

**So-Called “Preparedness” Invites War:
Telegram to the *New York Sun*
(November 29, 1915)**

Terre Haute, Ind., Nov. 29 [1915].

Replying to your inquiry, Charles Edward Russell has high standing in the socialist movement, but if he is correctly quoted in his Philadelphia speech in reference to war I do not at all agree with him, and his views are at variance with the attitude and principles of the Socialist Party. It is my conviction that we can keep out of war, but not by pursuing the course indicated by Mr. Russell.

Europe is today a glaring example of what preparedness for war means to a civilization. A large standing army, a powerful navy, and a stupendous military armament, such as President Wilson, with the backing of Wall Street, proposes means a military autocracy, and it can mean nothing else. If the American people acquiesce in such an obviously plutocratic program they must not be surprised if other nations treat it as a challenge to war, and if they are themselves conscripted, to fight and die to maintain plutocratic supremacy in the United States. If the peace of the world can be maintained only by a race of armed murderers, then the race should perish from the earth, for it is not fit to survive.

Socialism means internationalism, and socialists, if they are true to the fundamental principles of their cause, are opposed to war and to “preparedness,” as that term is understood in the present discussion. It is the ruling class which instigates and declares war without consulting their subjects and so far as the socialists are concerned the aristocrats, bureaucrats, and plutocrats who are responsible for the war may also fight the battles. We are living in the twentieth century, but the ruling class still has the barbarous spirit of the Middle Ages.

The United States government is today in a position to strike a death blow to war, but under its present control it may not avail itself of the supreme opportunity. If the presence of the appalling conflagration that is now destroying the Old World the government of the United States were to prove in good faith that it is opposed to the barbarism and butchery of war by issuing a proclamation of peace — itself setting the example of disarmament to the nations of the world — its preparedness would be not only in accordance with its vaunted ideals, but a thousandfold greater

guarantee to the respect of its neighbors and to its own security and peace than it it were loaded down with all the implements of death and destruction on earth.

Eugene V. Debs.

Published as "Russell Plan, Says Debs, Invites War" in *New York Sun*, Nov. 30, 1915, unspecified page. Copy in *Papers of Eugene V. Debs* microfilm edition, reel 10.