

What Armed Peace Leads To

[A selection from Dr. Charles E. Jefferson's recent volume, *WHAT THE WAR IS TEACHING*, copyrighted 1916, and reprinted by permission of the publishers, Fleming H. Revell Company.]

By armed peace is meant that policy of international life in vogue in Europe during the last hundred years, and more especially during the last half century. It is the policy by which each nation safeguards its honor and its vital interests by huge military and naval establishments. By this policy a nation becomes an army, and a country an armed camp. Its motto is "Preparedness," its creed is "In time of peace prepare for war," and its ruling ambition is to make and keep for itself a place in the sun by an imposing display of guns.

Never have the stars looked down upon a spectacle more pathetic than that which Europe has presented during the last fifty years. Europe has been professedly Christian. The continent is dotted with cathedrals, erected to the glory of the world's supreme teacher of good will. But around every cathedral have flashed glittering lines of bayonets. Within the cathedrals, worship baptized into the name of Jesus of Nazareth, has been carried on, while outside their doors another ritual, still more elaborate and magnificent, has been conducted, baptized into the spirit of Mars. The anthems sung in the cathedrals have been punctuated by the boom of guns engaged in target practice. Two forms of worship have been faithfully and enthusiastically supported—the worship of love and the worship of force. Two vast institutions have been standing side by side—the Christian church and the national army. For fifty years the great nations of Europe have been spending a large part of their enormous revenues in preparedness for human slaughter. It is intimated that in this period forty billion dollars were thus expended. Everything in sight was taxed to meet the increasing military and naval budgets. Certain nations unable to pay for armor by the taxation of the present, have mortgaged the property and labor of generations yet unborn. Governments have reluctantly taken clothing off the peasant's back, and food off his table, and deprived his children of an education, all in the interest of military preparedness. The time of millions of men has been spent in marching and counter-marching, drilling and fighting sham battles, some of the best years of their life devoted to this task of perfecting themselves in the art of human slaughter. The energy of thousands of brains has been poured into the work of equipping nations for the field of battle, some have worked upon ships, others on guns, others on explosives, others on aeroplanes, others on maps, others on schemes of espionage, others on fortifications, a great army of inventors and designers and engineers and chemists and machinists have consecrated their genius to the construction of a war machine more efficient and wonderful than the world had ever known.

HOPED TO SAFEGUARD PEACE OF EUROPE

And all this was done for the safeguarding of the peace of Europe. Every battleship was launched in the interests of peace, every battalion was drilled to make peace more certain. Burdens, heavy and grievous to bear, were rolled on the nations that they might be saved from the horrors of war. The people submitted to numberless sacrifices all for the sake of peace. All the rulers of Europe have been defenders of military preparedness because they believed that only by this policy could the peace of Europe be secured. They were, no doubt, honest in this belief. All the diplomats and statesmen have asked for army and naval appropriations on the ground that these were necessary for peace. It is incredible that all these men were deceivers. The military and naval leaders in all the countries have advocated colossal armies and navies because only by these could peace be certainly secured. We are bound to believe that they were honest men. It is unthinkable that all the rulers and diplomats and prime ministers and army and naval officials of Europe have been liars and hypocrites, secretly desiring war, while all the time professing devotion to peace. The leaders of Europe honestly believed that armed peace is the best possible policy for the world in its present stage of development, and so, for more than forty years they toiled, in season and out of season, to prepare themselves against war. That is one fact which must not be blinked. Eu-

rope for a half century prepared for war. The second fact, equally vivid and indisputable, is that Europe got what she prepared for. That is a fact which every rational human being must face. No one should be allowed to juggle with it, or to cover it up, or to explain it away. Europe prepared for war and she got what she prepared for. The first is plowed into European history, the second is written in characters of fire across the sky, and in lines of graves across the land. Europe wanted peace. Europe paid for peace. Europe got war. She made gigantic preparedness for war. She got the most gigantic war of history. Military preparedness does not, then, lead to peace. Armed peace leads to war. This is the crowning lesson of the European tragedy. Men who are blear-eyed talk about the failure of Christianity. Why do they not rather talk about the failure of militarism? Men who hate socialism sneer at the failure of socialism. Why do they not rather sneer at the failure of militarism? It is militarism which is the colossal booby and blunderbus of the world. What has this war shot to pieces? This adage: "In time of peace prepare for war." What has the war torn into a thousand tatters? This delusion: "Armaments are a guarantee of peace." What has the war ground to powder? This silly sophism: "Armaments are a form of national insurance." What has the war demonstrated? The impotency of expending armaments to keep the peace. Armed peace as a philosophy is false, and as a policy it is costly and ruinous. Armed peace is a delusion, a scourge, and a proved failure. This is the supreme lesson which the great war is teaching. Every moral teacher in America ought to do what he can to rub that lesson into the minds of men.

CLAIMS OF THE MILITARISTS

That the war teaches the futility of military preparedness is vehemently denied of course by all who idolize force. The one lesson, they say, which the war is teaching America, is that preparedness is our only salvation, and that the new world must now adopt the policy which has overwhelmed the old. Many men are saying this: "Military preparedness worked well, for it held Europe back from a great war for forty-three years. Without her huge armaments the great powers of Europe would have fought long ago. It was her guns and battle ships which gave Europe tranquility through more than forty years." And in order to bolster up this contention, the militarist turns back to preceding centuries and points out the fact that never before did Europe enjoy so prolonged a season of peace. If Europe for nearly a half century was saved from the desolating scourge of a great war, the inference is that this was due to the potency of military preparedness.

The answer to this is that there was peace through forty years not because of the armaments, but in spite of them. In the nineteenth century the world passed into a new era. A humanitarian spirit took possession of the hearts of men. All the peoples of Europe became peace-loving. There are no bellicose people in Europe. The masses of the people in every land are amiable, and affable, and haters of carnage. They desire nothing so much as to live their lives in quietness and do their work in peace. France, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was wild with ambition for military glory, closed the century by writing the name of Pasteur above that of Napoleon the First.

All the rulers of Europe within the last fifty years have been peace lovers. Not one of them has had the warrior spirit of earlier times. Commerce has bound the continents together by lines of ships, and the cities together by bands of steel and electric wires, bringing the nations into such intricate and vital relations to one another that war has become more and more, in the thought of sane-minded men, a nuisance and inexcusable blunder. And then the peace propaganda has been doing a mighty work. The Interparliamentary Union is only one of the many organizations at work in these recent years to bind the nations closer together. The programme of friendly visits, by which representative men of one country were entertained by representative men of another country, was carried out for years with increasing enthusiasm and success. New treaties were signed from time to time, each succeeding treaty phrased with a more earnest desire to safeguard the peace. There were two conferences at The

Hague. A Palace of Peace was erected. Great foundations were established to carry on in all lands the work of fostering the spirit of international goodwill. Thousands of men and women have been at work through the last forty years to bring the governments of Europe into a more friendly temper, and nothing but a most tremendous force could have swept away all the barriers against war which have been piled up, and snapped all the bonds of friendship which have been woven, and overcome all the devices which have been created for conserving the peace, and that force was generated in the huge military and naval establishments of the great powers. Armed peace did not hold back this war. It was held back for more than forty years by the men who love peace and work for it. But the peace workers were finally overcome by the vast engines of war. Military preparedness kills peace at last! Unless the world stops preparing for war, mankind is doomed.

But militarists are always prolific in ingenuities, and so some of them do not hesitate to contend that Europe was not prepared. "Had the nations all been prepared then the war would never have been. Adequate preparedness would have prevented this holocaust." So runs the argument, and one would laugh outright at it, were it not presented with a sober face by honorable men.

It is true that Europe had not yet procured everything which was conceivable, but she had provided everything which she could afford. She had not laid in a stock of material sufficient to carry her through an extended war, but she had laid in all she could pay for. Just before the war opened, the high officials of Great Britain reviewed the British fleet. There were twenty-eight miles of fighting ships, the greatest display of sea power since history began, and the British papers were aglow with the conviction that the British Empire was prepared. France had expended hundreds of millions of dollars on her forts, and had increased the period of military service from two years to three. Her military budget had been made as heavy as her people would endure. Russia within a few years had borrowed a hundred million dollars from France, most of it going into forts and guns. When one lays before him the expenditures of Great Britain and France and Russia for preparedness during the twenty years preceding the war, he is convinced, that if, after so vast an expenditure, the preparedness was inadequate, then anything like adequate preparedness in a world like this is clearly impossible. If these three nations were not prepared, then neither was Germany. For Germany made a desperate effort to reach Paris by way of Belgium and failed. If Great Britain and France were unprepared at the opening of the war then so also was Germany, for Germany did not possess the men or the equipment to enable her to drive her way through to Paris. To say that Europe was not prepared is consummate foolishness. European governments had spent on preparedness every dollar they could get their hands on, and some of them had gone deeply in debt. After Germany had driven one-third of her people into socialism and had screwed the last possible mark out of the pockets of the complaining taxpayer, she had gone into the purses of her aristocracy and taken out three hundred million dollars, all that she might have the satisfaction of being "ready." Great Britain had pushed up her preparedness budget from one hundred and fifteen million dollars to three hundred and fifty-five millions in 1913. All the nations were prepared. They had provided themselves, up to the level of their financial ability, with the latest and most expensive instruments of destruction, and in the month of August, 1914, they all said with one accord—"We are ready!" It was their readiness that precipitated the war. Sir Edward Grey at the eleventh hour attempted to improvise a tribunal of peace, but it was too late. The engine of war, carefully perfected through forty industrious years, was ready, and because it was ready a breath of passion set it in motion.

COMMERCIAL GREED BLAMED FOR WAR

But militarism has still another argument with which to deceive the unwary. It says that this is a commercial war. The cause of it is commercial greed. Great armaments had nothing to do with bringing it on. Military and naval establishments are superficial phenomena, the product of mighty forces which lie concealed. The war is rooted, we are told, in a feverish desire for markets. Russia and Germany wanted to exploit the Balkan nations, and hence they are fighting. Germany and France wanted spheres of influence in North Africa, and