

TO END ALL WARS

*Woodrow Wilson and the Quest
for a New World Order*

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The Political Origins of Progressive and Conservative Internationalism

Theodore Roosevelt was a man often ahead of his times. Within weeks of the outbreak of the European war, the former president became the first prominent American politician publicly to advocate the creation of some kind of league of nations. The general idea was not new for Roosevelt. In 1910, he had made an international league his main focus when he formally accepted the Nobel Peace Prize (for having mediated the Russo-Japanese War), at Christiania, Norway. During the fall of 1914, a series of thoughtful articles on the subject, in the context of the war, flowed from his pen. Of Belgium, he wrote in the *Outlook* in late September, "We have not the smallest responsibility for what has befallen her." Yet Germany's trampling of that country in the drive toward Paris raised serious issues for a neutral like the United States. Americans would not find their future well-being secure in disarmament or in milk-and-water "cooling-off" treaties, he was keen to say; rather, they would need to strengthen the country's military capabilities and put force behind arbitration (if that approach were to have any real worth). "Surely the time ought to be ripe for the nations to consider a great world agreement among all the civilized military powers to *back righteousness by force*," he concluded. "Such an agreement would establish an efficient world league for the peace of righteousness."¹

In November, in a piece for the *New York Times*, Roosevelt came as close as he ever would to condemning the concept of the balance of power (and to anticipating President Wilson). The alliance system, he declared, was "shifty and uncertain" and "based on self-interest." The kind of world league he dreamed of would show its true temper through "conduct and not merely selfish interest." The United States must brace itself "to take some chance for the sake of internationalism, that is of international morality."²

Roosevelt's mood and frame of mind underwent a dramatic change in late autumn. He soon became the country's most obstreperous pro-Allied extremist and the administration's most wrathful (some observers said "crazed") critic. His personal correspondence seethed with vituperation of the President and Secretary of State. Bryan was "a professional yodeler, a human trombone," and a "prize idiot," and Wilson was "a prime jackass" who had mastered the "hypocritical ability to deceive plain people." How could it be that destiny had placed these "preposterous little fools" in such positions of power at the very moment "when that great black tornado trembles on the edge of Europe?" he asked an intimate.³ The administration's failure to protest Belgium's fate—sheer partisanship, the Colombian treaty, and Wilson's handling of Mexico played large roles, too—ostensibly provoked Roosevelt's increasingly shrill public denunciations from November 1914 onward. His criticism of American neutrality had a consistent logic to it, and by his lights he had the country's interests at heart; but the manner and proportions of his antagonism, the public at large and even his friends knew, were inappropriate in the circumstances and unbecoming of someone of Roosevelt's stature.⁴ A man who had once revered him summed it up best: "The truth is," President Taft told a friend, "he believes in war and wishes to be a Napoleon and to die on the battlefield. He has the spirit of the old berserkers."⁵ Had Roosevelt, in 1914–15, put his immense prestige behind a movement for a league, the final chapter of his life and a part of American history would have been substantially different. Instead he let the opportunity pass. After 1914, he ceased any longer to exert a salutary influence in American politics.

One of the chief responsibilities of the President of the United States, Wilson believed, was to give purpose and direction to public opinion, particularly during times of stress and change.⁶ Throughout the first eighteen months of the war, however, most of Wilson's public utterances on foreign policy were aimed at justifying and maintaining neutrality, as public reaction to both the British blockade and German submarine warfare seemed to demand. His private deliberations and confidential diplomatic overtures notwithstanding, Wilson had done less than Roosevelt—which was not much—to cultivate public opinion on the question of an international league.

The great issue, though, had already begun to stir in American politics. Beginning in early 1915, several small but influential groups of new internationalists began to seek Wilson out, rather than the other way around. Theretofore, the American peace societies had demonstrated little more than intellectual bankruptcy in the war crisis. They had not begun to fathom the causes of the conflict, to define any goals for peace, to agitate for mediation, or to make contact with potential European allies, such as the Union of Democratic Control.⁷ A new American internationalist movement, however, soon came into being. It would transform American politics and diplomacy. Accommodating far more diverse perspectives than the long-established peace organizations, this movement was loosely composed of two divergent aggregations of activists—"progressive internationalists" and "conservative internationalists." Wilson's relationship with both of them was of fundamental importance.⁸

Feminists, liberals, pacifists, socialists, and social reformers of varying kinds, in the main, filled the ranks of the progressive internationalists. Their leaders included many of the era's authentic heroes and heroines, both the celebrated and the unsung: Jane Addams, the "Beloved Lady" of Hull House; Emily Greene Balch, Wellesley's controversial sociology professor whose future (like Addams') held the Nobel Peace Prize; Crystal Eastman, the industrial reformer and radical suffragist; her brother, Max Eastman, of the *Masses*; David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University; Oswald Garrison Villard, crusader in the fledgling civil rights movement and editor of the *New York Evening Post* and, later, of the *Nation*; Paul Kellogg, the nonpartisan conscience of the *Survey*; Lillian Wald, founder of New York's Henry Street Settlement; and Louis Paul Lochner, secretary of the Chicago Peace Society.

The quest for peace provided a new frontier and logical common ground for many liberal reformers, pacifists, and socialists. For them, domestic politics and foreign policy had suddenly become symbiotic: Peace was essential to change—to the survival of the labor movement and of their campaigns on behalf of women's rights, the abolition of child labor, and social justice legislation in general. If the war in Europe were permitted to rage on much longer, then the United States could not help but get sucked into it; and not only their great causes, but also the very moral fiber of the nation would be destroyed. Thus the *raison d'être* of the progressive internationalists was to bring about a negotiated settlement of the war.

Jane Addams played a pivotal role in this wing of the internationalist movement; indeed, she personified its purposes and values perhaps better than anyone else. Dismayed by the failure of the established peace societies to show any muscle, Addams, with the help of Paul Kellogg and Lillian Wald, organized the Woman's Peace party in January 1915. The Wom-

an's Peace party distinguished itself as the first organization of its kind—unlike the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace or the World Peace Foundation—to engage in direct political action (and on a variety of fronts) in order to achieve its goals.⁹

Three thousand delegates attended the WPP's inaugural convention on January 10, 1915, in Washington, D.C. Guided by the principle of "the sacredness of human life," the platform committee produced the earliest, and what must be acknowledged as the most comprehensive, manifesto on internationalism advanced by any American organization throughout the entire war. Their "program for constructive peace" somewhat resembled the platform of the UDC. It called for an immediate armistice, international agreements to limit armaments and to nationalize their manufacture, removal of the economic causes of the war (that is, a reduction of trade barriers), democratic control of foreign policy, self-determination, machinery for arbitration, freedom of the seas, and, finally, a "Concert of Nations" to supersede the balance-of-power system and rival armies and navies. Significantly (and without extended debate), the party also assumed a strictly neutral position toward the belligerents and planned to agitate for "continuous mediation" by neutral nations as the best means of bringing about a cessation of hostilities. The party made sure that President Wilson received copies of all their recommendations.¹⁰

The ideas of the Woman's Peace party cut a wide swath among progressives and radicals. Within a year the WPP had an active membership of 40,000, while several kindred organizations sprang up and adopted its platform. Addams displayed a determination to press hard for the New Diplomacy in Europe as well. She became the dominating figure at the International Congress of Women, which met at The Hague during the last week of April 1915. After The Hague Congress endorsed the WPP platform and continuous mediation, she received authorization to plead the case before the leaders of every major European country. So esteemed was Addams in the eyes of world opinion that she and her associates were granted audiences with Asquith, Grey, Bethmann Hollweg, von Jagow, and Pope Benedict XV.¹¹ In mid-summer, however, she returned to the United States, not only to thunderous acclaim at Carnegie Hall, but also to opprobrium, owing in part to the impasse with Germany over submarine warfare. When Roosevelt was invited to welcome home the entourage of the woman who had seconded his nomination in 1912, he fairly spat, "They have not shown the smallest particle of courage; and all their work has been done to advance the cause of international cowardice; and anyone who greets them or applauds them is actively engaged in advancing that cause."¹²

But they were welcome at the White House. On several occasions after the women's congress at The Hague, Addams and Emily Balch met

with Wilson, Colonel House, and Robert Lansing, Bryan's successor as Secretary of State. On July 19, Addams appealed to House on behalf of continuous mediation but failed to persuade him. Balch had what she believed was a more productive session with Wilson a month later when she presented him with additional material on mediation. He assured her that he would seize "any opportunity to be of use" if it presented itself. Wilson, of course, could not divulge to Balch the nature of Colonel House's recent mission to Europe; nor did he care to be pressured on the subject.¹³ Hence, his polite evasions perplexed these progressive internationalists as they continued to advise him on the matter of continuous mediation. Their campaign nonetheless generated an extended correspondence within the administration. Wilson and his advisers regarded their interlocutors as well-intentioned, but impractical and naïve. As Robert Lansing put it, "The perversity and selfishness of human nature are factors which they have left out of the problem."¹⁴

Yet, if Wilson and progressive internationalists like Addams and Balch sometimes felt frustrated with each other, their relationship was rather well-tempered by mutual comprehension and admiration. "I have unlimited faith in President Wilson," Addams told a London reporter in the summer of 1915, and Wilson fully reciprocated in his personal regard for her.¹⁵ Moreover, although he doubted the wisdom of their approach to mediation, Wilson was deeply impressed with the other proposals of the Woman's Peace party's, especially their "program for constructive peace." Addams' personal record of one of her many interviews with Wilson is particularly enlightening: "He drew out the papers I had given him, and they seem[ed] to have been much handled and read. 'You see I have studied these resolutions,' he said; 'I consider them by far the best formulation which up to the moment has been put out by anybody.'" ¹⁶ This was an important admission. The fact was that the Woman's Peace party had furnished Wilson with a pioneering American synthesis of the New Diplomacy during the critical year in which his own thinking acquired a definite shape.

The Woman's Peace party was not, of course, the only organization that made a potent contribution to early progressive internationalism. The Socialist Party of America, too, formulated a momentous program for a "democratic peace." It also motivated a sizeable constituency to think about foreign policy in new ways and, significantly, enjoyed access to the White House.

No group suffered greater despair over the events of August 1914 than American socialists. For them, the most troubling thing of all was that every leading socialist party of Europe had put its own nation before the International. One by one, those parties had voted in favor of war

credits and mass human slaughter in their respective parliaments. Most American socialists found it extremely difficult to swallow the rationalizations, for example, of both the French Socialist party and the German Social Democratic party (however sincere the French and Germans' perceptions) that the actions of their incipient foes constituted wanton aggression, when they had all failed even to try to stop the war.¹⁷

Reeling under such blows to the cause of international worker solidarity, the American party scarcely knew which way to turn. In the circumstances, Eugene Debs, like the vast majority of his followers, advocated strict neutrality. The party leader also took it upon himself to prepare Americans for "the impending social revolution" by explaining why the war had happened.¹⁸ "Despotism in Russia, monarchic Germany and republican America is substantially the same in its effect upon the working class," he wrote in the *New Review* in October 1914. From the stump he thundered against capitalism, which monstrously and climactically had proved itself irredeemable. He denounced the ruling classes for having driven the workers into the hell of the Marne and Tannenburg in order "to extend the domination of their exploitation, to increase their capacity for robbery, and to multiply their ill-gotten riches."¹⁹ Yet Debs' assessment hardly explained his European comrades' defense of nationalism or their encouragement of army enlistees.

Clearly, the Socialist party could not afford to indulge any longer its historic indifference to foreign policy issues. The stakes had grown too high. Morris Hillquit and William English Walling, among others, saw the urgent need to take, not only "a leading place in the anti-war movement," but also a position distinguished by socialist principles as opposed to the simple "bourgeois pacifism" of liberal-reformist peace societies. In December 1914, the National Executive Committee drafted a "Proposed Manifesto and Program of the Socialist Party of America on Disarmament and World Peace." After heated debate the party revised and finally adopted the document the following May: although the chief author was Hillquit, its contents—in particular, unequivocal statements on disarmament and indemnities—reflected the ascendent influence of the left wing. The "manifesto" portion contained a sweeping analysis of the political and economic causes of the war. Specific peace terms included the following:

1. No indemnities.
2. No transfer of territories except upon the consent and by the vote of their people.
3. All countries under foreign rule to be given political independence if demanded by their inhabitants.
4. An international parliament with legislative and administrative powers over international affairs and with permanent committees, in place of present secret diplomacy.

5. Universal disarmament as speedily as possible.
6. Political and industrial democracy [that is, the nationalization of basic industries and improvement of working conditions].²⁰

The manifesto was accorded ample space in the pages of the country's major socialist publications, which meant that at least two million Americans read it. If they happened to place it alongside the platform of the Woman's Peace party, however, discerning readers could see that the Socialist party's official stand on the war presented few stark contrasts with that of America's foremost "bourgeois pacifist" organization (in which, it should be mentioned, many individual Socialist party members held leadership positions).²¹ The Socialist peace formula further echoed the WPP by calling on the President to convoke a congress of neutral nations and offer mediation to the belligerents. Morris Hillquit justifiably boasted in his memoirs that the plank on "no indemnities" anticipated by more than two years the comparable slogan of the Russian Council of Workers and Soldiers.²² But this was the party's sole (not to say, by any means, unimportant) radical supplement to the progressive internationalist program. Even bearing the patent of the party's left wing, almost all of the proclamation might have been written—though, as of May 1915, not for publication—in the seclusion of the Oval Office.

None of these observations is meant either to suggest that the work of Hillquit, Walling, and company lacked originality, or to diminish its significance. The Socialist party was second only to the Woman's Peace party in its impact upon both radicals and reformers (Wilson included) during the progressive internationalist movement's crucial formative stage. Then, too, it is impossible to gauge who exerted the greater influence on whom. Whereas the Socialist party officially kept its distance from groups like the WPP, many prominent Socialists (left, right, and center) worked closely on an informal basis with their otherwise radical friends, who earnestly believed that the endeavor to reform capitalism was meaningful and worthwhile.

The Socialist program came to Wilson's personal attention through official delegations commissioned to lobby the White House. Although the party propagated its peace terms with vigor, keeping the United States out of the war received the stronger emphasis throughout 1915. The National Executive Committee regarded continuous mediation (of the sort advocated by the WPP) as the best means of accomplishing that object. Meyer London of New York, the lone Socialist member of the House of Representatives, introduced a resolution in Congress that proposed that the President take the initiative for mediation now endorsed by several organizations.²³

Wilson received Meyer London, Morris Hillquit, and James Hudson Maurer, president of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, on Jan-

uary 25, 1916. According to Hillquit's account, their host looked preoccupied and tired when they arrived but became deeply interested and animated once the conversation got under way. (Maurer, who interviewed Wilson on two other occasions, described him as "a good listener.") Congressman London read his resolution aloud, and the four men then proceeded for the next hour to discuss the other provisions of the Socialist party manifesto. Hillquit was somewhat surprised when Wilson, in confidence, "informed us that he had had a similar plan under consideration" and also "hinted at the possibility of a direct offer of mediation by the government of the United States." (This was privileged information he had not chosen to divulge to representatives of the WPP.) The meeting proved to be more encouraging and productive than London, Hillquit, and Maurer might have hoped. "[H]is sympathies were entirely with us," Hillquit told the *Appeal to Reason*. As the committee rose to take its leave, however, Maurer turned and said, "Your promises sound good, Mr. President, but the trouble with you is that you are surrounded by capitalist and militarist interests who want the war to continue; and I fear you will succumb to their influence." Placing a hand on Maurer's shoulder, Wilson smiled and replied, "If the truth be known, I am more often accused of being influenced by radical and pacifist elements than by the capitalist and militarist interest."²⁴

From their point of view, it remained to be seen whether Wilson's visitors could rest assured in his perception of which elements of the polity exerted the greatest influence on him—for progressive internationalists confronted formidable rivals. Indeed, conservative internationalists made up the largest and, generally speaking, the most influential segment of the broad American league movement. Unlike their liberal and left-wing counterparts, most leading conservative internationalists had helped found peace organizations—such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the American Society for the Judicial Settlement of International Disputes—in the prewar years. They therefore benefitted from a financially secure base of operations and from the kind of respectability and power that came with membership in the establishment. Almost all of them had been ardent imperialists and champions of Anglo-American *entente* since the 1890s.

Many conservative internationalists—like Senator Elihu Root of New York, the first president of the Carnegie Endowment (formerly Secretary of War under McKinley and Secretary of State under Roosevelt) and Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University—were so-called legalists. Seeking stability rather than change in international relations, legalists viewed the concept of world peace primarily through the prism of international law. Conflicts between major powers, Root argued

throughout the 1910s, could best be ameliorated through the steady growth of international legal precedents established by a world court. Other conservatives, such as William Howard Taft, while not denying the value of strictly juridical procedures, put greater faith in compulsory arbitration of certain kinds of disputes sustained by coercive sanctions to compel the submission of a dispute to a tribunal (though not compliance with the arbitration decision itself). This approach suggested a form of collective security, an alternative that legalists like Root considered too extreme.²⁵

Conservative internationalists became a force to be reckoned with in the summer of 1915. Under the auspices of the New York Peace Society and Hamilton Holt, the editor of the *Independent* (and an internationalist who also traveled in progressive circles), some 120 conservatives prominent in the fields of business, education, law, and politics gathered in Philadelphia at Independence Hall and, on June 17, founded the League to Enforce Peace (LEP).²⁶ The executive board of the new organization included Taft; Theodore Marburg, who had served as minister to Belgium under Taft; and Abbot Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University. Their platform, entitled "Warrant from History," corresponded to the ideas of the Bryce Group, a British conservative internationalist roundtable that had been meeting quietly in London since late 1914.²⁷ The LEP's platform called for American participation in a postwar league in which representatives from all nations would assemble periodically to make appropriate changes in international law. Member nations would also be bound to submit "justiciable" disputes (questions pertaining to treaty obligations and international law) to a judicial tribunal or council of arbitration, and "non-justiciable" disputes (questions of national honor or vital national self-interest) to a board of conciliation. Finally, the plan would require signatories to bring economic and military force to bear against any state that made war on another signatory before submitting its grievance to the foregoing process.²⁸

Because of its prestigious charter membership, the League to Enforce Peace enjoyed considerable public attention and favorable editorial comment. Soon the LEP began to formally consult and coordinate activities with the Bryce Group as well as with the League of Nations Society, founded in Great Britain in May. By the end of 1916, it had established some four thousand branches in forty-seven states and had published thousands of pamphlets explaining its "Warrant from History." Although the LEP was not a Wilsonian enterprise, it nonetheless ultimately became the most influential pro-league organization in the United States and perhaps in the world.²⁹

When reporters asked Wilson about the conclave in Philadelphia, his response was noncommittal, almost to the point of indifference.³⁰ From the start, Wilson kept the conservative internationalists at arm's length.

He did so in part because of their connections with the Republican party—Taft was elected president of the LEP—and because he did not want to commit himself to a definite program that might later restrict his freedom of action. But, for now, the fairly limited recommendations and personal discretion of conservative internationalist leaders averted potential friction between them. Cordiality prevailed throughout the early stages of the relationship, mainly because the LEP's directors demanded nothing of the President.³¹

The influence of the conservative internationalists on Wilson would never be decisive in any case, but not only on account of partisan considerations or Wilson's desire to protect his options. Wilson surely realized that on certain points their platform converged with his own prescriptions, as well as with those of the Woman's Peace party, the Socialist party, and the Union of Democratic Control. But what the LEP omitted was as important as what it prescribed. On one hand, its recommendations for settling disputes squared with Bryan's cooling-off treaties, and its position on sanctions was roughly similar to Wilson's own thoughts about mutual guarantees of territorial integrity and political independence (which the progressive internationalists had yet to endorse explicitly). On the other hand, the LEP did not concern itself much with the economic causes of the war, with disarmament or self-determination, and certainly not with "democratic control" of foreign policy. Thus, even though the two wings of the American internationalist movement were very broadly constituted, the differences between them were substantial; in most respects, fundamental.

It is important to emphasize that, whereas they were absolutely vital, Wilson did not regard collective security and arbitration as adequate by themselves to prevent future wars. Self-determination, reduction of armaments, and free trade were equally important to the community of nations to come. Moreover, he and the progressive internationalists sought to mediate an end to the war and believed a fair peace settlement to be one based on a stand-off in Europe. In contrast, most conservative internationalists made no bones about their wish to see the Allies win a clear-cut victory. Significantly, the slogan, "The LEP does *not* seek to end the present war," appeared on their letterhead in the autumn of 1916.³² Finally, for progressive internationalists, a league of nations symbolized the confluence of other dreams and purposes. The ultimate objective of Wilson and the progressive internationalists was a lasting peace that would accommodate change and advance democratic institutions and social and economic justice; and a just peace was dependent on the synchronous proliferation of political democracy and social and economic justice around the world.

Few conservative internationalists could identify with the exalted as-

pirations of liberals, pacifists, and socialists. Leading conservative intellectuals like Taft, Lowell, and Root rarely entertained doubts about their Social-Darwinist views of human relations. Some were fit to rule; the vast majority were not; the poor were poor because they were poor. Worst of all, liberal reformers and socialists abetted each other's causes: together, they threatened to overturn the natural order of things by appealing, either inadvertently or overtly, to class differences. They strove toward a welfare state that would destroy basic constitutional rights of individual liberty and property.³³ Furthermore, conservative internationalists regarded diplomacy as unquestionably the province of an educated élite. Wilson might fit into the latter category, but they could take little comfort in reading newspaper stories about the regular flow into the White House of counselors committed to mob rule.

Neither could conservative internationalists see much good coming from a military stalemate in Europe. Because they considered the defeat of Germany as essential to peace, they often regarded Wilson's policies of neutrality as either wrongheaded or morally reprehensible. Then, too, whereas they advocated American participation in a league to enforce peace, they remained committed nationalists and resisted any diminution of American sovereignty or military strength. They believed that the United States should pursue international stability through the power of deterrence inherent in collective security, yet reserve to itself the right to improve its capacity to undertake independent coercive action against the forces of disorder that threatened the national interest.

Such divergent viewpoints within the burgeoning American league movement held serious implications for the subsequent course of the new crusade as well as for virtually every other major issue related to the war, including the climactic domestic debate over the Treaty of Versailles. For the time being, however, Wilson and the progressive and conservative internationalists seemed inclined to perceive their differences as more apparent than real. Throughout 1915, on the broad proposition of a league of nations, they observed an unstated political truce in deference to the greater common task of exploring the possibilities for a domestic consensus to underwrite such a basic change in American foreign policy.

From mid-1915 to mid-1916, the single most divisive issue in American politics was neither the league idea, nor the New Freedom, nor neutrality; it was, rather, the state of the nation's military preparedness. Not since the days of the early Republic had the question of the role of the military in American life driven so sharp a wedge into American politics. The Progressive era witnessed the opening phase of a larger controversy that would persist in various manifestations through the twentieth century to the present day. In its own immediate context, the preparedness contro-

versy would, among other things, reveal a subtle moldering within the American internationalist movement before it had reached its apogee.

During the autumn of 1914, the relentless advocates of a large navy and standing army had gained some momentum in Congress. Even before Germany had raised the specter of submarine warfare, Representative Augustus Peabody Gardner of Massachusetts, encouraged by his senior colleague and father-in-law, Henry Cabot Lodge, introduced a measure calling for an investigation into the nation's preparedness for war.³⁴ Wilson responded forcefully in his annual message to Congress, on December 8. "From the first we have had a clear and settled policy with regard to military establishments. We never have had, and while we retain our present principles and ideals, we never shall have a large standing army," he declared. "We shall not ask our young men to spend the best years of their lives making soldiers of themselves." He reminded the Congress that the country had a National Guard. The citizen soldier, a tradition compatible with democratic institutions, would suffice in the present circumstances. "More than this," he went on, "would mean merely that we had lost our self-possession." Then, looking directly at Senator Lodge, the President added, "We shall not alter our attitude toward it because some amongst us are nervous and excited."³⁵

This was not the first time that antimilitarists had heard such sweet music from the administration. The year before, William Jennings Bryan had caused a commotion when he spoke at a military camp in Texas and confessed that he could not understand how the men could prefer service in the Army to "a respectable civilian profession." Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, likewise, had raised some hackles. While casually talking with a couple of stokers during an inspection of a battleship, he upbraided the admiral escorting him for not following his example. "Do you think that you are too good to shake the hand of a sailor?" Daniels wanted to know. Then, too, there was the Carabao Affair, which had earned for the officers responsible for the notorious anti-Bryan theatricale a severe public reprimand from the President. "In military circles there is great astonishment and dismay over the proceedings of the Democratic regime," the Austrian naval attaché in Washington reported to Vienna. "Up till now the Democrats have done nothing to raise the esteem of officers. Indeed they have damaged the officers' own conception of their place in society."³⁶

Whether or not the Austrian attaché's judgment was accurate, Wilson's summoning of Congress to uphold America's venerable antimilitarist tradition won overwhelming public approval, and the Republican drive to expand the armed forces was easily quashed. Within a year, however, the incessant abuses of the Allied blockade, and, especially, German submarine warfare brought about a gradual shift in public opinion as well as

within the administration. The shift rapidly evolved into a marked conversion soon after May 7, 1915. On that day a German submarine had perpetrated one of the biggest public-relations disasters of all time when it torpedoed without warning the great British passenger liner *Lusitania*, which took down with her 1,198 men, women, and children—among them 124 Americans. In the United States the shock of this seemingly wanton murder of so many innocent civilians was so great that ten years later people remembered exactly where they were and what they were doing when they had heard the news, according to the findings of journalist Mark Sullivan.³⁷

Americans barely had the chance to digest this assault on their sensibilities when, during the next week, the British government released an official report on German atrocities, bearing the name and validation of Viscount James Bryce, the esteemed former Ambassador to the United States. The crescendo of a systematic propaganda campaign to overcome American neutrality, this document catalogued in the most lurid detail some 1,200 alleged acts of barbarism and cruelty committed by German soldiers, primarily against Belgians—including the crucifixion and decapitation of prisoners of war, the gang rape and sexual mutilation of women, the hacking off of children's fingers for souvenirs, and the bayoneting of infants.³⁸ Although much of it was later proved to be fictional, the Bryce Report created a sensation. Germany would never fully recover from the revulsion that swept the United States during these seven days in May.³⁹

Because it raised the distinct possibility of war, the *Lusitania* incident presented the real crisis. Yet cries for intervention, though loud as they could be, represented the voice of extremists. The vast majority of Americans, including the Congress, expected their president to keep his head and save them from Europe's awful mess. Three days after the tragedy, Wilson addressed an audience of newly naturalized citizens in Philadelphia. "The example of America must be a special example," he said. "The example not merely of peace because it will not fight, but of peace because peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world and strife is not. There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right."⁴⁰

Such eloquent convictions notwithstanding, Wilson's subsequent demands that Germany cease submarine warfare against unarmed merchantmen were stern enough to compel the Secretary of State to resign in protest from the Cabinet in June. Bryan believed that the President's second note to Berlin, in particular, would lead to war. The outcome of these negotiations was still in doubt when, on the morning of August 19, 1915, two Americans were killed in the sinking of another British liner, the *Arabic*. "The worst worst [*sic*] thing that could possibly happen to the

world," Wilson wrote that evening to Mrs. Galt, "would be for the United States to be drawn actively into this contest,—to become one of the belligerents and lose all chance of moderating the results of the war by counsel as an outsider."⁴¹ In any case, he took firm action, threatening to sever diplomatic relations if Berlin refused henceforth to cease attacks on unarmed passenger liners without warning and without providing for the safety of those on board. The German government met Wilson's demands, and kept American neutrality alive, in the "*Arabic* pledge" of September 1, 1915. Consequently, tensions between the United States and Germany abated until the following spring.⁴²

Wilson's consistent example of self-possession and restraint throughout these protracted early crises made him something of a hero in the eyes of most progressive internationalists. The conclusion to the *Arabic* negotiations moved Oswald Garrison Villard, for instance, to break all precedents by running the President's portrait on the front page of the *New York Evening Post*, above the caption "The man who, without rattling a sword, won for civilization."⁴³ Yet if Wilson had "won for civilization," his stern notes, in the opinion of most Republicans, had not wrung enough meaningful concessions from Berlin. The Germans never admitted the illegality of undersea attacks on nonmilitary vessels, and the administration's demands did not require them to forego submarine warfare against Allied armed merchantmen. This ambiguity, along with the resounding impact of the *Lusitania* calamity, supplied preparedness advocates with all the ammunition they needed. Fortified by such organizations as the National Security League, the American Defense Society, and, eventually, the League to Enforce Peace, the movement now shifted into high gear.

Theodore Roosevelt had no peer in the preparedness crusade, and he beat the drum with both conviction and relish. Enraged by Wilson's comment about being "too proud to fight," he virtually called the President a coward and went so far as to hold him and Bryan personally responsible for the *Lusitania's* and the *Arabic's* misfortune. "It is our own attitude of culpable weakness and timidity—an attitude assumed under pressure of the ultra-pacifists—which is primarily responsible for this dreadful loss of life and for our national humiliation," he was still saying well into 1916.⁴⁴ The Colonel also called for a standing army of two million men, as well as for universal military training for adult males and drills and instruction for high school students. Soon the Governor of New York signed into law five preparedness bills, two of which provided for Roosevelt's training program in private and public schools. Huge preparedness parades marched down the avenues of all the nation's big Eastern cities. And a series of popular books and motion pictures, pandering to fears of invasion, flooded the nations bookstores and theaters.⁴⁵

Although the issue cut across party lines, the most vocal proponents

of preparedness and universal military training—Roosevelt, senators Lodge and Root, General Leonard Wood, and Taft—happened also to be Republicans. Lodge was no doubt sincere in the argument (one of infinite resilience in this century) that “there is no such incentive to war as a rich, undefended, and helpless country, which by its condition invites aggression.”⁴⁶ But politics informed conviction. Republicans portrayed themselves as the true patriots and the Democrats as the party of submission—the party that was “too proud to fight.” Preparedness seemed an altogether splendid charger upon which to ride to victory in 1916.

From the standpoint of politics, the President met the challenge masterfully. Most Americans had reluctantly concluded that the changed circumstances of the war required some degree of rearmament. By developing a measured response, the Democrats posed as something better than patriots—patriots with cool heads. On December 7, 1915, Wilson presented to Congress a program of national defense to increase substantially the size of the Army and the Navy. He then embarked upon a speaking tour of the Middle West to counter the Republicans and build support for “reasonable” preparedness among the many doubters within his own party.⁴⁷

The Republicans hoped to exploit the troubles that Wilson initially encountered within Democratic and progressive ranks (see below) and to make his alleged lack of leadership the keynote of their campaign in the forthcoming national election. But eventually Wilson marshaled both public opinion and a bipartisan congressional majority behind the administration’s program. Many Republicans—and many prominent conservative internationalists, including Taft, Root, and Lowell—regarded Wilson’s recommendations both as inadequate and as a characteristic example of the basest political opportunism.⁴⁸ Even harder to abide was the fact that, in the end, Wilson beat his opponents at their own game. Compromise and moderation robbed the Republicans of one of their most potent political issues. These were portentous complications in light of the Republican identity of the League to Enforce Peace, which had come into existence just as the preparedness controversy burst forth. Although Wilson managed to sustain a respectful correspondence with them, an important element of the conservative internationalists experienced the first stirrings of partisan bitterness toward the President.

Preparedness cut into the issue of a league of nations from another, potentially more acute, angle. Many progressive internationalists watched with alarm as their old collective nemesis—big-navy advocates, munitions makers, imperialists, big business, and all other manner of reactionaries—mounted what they viewed as an insidious offensive to thwart social and economic progress at home as well as disarmament, international cooperation, and the repudiation of war as an instrument of foreign policy. But

opponents of preparedness suffered the greatest blow to their morale when Wilson appeared to have surrendered to the enemy.

“The war in Europe is due to industrial strife, and the efforts of capitalists to further enslave the workingmen,” Socialist Helen Keller declared to the Labor Forum of New York. “If President Wilson had supported the policy of military preparedness which he recently sent to Congress, in 1913, the people would have demanded his removal to an insane asylum.”⁴⁹ In despair, Jane Addams, on behalf of the Woman’s Peace party, reminded her friend in the White House of his own noble expressions “that the United States might be granted the unique privilege not only of helping the war-torn world to a lasting peace, but of aiding toward a gradual and proportional lessening of that vast burden of armament which has crushed to poverty the peoples of the world.” She ended with a warning: increased war preparations would “tend to disqualify our National Executive from rendering the epochal service which this world crisis offers for the establishment of permanent peace.”⁵⁰ Shortly after the administration introduced its national defense bill, Lillian Wald’s Henry Street Group organized an “Anti-Militarism Committee.” It became the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM) in April 1916.⁵¹

The American Union Against Militarism represented one of the outstanding collaborations of liberal reformers and socialists of the Progressive Era. Its leaders and sympathizers included Addams and Wald, Paul Kellogg, Amos Pinchot, Frederick C. Howe, Crystal and Max Eastman, Rabbi Stephen Wise, Louis Lochner, Florence Kelley, Helen Keller, Oswald Garrison Villard, James Maurer, Hamilton Holt of the LEP, and many other friends and acquaintances of Wilson’s. Their movement was augmented by a cluster of Southern and Western Democratic congressmen and senators (some of whom considered the issue from an isolationist perspective), led by William Jennings Bryan; Claude Kitchin of North Carolina, the House Majority Leader; and William J. Stone of Missouri, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁵²

Within the year, the AUAM had established branches in every major city in the country. Members disseminated some 600,000 pieces of antipreparedness literature through a variety of publications and lobbied extensively on Capitol Hill and at the White House. To match Wilson’s swing around the circle, they hired the largest halls they could find and filled them to overflowing in New York, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Kansas City, and St. Louis. “Jingo,” the papier-mâché dinosaur (who wore a collar bearing the label “ALL ARMOR PLATE—NO BRAINS”) won national fame as the AUAM’s mascot, while “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier” became a hit song.⁵³ Notable figures outside the AUAM—Bryan being the most prominent and effective—also went out on the hustings to drive the an-