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University Essays

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CLASS OF NONVIOLENCE

Patriotism or Peace

By Leo Tolstoy

Strange is the egotism of private individuals, but the egotists of private life are not armed, do not consider it right either to prepare or use arms against their adversaries; the egotism of private individuals is under the control of the political power and of public opinion. A private person who has a gun in his hand takes away his neighbor's cow, or a desyatina¹ of his crop, will immediately be seized by a policeman and put into prison. Besides, such a man will be condemned by public opinion — he will be called a thief and robber. It is quite different with the states: they are all armed — there is no power over them, except the comical attempts at catching a bird by pouring some salt on its tail — attempts at establishing international congresses, which, apparently, will never be accepted by the powerful states (who are armed for the very purpose that they might not pay attention to any one), and, above all, public opinion, which rebukes every act of violence in a private individual, extols, raises to the virtue of patriotism every appropriation of what belongs to others, for the increase of the power of the country.

Open the newspapers for any period you may wish, and at any moment you will see the black spot — the cause of every possible war: now it is Korea, now the Pamir², now the lands in Africa, Now Abyssinia, now Turkey, now Venezuela, now the Transvaal. The work of the robbers does not stop for a moment, and here and there a small war, like an exchange of shots in the cordon, is going on all the time, and the real war will begin at any moment.

If an American wishes the preferential grandeur and well-being of America above all other nations, and the same is desired by his state by an Englishman, and a Russian, and a

Turk, and a Dutchman, and an Abyssinian, and a citizen of Venezuela and of the Transvaal, and an Armenian, and a Pole, and a Bohemian, and all of them are convinced that these desires need not only not be concealed or repressed, but should be a matter of pride and be developed in themselves and in others; and if the greatness and wellbeing of one country or nation cannot be obtained except to the detriment of another nation, frequently of many countries and nations — how can war be avoided?

And so, not to have any war, it is not necessary to preach and pray to God about peace, to persuade the English-speaking nations that they ought to be friendly toward one another; to marry princes to princesses of other nations — but to destroy what produces war. But what produces war is the desire for the exclusive good for one's own nation — what is called patriotism. And so to abolish war, it is necessary to abolish patriotism, and to abolish patriotism, it is necessary first to become convinced that it is an evil, and that is hard to do. Tell people that war is bad, and they will laugh at you: who does not know that? Tell them that patriotism is bad, and the majority of people will agree with you, but with a small proviso: "Yes, bad patriotism is bad, but there is also another patriotism, the one we adhere to." But wherein this good patriotism consists of no one can explain. If good patriotism consists in not being acquisitive, as many say, it is nonetheless retentive; that is, men want to retain what was formerly acquired, that is, by violence and murder. But even if patriotism is not retentive, it is restorative — the patriotism of the vanquished and oppressed nations, the Armenians, the Poles, Bohemians, Irish, and so forth. This patriotism is almost the very worst,

because it is the most enraged and demands the greatest degree of violence.

Patriotism cannot be good. Why do not people say that egotism can be good, though this may be asserted more easily, because egotism is a natural sentiment, with which a man is born, while patriotism is an unnatural sentiment, which is artificially inoculated in him?

It will be said: "Patriotism has united men in states and keeps up the unity of the states." But the men are already united in states – the work is all done: why should men now maintain an exclusive loyalty for their state, when this loyalty produces calamities for all states and nations? The same patriotism which produced the unification of men into states is now destroying those states. If there were but one patriotism – the patriotism of none but the English – it might be regarded as unificatory or beneficent, but when, as now, there are American, English, German, French, Russian patriotisms, all of them opposed to one another, patriotism no longer unites, but disunites. To say that, if patriotism was beneficent, by uniting men into states, as was the case during its highest development in Greece and Rome, patriotism even now, after 1,800 years of Christian life, is just as beneficent, is the same as saying that, since ploughing was useful and beneficent for the field before the sowing, it will be useful now, after the crop has grown up.

It would be very well to retain patriotism in memory of the use which it once had, as people preserve and retain the ancient monuments of temples, as mausoleums stand, without causing any harm to man, while patriotism produces without cessation innumerable calamities.

What now causes the Armenians and the Turks to suffer and cut each others throats and act like wild beasts? Why do England and Russia, each of them concerned about her

share of the inheritance from Turkey, lie in wait and not put a stop to the Armenian atrocities? Why do the Abyssinians and Italians fight one another? Why did a terrible war come very near breaking out on account of Venezuela and now on account of the Transvaal? And the Chino-Japanese War, and the Turkish, and the German, and the French wars? And the rage of subdued nations, the Armenians, the Poles, the Irish? And the preparation for war by all the nations? All that is the fruits of patriotism. Seas of blood have been shed for the sake of this sentiment, and more blood will be shed for its sake, if men do not free themselves from this outlived bit of antiquity.

*C'est à prendre ou à laisser*³, as the French say. If patriotism is good, then Christianity, which gives peace, is an idle dream, and the sooner this teaching is eradicated, the better. But if Christianity really gives peace, and we really want peace, patriotism is a survival from barbarous times, which must not only be evoked and educated, as we do now, but which must be eradicated by all means, by preaching, persuasion, contempt and ridicule. If Christianity is the truth, and we wish to live in peace, we must but only have no sympathy for the power of our country, but must even rejoice in its weakening, and contribute to it. A Russian must rejoice when Poland, the Baltic provinces, Finland, Armenia, are separated from Russia and made free; and an Englishman must similarly rejoice in relation to Ireland, Australia, India, and the other colonies and cooperate in it, because the greater the country, the more evil and cruel is its patriotism, and the greater is the amount of the suffering on which its power is based. And so, if we actually want to be what we profess, we must not, as we do now, wish for the increase of our country, but wish for its diminution and weakening, and contribute to it

with all our means. And thus must we educate the younger generations: we must bring up the younger generations in such a way that, as it is now disgraceful for a young man to manifest his coarse egotism, for example, by eating everything up, without leaving anything for others, to push a weaker person down from the road, in order to pass by himself, to take away by force what another needs, it should be just as disgraceful to wish for the increase of his country's power; and as it now is considered stupid and ridiculous for a person to praise himself, it should be considered stupid to extol one's nation, as is now done in various lying patriotic histories, pictures, monuments, textbooks, articles, sermons, and stupid national hymns. But it must be understood that so long as we are going to extol patriotism and educate the younger generations in it, we shall have armaments, which ruin the physical and spiritual life of our nations, and wars, terrible, horrible wars, like those for which we are preparing ourselves, and into the circle of which we are introducing, corrupting them with our patriotism, the new, terrible fighters of the distant East.

In reply to a prince's question on how to increase his army, in order to conquer a southern tribe which did not submit to him, Confucius replied, "Destroy all thy army, and use the money, which thou art wasting now on the army, on the enlightenment of thy people and on the improvement of agriculture, and the southern tribe will drive away its prince and will submit to thy rule without war."

¹A desyatina is a Russian unit of land measurement, about 2.7 acres

²The Pamir is a mountainous region of central Asia, located mainly in Tajikistan and extending into NE Afghanistan and SW Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China; called the "roof of the world."

³Take it or leave it.

Letter to a Corporal

By Leo Tolstoy (1899)

You wonder how it is soldiers are taught that it is right to kill men in certain cases and in war, where as in the Scripture, which is acknowledged to be sacred by those who teach this, there is nothing resembling such a permission, but there is the very opposite — a prohibition to commit murder and even any insult against men, a prohibition to do to others what one does not wish to have done to oneself; you ask me whether this is not a deception, and if so, for whose advantage it is practiced.

Yes, it is a deception, which is practiced in favor of those who are accustomed to living by the sweat and blood of other people and who, for this purpose, have been distorting Christ's teaching, which was given men for their good, but which now, in its distorted form, has become the chief source of all the calamities of men.

This happened in the following way: The government and all those men of the upper classes who adhere to the government and live by the labors of others have to have means for controlling the laboring masses; the army is such a means. The defense against foreign enemies is only an excuse. The German government frightens its nation with the Russians and the French; the French frightens its nation with the Germans; the Russian frightens its nation with the Germans and the French, and so it is with, all the nations; but neither the Germans, nor the Russians, nor the French wish to fight with their neighbors and with other nations; they prefer to live in peace with them and are afraid of war more than of anything in the world. But, to have an excuse in their control of the laboring masses, the governments and the upper idle classes act like a gypsy, who whips his horse around the corner and then pretends that he is

not able to hold it back. They stir up their people and another government, and then pretend that for the good or for the defense of their nation, they cannot help but declare war, which again is profitable for the generals, officers, officials, merchants and, in general, for the wealthy classes. In reality, war is only an inevitable consequence of the existence of the armies, but the armies are needed by the governments merely for the purpose of controlling their own laboring masses.

It is a criminal business, but the worst thing about it is this, that the governments, to have a rational foundation for their control of the masses, are obliged to pretend that they are professing the highest religious teaching known to men, that is, the Christian, and, in this teaching, educate their subjects. This teaching is, in its essence, opposed, not only to every murder, but even to every violence, and so, to be able to control the masses and be considered Christian, the governments had to distort Christianity and to conceal its true meaning from the masses and thus to deprive men of the good which Christ brought to them.

This distortion of Christianity took place long ago, in the time of the malefactor, Emperor Constantine, who, for this, was canonized a saint. All the subsequent governments, especially our own Russian government, have tried with all their strength to maintain this distortion and not to allow the masses to see the true meaning of Christianity, because, if they saw it, they would come to understand that the governments, with their taxes, soldiers, prisons, gallows and cheating priests, are not only no pillars of Christianity, such as they pretend to be, but its greatest enemies.

In consequence of this distortion, there result those deceptions which startled you so much, and all those terrible calamities from which the masses suffer.

The masses are crushed, robbed, impoverished, ignorant — they are dying out. Why? Because the land is in the hands of the rich; because the masses are enslaved in factories, in plants in their daily occupations; because they are fleeced for the taxes, and the price for their labor is lowered, and the price for what they need is raised. How can they be freed? Shall the land again be taken away from the rich? But if that is done, the soldiers will come, will kill off the rioters and will lock them up in prisons. Shall the factories, the plants, be taken away? The same will happen. Stick out in a strike? But that will never happen — the rich can stick out longer than the laborers, and the armies will always be on the side of the capitalists. The masses will never get away from that want in which they are held, so long as the armies shall be in the power of the ruling classes.

But who are the armies which hold the masses in this slavery? Who are those soldiers who will shoot at the peasants who have taken possession of the land, and at the strikers, if they do not disperse, and at the smugglers, who import wares without paying the revenue — who will put into prisons and keep there those who refuse to pay the taxes? These soldiers are the same peasants whose land has been taken away, the same strikers who want to raise their wages, the same payers of the taxes who want to be freed from these payments.

Why do these men shoot at their brothers? Because it has been impressed upon them that the oath which they are compelled to take upon entering military service is obligatory for them, and that they may not kill men in general, but may kill them by command of the

authorities, that is, the same deception which startled so much is practiced upon them. But here arises the question — how can people of sound mind, who frequently know the rudiments and are even educated, believe in such a palpable lie? No matter how little educated a man may be, he nonetheless cannot help knowing that Christ did not permit any murder, but taught meekness, humility, forgiveness of offenses, love of enemies; he cannot help but see that, on the basis of the Christian teaching, he cannot make a promise in advance that he will kill all those whom he is commanded to kill.

Thus, the deception of the soldiers, which consists in this, that they are impressed with the idea that it is possible without sinning to kill men by command of the authorities, does not stand alone, but is connected with a whole system of deceptions, without which this particular deception would be ineffective.

Advice to a Draftee

By Leo Tolstoy

This letter by Leo Tolstoy dramatizes the frequent fact that what is past is prologue. Written in 1899 to a desperate young candidate for conscription, Tolstoy's words will seem to some to bear a relevance to America.

Count Tolstoy's letter was addressed to a young Hessian, named Ernst Schramm, whose earlier correspondence with the great writer has been lost; Schramm evidently wrote a second time in an effort to evade Tolstoy's argument that he refuse conscription. The letter printed here is Tolstoy's response to Schramm's second letter, and it seems to have terminated the exchange. In reading Tolstoy's words against killing, one should bear in mind that both parties understood that the Hessian army in 1899 was a peacetime army, but that the penalty for evading conscription was death. Tolstoy addressed the letter to Schramm in Darmstadt, and the Hessian post office forwarded it to Aschaffenburg in Bavaria, leaving us to infer that Schramm decided not to join up but to change countries instead.

In my last letter, I answered your question as well as I could. It is not only Christians but all just people who must refuse to become soldiers — that is, to be ready on another's command (for this is what a soldier's duty actually consists of) to kill all those one is ordered to kill. The question as you state it — which is more useful, to become a good teacher or to suffer for rejecting conscription? — is falsely stated. The question is falsely stated because it is wrong for us to determine our actions according to their results, to view actions merely as useful or destructive. In the choice of our actions, we can be led by their advantages or disadvantages only when the actions themselves are not opposed to the demands of morality.

We can stay home, go abroad or concern ourselves with farming or science according to what we find useful for ourselves or others; for neither in domestic life, foreign travel, farming nor science is there anything immoral. But under no circumstance can we inflict violence on people, torture, or kill them because we think such acts could be of use to us or to others. We cannot and may not do such things, especially because we can never be sure of the results of our actions. Often, actions which seem the most advantageous of all, turn out in fact to be destructive; and the reverse is also true.

The question should not be stated: Which is more useful, to be a good teacher or to go to jail for refusing conscription? But rather: What should a man do who has been called upon for military service — that is, called upon to kill or to prepare himself to kill?

And to this question, for a person who understands the true meaning of military service and who wants to be moral, there is only one clear and incontrovertible answer: such a person must refuse to take part in military service no matter what consequences this refusal may have. It may seem to us that this refusal could be futile or even harmful, and that it would be a far more useful thing, after serving one's time, to become a good village teacher. But, in the same way, Christ could have judged it more useful for himself to be a good carpenter and submit to all the principles of the Pharisees than to die in obscurity as he did, repudiated and forgotten by everyone.

Moral acts are distinguished from all other acts by the fact that they operate independently of any predictable advantage to ourselves or to others. No matter how dangerous

the situation may be of a man who finds himself in the power of robbers who demand that he take part in plundering, murder, and rape, a moral person cannot take part. Is not military service the same thing? Is one not required to agree to the deaths of all those one is commanded to kill?

But how can one refuse to do what everyone does, what everyone finds unavoidable and necessary? Or must one do what no one does and what everyone considers unnecessary or even stupid and bad? No matter how strange it sounds, this strange argument is the main one offered against those moral acts which in our times face you and every other person called up for military service. But this argument is even more incorrect than the one which would make a moral action dependent upon considerations of advantage.

If I, finding myself in a crowd of running people, run with the crowd without knowing where, it is obvious that I have given myself up to mass hysteria; but if by chance I should push my way to the front, or be gifted with sharper sight than the others or receive information that this crowd was racing to attack human beings and toward its own corruption, would I really not stop and tell the people what might rescue them? Would I go on running and do these things which I knew to be bad and corrupt? This is the situation of every individual called up for military service, if he knows what military service means.

I can well understand that you, a young man full of life, loving and loved by your mother, friends, perhaps a young woman, think with a natural terror about what awaits you if you refuse conscription; and perhaps you will not feel strong enough to bear the consequences of refusal, and knowing your weakness, will submit and become a soldier. I understand completely, and I do not for a moment allow myself to blame

you, knowing very well that in your place I might perhaps do the same thing. Only do not say that you did it because it was useful or because everyone does it. If you did it, know that you did wrong.

In every person's life there are moments in which he can know himself, tell himself who he is, whether he is a man who values his human dignity above his life, or a weak creature who does not know his dignity and is concerned merely with being useful (chiefly to himself). This is the situation of a man who goes out to defend his honor in a duel or a soldier who goes into battle (although here the concepts of life are wrong). It is the situation of a doctor or a priest called to someone sick with plague, of a man in a burning house or a sinking ship who must decide whether to let the weaker go first or shove them aside and save himself. It is the situation of a man in poverty who accepts or rejects a bribe. And in our times, it is the situation of a man called to military service. For a man who knows its significance, the call to the army is perhaps the only opportunity for him to behave as a morally free creature and fulfill the highest requirement of his life — or else merely to keep his advantage in sight, like an animal and thus remain slavishly submissive and servile until humanity becomes degraded and stupid.

For these reasons, I answered your question whether one has to refuse to do military service with a categorical "yes" — if you understand the meaning of military service (and if YOU did not understand it then, you do now) and if you want to behave as a moral person living in our times must.

Please excuse me if these words are harsh. The subject is so important that one cannot be careful enough in expressing oneself so as to avoid false interpretation.

War and Peace

By Leo Tolstoy

After passing a chasseur regiment and in the lines of the Kiev grenadiers—fine fellows busy with similar peaceful affairs—near the shelter of the regimental commander, higher than and different from the others, Prince Andrew came out in front of a platoon of grenadiers before whom lay a naked man. Two soldiers held him while two others were flourishing their switches and striking him regularly on his bare back. The man shrieked unnaturally. A stout major was pacing up and down the line, and regardless of the screams, kept repeating:

“It’s a shame for a soldier to steal; a soldier must be honest, honorable, and brave, but if he robs his fellows, there is no honor in him, he’s a scoundrel. Goon! Go!”

So the swishing sound of the strokes, and the desperate but unnatural screams, continued.

“Go on, go on!” said the major.

A young officer with a bewildered and pained expression on his face stepped away from the man and looked round inquiringly at the adjutant as he rode by.

Prince Andrew, having reached the front line, rode along it. Our front line and that of the enemy were far apart on the right and left flanks, but in the center where the men with a flag of truce had passed that morning, the lines were so near together that the men could see one another’s faces and speak to one another. Besides the soldiers who formed the picket line on either side, there were many curious onlookers who, jesting and laughing, stared at their strange foreign enemies.

Since early morning - despite an injunction not to approach the picket line - the officers had been unable to keep sightseers away. The soldiers forming the picket line, like

showmen exhibiting a curiosity, no longer looked at the French but paid attention to the sightseers and grew weary waiting to be relieved. Prince Andrew halted to have a look at die French.

“Look! Look there!” one soldier was saying to another, pointing to a Russian musketeer who had gone up to the picket line with an officer and was rapidly and excitedly talking to a French grenadier. “Hark to him jabbering! Fine, isn’t it? It’s all the Frenchy can do to keep up with him. There now, Sidorov!”

“Wait a bit and listen. It’s fine!” answered Sidorov, who was considered adept at French.

The soldier to whom the laughs referred was Dolokhov. Prince Andrew recognized him and stopped to listen to what he was saying. Dolokhov had come from the left flank where their regiment was stationed, with his captain.

“Now then, go on, go on!” incited the officer, bending forward and trying not to lose a word of the speech which was incomprehensible to him. “More, please: More! What’s he saying?”

Dolokhov did not answer the captain; he had been drawn into a hot dispute with the French grenadier. They were naturally talking about the campaign. The Frenchman, confusing the Austrians with the Russians, was trying to prove that the Russians had surrendered and had fled all the way from Ulm, while Dolokhov maintained that the Russians had not surrendered but had beaten the French.

“We have orders to drive you off here, and we shall drive you off,” said Dolokhov.

“Only take care you and your Cossacks are not all captured!” said the French grenadier.

The French onlookers and listeners laughed.

“We’ll make you dance as we did under Suворov. . . [on vous fera danser],” said Dolokhov.

“*Qu’est-ce qu’il chante?* [What’s he singing about?]” asked a Frenchman.

“It’s ancient history,” said another, guessing that it referred to a former war. “The Emperor will teach your Suвara as he has taught the others. . .”

“Bonaparte...” began Dolokhov, but the Frenchman interrupted him.

“Not Bonaparte. He is the Emperor! *Sacre nom.* . . .!” cried he angrily.

“The devil skin your Emperor.”

And Dolokhov swore at him in coarse soldier’s Russian and shouldering his musket walked away.

Let us go, Ivan Lukich,” he said to the captain.

“Ah, that’s the way to talk French,” said the picket soldiers. “Now, Sidorov, you have a try!”

Sidorov, turning to the French, winked, and began to jabber meaningless sounds very fast: “Kari, mala, tafa, safi, muter, Kaska,” he said, trying to give an expressive intonation to his voice.

“Ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! Ouh! ouh!” came peals of such healthy and good-humored laughter from the soldiers that it infected the French involuntarily, so much so that the only thing left to do seemed to be to unload the muskets, explode the ammunition, and all return home as quickly as possible.

But the guns remained loaded, the loopholes in blockhouses and entrenchments looked out just as menacingly, and the unlimbered cannon confronted one another as before.

from War and Peace. excerpts from Book Two

Napoleon

By Leo Tolstoy

On the 29th of May, Napoleon left Dresden, where he had been spending three weeks surrounded by a court that included princes, dukes, kings, and even one emperor. Before his departure, Napoleon took a gracious leave of the princes, kings and emperor deserving of his favor, and sternly upbraided the kings and princes with whom he was displeased. He made a present of his own diamonds and pearls — those, that is, that he had taken from other kings — to the Empress of Austria. He tenderly embraced the Empress Marie Louise — who considered herself his wife, though he had another wife still living in Paris — and left her, so his historian relates, deeply distressed and hardly able to support the separation. Although diplomats still firmly believed in the possibility of peace, and were zealously working with that object, although the Emperor Napoleon, with his own hand, wrote a letter to the Emperor Alexander calling him “*Monsieur mon frere*,” and assuring him with sincerity that he had no desire of war, and would always love and honor him, he set off to join the army, and at every station gave such commands, hastening the progress of his army from west to east. He drove in a traveling carriage, drawn by six horses and surrounded by pages, adjutants and an armed escort, along the route by Posen, Thorn, Danzig and Konigsberg.

In each of these towns, he was welcomed with enthusiasm and trepidation by thousands of people.

The army was moving from west to east, and he was driven after by continual relays of six horses. On the 10th of June, he overtook the army and spent the night in the Vilkovik forest, in quarters prepared for him on the property of a Polish count.

The following day, Napoleon drove on ahead of the army, reached the Niemen, put on a Polish uniform in order to inspect the crossing of the river, and rode out on the river bank.

When he saw the Cossacks posted on the further bank and the expanse of the steppes — in the midst of which, far away, was the holy city, Moscow, capital of an empire, like the Scythian empire invaded by Alexander of Macedon — Napoleon surprised the diplomatists and contravened all rules of strategy by ordering an immediate advance, and his troops began crossing the Niemen the next day.

Early on the morning of the 12th of June he came out of his tent, which had been pitched that day on the steep left bank of the Niemen, and looked through a field glass at his troops pouring out of the Vilkovik forest, and dividing into three streams at the three bridges across the river. The troops knew of the Emperor’s presence, and were on the lookout for him. When they caught sight of his figure in the greatcoat and hat standing apart from his suite in front of his tent on the hill opposite, they threw up their caps and shouted, “*Vive l’Empereur!*” And one regiment after another, in a continuous stream, flowed out of the immense forest that had concealed them, and split up to cross the river by the three bridges. “We shall make some way this time. Oh, when he takes a hand himself, things begin to get warm! Name of God!... There he is! ... Hurrah for the Emperor! So those are the Steppes of Asia! A nasty country it is, though. Goodbye, Beauche; I’ll keep the finest palace in Moscow for you. Good-bye! Good luck! . . . Have you seen the Emperor? Hurrah for the Emperor! If they make me governor of the Indies, Gerard, I’ll make you minister of Cashmere, that’s settled. Hurrah for

the Emperor! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! The rascally Cossacks, how they are running. Hurrah for the Emperor! There he is! Do you see him? I have seen him twice as I am seeing you. The little corporal. . . I saw him give the cross to one of the veterans . . . Hurrah for the Emperor!" Such was the talk of old men and young, of the most diverse characters and positions in society. All the faces of those men wore one common expression of joy at the commencement of a long-expected campaign, and enthusiasm and devotion to the man in the gray coat standing on the hill opposite.

On the 13th of June, Napoleon mounted a small thoroughbred Arab horse and galloped towards one of the bridges of the Niemen, defended all the while by shouts of enthusiasm, which he obviously endured simply because they could not be prevented from expressing in such shouts their love for him. But those shouts, invariably accompanying him everywhere, wearied him and hindered his attending to the military problems which beset him from the time he joined the army. He rode over a swaying bridge of boats to the other side of the river, turned sharply to the left, and galloped in the direction of Kovno, preceded by horse guards, who were breathless with delight and enthusiasm, as they cleared the way before him. On reaching the broad river Niemen, he pulled up beside a regiment of Polish Uhlans on the bank.

"Vive l'Empereur!" the Poles shouted with the same enthusiasm, breaking their line and squeezing against each other to get a view of him. Napoleon looked up and down the river, got off his horse, and sat down on a log that lay on the bank. At a mute sign from him, they handed him the fieldglass. He propped it on the back of a page who had run up delighted. He began looking at the other side, then, with absorbed

attention, scrutinized the map that was unfolded on the logs. Without raising his head, he said something, and two of his adjutants galloped off to the Polish Uhlans.

"What? What did he say?" was heard in the ranks of the Polish Uhlans as an adjutant galloped up to them. They were commanded to look for a fording-place and to cross to the other side. The colonel of the Polish Uhlans, a handsome old man, flushing red and stammering from excitement, asked the adjutant whether he would be permitted to swim across the river with his men instead of seeking for a ford. In obvious dread of a refusal, like a boy asking permission to get on a horse, he asked to be allowed to swim across the river before the Emperor's eyes. The adjutant replied that probably the Emperor would not be displeased at this excess of zeal.

No sooner had the adjutant said this than the old whiskered officer, with happy face and sparkling eyes, brandished his sabre in the air shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" and commanding his men to follow him, he set spurs to his horse and galloped down to the river. He gave a vicious thrust to his horse, that foundered under him, and plunged into the water, making for the most rapid part of the current. Hundreds of Uhlans galloped in after him. It was cold and dangerous in the middle of the rapid current. The Uhlans clung to one another, falling off their horses. Some of the horses were drowned, some, too, of the men; the others struggled to swim across, some in the saddle, others clinging to their horses' manes. They tried to swim straight across, and although there was a ford half a verst away, they were proud to be swimming, and drowning in the river before the eyes of that man sitting on the log and not even looking at what they were doing. When the adjutant, on going back, chose a favorable moment and ventured to call the Emperor's attention to the devotion

of the Poles to his person, the little man in the gray overcoat got up, and summoning Berthier, he began walking up and down the bank with him, giving him instructions, and casting now and then a glance of displeasure at the drowning Uhlans who had interrupted his thoughts.

It was no new conviction for him that his presence in any quarter of the earth, from Africa to the Steppes of Moscow, was enough to impress men and impel them to senseless acts of self-sacrifice. He sent for his horse and rode back to his bivouac.

Forty Uhlans were drowned in the river in spite of the boats sent to their assistance. The majority struggled back to the bank from which they had started. The colonel, with several of his men, swam across the river and with difficulty clambered up the other bank. But as soon as they climbed out in drenched and steaming clothes, they shouted, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" looking ecstatically at the place where Napoleon had stood, though he was no longer there, and at that moment thought themselves happy.

In the evening, between giving two orders — one for hastening the arrival of the counterfeit rouble notes that had been prepared for circulation in Russia, and the other for shooting a Saxon who had been caught with a letter containing a report on the disposition of the French army — Napoleon gave a third order for presenting the colonel, who had quite unnecessarily flung himself into the river, the order of the Legion d'Honneur, of which he was himself the head. *Quos vult perdere, dementat.*
[*Those whom (God) wishes to destroy he drives mad.*]

Tolstoy and the Larger Vision

By Colman McCarthy

One night in early 1851, in a Russian military camp on the outer rim of organized life and circled by gore-minded Moslem soldiers, a young man despaired of his future. A chronic card-player, drinker and womanizer, he put in his diary a thought shared by countless other militarized young men before and since: "How on earth have I ended up here? I don't know. Why? I even know less." To ease his despair and keep busy his spitfire mind, 23-year-old Leo Tolstoy kept detailed, intricate notes on what he saw, heard and felt among the people of the Caucasus. It was therapy-by-writing, the first words from a pen that was to produce some of the world's most sweeping and most read novels.

In a few weeks, the centenary of Tolstoy's "War and Peace" will be celebrated; many of those for whom Tolstoy is important will re-read this book and take up again with the others. A New York radio station, the lively WBAI-FM, plans to read over the air the entire "War and Peace" non-stop, a pleasure expected to last four or five around-the-clock days. Even more topical, perhaps, is the influence of Tolstoy on those caught up in real war and peace; many conscientious objectors are telling draft boards that their moral refusal to kill other human beings in war is based on the writings of Tolstoy.

The most common pictures show a thin rock-faced old man, hair shooting from his head like a fire hazard, but with searing, deep set eyes that look out from a never-resting soul. That may have been Tolstoy the writer of genius, but the non-writer, the man of guilts and sins, was far different. The contradictions run through his life like crossties on a railroad of wildness. He fought for freedom of the oppressed outside the home, but inside he often ran his family like a gone-mad

czar. He warned soldiers that "to marry a woman of society is to swallow the whole poison of civilization" but chose for his own wife an upper-class girl. For much of his life, Tolstoy pined after a socialism that would give ownership of the meadows and forests to everyone, while regularly making land deals that added to his already large holdings. He saw himself as sensitive and intelligent but he called Shakespeare's plays "a boundless tedium." Yet, as if fully aware of his own hypocrisy—thus taking the treachery out of it—Tolstoy could write: "Every man lies twenty times daily."

The great and heavy labor of "War and Peace" took nearly seven years of writing. The bone structure of the story was Russia's war with Napoleon in 1812, but the muscles and sinews of character portrayal are the story's movement. "Napoleon, Alexander, Kutuzov and Talleyrand are not the heroes of my book," said Tolstoy. "I shall write the story of people living in the most privileged circumstances, with no fear of poverty or constraint, free people, people who have none of the flaws that are necessary to make a mark on history."

In the most recent and perhaps most exhaustive biography of Tolstoy, Henri Troyat wrote that the novelist "was deeply attached to the ideas in 'War and Peace.'" But it is not his ideas that have guaranteed the posterity of the book; it is the fact that, in spite of the historical, military and philosophical considerations that encumber it, the book is a hymn to man and nature whose like has not been seen in the literature of the world."

As with many fiction writers, Tolstoy's imaginative world was created from the real world. Heroine Natasha was partly a copy of sister-in-law

Tanya, whom the novelist adored. Friends, aunts, uncles, cousins-ail were illuminated in print by the sun of Tolstoy's pen. For his two heroes, Andrey Bolkonsky and Pierre Bezukhov, the writer drew on himself, as if proclaiming—with accuracy—that he had double the personality of most men. Andrey, a taut pragmatist conditioned to the world's cruelty, went into the army, as did Tolstoy, to prove his courage. Pierre, a tender, affectionate man, soft-hearted and softer headed, believed, as did Tolstoy, "we must love, we must have faith..." Of the two, only Pierre found peace.

Many issues of mid-19th century Russia are surprisingly similar to those in America today: freedom of the press, government reform, women's rights, reclaiming the poor, court reorganization. Russian critics of "War and Peace" hooted Tolstoy for being too remote from real problems like these. This was a standard charge, both about Tolstoy then and about many thinkers now—the get-with-it argument so cherished by liberals and sophomores foamed up about "relevance." In reality, no one feels the times more acutely than he who seeks to get beneath the acts and habits of men and understand the eternal laws that motivate them: fear, love, pride, hope, greed, ignorance.

Enriched rather than drained by life as it passed by, Tolstoy was soon able to write a second epic novel, "Anna Karenina." With little competition from American novelists today, with their zoom-lens delight in bedrooms, Tolstoy's study of three couples is still perhaps the world's greatest love story. Three kinds of marriages—perhaps the only three kinds—are detailed: the broken one between Anna and the clammy bureaucrat Karenin, the dried-up but surviving marriage of the Oblonskys and the innocent, happy marriage of Kitty and Levin. As in the earlier novel, the characters who best survive are not the proud and glittering, like Anna, but Kitty

and Levin, the naive, shuffling-along pair whose simplicity of heart is stronger than all the world's busy sorrow combined.

A brooding, seeking man with no rest from the world or himself, Tolstoy thrived in later life on manual labor—mowing hay fields, wood chopping, caring for cattle. The *muzhiks*, or peasants, with whom Tolstoy worked and constantly idealized seemed not only to have the answers to life—they didn't really—but their company was naturally better for a writer. "Continual association with professors," he wrote, "leads to prolixity, love of long words and confusion, but with *muzhiks*, to conciseness, beauty of language and clarity."

After a brief conversion to organized religion, Tolstoy came to loathe both the doctrines of faith and the priests who preached them. His complaints against the church were correct and are not at all dated today—a rich, aloof institution, preaching piety but all the while blessing the state and its mischief.

The value of Tolstoy's non-fiction is its message of nonviolence. He spoke out against British and American use of force in the Transvaal and the Philippines: "They are horrible, these wars that the English and Americans are waging in a world in which even schoolchildren condemn war." Typically, he had no master plan to end war, only a simple personalistic formula—"The freeing of men from servitude, from ignorance, can not be obtained by revolution, syndicates, peace congresses, but simply by the conscience of each one of us forbidding to participate in violence and asking in amazement, why are you doing that?"

Tolstoy died in 1910, revered, famous and worn out, the storehouse of his mind long filled with the best thoughts and hopes. Few of the latter have come true—war still smothers peace and everything else. Yet those who unashamedly

think that love is more essential for social change than politics and programs cling to Tolstoy as never before. A firm grip is best; as a major theme of Tolstoy's said, being ahead of the times often means being against the times.

