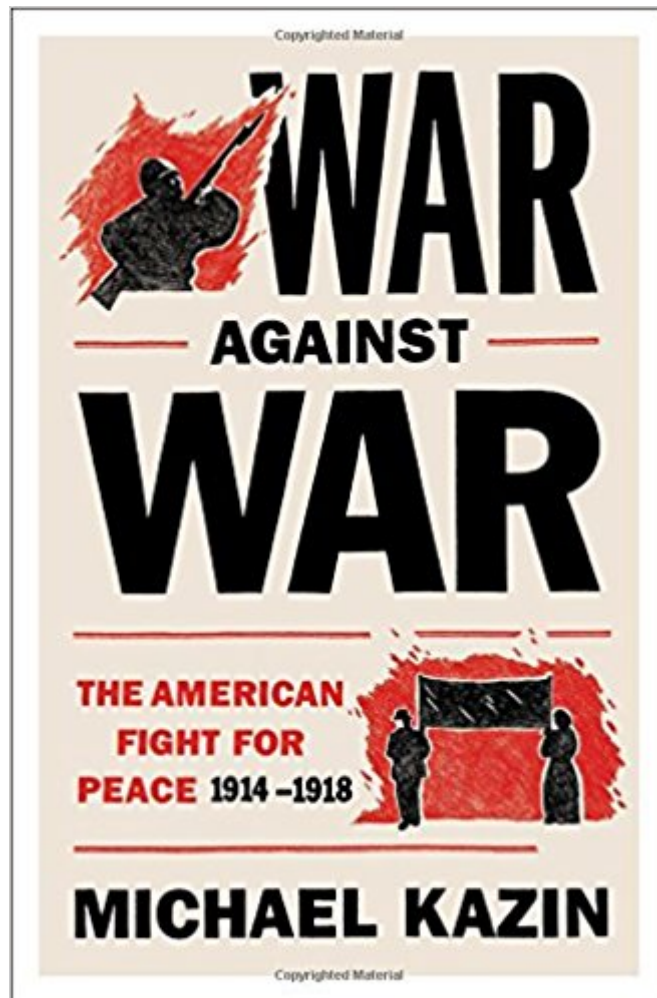




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# War Against War: The American Fight For Peace, 1914-1918



## Synopsis

The untold story of the movement that came close to keeping the United States out of the First World War. This book is about the Americans who tried to stop their nation from fighting in one of history's most destructive wars and then were hounded by the government when they refused to back down. In the riveting *War Against War*, Michael Kazin brings us into the ranks of the largest, most diverse, and most sophisticated peace coalition up to that point in US history. They came from a variety of backgrounds: wealthy and middle and working class, urban and rural, white and black, Christian and Jewish and atheist. They mounted street demonstrations and popular exhibitions, attracted prominent leaders from the labor and suffrage movements, ran peace candidates for local and federal office, and founded new organizations that endured beyond the cause. For almost three years, they helped prevent Congress from authorizing a massive increase in the size of the US army—a step advocated by ex-president Theodore Roosevelt. Soon after the end of the Great War, most Americans believed it had not been worth fighting. And when its bitter legacy led to the next world war, the warnings of these peace activists turned into a tragic prophecy—and the beginning of a surveillance state that still endures today. *War Against War* is a dramatic account of a major turning point in the history of the United States and the world.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 400 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster (January 3, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1476705909

ISBN-13: 978-1476705903

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #96,524 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > War & Peace #119 in Books > History > Military > World War I #426 in Books > History > World > Women in History

## Customer Reviews

**\*\* New York Times Editors' Choice \*\*** "With his customary clarity and insight, Kazin draws our attention to the remarkable group of individuals who argued eloquently and with great moral urgency against intervention in World War I. They lost the debate, but a singular

achievement of this deeply incisive book is to show the lasting resonance of their analysis and their fears, down to our present day. — (Fredrik Logevall, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Embers of War*) — “[A] fine, sorrowful history.... A timely reminder of how easily the will of the majority can be thwarted in even the mightiest of democracies. — (New York Times Book Review) — “Michael Kazin’s important history of American pacifism is a compelling cautionary tale. It not only provides an arresting history of a major American movement, it also reminds us of the false hopes that drew us into World War I, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The book should be required reading for aspiring military officers and every politician pronouncing on U.S. leadership around the globe. — (Robert Dallek, bestselling author of *An Unfinished Life*) — “At a time when people tell veterans, ‘Thank you for your service,’ Michael Kazin reminds us of some largely forgotten people who deserve our thanks far more: those who tried to keep us out of the most terrible war the world had yet seen. The dissenters against American participation in the First World War are still a model for us, and Kazin evokes them with care and grace. — (Adam Hochschild, bestselling author of *To End All Wars*) — “Well-written, carefully researched, and compelling scholarship. A dramatic read. — (New York Journal of Books) — “Once again, Michael Kazin has written a book about the past that forces us to take another look at our present. *War Against War*, the story of the activists who opposed American entry into World War I, is a gem of historical analysis. Eloquent, written, powerfully argued, fully documented, it introduces us to a remarkable and remarkably diverse cast of American characters and compels us to re-examine the most fundamental of questions: when is a war worth fighting? — (David Nasaw, bestselling author of *The Patriarch*) — “In this penetrating account of the women and men of a century ago, whom he calls the ‘anti-warriors,’ Michael Kazin brings off a skillful double play. First, he resurrects the memory of this varied and not so little band of sisters and brothers with both sympathy and critical detachment. Second, he illuminates attitudes and arguments that persist in underpinning and resisting America’s ‘great power’ outreach. Anyone who cares about this country’s role in the world should read this book. — (John Milton Cooper, Jr., author of *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*) — “Kazin...brings a fascinating perspective. — (Los Angeles Times) — “*War Against War* is a magnificent book that gives opponents of American involvement in World War I, one of the most profoundly destructive conflicts in human history, their due. In elegant and engaging prose, Michael Kazin tells a story about politics, morality, social forces and a fascinating cast of personalities with power and clarity. This is a very important book, at once sobering and inspiring. — (E. J. Dionne, Jr., bestselling author

of Why the Right Went Wrong) – “Kazin ends War Against War with a salute to those who search for peace. He deserves praise for portraying that quest with clear-eyed honesty and rigor. Maybe that kind of clarity could help keep us out of wars to come.” – (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) – “An astute account of the United States’ futile struggle to stay out of WWI.... Kazin’s War Against War confirms his stature as one of the most astute historians of American 19th- and 20th-century social movements.” – (Washington Independent Review of Books) – “An important story.... War Against War offers much to reflect upon.” – (American Conservative) – “Tightly written.” – (Dallas Morning News) – “War against War’s great strength is in laying out the pitfalls and fractures the pacifist movement confronted... while showing how it created a strong enough base, and a powerful enough critique, to push back against U.S. entry for three years.” – (In These Times) – “Illuminating.... [Kazin] presents all parties fairly in this well-researched, carefully written work.” – (Kirkus Reviews) – “[Kazin] expertly conveys the complex and electric prewar political landscape, and the constellation of reasons that many Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, farmers, feminists, left-wing trade unionists, segregationists and liberal immigrants had for banding together in this common cause, and then for breaking apart again.” – (Shelf Awareness) – “Passionate.... [Kazin] pays eloquent tribute to a diverse coalition of peace activists.” – (Booklist) “Smoothly written and solidly researched... Kazin’s book fills in gaps of knowledge surrounding the peace movement that took place prior to the Vietnam War, offering an excellent introduction to domestic politics during World War I.” – (Library Journal) – “[Kazin] brings a fascinating perspective to the war that is still known as the Great War [and] convincingly argues that the U.S. decision to join the Allies was a turning point in history, and one that still reverberates today.” – (National Book Review)

Michael Kazin is a professor of history at Georgetown University and editor of Dissent. He is the award-winning author of War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918; American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation; A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan; America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s (with Maurice Isserman); The Populist Persuasion: An American History; and Barons of Labor. In addition, he is editor-in-chief of The Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History, co-editor of the anthology Americanism, and editor of In Search of Progressive America. Kazin has contributed to The Washington Post, The Nation, Democracy, The New York Times Book Review, Foreign Affairs, and many other publications and websites. He lives in Washington, DC, and is married to Beth Horowitz. They have two grown

children.

War Against War is the story of a peace movement that almost kept the US out of World War One. It is filled with little known and long forgotten actions of the American government and its citizens. America's entry into the war foreclosed the possibility of a negotiated peace among the belligerents, who were exhausted by three years of fighting. In another year or two, the warring nations would have been forced to reach a settlement. There would have been no punitive peace treaty, no reparations, no Nazis and World War Two. Four very different individuals – Socialist Morris Hillquit, liberal feminist Crystal Eastman, House Majority Leader Claude Kitchin, and Senator Bob LaFollette – all believed industrial corporations wielded too much sway, eager for war to increase their profits. Americans could do a good business with one or both sides while the killing lasted. A Nashville headline: "Let 'em shoot! It makes good business for us!" The Progressives argued that all munitions be produced by the federal government to take the profits out of war. If that happened, the millionaire patriots agitating for ever increasing armaments would instead complain about the tax money being spent to prepare for war in time of peace. LaFollette insisted the "trade in munitions had but one purpose, and that is to sacrifice human life for private gain." Peace advocates had grand conventions, but little came of them. They were praised for their efforts, but belligerents were firm about the war ending their way. The warring nations wanted decisive victory for their armies. Some claimed spinning grand designs for a mediated peace was a colossal waste of time. People who warned us against entering wars often end up being right, and they often end up being punished by a government that doesn't want to hear the message. In joining the Allies, the US won the war, but lost the peace, gaining no satisfying moral outcome. In no previous war had there been so much repression in the US, legal and otherwise. Never had the government created a propaganda agency to make an altruistic case for involvement. President Woodrow Wilson believed war critics had to stay silent or suffer. He equated opposition with treason. He actually endorsed a form of Prussianism: employing the might of the state to crush the liberties of its citizens. As Max Eastman (brother of Crystal Eastman) said, "There is no use making the world safe for democracy if there is no democracy left in the world. There is no use waging a war for liberty if every liberty we have must be abolished in order to wage war." War Against War presents a lot to ponder. This is not light reading, but it is worth it. I received a free copy in exchange for my honest review.

Georgetown history professor Michael Kazin wears his biases on his sleeve. As someone who was very active in the 1960s anti-war and radical movements, Kazin has written a highly sympathetic account of the anti-war movement that arose in the U.S. to keep us out of World War I. He organizes his history around the lives of four people who symbolized the broad-based coalition that worked round the clock in their anti-war efforts. They are the Southern segregationist Majority Leader of the House and Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Claude Kitchin; Crystal Eastman a social reformer who founds the Woman's Peace Party and the American Union Against Militarism; Morris Hilquit the Jewish Socialist labor lawyer and politician from New York City and Senator Robert La Follette, the Wisconsin progressive filibusters President Wilson's proposal to arm merchant ships. It was that filibuster that caused the Senate to adopt the cloture rules we have today. Along the way we meet Crystal Eastman's brother, Max who publishes *Masses*, future socialist Norman Thomas, auto magnate Henry Ford, social reformer Jane Addams and Roger Baldwin who would found the ACLU. All in all it was quite a broad coalition and in Kazin's mind they worked a miracle to keep the U.S. out of the war as long as it did in countering a pro-war movement headed up by Theodore Roosevelt. After all the *Lusitania* was sunk by a German U-boat in 1915 and under the aegis of the German ambassador, Germany was running a vast terror network on the east coast. That network caused the Black Tom explosion in New York Harbor which blew up munitions heading for England. He argues that were it not for the anti-war movement the U.S. would have entered the war sooner causing countless more American deaths. I would argue to the contrary because, in my opinion, a U.S. entry say in early 1916 would have likely shortened the war and prevented the carnage on the eastern front that was to come. My criticism of Kazin's work is that he ignores the broad forces of history that made U.S. entry into the war inevitable. The U.S. as a rising power couldn't really stay out and a Professor Adam Tooze has taught us that during 1916 economic power was being transferred from England to the U.S. Simply put the U.S. had too much at stake in an Allied victory as the Allies were head over in heels in debt to the U.S. and the war was engendering an economic boom. It was only a matter of time for the "peace candidate" Woodrow Wilson to tip his hand. That happened in 1917 when Germany renewed unrestricted submarine warfare, the Zimmermann telegram was published indicating German overtures to Mexico and Tsar Nicholas II abdicated making it easy for Wilson to say that the war was about democracy. Put in a geopolitical context, no U.S. president would allow a Europe dominated by a hostile Germany. Nevertheless Kazin tells a

good story about an era in American history that has long been forgotten.

I received a free electronic copy of this history from Netgalley, Michael Kazin, and Simon and Schuster in exchange for an honest review. Thank you all, for sharing your hard work with me. I have a special interest in 20th century history, including WWI during which my maternal grandfather served. This book touches on those who supported isolationism during the WWI conflict - something only covered lightly in my past readings. I am grateful to more fully understand this aspect of our history. The book is well written, and well documented. It is one I will keep for research. Though the isolationists of WWII and the Vietnam Conflict have been pretty well documented, I was not aware that WWI had as strong a backing of anti-militarists as this book reveals them to be. Thank you, for sharing this aspect of American history with me.

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