

# The End of the Age

## An Essay on the Approaching Revolution

1905

### **People :**

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### **Text :**

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In Gospel language "the age" and "the end of the age" does not signify the end and beginning of a century, but the end of one view of life, of one faith, of one method of social intercourse between men, and the commencement of another view of life, another faith, another method of social intercourse. [...] Every revolution begins when Society has outgrown the view of life on which the existing forms of social life were founded, when the contradictions between life such as it is, and life as it should be, and might be, become so evident to the majority that they feel the impossibility of continuing existence under former conditions. The revolution begins in that nation wherein the majority of men become conscious of this contradiction. As to the revolutionary methods these depend on the object towards which the revolution tends.

In 1793 the consciousness of the contradiction between the idea of bureaucracy was felt not only by the nations suffering from oppression, but also by the best men of the ruling classes in all Christendom. But nowhere were these classes so

sensitive to this inequality, nowhere was the consciousness of the people so little stultified by the servitude as in France, and therefore the revolution of 1793 actually began in France. The most adequate means of realizing equality naturally seemed to be to take back that which the authorities possessed, and therefore those revolutionaries realized their aims by violence.

At the present date, 1905, the contradiction between the consciousness of the possibility, and the lawfulness, of free life on the one hand, and the unreason and disaster of obedience to coercive authority, arbitrarily depriving people of the product of their labor for armaments which can have no end, of authority capable at any moment of compelling nations to participate in insensate and cruel manslaughter on the other is felt not only by the masses suffering from this coercion, but also by the best men of the ruling classes. Nowhere is this contradiction felt so strongly as in Russia. This is partly due to the insane and humiliating war into which they have been drawn by the Government and to the agricultural life yet retained by the Russian people, but above all to the particularly vital Christian consciousness of this people. This is why I think that the revolution of 1905 having as its objective the liberation of men from coercion must begin and has already begun in Russia. The means of realizing the objectives of a revolution for the freedom of men obviously must be other than that violence by which men have hitherto attempted to raise equality. The men of the great French revolution wishing to retain equality might make the mistake of thinking that equality is attainable by coercion, although it would seem evident that equality cannot be secured by coercion, as coercion is in itself the keenest manifestation of inequality. But the freedom constituting the chief aim of the present revolution cannot in any case be attained by violence. Yet at present the people who are producing the revolution in Russia think that the Russian revolution, having repeated all that has taken place in European revolutions with solemn funeral processions, destruction of prisons, brilliant speeches, *Allez dire a votre maitre*, constitutional assemblies and so forth, and having overthrown the existing Government and instituted constitutional monarchy or even a socialistic republic, will attain the objective at which the revolution aimed.

But history does not repeat itself. Violent revolution has outlived its time. All it can give men, it has already given them, but at the same time it has shown what it

cannot attain. The revolution now beginning in Russia among a population of one hundred million souls of quite a peculiar mental attitude, and taking place not in 1793 but in 1905, cannot possibly have the same objectives, and be realized by the same methods, as the revolutions of sixty, eighty, a hundred years ago among German and Latin nations quite differently constituted.

The Russian agricultural nation, which, as a matter of fact, means the whole nation, required not a Duma and not the grant of a certain kind of rights, the enumeration of which more than anything clearly demonstrates the absence of simple true freedom, not the substitution of one form of coercive power for another, but a true and complete freedom from all coercive power.

The significance of the revolution beginning in Russia and hanging over all the world does not consist in the establishment of income tax or of other taxes, nor the separation of Church from State, nor in acquisition by the State of social institutions, nor in the organization of elections and the imaginary participation of the people in the ruling power, nor in the founding of the most democratic, or even socialistic republic with universal suffrage. It consists only in *actual freedom*.

Freedom not imaginary, but actual, is attained not by barricades or murders, nor by any kind of new institution coercively introduced, but only by the cessation of obedience to any human authority whatever.

## II

The fundamental cause of the impending revolution, as of all past and future revolutions is a religious one. By the word religion is usually understood either certain mystical definitions of the unseen world, certain rites, a cult supporting, consoling and inspiring men in life, or else the explanation of the origin of the universe, or moral rules of life sanctioned by divine command; but true religion is before all else the disclosure of that law common to all men which at any given time affords them the greatest welfare.

Among various nations, even before the Christian teaching, there was expressed and proclaimed a supreme religious law, common to all mankind and constituting in this, that men for their welfare should live not each for himself, but each for the good of all, for the mutual service (Buddha, Isaiah, Confucius, Laotze, the Stoics). The law was proclaimed, and those who knew it could not but see all its truth and

beneficence. But custom founded not upon mutual service but on violence had penetrated to such an extent into all institutions and habits that, whilst people recognized the beneficence of the law of mutual service, they continued to live according to the laws of violence, justifying this by the necessity of threats and retribution. It seemed to them that without threats, and without returning evil for evil, social life was impossible. Certain people for the establishment of order and the correction of men took upon themselves the duty of applying laws, and while they commanded, others obeyed. But the rulers were inevitably depraved by the power they used. Then being themselves depraved, instead of correcting men, they transmitted to them their own depravity. Meanwhile those who obeyed were depraved by participation in the coercive actions of the rulers by the imitations of the rulers and by servile submission. One thousand nine hundred years ago Christianity appeared. Christianity confirmed with new force the law of mutual service and further explained the reasons why this law had not been fulfilled.

With extraordinary clarity the Christian teaching showed that this reason was the false idea about the lawfulness and the necessity of coercion for retribution. Having demonstrated from various sides the unlawfulness and harmfulness of retribution it showed that the greatest calamities of men proceeded from acts of violence which under the excuse of retribution are committed by some men upon others. The Christian teaching demonstrated not only the injustice but the harmfulness of vengeance, it showed that the only means of deliverance from violence is the submissive and peaceful endurance of it.

'Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy boat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.' (Matt. V. 38-42).

This teaching pointed out that if the judge as to the cases when force is admissible, is the man who uses force, then there will be no limit to violence, and therefore, that there may not be violence it is necessary that *no-one under any pretext whatever should use violence, especially under the most usual pretext of retribution.*

This teaching confirmed the simple self-evident truth that evil cannot be abolished

by evil, and that the only means of diminishing the evil of violence is abstinence from violence.

This teaching was clearly expressed and established. But the false idea of the justice of retribution as a necessary condition of human life had become so deeply rooted, and so many people did not know the Christian teaching, or knew it only in a distorted form, that those who had accepted the law of Jesus yet continued to live according to the law of violence. The leaders of the Christian world thought that it was possible to accept the teaching of mutual service without that teaching of nonresistance which constitutes the key-stone of the whole teaching of the mutual life of mankind. To accept the law of mutual service without accepting the commandment of nonresistance was the same as to build an arch without securing it where it meets.

Christian people, imagining that without having accepted the commandment of nonresistance, they could arrange a life better than the pagan, continued to do not only what non-Christian nations did, but things much worse, and increasingly departed from the Christian life. The essence of Christianity, owing to its incomplete acceptance, became more and more concealed, and Christian nations at last attained the position in which they are now, namely, the transformation of Christian nations into inimical camps giving all their powers to arming themselves against each other, and ready at any moment to devour each other; and they have reached the position that they not only arm themselves against each other, but have also armed and are arming against themselves the non-Christian nations who hate them and have risen against them; and above all they have reached the complete repudiation of Christianity but of any higher law in life whatever.

The fundamental religious cause of the impending revolution lies in the distortion of the higher law of mutual service, and of the commandment of nonresistance given by the Christian teaching which renders this law possible.

### III

Not only did the Christian teaching show that vengeance, and the return of evil for evil, is disadvantageous and unreasonable since it increases the evil- it showed, moreover, that nonresistance to evil by struggling against it, is the only means for the attainment of that freedom which is natural to man. The teaching showed that

the moment a man enters into strife against violence he thereby deprives himself of freedom, for by admitting violence on his part towards others, he thereby admits also the violence on his part towards others, he thereby admits also the violence against which he has striven; and even if he remain the victor yet entering into the sphere of external strife he is always in danger of being in the future conquered by a yet stronger violence.

This teaching showed that only that man can be free who sets as his aim the fulfillment of the higher law, common to all mankind, and for which there can be no obstacle. The teaching showed that the one means to achieve both the diminution of violence in the world and the attainment of complete freedom is the submissive peaceful endurance of all violence whatsoever.

The Christian teaching proclaimed the law of the complete freedom of man, but under the necessary condition of submitting to this higher law in all its significance.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell." (Matt. X. 28).

Those who accepted this teaching in all its significance, obeying the higher law, were free from any other obedience. They submissively bore violence from men, but they did not obey men in things incompatible with the higher law.

Thus acted the first Christians when they were a small number among pagan nations.

They refused to obey Governments in matters incompatible with the higher law which they called the law of God; they were persecuted and executed for this, but they did not obey man and were free. But when the whole nations living in established State organizations supported by violence were by means of the eternal rite of baptism recognized as Christians, the relation of the Christians to the authorities completely altered. Governments by the help of a servile priesthood inculcated into their subjects that violence and murder might be perpetrated when they were resorted to for just retribution and in defense of the oppressed and weak. Beside this, by forcing men to swear allegiance to the authorities, to vow before God that they would unreservedly fulfill all that might be commanded by the authorities, the Governments reduced their subjects to such a state that people regarding themselves as Christians ceased to look upon a violence and murder as forbidden. Committing violence and murder themselves, they naturally submitted

to the same when perpetrated upon them. And it came to this, that Christian men, instead of the freedom proclaimed by Jesus, instead of as formerly regarding as a duty the endurance of every violence while obeying no-one except God began to understand their duties in a directly opposite sense. They began to feel that peaceful endurance was humiliating and to regard their most sacred duty obedience to the authority of Governments, and became slaves. Educated in these traditions they were not only unashamed of their slavery, but were proud of the power of their Governments as slaves are always proud of the greatness of their masters.

From this distortion of Christianity there has latterly developed yet a new deceit which secured the Christian nations in their oppression. This deceit consists of inculcating in a given nation --- by means of a complicated organization of suffrage and representation in governmental institutions --- that by electing the one who will then with others elect this or that score of candidates unknown to him, or by directly electing their representatives, they become participators in governmental power, and that therefore in obeying the Government they are but obeying themselves and so are presumably free. This deceit, it would seem, ought to have been obvious both theoretically and practically, as even with the most democratic organization and universal suffrage the people cannot express their will; they cannot express it, first, because there does not exist such a universal will of a nation of many millions; and secondly, because even if such a universal will of the whole people did exist, a majority of votes could never express it, and they do not themselves know nor can know what they require. This deceit, apart from the circumstances that the elected representatives who participate in the Government, institute laws and rule people, not with a view to their welfare, but in most cases are guided only by the aim of retaining their position and power amid the strife of parties. Not to mention the corruption of the nation by every kind of fraud, stultification and bribery produces by the deceit, the deceit is especially pernicious in the voluntary slavery to which it reduces men who fall under its influence. Those fallen under the influence of this deceit imagine that in obeying the Government they obey themselves, and never make up their minds to disobey the ordinances of human authority, even though the latter be contrary not only to their personal tastes, interest and desires, but also to the higher law and to their consciences. Yet

the actions and measures of the Governments of such pseudo-self governing nations determined by the complex strife of ambition and greed, depend as little upon the will and desire of the whole nation as the action and measures of the majority imagining that they are free if they have the right to vote in the election of the jailers and for the internal administrative measures in the prison.

A subject of the most despotic Government can be completely free although he may be subjected to cruel violence on the part of the authorities he has not established; not a member of a constitutional State is always a slave because, imagining that he has participated or can participate in his Government, he recognizes the legality of all violence perpetrated upon him; he obeys all the orders of the authorities. So that people in constitutional States imagining that they are free, owing to this very imagination lose the idea itself of what true freedom is, and more and more surrender themselves into increasing slavery to their Governments. Nothing demonstrates so clearly the increasing enslavement of nations as the growth, spread and success of socialistic theories: that is, the tendency towards greater and greater slavery.

Although the Russian people in this respect are placed in more advantageous conditions since hitherto they never have participated in power, and so have not yet been deprived by such participation, still the Russian people like other nations have been subjected to all the deceits of the glorification of authority, of oaths, of the prestige and greatness of the state and of the Fatherland, and they also regard it as their duty to obey the Government in everything. Latterly, too, shortsighted men of Russian society have endeavored to reduce the Russian people also to that constitutional slavery in which the other European nations find themselves.

So that the chief consequence to the non-acceptance of the law of nonresistance, besides the calamity of universal armament and of war, has been the greater loss of freedom for those who profess the distorted law of Jesus.

## IV

The distortion of the teaching of Jesus with the non-acceptance of the commandment of nonresistance has brought Christian nations to mutual enmity and to consequent calamities as well as to continually increasing slavery, and people of the Christian world are beginning to feel the weight of this slavery. This is

the fundamental general cause of the approaching revolution. The particular and temporary causes, owing to which this revolution is beginning at this very time, consists first in the insanity of growing militarism of the peoples of the Christian world as it stands revealed in the Japanese war, and secondly, in the increasing state of calamity and dissatisfaction of the working people proceeding from their being deprived of their legitimate and natural right to use the land.

These two causes are common to all Christian nations, but owing to special historical conditions of the life of the Russian nation they are felt by it more acutely than by other nations and at this particular time. This misery of its position flowing from obedience to the Government has become especially evident to the Russian people, not, I think, only through the dreadful insane war into which their Government has drawn them, but also because the attitude of Russian people to the ruling powers has always been different from that of European nations. The Russian people have never struggled with their rulers, and, above all, having never participated in power, have not been depraved by such participation.

The Russian people have always regarded power, not as a good thing towards which it is natural for every man to strive, as the majority of European nations regard power (as unfortunately some corrupt people of the Russian nation are already regarding it), but it has always looked upon power as an evil which man should avoid. The majority of the physical misery proceeding from violence rather than accept the spiritual responsibility of participation in it. So that the Russian people in its majority has submitted to power, and is submitting to it, not because they cannot overthrow it as the revolutionaries wish to teach them to do, and not because they cannot attain such participation as the liberals wish to teach them to attain, but because in their majority the Russian people have always preferred, and do prefer, submission to violence rather than strife with it or participation in it. This is how a despotic Government was established and has maintained itself in Russia, that is, the simple violence of the strong and pugnacious over the weak or those not desirous of struggling.

The legend of the call of the Varangians (\*), obviously composed after the Varangians had already conquered the Slavonians, fully expresses the relation of the Russian people towards power even before Christianity. "We ourselves do not wish to participate in the sins of power. If you do not regard it as a sin, come and

govern us." By this same attitude towards power can be explained the submission of the Russian people to the most cruel and insane autocrats often not even Russian, from Ivan IV down to Nicholas II.

Thus in older times did the Russian people regard power and their relation towards it. Even now the majority look upon it in the same way. It is true that as in other States, the same deceits, by which Christian people have been unconsciously compelled not only to submit but to obey in deeds contrary to Christianity, have been perpetrated also in relation to the Russian people. But these deceits reached only the upper, corrupt layers of the people, whereas the majority have retained that view of power by which man regards it as better to bear suffering from violence than to participate in the violence.

The cause of such an attitude of the Russian people towards power consists, I think, in this: that in the Russian nation more than in other nations has been conserved true Christianity which sees a radical difference between submitting to violence and obeying it. A true Christian may submit, he cannot even but submit without strife to every violence, but he cannot obey it, that is, recognize its lawfulness. However much Governments in general, and the Russian Government in particular, have stricken, and are striving to replace this truly Christian attitude towards power by the orthodox "Christian" teaching, the Christian spirit and the distinction between 'submission" to power and " obedience" continues to live in the great majority of the Russian working people.

The incompatibility of governmental coercion and Christianity has never ceased to be felt by the majority of the Russian people, and this contradiction has been especially keenly and distinctly felt by the more sensitive Christians, who did not embrace the distorted teaching of orthodoxy, that is, by the so-called sect members. These Christians of various denominations did not recognize the lawfulness of governmental power. From fear the majority submitted to Government demands although they knew them to be unlawful, but some of the minority circumvented them by various devices, or else fled from them. When, with the introduction of universal conscription, State coercion then, as it were, a challenge to all true Christians, demanding from every man readiness to kill, many orthodox Russian people began to understand the incompatibility of Christianity with power. At the same time non-orthodox Christians became soldiers.\*\* Although

there were not many such refusals (hardly one in a thousand conscripts), still their significance was great, since these refusals, which called forth cruel executions and persecutions on the part of the Government, opened the eyes no longer of sect members only, but of all Russian people to the un-Christian demands of the Government. An enormous majority of people who previously had not thought about the contradiction between the divine and human law saw this contradiction, and among the majority of the Russian nation there began the invisible, persistent, incalculable, work of the liberation of consciousness. Such was the position of the Russian nation when the utterly unjustifiable Japanese war broke out. It is this war, coupled with the development of reading and writing with the universal dissatisfaction, and above all with the necessity of calling out for the first time hundreds of thousands of middle-aged men dispersed all over Russia, and now torn from their families and rational labor (the reservists) for a glaring, insane and cruel purpose, which has served as the final impetus to transform the invisible and persistent inner development into a clear consciousness of the unlawfulness and sinfulness of obedience to a Government requiring such actions.

This consciousness has expressed itself, and is now expressing itself, in the most varied and momentous events: in the conscious refusals of the reservists to enter the army, in the desertions from the army; in equally conscious refusals to shoot and fight, especially in refusals to shoot at one's comrades during suppression of revolts; and above all, in the continually increasing number of cases of refusal to take the oath and enter the military service. Such are the conscious manifestations of the unlawfulness and needlessness of obeying the Government; whilst the unconscious manifestations of it are to be found in all that which is now being accomplished both by the revolutionaries and by their enemies: such as the sailors' revolts in the Black Sea and in Kronstadt, the military revolts in Kiel and other places, wrecking, self-constituted violence, peasants' riots. The prestige of the authorities is destroyed, and before the enormous majority of the Russian people of our time there has arisen in all its great significance the question as to whether one should- whether it is one's duty to- obey the Government. In this question arisen among the Russian nation consists one of the causes of the great revolution which is approaching and perhaps has already begun.

# V

The second external cause of the approaching revolution consists in this: that the working people are deprived of their natural and lawful right to the use of the land, and that this deprivation has brought to the nations of the Christian world the continually increasing misery of the working people and their increasing exasperation against those who exploit their labor. This is especially perceptible in Russia because it is only in Russia that the majority of the working people still live an agricultural life, and the Russian people, owing to the increase of the population and the insufficiency of the land, are only now placed under the necessity either of abandoning their accustomed agricultural life in which they see the possibility of the realization of the Christian commonwealth, or else of ceasing to obey the Government which keeps in the hands of the landowners the land taken from the people.

It is generally thought that the cruelest slavery is personal slavery: when one man can do anything he likes which another, torture mutilate, kill him, while that which we do not even call slavery, the deprivation of the possibility of using the land, is thought merely a certain somewhat unjust economical institution.

But this view is quite false. That which Joseph did with the Egyptians, which all conquerors have done with the vanquished nations, which is now being done by men to men in the deprivation of the possibility of using the land- is the most dreadful and cruel slavery. The personal slave is the slave of one, but the man deprived of the right to use the land is the slave of all. Even this is not the principal calamity of the land slave. However cruel might have been the owner of the personal slave, in view of his own advantage and that he might not lose the slave, he did not starve him, whereas the man deprived of land is always obliged to work beyond his strength, to suffer, and to starve, and can never for one minute be completely provided for and be set free from the arbitrary will of men, especially from that of evil and avaricious men. Yet even this is not the chief calamity of the land slave. The worst is that he cannot live a moral life. Not living by labor on the land, not struggling with nature, he is inevitably obliged to struggle with men, to endeavor to take from them by force or cunning that which they have acquired from the land and from the labor of others.

Land slavery is not, as is thought even by those who recognize deprivation of land as slavery, one of the remaining forms of slavery, from which has grown and grows every form of slavery, and which is incomparably more painful than personal slavery. Personal slavery is merely one of the particular cases of exploitation by land slavery, so that the emancipation of men from personal slavery without their emancipation from land slavery, is not emancipation, but merely the cessation of exploitation by one form of slavery, and in many cases, as it was in Russia (when the serfs were emancipated with but a small portion of land), is deceit which can only for a time conceal from the slaves their true position.

The Russian people always understood this, during serfdom, saying, "We are yours, but the land is ours", and during the emancipation of the land. During the emancipation from serfdom the people were cajoled by a little land being given them, and for a time they subsided, but with increase of population the question of the insufficiency of land again arose before them, and that in the clearest and most definite form.

While the people were serfs they used the land as much as was necessary for their existence. The Government and the landowners had the care of distributing the increasing population on the land, and so the people did not see the essential injustice of the seizure of the land by private individuals. But as soon as serfdom was abolished the care of the Government and landowners concerning the people's economic agricultural --- I shall not say welfare but- possibility of existence was also abolished. The quantity of land which the peasants might possess was once and for all determined without the possibility of increasing it as the population increased, and the people saw more and more clearly that it was impossible to live thus. They waited for the Government to rescind the laws which deprived them of the land. They waited ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, but the land has been seized even more and more by private landowners, and before the people was placed the choice: of starving, ceasing to multiply, or altogether abandoning rural life and forming generation of navies, weavers or locksmiths. Half a century passed, their positions kept becoming worse and worse, and reached such a state that the order of life which they regarded as necessary for Christian life began to fall to pieces, and the Government not only did not give them land, but gave it to its minions, and, securing it for the latter, intimated to the people that they need never hope for the

emancipation of the land, while on the European model it organized for them an industrial life, with labor inspection, which the people regarded as bad and sinful.

The deprivation of the people of their legitimate right to the land is the principal cause of the calamitous position of the Russian people. The same cause lies at the basis of the misery and discontent with their position felt by the working people of Europe and America, the difference is only this: that the seizure of the land from the European people by recognition of the lawfulness of landed property has taken place long ago; so many new relations have covered up this injustice that the men of Europe and America do not see the true cause of their position, but search for it everywhere: in the absence of markets, in tariffs, in unfair taxation, in capitalism, in everything save in the deprivation of the people of their right to the land.\*\*\*

To the Russian people the radical injustice --- not having yet been completely perpetrated upon them --- is clearly seen.

The Russian people living on the land clearly see what people wish to do with them, and they cannot reconcile themselves to it.

Senseless and ruinous armaments and wars, and the deprivation of the people of their common right to the land --- these, in my opinion, are the causes of the revolution impending over the whole of Christendom. And this revolution is beginning in no other place but in Russia, because nowhere except among the Russian people has the Christian view of life been preserved in such strength and purity, and nowhere save in Russia has been so far conserved the agricultural condition of the majority of the people.

## VI

The Russian people before other nations of the Christian world, owing to their special qualities and conditions of life, have been brought to the consciousness of the disasters proceeding from obedience to coercive State power. In this consciousness and in the aspiration to free themselves from the coercion of their rulers lies, in my opinion, the essence of the revolution which is approaching, not only for the Russian people, but also for all nations of the Christian world. But to people living in States founded upon violence, it seems that the abolition of the power of Government will necessarily involve the greatest of disasters.

But the assertion that the degree of safety and welfare which men enjoy is ensured

by State power is altogether an arbitrary one. We know those disasters and such welfare as exist among people living under State organization, but we do not know the position in which people would be were they to get clear of the State. If one takes into consideration the life of those small communities which happen to have lived and are living outside great States, such communities, whilst profiting from all the advantages of social organization, yet being free from State coercion, do not experience one-hundredth part of the disasters which are undergone by people who obey State authority.

The people of the ruling classes for whom the State organization is advantageous speak most about the impossibility of living without State organization. But ask those who bear only the weight of the State power, ask the agricultural laborers, the one hundred million peasants in Russia, and you will find they feel only its burden, and, far from regarding themselves as safer for State power, they could altogether dispense with it. In many of my writings I have repeatedly endeavored to show that what intimidates men --- the fear that without governmental power the worst men would triumph whilst the best would be oppressed --- is precisely what has long ago happened, and is still happening, in all States, since everywhere the power is in the hands of the worst men; as, indeed, cannot be otherwise, because only the worst men could do all these crafty, dastardly and cruel acts which are necessary for participation in power. Many times I have endeavored to explain that all the chief calamities from which men suffer such as the deep poverty of the majority, the seizure of the land by those who do not flow only from the recognition of the lawfulness of governmental coercion; I have endeavored to show that before answering the question whether the position of men would be the worse or the better without Governments, one should solve the problem as to who makes up the Government. Are those who constitute it better or worse than the average level of man? If they are better than the average run, then the Government will be beneficent; but if they are worse it will be pernicious. And that these men --- Ivan IV, Henry VIII, Marat, Napoleon, Arakcheyef, Metternich, Tallyrand, and Nicholas --- are worse than the general run is proved by history.

In every human society there are always ambitious, unscrupulous, cruel men, who, I have already endeavored to show, are ever ready to perpetrate any kind of violence, robbery, murder for their own advantage; and that in a society without

Government these men would be robbers, restrained in their actions partly by strife with those injured by them (self-instituted justice, lynching), but partly and chiefly by the most powerful weapon of influence upon men --- public opinion. Whereas in a society ruled by coercive authority, these same men are those who will seize authority and will make use of it, not only without the restraint of public opinion, but, on the contrary, supported, praised and extolled by a bribed and artificially maintained public opinion.

It is said: "How can people live without Governments and coercion?" On the contrary, one would say: "How can people, if they are rational beings, live recognizing violence and not rational agreements as the inner connecting link of their life?"

Wither one or the other: men are either rational or irrational beings. If they are not rational beings, then all matters between them can and should be decided by violence. But if men are rational beings, then their relations should be founded, not on violence, but on reason.

One would think that this consideration would be conclusive to men recognizing themselves as rational beings. But those who defend State power do not think of man, of his qualities, of his rational nature; they speak of a certain combination of men to which (sic.) they apply a kind of supernatural or mystical signification.

What will happen to Russia, Germany, say they, if people cease to obey Governments? What will happen to Russia? What is Russia? Where is its beginning or its end? Poland? The Baltic Provinces? The Caucasus with all its nationalities? The Kazan Tartars? Ferghana Province? All these are not only not Russia, but all these are foreign nationalities desirous of being freed from the combination which is called Russia. The circumstance that these nationalities are regarded as parts of Russia is an accidental and temporary one, conditioned in the past by a whole series of historical events, principally acts of violence, injustice and cruelty, whilst in the present this combination is maintained only by the power which spreads over these nationalities. During our memory, Nice was in Italy and suddenly became France; Alsace was France and became Prussia. The Trans-Amur Province was China and became Russia. Sakhalin was Russia and became Japan. At present the power of Austria spreads over Hungary, Bohemia and Galicia, and that of the British Government over Ireland, Canada, Australia, Egypt, and India, that of the Russian

Government over Poland and Guria. But tomorrow this power may cease. The only force uniting all these Russias, Austrias, Britains and Frances is coercive power, which is the creation of men whom contrary to their rational nature and the law of freedom as revealed by Jesus, obey those who demand of them evil works of violence. Men need only become conscious of their freedom, natural to rational beings, and cease to commit acts contrary to their conscience and the Law, and then these artificial combinations of Russia, Britain, Germany, France, which appear so splendid, will no longer exist, and that cause, in the name of which people sacrifice not only their life but the liberty proper to rational beings will disappear.

It is usual to say that the formation of great States out of small ones continually struggling with each other, by substituting a great external frontier for small boundaries, diminishes strife and bloodshed and their attendant evils. But this assertion also is quite arbitrary, as no-one has weighed the quantities of evil in the one and the other positions. It is difficult to believe that all the wars of the confederate period in Russia, or of Burgundy, Flanders and Normandy in France, cost as many victims as the wars of Alexander or of Napoleon or as the Japanese war lately ended.

The only justification for the expansion of the State is the formation of a universal monarchy, the existence of which would remove all possibility of war.\*\*\*\* But all attempts at forming such a monarchy by Alexander of Macedon, but the Roman Empire, or by Napoleon never attained this objective of pacification. On the contrary they were the cause of the greatest calamities for the nations. So that the pacification of men cannot possibly be attained except only but the opposite means: the abolition of States with their coercive power.

There have existed cruel and pernicious superstitions, human sacrifices, burnings for witchcraft, "religious" wars, tortures --- But men have freed themselves from these; whereas the superstition of the State as something sacred continues its hold upon men, and to this superstition are offered perhaps more cruel and ruinous sacrifices than to all the others. The essence of this superstition is this: that men of different localities, habits and interests are persuaded that they all compose one whole because one and the same violence is applied to all of them, and these men believe this, and are proud of belonging to this combination.

This superstition has existed for so long and is so strenuously maintained that not

only those who profit by it --- kings, ministers, generals, the military and officials --- are certain that the existence, confirmation and expansion of these artificial combinations is good, but even the groups within the combinations become so accustomed to this superstition that they are proud of belonging to Russia, France, Britain or Germany, although this is not at all necessary to them, and brings them nothing but evil.

Therefore if these artificial combinations into great States were to be abolished by people, meekly and peacefully submitting to every kind of violence, while ceasing to obey the Government, then such an abolition would only lead to there being among such men less coercion, less suffering, less evil, and to its becoming easier for such men to live according to the higher law of mutual service, which was revealed to men two thousand five hundred years ago, and which gradually enters more and more into the consciousness of mankind.

In general for the Russian people, both the town and the country population it is, in such a critical time as the present, important above all not to live but the experience of others, not by others" thoughts, idea, words, not by various social democracies, constitutions, expropriations, bureaux, delegates, candidatures and mandates, but to think with their own mind, to live their own life, constructing out of their own past, out of their own spiritual foundations new forms of life proper to this past and these foundations.

## VII

The revolution now impending over mankind consists in their liberation from the deceit of obedience to human power. As the essence of all former revolutions in the Christian world, therefore also the activity of those participating in this revolution must be quite different from the activity of those who participated in former revolutions.

The activity of those involved in former revolutions consisted in the violent overthrow of power and in its re seizure. The activity of those people involved in the present revolution should, and can, consist in the cessation of that obedience to any violent power whatever, which has now lost its meaning, and in the ordering of one's life independently of Government.

Besides the activity of those engaged in the coming revolution being different from

that of the people who participated in former revolutions, the principal participants in this revolution are themselves also quite different, as is the locality where it must take place, and the number of participants.

The participants in former revolutions were principally people of the higher professions, free from physical labor, and the urban workers led by these men; whereas the participants in the coming revolution must, and will, be chiefly agricultural masses. The localities where former revolutions began were town; the locality of the present revolution must be chiefly the country. The number of participants in former revolutions was ten or twenty per cent of the whole nation; now the number of participants in the revolution which is taking place in Russia must be eighty or ninety percent.

Therefore all the activity of the agitated urban population of Russia, who, imitating Europe, combine into unions, prepare strikes, demonstrations and revolts, and invent new forms of Government, not to mention those unfortunate brutalized men who commit manslaughter, thinking thereby to serve the dawning revolution, the activity of all these men, far from being in harmony with the impending revolution, arrests its progress much more effectually than Governments do (for, without knowing it themselves, they are the truest assistants of the Government), and falsely directs and impedes it.

The danger now threatening the Russian nation is not that the existing coercive Government may not be violently overthrown and that in its place may not be established another Government also coercive, however democratic or even socialistic, but that this struggle with the Government may draw the nation itself into an activity of violence.

The danger lies in this: that the Russian people, called by peculiar circumstances in which it is placed to point out a peaceful and certain way of liberation, instead of this may, by those who do not understand all the significance of the revolution taking place, be attracted into a servile imitation of former revolutions, and that, abandoning the eye of salvation on which they are now standing, they may advance along the false way by which other nations of Christendom are advancing to their certain ruin.

In order to avoid this danger the Russian people should first of all be *themselves*; they should not seek to ascertain how they should act and what they should do

from European nations and American constitutions, or from socialistic programs. They should inquire and seek advice only from their own conscience. The Russian people, in order that they may fulfill the great work now before them, should not only refrain from concerning themselves with the political government of Russia and with the securing of freedoms to the citizens of the Russian State, but should first of all free themselves from the very idea of the Russian State, and consequently also from all concern in the rights of the citizens of such a state.\*\*\*\*\*

At the present moment the Russian people, so that they may obtain freedom, should not only refrain from taking this or that action, but should refrain from all undertakings, from those into which the Government is luring them as well as from those into which the revolutionaries and liberals desire to draw them. The peasants, the majority of the Russian people, should continue to live as they have always lived, in their agricultural, communal life, enduring all violence, both governmental and non-governmental, without struggle, but not obeying demands to participate in any kind of governmental coercion; they should not willingly pay taxes, they should not willingly serve in the police, the administration, the customs, in the army, in the navy, nor in any coercive organization whatever. Likewise, and still more strictly, the peasants should refrain from the violence to which they are being incited by the revolutionaries. All violence of peasants towards the landowners will call forth strife with reacting violence, and will end in any case by the establishment of a Government of this or that kind, but unavoidably coercive. And with any coercive Government, as happens in the freest countries of Europe and America, the same senseless and cruel wars continue to be the property of the wealthy. It is only the nonparticipation of the people in any violence whatever which can abolish all coercion from which they suffer, and prevent all possibility of endless armaments and wars, and also abolish private property in land.

Thus should the agricultural peasants act in order that the revolution now taking place may produce good results. As to the urban classes, the nobles, merchants, doctors, scientists, writers, mechanics and so on, who are now occupied with the revolution, they should first of all understand their insignificance, be it only numerical, of one to a hundred in comparison to the agricultural population; they should understand that the objective of the revolution now taking place cannot, and should not, consist in the foundation of a new political coercive order, with

whatever universal suffrage, whatever improved socialistic institutions, but that this objective can, and should, consist in the liberation of the whole people and especially of their majority, the one hundred million agricultural workers, from every kind of coercion: from military coercion --- soldiery; from economic coercion--- taxes and tariffs; and from agrarian coercion --- the seizure of the land by the landowners. For this purpose that fretful, unreasonable and unkind activity with which Russian liberals and revolutionaries are now occupied is not at all necessary, but something quite different. These men should understand that Revolution cannot be made to order. "Let us organize a revolution": that revolution cannot be produced by imitating the ready-made patterns of what has taken place a hundred years preciously under utterly different conditions. Above all, these men should understand that a revolution can improve the condition of a people only when they, having recognized the unreasonableness and calamity of former foundations of life, strive to arrange a life on new foundations capable of giving them true welfare, when people possess ideals of a new better life.

Those who are now endeavoring to produce in Russia a political revolution according to the model of European revolutions, however, possess neither any new foundations nor any new ideals. They strive merely to substitute for one old form of coercion another new one, also to be realized by coercion, and carrying with it the same calamities as those from which the Russian people now suffer, as we see in Europe and America, groaning under the same militarism, the same taxation, the same seizure of the land.

The majority of revolutionaries put forward as their ideal a socialistic organization which could be obtained only by the cruelest coercion, and which, if it ever were attained, would deprive men of the last remnants of liberty.

In order to free themselves from all the evils which now oppress them, the working men should, without strife, without coercion. Cease to obey the authorities. And this same is also necessary for the fulfillment of the law which Christian nations profess. A Christian, as a Christian, cannot obey (and obeying thereby necessarily by participate in) (sic) and authority which is entirely based on violence, maintained by violence, and unceasingly committing acts of violence the most contrary to the Christian law: soldiery, wars, prisons, executions, the depriving of the people of the possibility of using the land. So, both the bodily welfare of man, as well as the

higher spiritual welfare, can only be attained in one way: by the suffering without struggle of all violence, but at the same time by the abstinence from participation in it, by *disobedience to the authorities*.

So, if people of the urban classes really desire to serve the great revolution which is taking place, the first thing they should do is to desist from the cruel, revolutionary, unnatural, artificial activity with which they are now occupied, and to settle down in the country and share the people's labor, learning from the people their patience, their indifference and contempt towards the exercise of power, and, above all. Their habits of industry endeavoring not only to refrain from inciting people, as they now do, to violence, but, on the contrary, restraining them from all participation in acts of violence and from any obedience to coercive power of whatever kind, and to serve them, should it be necessary, with their scientific knowledge, to clarify those questions which will inevitably arise with the abolition of Government.

## VIII

But how and in what forms can men of the Christian world live if they will not live in the form of States obeying Government rule?

The answer to this question lies in those very qualities of the Russian people, owing to which I think that the impending revolution must be and must happen in Russia rather than in other countries.

The absence of Government power in Russia has never prevented the social organization of agricultural communes. On the contrary, the intervention of Government power always hindered this inner organization natural to the Russian people. The Russian people, like the majority of agricultural nations, naturally combine like bees in a hive into definite social relations fully satisfying the demands of the common life of men. Wherever Russian people settle down without the intervention of Government they have always established an order not coercive but founded upon mutual agreement, communal, and with communal possession of land, which has completely satisfied the demands of peaceful social life. Without the aid of the Government such communes have emigrated to Turkey, like the Nekrassovisi, and retaining their Christian communal organization, quietly have lived, and are living there, under the power of the Turkish Sultan. Such communes

have without knowing it passed into Chinese territory, into Central Asia, and have lived there for a long time, without needing any Government beyond their own inner organization (NOTE No 20). In precisely the same way do the Russian agricultural people, the enormous majority of the population of Russia live without needing the Government, but merely suffering it. The Government for the Russian people has never been a necessity but always a burden.

The absence of Government, of that same Government which retains by force the right of putting the land into the hands of the non-laboring landowners, can only contribute to that communal agricultural life which the Russian people regard as a necessary condition of good life. It will contribute to it, in that power of maintaining property in land being abolished, the land will be freed and all will have equal right to it.

Therefore the Russian people, when abolishing Government, need not invent any new forms of combined life with which to replace the former. Such forms of combined life exist among the Russian people, have always been natural to them, and have satisfied their social demands.

These forms are communal organization with the equality of all the members, a co-operative system in industrial undertakings, and a common possession of the land. The revolution which is impending over Christendom and is now beginning among the Russian people, is distinguished from former revolutions precisely by this, that the latter destroyed without substituting anything for that which was destroyed by them, or else replaced one form of violence by another; in the impending revolution nothing need be destroyed, it is only necessary to cease participating in violence, not to root up the plant, putting in its place something artificial and lifeless, but merely to remove all which has hindered its growth. Therefore these hasty, bold-faced and self-assured people who, without understanding the cause of the evil with which they are violently struggling, and who, without admitting the reality of any form of lie without violence, blindly and thoughtlessly overthrow the existing violence in order to replace it by new violence. Those who will contribute to it are those who, without overthrowing anything, without breaking anything, will organize their life independently of the Government, will peacefully endure any violence inflicted upon them, but will not participate in the Government and will not obey it.

The Russian nation, the agricultural nation, the enormous majority, need only continue to live as it lives now, an agricultural communal life, only with *no participation in the works of the Government and with out obedience to it.*

The closer the Russian people will stick to the combined life which is natural to them, the less possible will be the interference of governmental coercive rule in their life, and the more easily will this be removed, finding fewer and fewer occasions for interference, and fewer and fewer assistants in the doing of its deeds of violence.

Therefore to the question as to what consequences will follow the cessation of obedience to Government, one can say for certain that the consequence will be the abolition of the coercion which compelled men to fight with each other and deprive them of the right to use the land. Men liberated from violence, no longer preparing for war nor fighting with each other, but possessing access to the land, will naturally return to the most joyous, healthy and moral agricultural labor proper to all men, in which man's effort will be directed to a struggle with nature and not with men; to a labor on which rest all other branches of labor, and which can be abandoned only by those who live by violence. The cessation of obedience to Government must bring men to agricultural life, and agricultural life in its turn will bring them to the communal organization most natural under the conditions of life in small communities placed in similar agricultural conditions.

It is very probable that these communities will not live in isolation, but owing to unity of economical, racial or religious conditions, will enter into new free mutual combinations, completely different, however, from the former State combinations founded upon violence. The repudiation of coercion does no deprive men of the possibility of combination, but combination founded upon mutual agreement can be formed only when those founded upon violence are abolished.

In order that one may build a new and durable house in the place of one falling into ruins, one must take down the old wall, stone by stone, and build it anew.

So it is with those combinations which may develop among men after the abolition of the combinations founded on violence.

20) It was in visiting such communities in Central Asia that Kropotkin developed his theories later published in *Mutual Aid* (1902), in which Kropotkin referred to Tolstoy's conception of village communities. Such primitive anarchist societies still

exist: in April 1990, oil prospectors exploring China's remote Taklemakan desert in Xinjiang province discovered a tribe which had remained isolated from the outside world for over 350 years. The tribe, numbering over 200 people, lived without government, money or private property: see press reports of April 26th, 1990.

## IX

But what is to become of all which mankind has elaborated? What will become of civilization?

"The return of monkeys"- Voltaire's letter to Rousseau about learning to walk on all fours- "the return to some kind of primitive, natural life", say those who are so certain that the civilization they possess is so great a good that they cannot even admit the idea of the loss of anything which has been attained by civilization.

"What! A coarse agricultural commune in rural solitude long ago outlived by mankind instead of our cities with underground and overground electric ways, with electric suns, museums, theaters and monuments? "cry these people. "Yes, and with paupers" quarters, with the slums of London, New York and all large cities, with the houses of prostitution, the usury, explosive bombs against external and internal foes, with prisons, gallows and millions of military", I say.

"Civilization, our civilization, is a great boon", people say. But those who are so certain of this are the few people who not only live in this civilization, but *live by it*, they live in complete content, almost idly in comparison with the labor of the working people, just because this civilization does exist.

All these people --- kings, emperors, presidents, princes, ministers, officials, the military, landowners, merchants, mechanics, doctors, scientists, artists, teachers, priests, writers --- they know for certain that our civilization is such a great boon that one cannot admit the idea not only of any possibility of its disappearance, but even of its alteration. But ask the enormous mass of the Slav, Chinese, Indian, Russian agricultural people, nine-tenths of humanity, whether the civilization which appears so precious to the nonagricultural professions is indeed a boon or not.

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Strange to say, nine-tenths of humanity will answer quite differently. They know that they require land, manure, water, irrigation, the sun, rain, woods, harvests, certain simple implements of labor which can be manufactured without interrupting

agricultural pursuits; but as to civilization, either they are not acquainted with it or else when it appears to them in the form of town depravation or unjust law-courts with their prisons and hard labor; or in the form of customs impeding the free exchange of products; or of guns, ironclads, armies devastating whole countries, they will say that if civilization consists in these things then it is not only unnecessary but exceedingly harmful to them. By

Those who profit by the advantages of civilization say that it is a boon for the whole of mankind, but then in this question they are not the judges, nor the witnesses, but one of the litigants.

It is beyond doubt that great advances have been made along the road of technical progress, but who has advanced along this road? That small minority which lives on the shoulders of the working people; whilst the working people themselves, those who serve these other men who profit by civilization, continue in all Christendom to live even as they lived five or six centuries ago, profiting only at times and in rare cases by the effuse of civilization. If they do live better then the difference separating them from the wealthy classes is not less, but it is rather greater, than the one which separated them from the wealthy six centuries ago. I do not say that when we have understood that civilization is not the absolute advantage that so many think it is, we should throw aside all that can know that what has been attained by men does indeed serve their welfare, it is necessary that all should profit by these advantages, and not a small number; it is necessary that people should not be compulsorily deprived of their own welfare for other people's benefit in the hope that the same advantages shall some day reach their descendants.

We look upon the Egyptian pyramids and are horrified by the cruelty and insanity of those who ordered their erection, as well as of those who fulfilled these orders. But how much more cruel and insane are those than the thirty-six story houses which men of our time erect in cities and are proud of. Around lies that land with its grass, its woods, its pure water, pure air, sun, birds, animals, but men with dreadful effort shut the fun from others and erect thirty-six story houses, rocked by the wind, where there is neither grass nor trees, and where everything, both water and air, is contaminated, all the food adulterated and spoiled, and life itself is tedious and unhealthy. Is not this a sign of manifest madness in a whole society of men, not

only to accomplish such insanities but also to pride themselves upon doing so? This is not the only example: look around you and you will see at every step what equals thirty-six story houses and Egyptian pyramids.

The justifiers of civilization say: "We are ready to correct the evil, but only on the condition that all which mankind has attained should remain intact." Why, this is what a dissipated man who has ruined his life, his position and his health, says to his doctor. He is ready to agree with all the doctor will prescribe, but only on condition that he may continue his depraved life. To such a man, we say that if he is to improve his state, he must cease to live as he is living. It is time for Christian humanity to say and understand the same. The unconscious mistake which those who defend civilization make is that they regard civilization, which is only a means, as an end or a result, and deem it always an advantage. It might be an advantage if only the rulers of society were food. Explosive gases are very useful for opening means of communication by blasting rock, but they are pernicious in bombs. Iron is useful for plows but pernicious for shells and for prison bars.

The Press may disseminate good feelings and wise thoughts but with yet more success, that which is immoral and false. The question as to whether civilization is useful or otherwise depends upon whether in a given society good prevails or evil. In our society where the minority crushes the majority, civilization is a great evil. It is merely an extra weapon for the oppression of the masses by the ruling minority. It is time for us to understand that our salvation lies, not in continuing along the road on which we have been moving, and not in the retention of what we have elaborated, but in the recognition that we have advanced along a false road and have entered a bog out of which we must extricate ourselves, and that we should be concerned, not in retaining that which we have, but, on the contrary, should boldly throw aside all the most useless things we have been dragging upon ourselves, so that in some way (be it on all fours) we may scramble out upon a firm bank.

A rational and righteous life consists only in man choosing among the many actions or paths before him the most rational and good. Christian humanity in its present condition has before it the choice of two things; either to continue on the path in which existing civilization will give the greatest welfare to the few, keeping the many in want and servitude, or else at once, without postponement to some far

future, to abandon a portion or even all those advantages which civilization has attained for the few, if such advantages hinder the liberation of the majority from servitude.

## X

That men of our time talk about separate liberties, the freedom of speech, of the Press, of conscience, of assembly, of this or that kind of elections, of associations, of labor, and of much else, clearly demonstrates that such people- as at the present time our Russian revolutionaries; possess a very fallacious idea, or have no idea whatever of freedom in general. That simple freedom, which is comprehensible to all, consists in there being no power over man demanding from him actions contrary to his desires and advantages.

In this non-comprehension of what constitutes freedom and in the consequent idea that the permission of certain people to do certain actions is freedom, lies a great and pernicious error. This error is that men of our times imagine that the servile subjection to violence in which they stand, in relation to the Government, is a natural position and that the authorization by governmental power of certain actions defined by this power, is freedom; somewhat as if slaves were to regard as freedom the power, is freedom; somewhat as if slaves were to regard as freedom the permission to go to church on Sundays, or to bathe in hot weather, or in their leisure time to mend their clothes, and so forth.

One need only for one minute reject established customs, habits and superstitions, and examine the position of every man in Christendom, whether belonging to the most despotic or to the most democratic State, in order to be horrified at the slavery under which men are now living while imagining that they are free.

Over every man, wherever he may have been born, there exists a group of individuals completely unknown to him, who establish the law of his life. What he should and what he should not do. The more perfect the State organization, the closer is the net of these laws. It is defined to whom and how he shall swear allegiance- to whom he shall promise to fulfill any laws that may be invented and proclaimed. It is defined how and when he should marry (he may marry only one woman but he may make use of prostitution); it is defined how he may divorce his wife, how he should maintain his children, which of them he should regard as

legitimate, which as illegitimate, and from whom and how he should inherit and to whom transmit his property. It is defined for what transgressions of the law and how and by whom he shall be judged and punished. It is defined when he must himself appear in court, in the capacity of juror or witness. The age at which he may make use of the labor of assistants of workmen, is defined, and even the number of hours a day which his assistants may work, and the food he must give them; it is defined when and how he should inoculate preventative diseases into his children. The methods are defined which he must undertake, and to which he must submit in case of this or that disease afflicting him, his family or his cattle. The schools into which he must send his children are defined as well as the proportion and the stability of the house which he must build, It is defined how he should maintain his animals, horses and dogs, how he must make use of water, and where he may walk without a road. For the non-fulfillment of all these and many other laws the punishments are defined. It is impossible to enumerate all the laws upon laws and rules upon rules to which he must submit, and the ignorance of which (although it is impossible to know them) is, moreover, placed in such a position that in buying every article which he consumes: salt, beer, wine, cloth, iron, oil, tea, sugar, and so on, he must surrender a great portion of his labor for certain undertakings unknown to him, and for the paying of interest on debt contracted by somebody or surrender a part of his labor on the occasion of any removal from place to place, or of any inheritance he may come into, or of any transaction whatever with his neighbor. Further, for the portion of the land he occupies, either by his abode or by cultivation, a yet more considerable part of his labor is demanded from him, so that if he lived by his own labor and not by that of others the greater part of his labor, instead of being used for that alleviation and improvement of his own position and that of his family, goes to pay these taxes, tariffs, and monopolies.

More than this! This man, in some States (the majority), as he comes of age, is ordered to enter for several years the military service, the most cruel servitude, and to go and fight, and in other States (Britain and America), he must hire other people for this same purpose. Yet people placed in this position not only fail to see their own slavery but are proud of it, regarding themselves as free citizens of the great States of Britain, France or Germany; they are proud of this just as lackeys

are proud of the importance of the masters they serve.

\*The Varangians were Swedish Vikings, whose leader Rurik was invited by the Slavonic tribes of Russia to rule over them in 862.

\*\*Tolstoy is thinking particularly of the Doukhobors, cruelly persecuted for their refusal to obey the State, particularly in relation to military service. Helped by Tolstoy, over seven thousand Doukhobors emigrated from the Caucasus to Canada in 1898. Kropotkin also took up their cause.

\*\*\* Tolstoy had evidently not heard of the Diggers, a dissident religious group during Cromwell's commonwealth who also interpreted Christianity from a humanist and anarchist angle. In his book *The New Law of Righteousness*, the Diggers' leader, Gerrard Winstanley, called upon the poor to occupy and farm the common land, and attempted to put this into practice by occupying St George's Hill near Walton-on-Thames in 1649, a move that was quickly repressed by Cromwell's army.

\*\*\*\* See H.G. Wells' dream of a World State in *Men like Gods* and *The Shape of Things to Come*

\*\*\*\*\*Again, it would be possible to misunderstand Tolstoy's intentions and see this passage as a sign of complete lack of concern for civil liberties. Tolstoy however wrote many letters to the Czar and other officials about the persecution of conscientious objectors and against the death penalty for those condemned for revolutionary acts. His intention here, and in many of his other essays, is to show that the constitutional or reformist approach --- hoping to pressure the State into conceding political liberties --- is doomed to failure, as the State will not give up its power voluntarily, and in particular will not allow public control of its strongest arm, the secret police. Tolstoy argues in the final chapter of this essay that there is only one fundamental freedom --- the freedom to live without Government coercion, it is the State, and not private individuals, which most violates the freedom and security of the citizens. Our recent past has confirmed that the vast majority of violations of human rights and civil liberties throughout the world are committed by official (but usually deniable or unaccountable) State bodies, from the death squads of Latin America to the security and intelligence agencies of the powerful Western American nations. As these bodies are the ultimate summit of the State pyramid, and certainly control and manipulate the elected governments, it is futile to expect

parliamentary pressure to succeed in curbing the violations of human rights and civil liberties --- such violations being in the very nature of the State.

\*\*\*\*\* When asked what he thought of Western civilization, Gandhi replied: "I think it would be a very good idea.

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