

CARTHAGO DELENDA EST

by Leo Tolstoy

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La Vita Internationale and L'Humanité Nouvelle sent me the following letter :

"Monsieur: – Dans le but d'être utile au développement des idées humanitaires de la civilisation La Vita Internationale (Milan), avec l'appui de L'Humanité

Nouvelle (Paris et Bruxelles), a cru devoir s'intéresser au difficile problème qui dernièrement s'est montré dans toute sa gravité et son importance à cause de la délicate question pour laquelle la France et le monde entier se sont passionnés si vivement : nous voulons parler du problème de la guerre et du militarisme. A cette fin, nous prions tous ceux qui en Europe dans la politique, les sciences, les arts, dans le mouvement ouvrier, parmi les militaires mêmes occupent la place la plus éminente, de contribuer à cette œuvre hautement civilisatrice en nous envoyant les réponses au questionnaire suivant :

" 1. La guerre parmi les nations civilisées est-elle encore voulue par l'histoire, par le droit, par le progrès ?

" ~ · Quels sont les effets intellectuels, moraux, physiques, économiques, politiques, du militarisme ?

" 3. Quelles sont les solutions qu'il convient de donner, dans l'intérêt de l'avenir de la civilisation mondiale, aux graves problèmes de la guerre et du militarisme ?

"4– Quels sont les moyens conduisant le plus rapidement possible à ces solutions ? " I cannot conceal that feeling of disgust, indignation, and even despair, which this letter provoked in me. People of our Christian world, enlightened, clever, good men, who profess the law of love and of brotherhood, who regard murder as a terrible crime, who, with few exceptions, are unable to kill an animal, all these people suddenly, under certain conditions, when these crimes are called war, not only recognize destruction, pillage, and the murder of men to be right and lawful, but themselves contribute to this pillage and these murders, prepare themselves for them, take part in them, and pride themselves on them. With this the same phenomenon is always repeated, namely this, that a vast majority of men, all the working people, those who do the pillaging and the murdering and bear the whole weight of this business, do not plan, or prepare, or wish these murders, and take part in them against their will, only because they are placed in such a position and are so minded that it seems to them, to each of

them individually, that they will fare worse, if they refuse to take part in these robberies and murders and in the preparations for them ; but it is only a very insignificant minority, which lives in luxury and idleness upon the labours of the working people, that plans and prepares those robberies and murders, and compels the working people to commit them. This deception has been taking place for a long time, but of late the impudence of the deceivers has reached the farthest limit : a large portion of the products of labour are taken away from the working people and are used for the preparations for these robberies and murders. In all the constitutional governments of Europe, the labourers themselves, all without exception, are called upon to take part in these robberies and murders, the international relations are intentionally made more and more complex, so as to lead up to war, peaceful countries are robbed without any cause, every year people are robbed and killed somewhere, and all men live in constant fear of universal mutual pillage and murder. It would seem to be obvious that if such a phenomenon takes place, it is due to this, that the greater masses are deceived by the minority, to which this deception is profitable, and that, therefore, the first thing those who want to free people from the calamities of these mutual robberies and murders ought to do is to lay open the deception in which the masses are, to show the masses how the deception is accomplished, how it is maintained, and how to be freed from it. But the enlightened men of Europe do nothing of the kind : instead of it they, under the pretext of cooperating with the establishment of peace, at first gather in one city of Europe, then in another, and seat themselves with most serious faces at tables and discuss in what way best to persuade the robbers, who live by their trade, to stop committing robberies and become peaceful citizens, and then they put profound questions : the first, as to whether history, right, progress demand war, as though the fictions which we invent can demand of us a departure from the fundamental moral law of our life; the second question, – as to what can be the consequences of war, as though there can be any doubt in this, that the consequences of war will always be universal calamity and universal corruption ; and, finally, the third question, how to solve the problem of war, as though there existed a difficult problem about how to free deceived men from the deception which we see clearly.

This is terrible. We see, for example, that healthy, peaceable, often happy people from year to year frequent gambling-dens, such as Monte Carlo, and leave there, for the advantage of the keepers of these dens, their health, their peace, their honour, and frequently their lives. We are sorry for these men ; we see clearly that the deception to which these people are subjected consists in those temptations by means of which the players are enticed, in the inequality of the chances, and in the infatuation of the players, who know that in general they will be losers, but none the less hope that they will at least once be more fortunate than others. All that is perfectly clear.

And here, instead of freeing people from these calamities, instead of pointing out to them the temptations to which they are subjected, the certainty of their losses, the immorality of the play, which is

based on the expectation of other people's misfortunes, we meet with distinguished men in sessions and discuss the questions as to how to arrange matters so that the keepers of the gambling establishments shall voluntarily close their institutions, we write books about this, and ask ourselves questions as to whether history, right, and progress do not demand the existence of gambling establishments, and what may be the consequences of roulette, – the economic, intellectual, moral consequences, etc.

If a man drinks, and I tell him that he can himself stop drinking and must do so, there is some hope that he will pay attention to me ; but if I tell him that his drunkenness forms a complex and difficult problem, which we, the learned, will try to solve in our meetings, all the probabilities are that he, waiting for the solution of the problem, will continue to drink. The same is true of the false and intricate scientific, external means for the cessation of war, like the international tribunals, the court of arbitration, and other similar foolish things, when we with them keep in abeyance the simplest and most essential means for the cessation of war, which is only too obvious to anybody. For people who do not need war not to fight we need no international tribunals, no solution of questions, but only that the people who are subject to deception should awaken and free themselves from that spell under which they are. This means for the abolition of war consists in this, that the men who do not need war, who consider a participation in war to be a sin, should stop fighting. This means has been preached since the most remote times by Christian writers, – Tertullian, Origen, and by the Paulicians and their continuators, the Mennonites, the Quakers, the Herrnhuters ; about this means wrote Dymond, Garrison, Ballou ; it will soon be twenty years during which I have in every way elucidated the sin, harmfulness, and senselessness of military service. This means was applied long ago, and has been applied with particular frequency, both by separate individuals in Austria, Prussia, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Russia, and by whole societies, such as the Quakers, Mennonites, Nazarenes, and of late the Dukhobors, a whole fifteen thousand of whom have now for three years been struggling against the mighty Russian government, in spite of all the sufferings to which they are subjected, without acceding to its demands that they take part in the crimes of military service.

But the enlightened friends of peace not only do not propose this means, – they cannot even bear the mention of it ; and when they hear of it, they make it appear that they do not notice it, or, if they notice it, they shrug their shoulders with a significant mien, expressing compassion for those uneducated and senseless people, who use such an inefficacious, stupid means, when they have such a good means, which consists in throwing salt on the tail of the bird which you want to catch, that is, in persuading the governments, which live only by violence and deception, to renounce this violence and deception.

They say that the misunderstandings that may arise between the governments will be decided by tribunals or by a court of

arbitration. But the governments do not at all wish for the settling of these misunderstandings : on the contrary, the governments invent misunderstandings, if they do not exist, because only misunderstandings with other governments give them an opportunity of maintaining the army on which their power is based. Thus the enlightened friends of peace try to distract the attention of the suffering working people from the only means which frees them from the slavery, in which they are held from childhood by means of patriotism, and then by means of the venal priests of a corrupt Christianity, by binding men by an oath and, finally, threatening them with punishments.

In our time, when close peaceful relations have been established between the men of various nationalities and states, the deception of patriotism, which always demands the preference of one state or nationality to others, and which, therefore, always draws people into useless and ruinous wars, is too obvious for sensible people not to be freed from it; the deception of the obligatoriness of the religious oath, which is clearly forbidden in the Gospel professed by the governments, is, thank God, believed in less and less, so that it is only the fear of the punishment which is imposed on such refusals by the government, that for the majority of men serves as a barrier to refusing to take part in military service. But this fear, too, is only a consequence of the deception practised by the governments, and has no foundation but in hypnosis.

The governments may and must be afraid of those who refuse, and, in reality, are afraid of them, because every refusal undermines the prestige of the deception, in which the governments keep men, but those who refuse have no reason to fear the government which demands the crime.

By refusing to do military service every man risks much less than in entering the army. The refusal to do military service, and the punishment, – imprisonment, exile, – are frequently only a profitable self-insurance from the dangers of military service. Upon entering military service a man risks taking part in war, for which he is being prepared, and of getting in the war into such a position that he will, under the most oppressive and agonizing of conditions, be certainly killed, like one condemned to death, or crippled, as, indeed, I saw at Sevastopol, where a regiment came to a bastion where two regiments had already been killed off, and remained there until it, too, was annihilated. A second, more advantageous eventuality is this, that the one who does military service will not be killed, but will only fall sick and die from the unhealthy conditions of military service. A third eventuality is this, that, having been insulted, he will not hold out, will say something rude to his superior, will violate discipline, and will be subjected to a worse punishment than what he would suffer by refusing to do military service. The most advantageous eventuality is this, that, instead of imprisonment or deportation, to which he who refuses military service would be subjected, he will pass three or five years of his life in preparing himself to commit murder, in a corrupt circle and in a slavery similar to that in a prison, except for a degrading humility to

corrupt men.

So much in the first place. In the second place, in refusing military service, every man, however improbable this may be, may none the less count on having to suffer no punishment, because his refusal will be that last arraignment of the government's deception, in consequence of which it will not be possible for any one to punish him, because no people will be found who are so stultified that they can cooperate in the punishment of the man who refuses to take part in their oppression.

Thus the submission to the demands of military service is obviously only a submission to the hypnosis of the crowd, – a quite useless jumping of Panurge's sheep into the water to their obvious destruction.

But, besides the consideration of advantage, there is also another cause which ought to urge every man who is free from hypnosis and who understands the significance of his acts to refuse to do military service. A man cannot help but wish that his life should not be a useless, aimless existence, but that it should be a service to God and men. Frequently a man lives his life, without finding an opportunity for this service. The call to take part in military service is that opportunity which presents itself to every man of our time. Every man, by refusing to take part personally in military service, either as a recruit or as a payer of taxes to the government, which uses these taxes for military matters, by this refusal in the most efficacious manner does a great service to God and men, because by this refusal he in the most efficacious manner contributes to the forward movement of humanity toward that better social structure, toward which humanity is striving and at which it must arrive.

But it is not only advantageous to refuse to take part in military service, and not only ought this to be done, – for the majority of the men of our time, if they are at all free from hypnosis, it is impossible not to renounce military service. For every man there are certain acts which are morally impossible, just as impossible as are certain physical acts. Such a morally impossible act for the vast majority of the men of our time, if one is at all free from hypnosis, is the promise of slavish obedience to strangers and immoral men, whose professed aim is to kill men. And so every man of our time not only will find it advantageous and necessary to refuse to take part in military service, but even impossible to refrain from doing so, if he is at all free from the stultification of hypnosis.

" But what will happen, when all men shall refuse to do military service, and there shall be no bridle and no fear on the evil ones, and the evil ones shall triumph, and there shall be no defence against the savages, – against the yellow race, – who will come and conquer us?" I shall not speak of the fact that the evil men have triumphed long ago and still continue to triumph, and.

struggling among themselves, have for a long time been ruling over

the Christians, so that there is no cause for fearing what has happened long ago ; nor shall I speak of this, that the fear of wild and of yellow men, whom we persistently irritate and teach war, is a barren excuse, and that for the imaginary defence against these wild and yellow men one-hundredth part of those armies which Europe now maintains would suffice ; I shall not speak of all that, because the considerations as to what may happen to the world at large from such or such an act of ours cannot serve as a guidance for our acts and our activity. Man has given to him a different guide, one that is incontestable,— the guide of his conscience, by following which he knows beyond a doubt that he is doing what he ought to do. And so all the considerations about the dangers which confront the separate individual who refuses to do military service, as also about this, what danger threatens the world in consequence of such refusals, — all those are particles of that vast and terrible deception in which Christian humanity is enmeshed, and which is carefully maintained by the governments, which live by this deception.

From a man's acting as his reason, his conscience, his God commands him to act, nothing but the best can result, both for him and for the world.

The men of our time complain of the evil current of life in our Christian world. This cannot be otherwise, when in our consciousness we have recognized not only the fundamental divine commandment, " Do not kill," which was proclaimed thousands of years ago, but also the law of the love and brotherhood of all men, and when, in spite of this, every man of our European world in reality renounces this fundamental divine law, which he recognizes, and at the command of a president, emperor, minister, a Nicholas, a William, puts on a fool's costume, takes up instruments of murder, and says, " I am ready,— I will strike down, ruin, and kill whomsoever you command me to." What, then, can society be, which is composed of such men ? It must be terrible, and, indeed, it is terrible.

Bethink yourselves, brothers ! Do not listen to those rascals who from your childhood infect you with the devilish spirit of patriotism, which is contrary to goodness and truth, and which is needed only to deprive you of your property, and your freedom, and your human dignity ; and do not listen to those cheats who preach war in the name of God, a cruel and revengeful God, invented by them, and in the name of the false Christianity, which they have corrupted, and still less to those new Sadducees who in the name of science and enlightenment, wishing for nothing but the continuation of the present order, gather at meetings, write books, and make speeches, promising to establish a good and peaceful life for men without their efforts. Do not believe them. Believe in nothing but your feeling, which tells you that you are not animals or slaves, but free men, who are responsible for your acts, and so are unable to be murderers, either by your own will, or by the will of managers who live by these murders. You need only stop and think, in order that you may see all the terror and madness of what you have been doing, and, having come to see it, may stop doing the evil which you yourselves hate and which ruins you. And if you stop doing the evil,

which you yourselves hate, there will naturally, without your effort, like owls before daylight, disappear all those ruling cheats, who at first corrupt you and then torment you, and there will naturally be formed those new, human, fraternal conditions of life, for which Christian humanity, worn out from suffering, exhausted from deception, and stuck fast in insolvable contradictions, has been yearning.

Let each man without any finely spun and complicated considerations and assumptions fulfil what his conscience indubitably tells him in our time, and he will know æ justice of the Gospel words, " If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 17).

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