Frédéric Passy:
Patriotic Pacifist

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ALFRED NOBEL’S WILL establishing the famous peace prize that bears his name stipulated that it go to “the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.” Since 1901, the Nobel Committee has conferred the prize upon more than one hundred individuals and groups, awarding it that first year to two individuals: Henry Dunant (1828-1910), founder of the International Red Cross, and Frédéric Passy (1821–1912), an indefatigable proponent of international peace. Dunant’s nomination provoked considerable controversy. Critics charged that by helping to alleviate the suffering of warfare, the Red Cross actually made war more tolerable, thus weakening an important consideration in states’ decisions to pursue peaceful policies. Passy, however, represented the ideal type of peace advocate described in Nobel’s will. As a liberal economist, member of the French Chamber of Deputies, and advocate of social and educational reform, Passy referred consistently to his commitment to peace as his guiding principle, created one of the most enduring peace societies in France, and provided the catalyst for the French peace movement’s expansion. His long service in the cause of peace began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued unabated until his death in 1912. Passy’s approach led to an open framework in the organization of the
peace movement; he promoted what he called the “politics of the possible,” declaring: “[w]hoever loves peace—for whatever reason—is with us.” As a result, the French peace movement achieved a level of diversity that contributed to its vitality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Passy’s major contribution to the development of modern peace movements lay in his ability to frame peace in practical terms, thus distancing the goal of perpetual peace from its association with idealism and utopianism.

The European peace movement in the years leading up to the First World War has been the subject of considerable research since the early 1990s, when the process of European integration was reaching a critical point. As Sandi Cooper suggested at the time, European peace advocates a century earlier would have welcomed this transformation of Europe as the realization of their own ideas, whose time had finally come. Passy and his colleagues in France stood at the forefront of the peace movement on the European continent, where an approach to peacemaking based on humanistic and juridical considerations, rather than religious sensibilities, distinguished it from its Anglo-American counterparts. In part because it acknowledged the legitimacy of war in cases of national defence, continental European pacifism from this period has frequently been qualified with adjectives meant to differentiate it from the “absolute” or “integral” pacifism that insists upon non-violence and refusal to take an active part in any war. Cooper, for instance, uses the phrase “patriotic pacifism,” while Norman Ingram calls the pre-1914 variety “old-style pacifism” (le pacifisme ancien style) to distinguish it from the more radical “new style” that predominated in the 1920s and 1930s. The British historian Martin Ceadel categorizes the French peace movement as “pacificist,” a term borrowed from A.J.P. Taylor that has not received enthusiastic acceptance by scholars. The word “pacifism” itself was introduced in 1901 by Émile Arnaud, a Frenchman who wanted the word to denote the secular and juridical approach to peace, in contrast to the approach embraced by those “friends of peace” whom he regarded as utopian. Changing circumstances have reshaped the word’s meaning over time so that, iron-
ically, it has become more closely associated with those groups that Arnaud disdained—to the extent that, as Roger Chickering points out, historians’ practice of making such distinctions “excludes from the category of pacifist the very people who invented the term as a self-designation.” The present biographical profile of Frédéric Passy shares the concerns raised by Chickering and others about the shortcomings involved in making such qualifications about “pacifism” as a descriptor, especially as the word was used in its original sense during Passy’s lifetime. Passy—who actually preferred the word *pacifique* to *pacifiste*—is described here as a “patriotic pacifist,” not to diminish in any way the validity of his pacifism, but to emphasize the compatibility between his patriotic and pacifist commitments.

**Passy and the Political Economy of Peace**

Passy was born into a family brimming with well-placed public servants. These included a number of veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, such as his father, Félix, who fought at Waterloo; his great-uncle the Count d’Aure, who fought in Egypt and Santo Domingo; and his uncle Hippolyte, who followed Napoleon into Russia and later held ministerial positions during the July Monarchy and the Second Republic. “In my childhood and youth,” Passy explained in his autobiography, “I might easily have been drawn towards militarism.” But listening to the war stories told by the Count d’Aure and reflecting upon the French conquest of Algeria caused Passy to consider the harmful effects war had on the material and moral condition of humanity. Although he was trained in law, his interest turned increasingly to moral and political economy. His influences, as he contemplated the problems of war and peace, included the liberal economists and proponents of free trade Richard Cobden and Frédéric Bastiat, the American abolitionists, and the champion of Irish Catholic emancipation, Daniel O’Connell. Under the intellectual tutelage of these figures, Passy wrote, “individual liberty, the sacred
character of human life, the inviolability of conscience, respect for work, property, and trade became dogmas for me.”

Passy became particularly influenced by Bastiat’s faith that unrestricted commerce would harmonize interests among nations and ensure peace. Bastiat’s optimistic belief in this natural harmony of interests led him to advocate an unequivocal program of *laissez-faire*: peace and liberty were, for him, two sides of the same coin. Known as “the French Cobden” for his support of free trade, Bastiat argued that the material interests of France lay in solidarity with other nations and that war benefited only a few in society while excessively taxing the majority. In 1849, he asserted that the survival of the French Second Republic depended upon a policy of disarmament and investment in education and industry. The initiative to disarm, moreover, should be unilateral, since the French arms build-up had provoked the global arms race (*la paix armée*) to begin with. He specifically recommended a foreign policy of non-intervention, which meant withdrawal from Algeria, and the reduction of the standing army to two hundred thousand troops. These measures, he estimated, would save France one hundred million francs. Bastiat believed, furthermore, that the economic dislocation caused by the *paix armée* would continue as long as the process of government excluded public opinion. “Freedom in the interior, peace abroad. That is the whole program,” Bastiat insisted. The revolutionary events of 1848 convinced him that developments in mass politics were making the goal of universal peace more attainable. As he wrote to the 1850 Peace Congress in Frankfurt:

For some years, the world has withstood circumstances which would certainly have incited long and cruel wars in other eras. Why have they been avoided? Because if there are partisans of war in Europe, there are also friends of peace; if there are men who are always set to go to war, in whom a foolish education has imbued archaic and prejudiced ideas, who attach honour only to physical courage and see glory only in military feats, there are fortunately
Inspired by Bastiat, in 1849, Passy left his rather enviable position as an auditor in the Council of State to embark on a career as an economist. He refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Napoleon III, however, and therefore forfeited any chance to secure a permanent full-time position in education or government during the 1850s-60s. He was married in 1848, and the wealth of his wife, Blanche (née Sageret), fortunately allowed Passy the freedom to write and lecture.\textsuperscript{18} He did so prodigiously during this period, publishing \textit{Mélanges économiques} (1857), \textit{De la propriété intellectuelle} (1859), \textit{Leçons d’économie politique} (1861), \textit{La Démocratie et l’instruction} (1864), and \textit{Les Machines et leur influence sur le développement de l’humanité} (1866). Many of these books were collections of the various courses on economy and education that he offered as an itinerant lecturer at universities in Pau, Montpellier, Bordeaux, and Nice. These occurred under the patronage of Michel Chevalier, who was co-architect, with Cobden, of the famous free-trade treaty of 1860 during the liberal period of the Second Empire. Passy gained a reputation as a skilful speaker; his qualities as an orator were remembered vividly in one of the eulogies offered after his death: he possessed “impeccable” phrasing, “perfect mastery” of timing, a voice that was “warm, vibrant, naturally moving,” and he had “a proud disdain for theatri.cs.” Above all, Passy projected a “candid sincerity” that inspired in his audience the belief that they were listening to “a living conscience…who made of each speech, even the simplest toast..., a very noble, intelligent, and comforting spectacle.”\textsuperscript{19} His habit of independent thinking and powers of communication served as valuable assets in his career as a peace advocate.

Like Bastiat, Passy regarded peace as the natural state of human society. War resulted from misunderstandings between nations, and these, he believed, would ultimately be overcome through educated public opinion aided by improved technologies of communication and the elimination of commercial barriers.\textsuperscript{20} “One of the
principal causes of war and international animosities,” he claimed, “is the absence or deficiency of information, and more often, alas!, its inaccurate and untruthful character.” Once the physical and material barriers had been hurdled, the impediments to international understanding would disappear, and moral solidarity among nations would become the rule:

Three or four inventions appeared, the fruits of the speculation of intelligence, and the physical world has been transformed. Science has spoken, and the material barriers [have been] thrown down….Yesterday, everyone saw the world in narrow limits; tomorrow, the world will be everyone’s country…. Material abundance has brought morality everywhere along with it.22

Passy described war as an “artificial” disaster and pointed out the material self-destruction and moral stupidity that it represented. People possessed the power to avoid war through informed choice, after all—a power that they lacked in preventing natural disasters.

Still, Passy’s enthusiasm for technology as the vehicle for lasting international peace was not unrestrained. He recognized that the ingenuity applied to the development of peaceful modes of production could also devise instruments of horrific destruction. Issues concerning the increasing destructive power of military technology became of especial concern to him. He warned that innovations such as dynamite and smokeless powder, artillery of greater precision and mobility, and armoured naval vessels of increasing proportions had rendered modern warfare inhuman in the most literal sense:

Man no longer fights…; he only controls machines of destruction that fight for and against him. Just as in the factories of Chicago, where…the swine that enter into the merciless machinery reappear upon their exit in the form of ham, lard, and sausages, the same is true of this prodigious machinery that today constitutes the material of war: it will take just moments for armies that never meet to be trans-
formed into blood-soaked dirt and twisted flesh…. The machinery will carry out its duty without thinking about the men who put them into action. Where is there a place for heroism in all this?  

The real dynamic guiding humanity towards peace and away from war, Passy asserted, would come from the moral improvement that material advances would engender, not simply from the increased power that machines put at people’s disposal. It is not clear whether he was aware of the series of international peace congresses held between 1843 and 1850, but Passy first became involved in the peace movement in the 1850s. In addition to writing to the 1850 Frankfurt Peace Congress, Passy’s idol, Bastiat, had participated in the 1849 Peace Congress held in Paris, joining the journalist Émile de Girardin to present an analysis of how the misuse of capital for the military hindered the development of domestic prosperity. Victor Hugo had delivered a stirring speech during the same congress, in which he predicted the eventual emergence of a “United States of Europe.” Passy did not take part in these gatherings, however. It was war in the Crimea and in Italy that ultimately inspired him to action. He concluded that “the greater part of humanity’s miseries were so much the product of our own fault that it could only be up to us to make them disappear,” and he regarded the press as a powerful instrument of education for the cause of peace. In 1859, he conceived a plan for a journal devoted entirely to “pacific propaganda,” which resulted in a brief collaboration, in 1863, with Edmond Potonié, another French pioneer of the European peace movement, on a bilingual (French–English) periodical, *Le Courrier International*. In a letter to Potonié, Passy pointed to “the necessity of a common action of enlightened and dedicated men of all nations in order to prepare and assure [a] future...where fair-minded and wise sentiments will prevail..., a future of growing peace, justice, and solidarity...” A fundamental belief in the efficacy of education and the positive role of public opinion in preventing war and ending the armed peace in general fuelled his decision to call for the establishment of an organization towards those ends.
La Ligue internationale et permanente de la paix

The threat of war between Prussia and France in 1867 provided Passy with the opportunity to make his plan a reality. A dispute over the continuing presence of a Prussian garrison in Luxembourg had brought the two countries to the brink of war in April. Napoleon III coveted the duchy of Luxembourg, whose status remained uncertain in the wake of the war between Austria and Prussia and the subsequent dissolution of the German Confederation the previous year. Inquiries made concerning such an acquisition were received favourably at the court of the Dutch king, to whose house the territory was nominally attached, as well as by the Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. However, a controversy—possibly engineered by Bismarck—erupted in the Prussian Diet after a discussion of the plan provoked the ire of the National Liberals. The Dutch court consequently retreated from its former position, and a clamour arose in France that the Luxembourg garrison was a threat to French national security. The press in both countries made vociferous accusations, and war seemed to loom on the horizon. However, appeals to Russia and Great Britain to mediate the dispute led to its peaceful settlement on 11 May after a conference in London. Luxembourg’s status as an autonomous, neutral state was guaranteed, while the Prussians removed the objectionable garrison on 9 September.26

At the height of the crisis, Passy had launched an appeal in the pages of the influential newspaper *Le Temps* for an international peace society.27 By the end of May, Passy and his supporters announced the creation of the International and Permanent Peace League (Ligue internationale et permanente de la paix, or LIPP). The league sought to bring together influential figures throughout Europe and America, not only to intervene when imminent war loomed, but also to bring to the public’s attention policies that could potentially lead to international crises. It quickly succeeded in attracting members from Italy, Belgium, Germany, and the United States, in addition to France, and it appealed for the support of people from all backgrounds and religious or political affiliations. Letters of support
came from an association of German workers, from French theology students in Geneva, from Protestant pastors in France, and from Freemasons in Marseilles. Significant individuals who responded to Passy’s initiative included the pastor of the Reformed Church in Paris, Joseph Martin-Paschoud; the Grand Rabbi of France, Lazare Isidor; and the Oratorian priest Alphonse Gratry, a prominent advocate of the liberalization of the Catholic Church.28

The ecumenical character of this group reflected Passy’s own beliefs, spiritual and temporal, and it is worth lingering a moment here over his religious identity, particularly given the traditionally close association between sectarian beliefs and pacifism. Passy rooted his own pacifism firmly in the worldly considerations of political economy rather than in any religious doctrine, although it should be kept in mind that, for him, material factors and moral concerns occupied either side of the same coin. Though Passy had always admired and befriended members and clergy of other faiths, he lived as a fairly observant Roman Catholic much of his life, insisting upon regular attendance at Sunday Mass and, when he lived with his young family in Ézy-sur-Eure during the 1850s, often enjoying the company of the local parish priest.29 A change came after 1870, however, upon Pope Pius IX’s announcement of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Passy could no more accept such an assertion of exclusive authority by the pope than he could swear an oath of loyalty to Napoleon III. Thereafter, Passy and his family gravitated towards a liberal Protestantism, although never formally adhering to a specific denomination. He believed generally in immortality and divine retribution in the afterlife for one’s earthly conduct; he was not so ecumenical that he strayed away from a basic Christianity, and he held St. Paul in especially high regard. Passy’s eldest son, Paul, even suggests that his father remained a “liberal Catholic” to some degree, identifying the renegade (and married) liberal Catholic priest Hyacinthe Loyson (Père Hyacinthe) as the religious friend with whom Passy “felt the most direct spiritual communion.”30 In a letter that he wrote to his family after being struck by what would be his final illness, Passy made sure to point out that his preference that the
Protestant pastor Charles Wagner preside over his funeral “in no way implie[d] an exclusive sympathy or antipathy whatever to one or another faith.” Instead, he affirmed his adherence to “the universal religion.”

In much the same way, Passy considered diversity and ideological neutrality the foundations of the LIPP’s strength. Another peace society, the International League of Peace and Freedom (Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté, or LIPL), whose radical republican and socialist tendencies were reflected in its broad program of social, economic, and political reform, had appeared the same year as Passy’s own. Passy believed that the other interests addressed by the LIPL would be a distraction from the principal task of working for peace:

> If other associations pursue other works or if League members work...at different tasks besides our own that put them in the situation of finding themselves no longer at one, that is their right and perhaps their duty. At the heart of the League, there is only one thought—the pacification of international discord—and only one flag—the flag of justice and mutual respect. And neither politics nor religion, whatever influence they might otherwise have upon the convictions and the conduct of each one of us, will be able to disturb that accord.

In practice, the league purposefully avoided developing into a mass democratic movement by imposing expensive dues on its members. It aimed instead at influencing the highest levels of society and politics and sought to allay any fear governments might have that it sponsored a radical agenda. Much to his chagrin, Passy discovered that government authorities often confused his society with the LIPL, and this led him to take pains to persuade officials of the Second Empire that his activities would not be politically disruptive. He assured one suspicious official of his utter rejection of “the pettiness of partisanship, that pest so devotedly agitated by the imbeciles and wretches of every camp”: “I have never varied in that view, no more
than I have in my horror of war.” This conviction remained the core of Passy’s style as a peace advocate for the rest of his life.

His relationship with the LIPL improved after the demise of the Second Empire and the moderation of the LIPL’s own program, but Passy sometimes expressed reservations about certain groups or individuals associated with the peace movement when he believed their other goals compromised the main agenda. Devoted to liberal political economy as he was, for instance, Passy mistrusted the socialists who occasionally appeared at peace congresses, although he acknowledged the legitimacy of certain socialist concerns. He considered the violence associated with the labour movement, in particular, to be a significant hindrance to the goals of social and international peace, and reasoned that the very presence of this violence justified the peace movement’s work all the more. Elsewhere, though, he admitted that “in the program of certain revolutionaries and in the overall movement that is vaguely called socialism, there are some points, some very legitimate aspirations, that we would be wrong not to take into account, and which we may even support.” The Universal Peace Congress at Antwerp in 1894, however, caused Passy to be concerned about the peace movement’s relations with the labour movement. Acknowledging that the social costs of the armed peace weighed most heavily upon the working classes, and recognizing the growing influence of workers’ associations, the congress considered a proposal to inquire into ways that these representatives of the labour movement might be included in the deliberations of the peace congresses. Some French representatives at the congress supported the proposal, but Passy argued vigorously against it on two counts. First, he rejected the significance of class distinctions in free and democratic societies, where no legal barriers prevented movement up or down the social ladder. Second, while admitting the benefits of making overtures to workers’ associations, he recommended that these associations or their individual members join one of the existing peace societies rather than form a separate entity within the peace movement itself.
Passy sometimes lost patience with other supporters whose motives he suspected. In 1894, for instance, Édouard Grimbert announced the creation of two peace societies, the Ligue française de la paix and the Association internationale pour la justice et le droit. Both organizations claimed to work for the suppression of war and the popularization of the idea of international arbitration. They resembled other mainstream peace groups in their composition and professed tactics, and made specific appeals to university students as well as workers’ associations. Grimbert also claimed to be the president of an Association internationale de la presse pacifique, which supposedly published two journals, La Revue pacifique and La Patriotte hebdomédai re, and had further plans to publish yet another, La Revue pacifique et littéraire. All this industry from one man led Passy to conclude that Grimbert might be a swindler, one of a few who sought to turn the rising popularity of the peace movement after 1889 to their own advantage.

The “True Patriotism”

On 21 May 1867, Passy delivered a lecture at the École de Médecine in Paris that essentially summarized the themes that he would go on to emphasize for the next forty-five years. Passy made sure to point out that he approached the question of peace, not from a political perspective, but from economic, moral, and philosophical principles. He also made the significant reservation that he was specifically addressing war of an aggressive nature—wars of conquest and expansion. “In certain cases,” he admitted, “when it concerns defending or recovering the independence of one’s country..., war can be and is the most noble and magnificent task in life, for it is the most complete surrender, the supreme sacrifice to the first among duties, the unhesitating and absolute devotion to a holy cause.” Having asserted both his political disinterest and his patriotism, Passy explained his mission as “the true patriotism”: “tranquil patriotism, quiet patriotism, the patriotism of peace; …patriotism without hate,
but not without love; …patriotism that bears no one a grudge, yet bows before no one; and just as it sincerely respects the rights of other nations, it expects other nations to respect its rights.”

Passy refuted claims that war strengthened the nation by expanding its commercial and territorial wealth and developing its moral character through an infusion of “manly” and energetic virtues. He invoked the liberal economic argument that military pursuits wasted valuable capital for unproductive purposes; he denied the alleged productive stimulus that war provided; and he questioned whether conquest had truly benefited Russia in Poland, Great Britain in Ireland, or France in Algeria. Nor was the force of arms the proper method to open new markets. While not denying the presumed superiority of European civilization or the legitimacy of its dominant position in Africa or Asia, Passy advised instead the approach of enlightened example in developing these “undeveloped” lands:

The European nations, the Christian nations, the nations who march at the head of civilization in all things...have to give a good example to these people, beginning with showing themselves wiser, more moderate, more patient to them in their needs. They have to respect their traditions, their mores, their beliefs, even their prejudices, until, little by little, persuasion can act upon them and enlighten them. They are men like us, after all; and we are not exempt ourselves from bizarre behaviour and errors.

Passy used his position as a member of the Chamber of Deputies during the 1880s to bring imperialism under scrutiny and to advance the idea of international arbitration. He saw imperialism as a moral issue that should cause reflection among European nations—especially France, which had, by then, seen portions of its own territory annexed in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. In October 1883, for instance, Passy attacked the government’s imperialist policy in Tonkin, proposing that the dispute between China and France be submitted for arbitration. The suggestion was met with such violent ridicule that Passy left the Chamber ill. He returned to
the matter in 1885, pointing out the hypocrisy of denying the people of Tonkin and other colonies the same rights that the French claimed for the people of Alsace and Lorraine. “It is their life...,” Passy asserted. “It is their Alsace; it is their Lorraine, to them. For them and before humanity as before God, it is worth as much as our own.”

Passy also criticized the éspirt militaire engendered by “an armed nation within a nation.” The habit of blind and passive obedience so instilled, although appropriate for the military’s specific purpose, was unhealthy when carried over into civil society. Passy believed that the long stretches of unoccupied, unproductive, and unregimented time that characterized garrison life promoted laziness and such unhealthy pursuits as gambling and promiscuity. The proper “military virtues” might just as well be nurtured in the home and workplace without disrupting the fabric of family and society; in fact, the citizen-soldier might prove to be more ardent:

Do not fear that the man who will be used to working every day in order to feed his wife and to raise his children is incapable of making the effort to defend them at a moment’s notice. He will have been an exact and conscientious labourer in his workshop, an honest and polite foreman, a boss concerned with the well-being and dignity of the men he employs; in other words, he will have known and fulfilled his duties each day. Now comes the exceptional day when it is necessary to call on these extraordinary virtues, on these heroic sacrifices that the country’s well-being sometimes requires; rest assured that this man will still know how to fulfill his duty that day and will not fail in his task.

Military life uprooted men from their native soil, families, and way of life; its physical and moral effects damaged rather than strengthened a country.

Certainly, Passy was neither a radical antimilitarist nor a non-resistant. He had served in the Garde nationale during the upheaval of 1848, and his son Paul relates that he sometimes carried a weapon to protect himself when walking through dangerous neighbourhoods
upon returning home late at night after having delivered a lecture. Passy rejected schemes that promoted disarmament without first ensuring that institutions that would promote international co-operation and security could be put into place. In 1887, when he accepted the honorary title of president of a peace society composed of members still in their teens, Passy expressed concern over a statute that called for the suppression of permanent armies through the creation of national militias. Passy pointed out to his new young colleagues that the reduction of permanent armies could not take place without a general acceptance of international arbitration. Even later, when the French peace movement had grown considerably, and the question of whether it should offer support to conscientious objectors came up at one of the national congresses of peace societies that were then being held, Passy took a cautious stand. He expressed admiration for those who willingly suffered the punishment incurred for obeying their conscience, but he also largely rejected conscience as a claim for avoiding military service. These views reflected the moderate and cautious tone of “patriotic pacifism” that Passy championed.

The Politics of the Possible

One of the first crises Passy faced as a leader of the French peace movement was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Understandably, the fortunes of the peace movement encountered a sudden turnabout during, and immediately after, the conflict. One factor in this was the dispersion of the peace movement’s forces. Supporters were scattered across France, caught unprepared by the rapidity with which the dispute over the succession to the Spanish throne escalated into war. Passy himself was away from Paris at the time. He could do no more than circulate protests via the press, which was in no way as cooperative as it had been in 1867. An appeal that Passy dated 9 July 1870 blamed the crisis on King Wilhelm of Prussia’s dynastic ambitions and called on the spontaneous power of public opinion to deter the “human butchery” in preparation. No doubt Passy held
Napoleon III equally accountable, but publicly expressing this view would likely have decreased even further the chances of his words reaching the columns of French newspapers. Even Passy admitted that nothing much was hoped for out of this initiative, and he never learned whether royal eyes ever read the appeal.

The debacle at Sedan, several months into the war, offered Passy another opportunity to address the Prussian victor in the hope of preventing any more bloodshed. Along with some others, Passy composed yet another letter to Wilhelm on 9 September. This one argued that the motives that the Prussians claimed had led them to take up arms—the insult to its national honour committed by Napoleon III’s government and the fear of a French attack—no longer existed. The Prussian monarch thus had a chance to serve the causes of peace and justice in Europe by leaving France under its new republican form of government and pursuing a peaceful relationship with its neighbours. Passy, who by this time had reached Paris, even considered travelling by one of the balloons that were just beginning to connect Paris to the provinces to make a personal appeal to Wilhelm, but aborted the plan.

These days of desperation not only revealed the organizational weakness of Passy’s peace league, but also pointed to the necessity of pressing for more solid methods for securing international peace than the current practice of appealing to key political leaders. Over the following decades, Passy played a leading role in developing a more systematic approach to establishing a basis for international peace. While still rooting his plans in the power of enlightened public opinion, Passy went on to advocate such measures as the codification of international law, the establishment of bodies that would arbitrate disputes between states, and an end to the ever-escalating arms race that ravaged economies and exacerbated social tensions. The importance of arbitration as the linchpin of this system of practical and rational international relations was reflected in the new name that Passy gave to his peace society in 1891: the French Society for Arbitration between Nations (Société française pour l’arbitrage entre nations).
Passy regarded republican forms of government as the best suited for promoting international peace, since their policies reflected the desires of (hopefully enlightened) public opinion rather than the ambitions of dynastic rulers. Unwilling to collaborate with Napoleon III’s empire, Passy now welcomed the opportunity to work directly through the political process in the new republic. Passy already had experience in public service when he ran for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. In 1846, he had served as an auditor with the Council of State, but had given up on a career as a functionary in 1849. Although he had been offered a political position during the early years of the Second Empire, he turned his back on Napoleon III’s regime by continuing to refuse to take the oath of loyalty. He ran for several low-level offices in the 1870s with only minimal success, leading authorities to dismiss him as “upstanding...but of an indecisive character and poorly defined opinions,” and to complain: “He calls himself a liberal republican but he has not been able to find a place in either the center or moderate left.... He is certainly not a politician.”

Paul Passy reports that, aside from his disdain for the Bonapartist regime, his father remained politically indifferent throughout the Second Empire, committing himself to no faction in particular. Although his family had strong ties to Orléanism, the heirs to that political legacy disappointed Passy, and he welcomed the Third Republic’s birth in September 1870. After winning election to the local council for Seine-et-Oise in 1874, Passy held that seat for twenty-four years, and in 1881 he defeated a Bonapartist candidate to represent the eighth arrondissement of Paris in the Chamber of Deputies. He embraced a moderate platform that advocated the gradual separation of church and state and laissez-faire policies in place of social reform. The only issue he addressed that directly concerned the peace movement was that of military service: he called for three-year obligatory terms for all citizens, but stipulated that the period could be shortened for those contributing to “the intellectual grandeur of France.”

Passy’s tenure in the French legislature afforded him several opportunities to make the peace movement’s views heard by the
government. Although none of Passy’s initiatives achieved success in terms of legislation or treaties, his ardent efforts and moderate tone gradually broke down the suspicion and outright animosity with which his views were first met. *Le Matin* reported in 1888, “His colleagues in the Chamber of Deputies always listen with respect to his discreet and honest utterances, even when they cannot share the convictions, which he supports with a fervour resembling that of youth.” Although he would not support Passy’s convictions in practice, Charles de Freycinet, who served as both premier and foreign minister at the time, was one of those who assured Passy that he agreed with his convictions in “principle.” “It is assuredly most desirable,” he said, “that the voice of reason, of humanity, and of law should be substituted in international differences for the brutal language of the cannon.”\(^{56}\) Initiatives that had once been rejected out of hand now garnered greater respect. In August 1884, he won support from radical republicans for a renewal of his suggestion to arbitrate the Tonkin problem, managing, this time, to get fifty votes for his proposal.\(^{57}\) By 1887, Passy had accumulated enough support in the Chamber to present a proposal requesting that the government “take advantage of all favourable occasions to enter into negotiations with other governments to promote the practice of arbitration and mediation.” The 112 deputies who signed the proposal cut across all party lines. It was presented to the foreign minister René Goblet, who nevertheless objected: “It is not for us, a defeated power, to make overtures.”\(^{58}\)

Passy’s most enduring contribution to the cause of peace in his capacity as a member of the Chamber came with the organization of the Inter-parliamentary Conference held in Paris in 1889. Renamed the Inter-parliamentary Union in 1899, it continues to meet to this day. The conference grew out of the 1887 initiatives of William Randal Cremer, a British MP, and Passy, who had simultaneously, yet separately, petitioned the members of their respective legislatures to support arbitration treaties between their countries and the United States. In November 1888, a delegation of nine British MPs, led by Cramer, met with twenty-five French deputies to discuss
ways of combining their efforts. The two delegations agreed to reconvene the following year and to recruit delegations from the parliaments of other nations.59

Among the fifty-five French legislators who attended the resulting 1889 conference were such future luminaries of the Third Republic as Léon Bourgeois and Jean Jaurès. Jules Simon opened the conference, and Passy served as its president. The conference focused particularly on the immediate issue of arbitration. In his inaugural address, Simon articulated the aspirations of the architects of the conference: “Representing the diverse countries of the world, we can make...the most excellent use of that [force] which is given to us by the electors.”60 The conference passed five resolutions, four of which dealt with promoting the idea of arbitration among nations (the fifth was that the conference would gather the following year in London). A rejected motion, had it passed, would have made a first step towards creating an international tribunal of arbitration out of the supreme courts of those nations that had concluded arbitration treaties. Delegates perhaps felt that the resolution too eagerly anticipated the second step of the peace movement’s program before enough progress had been made on the first. One of the resolutions expressed the democratic ethos guiding the conference: “The conduct of governments tending to become more and more the expression only of ideas and sentiments voiced by the body of citizens, it is for the electors to lead the policy of their country in the directions of justice, of right, and of fraternity among nations.”61 Although another resolution assured that the conclusion of treaties of arbitration would not entail any imposition upon the constitution of governments, the Inter-parliamentary Conference’s program targeted those countries where representative democracy prevailed.

An “Irresistible Movement”

The Inter-parliamentary Conference, along with the Universal Peace Congress, also held in Paris only a few days before, served to
revitalize the European peace movement, which had remained relatively dormant since the Franco-Prussian War. The peace movement in France, in particular, underwent an impressive period of expansion during the 1890s. According to one estimate in 1896, the French peace movement comprised fifteen peace societies publishing nine peace-related journals.  

Passy published an optimistic assessment of the peace movement that year:

In spite of all the different interests which seek to put obstacles in its way, the [peace] movement is irresistible...As for myself, I have labored unceasingly in this cause for thirty years, and in spite of temporary defeats and mortifications, I have never despaired of ultimate success.... And now I believe I have a right to declare...that the horizon is brightening; deeds have spoken louder than words; the public mind is awakening to the necessity of arbitration.

A significant measure of the peace movement’s impact during this period was the 1899 Hague Conference, held in response to Tsar Nicholas II’s appeal to the leaders of other nations to discuss the issue of disarmament. Nicholas took the world by surprise with his call to explore “the most effectual means of insuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and durable peace, and, above all, of putting an end to the progressive development of the present armaments.”

Leaders of the peace movement across Europe naturally welcomed the tsar’s initiative as official recognition of the principles that they had promoted for so long. Still, the tsar’s emphasis on disarmament caused a certain wariness among most veterans of the peace movement, including Passy, who argued that a legitimately viable system of arbitration needed to precede any plans for disarmament. Cynics charged that the tsar’s motives lay, not in a sincere conversion to the peace movement’s point of view, but in an effort to buy Russia time until its economic situation had improved enough to allow it to compete militarily with its rivals.
Although the conference achieved nothing in the area of disarmament, it did succeed in establishing a Permanent Court of Arbitration, an outcome that proved so encouraging to some that another conference was held at The Hague in 1907 to improve upon the measures adopted in 1899. It also served as yet another catalyst for the expansion of the peace movement. In France, a further forty-seven peace societies appeared between 1899 and 1904. These totals include nineteen autonomous peace societies as well as new branches of those already in existence.

Passy’s dedication and persistence played no small role in this surge of enthusiasm for peace issues. Despite constant frustrations, ridicule, and failing health, he worked tirelessly to nurture the peace movement by offering encouragement and guidance to new peace societies, lecturing and publishing, organizing and attending conferences, corresponding with peace advocates from around the world, soliciting the support of figures ranging from Pope Leo XIII to Andrew Carnegie, countering attacks and criticisms from nationalists and cynics, and devising all sorts of methods to promote the peace movement’s message and program. Few were surprised, then, when he was announced as the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901. Nobel had died in 1896, but his heirs had contested his will, leaving the several prominent peace activists who expected to receive the honour—and the money—in anticipation for several years. Passy himself estimated that only about a half dozen people could lay claim to the prize and bristled at any suggestion that latecomers to the movement might be considered as candidates. As the committee in Christiania prepared to make its choice, publicity surrounding the prize grew, and the public attention provoked a strange incident in which Passy was challenged to a duel by a man who alleged, in a cryptic note: “the Nobel Prize does not belong to you.” Passy, approaching eighty years old, blind in his right eye (and nearly so in the other), told a colleague that he thought the man must be some kind of a practical joker, but he also took the precaution of requesting police protection when he delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne shortly afterwards. While no incident occurred, the episode reveals the
extent to which the peace movement had reached public consciousness, Passy’s recognition as one of the movement’s central figures, and the animosity he could attract as a result.

Passy received over one hundred thousand francs as his share of the award. Due to his frailty, he declined a trip to Christiania and so delivered no acceptance speech. (Dunant was by then an invalid and also failed to make the trip.) Instead, Passy wrote an article that he requested remain unpublished until after his death. The influential French peace journal *La Paix par le droit*, receiving it from Passy’s son, finally published the article on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Nobel Committee’s announcement. It castigated Nobel’s executors for the manner in which they mishandled his testament by using part of the money to create foundations that were not part of Nobel’s intentions. He also suggested that the award threatened to weaken the cause of peace by attracting individuals into the peace movement whose true motivation would be the prize money rather than a sincere dedication to the cause. Despite his outward support for the proliferation of peace societies in France and elsewhere, Passy had concerns that the peace movement could prove a refuge for charlatans, quacks, or others who might dilute its message by using it to pursue other goals besides the immediate aims of arbitration and disarmament.

**Recovering Passy’s Legacy**

While the Nobel Peace Prize seemed to mark the culmination of a career devoted to the cause of peace, Passy still had over a decade of activism ahead of him. At ninety, Passy finally collapsed, spent months incapacitated in bed, and died in June 1912. On 17 February of that year, while Passy lay on his deathbed, visitors to the Eiffel Tower watched, horrified, as a young, well-dressed woman of about twenty suddenly threw herself over one of the railings of the observation deck and plummeted to her death. Authorities identified the woman as Mathilde Paulian, one of Passy’s numerous grand-
children. Relatives never informed Passy of the tragedy, but with a little poetic license one can see in it an allegory of the fate of the peace that Passy had sought to nurture so carefully for nearly half a century. Two years after Passy’s death, Europe descended into four years of self-destruction that spread to other parts of the world and inaugurated the bloodiest century in history. Moreover, Passy’s pacifist colleagues in France and across Europe supported their countries’ respective decisions to go to war in 1914 as just. Paul Passy admitted to being thankful that his father did not live through the events of 1914—“if he had…he would have certainly been taken by the most bitter despair, since it would have seemed to him that his whole life’s work was in vain.”

The elder Passy would perhaps be consoled to learn that despite—or quite likely because of—the violence unleashed throughout the twentieth century, many today recognize the importance of his commitment to international co-operation and continue to follow his example, consciously or not. As an upstanding citizen and what the French call un honnête homme, Passy received the distinctions generally bestowed upon valued members of society during his lifetime. He was accepted into the Académie de sciences morales et politiques in 1877 and was elected president of the Association française pour l’avancement des sciences in 1881. He was decorated with the Legion of Honour in 1895 and was later elevated to the rank of commander in that order. He was regularly invited to accept positions as honorary president by the peace societies that appeared in great numbers in France and abroad after the early 1890s. After he won the Nobel Prize, even those opposed to his ideas treated him with a degree of respect, if not esteem. Still, although here and there throughout France, one may find a Rue or Avenue Frédéric Passy (in Nice, Neuilly, and Saint Germain en Laye, for example), successive world wars seem to have obliterated most memory of the man. Not until recently have the French and the European community attempted to recover his legacy. The centennial of the Nobel Prize offered one opportunity that was met with an official program of recognition sponsored, in part, by the French National Assembly and
the Ministries of State and Defence.\textsuperscript{74} The Inter-parliamentary Union repaid part of its debt to Passy in March 2004, when it inaugurated the Frédéric Passy Archive Centre.\textsuperscript{75} In fact, the Inter-parliamentary Union itself, the World Court at The Hague, even the European Union and the United Nations—the institutions that, today, form the very infrastructure of international cooperation—are, in truth, monuments to Passy.
Notes

1 Earlier versions of this article were presented as papers at the Siena Heights University Humanities Colloquium in April 2001 and at the conference “2001: A Peace Odyssey,” co-sponsored by the Peace History Society and the Hague Appeal for Peace at Hofstra University in November 2001. I would like to thank the following people for comments they made to previous drafts: Irwin Abrams, Kimberly Blessing, Joseph Chandler, Jun Tsuji, Anthony Sciglitano, Peter van den Dungen, and the anonymous reviewers and editorial staff of the Journal of Historical Biography. All translations from the French are my own.

2 The text of Alfred Nobel’s will can be read at http://nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/will/index.html. The most valuable historical account of the Nobel Peace Prize is Irwin Abrams, The Nobel Peace Prize and the Laureates: An Illustrated Biographical History, 1901–2001 (Nantucket, MA: Science History Publications, 2001), which draws upon unprecedented access to the Nobel Committee’s archives. In addition, the Peace History Society’s journal Peace & Change devoted its October 2001 edition to the Nobel Peace Prize to commemorate the award’s centennial.

3 Abrams regards the decision to include Dunant as co-recipient “one of the most important decisions in the history of the prize.” It established a precedent for the committee entrusted with conferring the prize to interpret Nobel’s wishes liberally; as a result, the prize has gone to a wide range of individuals and groups involved in humanitarian activities not directly aimed at war prevention. Abrams, The Nobel Peace Prize, 41-42. The controversy surrounding the Nobel Committee’s decision is also addressed in Geir Lundestad, “Reflections on the Nobel Peace Prize,” nobelprize.org, http://www.nobel.se/peace/articles/lundestad/index.html, and in André Durand, “Le premier Prix Nobel de la Paix (1901), Candidatures d’Henry Dunant, de Gustave Moynier, et du CICR,” Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge, 83: 842 (June 2001): 275–85 (retrievable online at http://www.icrc.org/Web/fre/sitefre0.nsf/html/5FZHXF). Other controversies surrounding Nobel Peace laureates are treated in Øyvind Tønnesson, “Controversies and Criticism,” nobelprize.org, http://www.nobel.se/peace/articles/controversies/index.html. For Dunant and the founding of the International Red Cross, see Caroline Moorehead, Dunant’s Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998). She addresses Dunant and the Nobel Peace Prize on pages 164-8.

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5 Quoted in Frédéric Passy, Historique du mouvement de la paix, (Paris: Librairie Guillaumin, 1901), 17.


Ingram points to the influential Association de la paix par le droit as the chief representative of “old-style pacifism.” Norman Ingram, “Pacifisme ancien style, ou le pacifisme de l’Association de la paix par le droit,” Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps, 30: 3 (1993): 2-5.


Chickering, Imperial Germany and a World without War, 16. Still, even Chickering makes an effort to draw distinctions between “utopian” and “ideological” variants of pacifism, categories derived from Karl Mannheim; Chickering, Imperial Germany and a World without War, 18-26. Other scholars who have considered cultural and historical shifts in the way that “pacifism” has been understood, particularly in the French context, include: Vaïsse, “Le Passé insupportable”; Grossi, Le Pacifisme européen, 31-42; Sudhir Hazareesingh, Political Traditions in Modern France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 178-206; and Michael Clinton, “Coming to Terms with ‘Pacifism’: The French Case, 1901-18” Peace & Change 26: 1 (January 2001): 1-30.


F. Passy, Pour la paix, 2-3. The French had seized Algeria in 1830.

Ibid., 4. Cobden, an English statesman, and Bastiat, a French economist, both advocated the eradication of tariffs and other policies intended to protect domestic industries. Cobden actually succeeded in securing a free-trade agreement between England and France in 1860. In 1829 the repeated electoral successes of O’Connell, an Irish Catholic landlord and lawyer, induced the British Parliament to eliminate the oath requiring MPs to swear to defend the Church of England, a requirement that, in practice, prohibited Catholics from sitting in Parliament. He later pursued an unsuccessful campaign to repeal the Act of Union (1801) that politically united Ireland with England. His tactics included “monster meetings” that drew hundreds of thousands of supporters as well as the vengeance of the British government, which had him arrested and convicted of conspiracy. His conviction was later overturned.


Ibid., p.467.

Frédéric Bastiat, “Lettre au Congrès de la Paix” (1850), ibid., v.1, p.198.

The Passy-Sageret family ties were further strengthened when Blanche’s mother Irma later married Félix Passy, Frédéric’s father.


Frédéric Passy, “‘La Question de la paix,’ Extrait du *Monde Economique* des 13 et 20 janvier 1894” (Paris, 1894), 4.

See Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism*, 22-30, for a summary of these peace congresses.

Frédéric Passy, *Pour la paix*, 6-8.


*Le Temps*, 26 April 1867.


Ibid., 36-8.

F. Passy to “My Dear Children,” 19 February 1912, Swarthmore College Peace Collection [SCPC] CDGB 1268, Folder 5 [photocopy]. In the same letter, Passy reminded his children of his desire to have his remains cremated.


F. Passy to Victor Duruy, Minister of Public Instruction, 1 June 1867, Archives Nationales [AN] F17 6648.


F. Passy to Ducommun, 30 November 1896, BIP 158/13.


“Appel de l’Association,” a flyer announcing the creation and specifics of the Association Internationale pour la Justice et le Droit [1894], BIP 230/14.

Édouard Grimbert to Ducommun, 5 August 1894, BIP 158/32.

F. Passy to Ducommun, 14 April 1902, BIP 230/14.


Ibid., 23.

Ibid., 16-7.


*Journal Officiel*, 23 December 1885, 338.

46 P. Passy, *Un apôtre de la paix*, 27.
47 Debate over the issue of conscientious objection is recorded in: Délégation
nationale des sociétés françaises de la paix, *Deuxième Congrès national des
sociétés françaises de la paix, Nîmes, 7, 8, 9, et 10 avril 1904: Compte rendu des
séances* (Nîmes, 1904), 42-51.
48 Frédéric Passy, “Notre Antimilitarisme,” *Revue de la Paix* 11 (February 1906),
37.
49 “Appel à l’opinion adressé, des le 9 juillet 1870, au nom de la Ligue
internationale et permanente de la Paix, à tous les amis de la paix, et recommandé
51 Ibid., 32-5; Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism*, 44.
52 The organization’s name from 1872 to 1891 had been the French Society of
Friends of Peace (Société française des amis de la paix.)
53 6 March 1874, Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris [PPP] B/a 1214.
55 *Le Constitutionnel*, 19 April 1881.
57 Ibid., 232.
58 F. Passy, *Pour la paix*, 89.
59 For an account of the origins of the Inter-parliamentary Union, see Christian
60 Quoted in *Le Temps*, 30 June 1889.
61 For an account of these sessions, see the issues of *Le Temps*, 30 June-2 July 1889.
(September-October 1896), 229-31.
63 Frédéric Passy, “Peace Movement in Europe,” *The American Journal of
Sociology* 2:1 (July 1896), 11-12.
64 A copy of the tsar’s appeal can be found in Charles Chatfield and Ruzanna
Ilukhina, eds., *Peace/ Mir: An Anthology of Historic Alternatives to War
66 F. Passy to Ducommun, 8 December 1898, BIP 161.
67 The letter, signed simply “Beaumarchais”, is dated 27 January 1901, PPP B/a
1214.
68 F. Passy to Ducommun, 28 January 1901, BIP 161; F. Passy to the Préfecture de
Police de Paris, 2 February 1901, PPP B/a 1214.
69 Comité Nobel du Parlement norvégien to Passy, 10 December 1901, SCPC
CDGB 1268, Folder 5 [photocopy].
71 Sandi E. Cooper, “The Reinvention of the ‘Just War’ among European Pacifists
72 P. Passy, *Un apôtre de la paix*, 56.
73 Wild, “Frédéric Passy,” in *Nobel Peace Prize*, ed. Karl Holl and Anne C.
Kjelling, 43-4.
See, in particular, the biographical appreciation composed for the commemoration, “Frédéric Passy, un député qui voulait interdire la guerre,” États généraux de l'action et du droit international humanitaires, http://www.palais-bourbon.fr/verenevemts/nobel-cicr-5.asp, which begins, “Although we celebrate the centenary of the Nobel Peace Prize this year, he who was deemed worthy of receiving it along with Henry Dunant, founder of the Red Cross, still remains unjustly forgotten.”