

A League for Preparedness

By Theodore Roosevelt, ex-President of the United States,

and

George L. von Meyer, ex-Secretary of the Navy.

It was ascertained in Washington on June 1, 1915, that the Atlantic battleship fleet would remain in Atlantic Ocean waters indefinitely. The plan to send the fleet through the canal in July for participation in the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco had been abandoned, and Admiral Fletcher's ships would not cross the Isthmus this year. The decision to hold the fleet in Atlantic waters is predicated on two principle factors. These are: First, there undoubtedly will be another great slide in Culebra Cut in the Panama Canal some time this Summer, and it would be considered highly undesirable to have the fleet on the Pacific Coast with such a slide interposed between Admiral Fletcher's vessels and the Atlantic waters. Second, the general situation of American foreign affairs growing out of relations with Germany is such that it is considered unwise to send the fleet to the west coast and leave the Atlantic Coast unguarded. This is the extent, at present, of national preparation against war.

The Peace and Preparation Conference, called in the name of the National Security League to discuss the military needs of the nation, began on the evening of June 14, 1915, with the opening to the public of the Army and Navy Exhibit in the Hotel Astor, where there were to be seen numerous placards which gave in figures and words information as to the situation of the United States so far as military preparedness is concerned.

General Luke E. Wright of Memphis, who was Secretary of War the latter part of the second Roosevelt Administration, was among the visitors to the conference, and said he was in thorough sympathy with the aims of the National Security League. In his opinion the American first line of defense, to be immediately available for service, should be at least 300,000 men.

An audience composed of nearly as many women as men heard in Carnegie Hall, on the evening of June 15, the arguments of Alton B. Parker, Dr. Lyman Abbott, Henry L. Stimson, ex-Secretary of War; Charles J. Bonaparte, ex-Attorney General, and Jacob M. Dickinson, ex-Secretary of War, advocating immediate increases in the army and navy as the best safeguard against war. Ex-Judge Parker, who was Chairman of the meeting, struck the keynote of the conference in these words:

"We want to arouse the people of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to the end that they shall let Congress know that they have made up their minds to spend a little of that \$187,000,000,000 of which we boast in order that our wives and our children and our grandchildren shall not be visited with the calamity which has befallen Belgium."

Two features of the conference were the reading of a letter to Hudson Maxim from ex-President Theodore Roosevelt and a speech on naval unpreparedness by George von L. Meyer, ex-Secretary of the Navy. The speech is reproduced below in part, and the letter from Mr. Roosevelt in full, together with the resolution of the conference.

MR. ROOSEVELT'S LETTER.

My Dear Mr. Maxim:

I thank you heartily for your book on "Defenseless America." It is a capital book and I believe it is safe to say that no wise and patriotic American can fail to recognize the service that you have rendered in writing it. I hope it will have the widest possible circulation throughout our country.

I was glad to see the first-class letters that have been written you by such good Americans as Oscar Straus, Garrett P. Serviss, Rear Admiral W. W. Kimball, C.

P. Gray, Holman Day, and the others. On the other hand, I was saddened by the extraordinary letter sent you by the three young men who purported to speak for the senior class of the college of which they are members. The course of conduct which these men and those like them advocate for the nation would, of course, not only mean a peculiar craven avoidance of national duty by our people at this time, but would also inevitably tend permanently to encourage the spirit of individual cowardice no less than of national cowardice.

The professional pacifists, the pro-

fessional peace-at-any-price men, who during the last five years have been so active, who have pushed the mischievous all-arbitration treaties at Washington, who have condoned our criminal inactivity as regards Mexico and, above all, as regards the questions raised by the great world war now raging, and who have applauded our abject failure to live up to the obligations imposed upon us as a signatory power of The Hague Convention, are, at best, an unlovely body of men, and taken as a whole are probably the most undesirable citizens that this country contains.

But it is less shocking to see such sentiments developed among old men than among young men. The college students who organize or join these peace-at-any-price leagues are engaged, according to their feeble abilities, in cultivating a standard of manhood which, if logically applied, would make them desire to "arbitrate" with any tough individual who slapped the sister or sweetheart of one of them in the face.

Well-meaning people, as we all know, sometimes advocate a course of action which is infamous; and, as was proved by the great Copperhead Party fifty years ago, there are always some brave men to be found condoning or advocating deeds of national cowardice. But the fact remains that the advocates of pacifism who have been most prominent in our country during the past five years have been preaching poltroonery.

Such preaching, if persevered in long enough, softens the fibre of any nation, and, above all, of those preaching it; and if it is reduced to practice it is ruinous to national character. These men have been doing their best to make us the China of the Occident, and the college students, such as those of whom you speak, have already reached a level considerably below that to which the higher type of Chinaman has now struggled on his upward path.

On the whole, for the nation as for the individual, the most contemptible of all sins is the sin of cowardice; and while there are other sins as base there are none baser. The prime duty for this na-

tion is to prepare itself so that it can protect itself—and this is the duty that you are preaching in your admirable volume. It is only when this duty has been accomplished that we shall be able to perform the further duty of helping the cause of the world righteousness by backing the cause of the international peace of justice (the only kind of peace worth having) not merely by words but by deeds.

A peace conference such as that which some of our countrymen propose at the moment to hold is purely noxious, until as a preliminary we put ourselves in such shape that what we say will excite the respect and not the derision of foreign nations; and, furthermore, until we have by practical action shown that we are heartily ashamed of ourselves for our craven abandonment of duty in not daring to say a word when The Hague Conventions were ruthlessly violated before our eyes.

Righteousness must be put before peace, and peace must be recognized as of value only when it is the hand-maiden of justice. The doctrine of national or individual neutrality between right and wrong is an ignoble doctrine, unworthy the support of any brave or honorable man. It is wicked to be neutral between right and wrong, and this statement can be successfully refuted only by men who are prepared to hold up Pontius Pilate, the arch-typical neutral of all time, as worthy of our admiration.

An ignoble peace may be the worst crime against humanity, and righteous war may represent the greatest service a nation can at a given moment render to itself and to mankind.

Our people also need to come to their senses about the manufacture and sale of arms and ammunition. Of course, the same moral law applies here between nations as between individuals within a nation. There is not the slightest difference between selling ammunition in time of war and in time of peace, because when sold in time of peace it is only sold with a view to possibility or likelihood of war. It should never be sold to people who will make bad use of it, and it should

be freely sold at all times to those who will use it for a proper purpose.

It is absolutely essential that we should have stores where citizens of a nation can buy arms and ammunition. It is a service to good citizenship to sell a revolver to an honest householder for use against burglars or to a policeman for use against "gunmen." It is an outrage against humanity knowingly to sell such a revolver to a burglar or a "gunman." The morality of the sale depends upon the purpose and the probable use. This is true among individuals. It is no less true among nations.

I am speaking of the moral right. Our legal right to sell ammunition to the Allies is, of course, perfect, just as Germany, the greatest trader in ammunition to other nations in the past, had an entire legal right to sell guns and ammunition to Turkey, for instance. But, in addition to our legal right to sell ammunition to those engaged in trying to restore Belgium to her own people, it is also our moral duty to do so, precisely as it is a moral duty to sell arms to policemen for use against "gunmen."

Wishing you all possible success, I am, faithfully yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Hudson Maxim, Esq., Lansing, N. J.

MR. MEYER'S SPEECH.

The National Security League brought its two-day Peace and Preparation Conference to a close on June 15, 1915, with a luncheon in the Hotel Astor at which more than 1,000 men and women listened to George von L. Meyer, ex-Secretary of the Navy, as he announced that the navy of the United States was utterly unfit for war with any first-class nation. Mr. Meyer was interrupted many times by applause, and the loudest outburst came when he placed the blame for what he termed the present demoralized state of the navy squarely up to Secretary Josephus Daniels. He said, in part:

In calling attention to these defects I have not done so from a desire to criticise the present head of the navy, although I do believe that he is responsible for the demoralized condition of

the personnel and the decreased efficiency of the navy.

In advancing his argument for a greater navy Mr. Meyer contended that such a step would be the best safeguard against war. He asserted that we would have had no war with Spain in 1908 if we had had four more ships like the Oregon. With such a powerful fighting force, he argued, no nation at that time would have dared to meet us. Spain would have yielded without a fight, and this country would have saved \$500,000,000. He continued:

The only attack we need consider is an attack from some great naval power, and for that reason we need an adequate navy because it tends toward peace, because it discourages attack and serves the best interests of the country, while an inadequate navy is a vast expense to the country and does not serve as a protection.

Of the thirty-five battleships that we have today only twenty-one are in commission and ready for emergency. Of those twenty-one, three have broken shafts, and the fourth is a turbine battleship which was put out of commission because it needs to be thoroughly overhauled. In addition to that, there are seventy fighting vessels which are not ready to be called upon for an emergency because they are out of commission and would require a long overhauling. We lack battle cruisers, scout cruisers, aeroplanes, and armed airships.

Our submarine fleet is in a critical condition. The complement of torpedo vessels has been reduced from 15 to 25 per cent. to get men to commission new boats. This reduction in personnel is a serious handicap, reduces the efficiency of the destroyers, affects contentment, and prevents the boats being kept in good condition. The Atlantic fleet needs 5,000 men, according to the evidence of the Commander in Chief of that fleet. The reserve fleet at Philadelphia was largely depleted in order to get a new crew for the Alabama when she was ordered to Hampton Roads to enforce neutrality; and the naval force of Hampton Roads was a pitifully weak one: One

small submarine, one little torpedo destroyer diverted from Annapolis, and one reserve battleship, of which the fleet in Philadelphia had been robbed in order to put her in commission.

The review in New York this year was a poor imitation of previous reviews, in that the reserve fleet was absent. It was a mere parade, not a mobilization. It did not indicate the true condition of the fleet, because the people did not know the whole truth. For lack of men, ships are laid up in navy yards, where they rapidly deteriorate, like a vacant house.

All small ships and all cruisers now laid up for lack of men are needed in Mexico and elsewhere, and should be ready for an emergency call. The complement of enlisted men at shore stations and training stations has been kept down, with a decided loss of efficiency and greatly to the discontent and discomfort of the men. A navy with an insufficient and disgruntled personnel cannot be efficient, and its morale must necessarily be disastrously affected.

It would take 18,000 men in order to put the vessels that are fit for war service into commission, Mr. Meyer asserted. Congress was to blame for not having established a national council of defense, a general staff, and a national reserve of 50,000 efficient men. He added:

It is the lack of any definite naval policy and the failure of Congress to recognize the necessity for such a policy that has placed us in a position of inferiority, which may lead us to war or cause us great embarrassment as well as discredit to the country.

Mr. Meyer urged an investigation by Congress of our national defense, to the end that a comprehensive plan should be adopted for the future. He declared further:

This investigation has been denied to

the people by the leaders of the party in power, and it is deplorable that there should be an attempt to deceive the people in a matter of such vital importance.

OFFICIAL RESOLUTION.

Here is the resolution of the league, which was later ratified by the official delegates and forwarded to the White House at Washington:

Whereas, The events of the past year have demonstrated the fact that war, no matter how greatly it may be deplored, may suddenly and unexpectedly occur, notwithstanding the existence of treaties of peace and amity, and have also shown that nations who were unprepared have paid and are paying the price of their lack of foresight;

And, Whereas, The reports of our military and naval experts have made clear that the defensive forces of the country are inadequate for the proper protection of our coasts and to enable our Government to maintain its accepted policies and to fulfill its obligations to other States, and to exert in the adjustment of international questions the influence in which the Republic is entitled;

Therefore, be it Resolved

That we appeal to the President, if consistent with the public interest, to call the early attention of Congress to the pressing need of prompt and efficient action so that the resources of our great country can be utilized for the proper defense of the Republic;

And, Resolved, That the National Security League, under whose auspices this Peace and Preparation Conference has been held, be urged to continue the work which it has already undertaken, of bringing the American people to a full realization of our deplorable state of unpreparedness and of the necessity of action by Congress.