladies who give money to foreign missions invest as largely as they can in McVickers, that they may have large dividends to spend on "Christian work among the heathen"! And most of the clergy whose incomes are large enough to permit investments seem to prefer McVickers. When increased military expenditures lead to increased dividends for the stockholders in McVickers they can more efficiently worship the Prince of Peace!)

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Verily, "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels"!

Whoever believes that our American capitalist "patriots" are different, beings of superior virtue, quite incapable of the sort of rascality herein described, must needs be very innocent. Quite unfitted for this wicked world, in fact!

Every thinking person knows that the very powerful group of economic interests comprising the makers of guns and ammunition, armor-plates and battle-ships, locomotives and other machinery essential to modern warfare, together with those who want by force of arms to open up markets for their wares, have organized and are paying for this remarkable campaign for "Preparedness."

The great war in Europe has caused many people to fear the astonishingly efficient military organization of Germany. With frightened hearts they have asked, "What if the United States were attacked by such an efficient foe?" And the capitalist "patriots" have

capitalized that fear. They have made it the basis of the most hysterical campaign in our history.

They have even swept some of our best-beloved comrades from the moorings of their faith. Socialists who but yesterday thrilled us by their revolutionary ardor now join in the hysterical cry "Prepare against War! Prepare against War!"

Let us not be deceived. The United States is more assured against attack from any quarter in the world today than at any time within the past hundred years. Nowhere in the world is there the interest, the disposition, or the power to make war upon this nation.

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It will take a generation at least for any of the great powers now engaged in this monstrous war to gather sufficient strength of human and material resources to attack us. We should be safe from invasion if we had even less military and naval force than we now have. Nobody questions that.

Meantime, we are asked to consent to the expenditure of the colossal sum of *one and a half billion dollars upon the navy alone during the next 6 years.* That is the program of the General Board of the Navy. It means the expenditure of more than \$265 million a year on new construction alone. This in addition to nearly \$50 million already authorized for expenditure within the next 2 years for new construction, \$5 million for aviation in connection with the navy, and about \$11 million for reserve ammunition.

Remember, this colossal program is for naval preparation alone. *The military expenditures, if a really great army is to be organized and developed, will be even greater!*

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And all this expenditure practically unnecessary for a nation content to mind its own business. It is not necessary to the defense of this nation in any particular. Only the needs of a nation bent upon offensive action can justify it.

Such an army and navy as we are now called upon to create will give us the strength necessary to assume the offensive. And the greatest lesson of history is that no nation ever yet long possessed the power

for offensive action without taking the offensive.

Let us not forget: if this enormous increase of military and naval expenditures is voted and authorized by Congress, as it will be unless the workers stir themselves, all the work of social reform which we hoped to see the nation undertake will be permanently shelved.

There will be no money for Old Age Pensions; no money for Sickness and Accident Insurance; no money for anything except the work of death and destruction.

The hypocritical mask of "Preparedness" hides the ugly features of militarism. Let us unmask and destroy the beast!

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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