

The Slavery Of Our Times

Leo Tolstoy

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Leo Tolstoy

INTRODUCTION

By Aylmer Maude

This little book shows, in a short, clear, and systematic manner, how the principle of Non-Resistance, about which Tolstoy has written so much, is related to economic and political life.

The great majority of men, without knowing why, are constrained to labour long hours at tasks they dislike, and often to live in unhealthy conditions. It is not that man has so little control over nature that to obtain a subsistence it is necessary to work in this way, but because men have made laws about land, taxes, and property, which result in placing the great bulk of the people in conditions which compel them to labour thus, or go to the workhouse, or starve.

It may be said that man's nature is so bad that were it not for these laws an even worse state of things would exist; that the laws we make and tolerate are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual disgrace – the selfishness of man, which is the real root of the evil. But granting that, in a sense, this may be true, we need not suppose man's nature to be immutable, and all progress for ever impossible. Nor need we suppose it our duty to leave progress in the hands of some kind of a self-acting evolution, whose operations we can only watch as a passenger watches the working of a ship's engines. We may consider the effect of the laws we have made, approve or disapprove of them, discern the direction in which it is possible to advance, and take our part in furthering or hampering that advance.

Laws are made by Governments, and are enforced by physical violence. We have been so long taught that it is good for some people to make laws for others, that most men approve of this. Just as "genteel" people have been known to approve of wholesale while they turned up their noses at retail business, so people in general, while disapproving of robbery and murder when done on a small scale, admire them when they are organised, and when they result in allotting most of the land on which forty millions have to live to a few thousands, and in periodically sending out thousands of men to kill and to be killed. Nor are people much shocked at isolated murders, the responsibility for which is subdivided between the Queen, the hangman, the judge, jury, and officials.

To Tolstoy's mind, violence done by man to man is wrong. We cannot escape the wrongness by doing it wholesale, or by subdividing the responsibility.

But what would happen if we ceased to abet it?

If it were possible forcibly to oblige men to cease from using force, the selfishness which is at the root of the matter would, no doubt, burst out in some fresh form. That is, in fact, pretty much what has happened : weary of strife and private feuds, people consented to leave to Governments the use of force. External peace among individuals has ensued, but in place of strife with club or sword, a new struggle almost as fierce is carried on under legal and commercial forms, Tolstoy's desire is not that people should be compelled to cease from violence, but that violence should become to them abhorrent, and that they should not wish to sway others more than they can be swayed by reason and by sympathy. Were that accomplished, surely we may trust that good would come of good, as now ill comes of ill. At anyrate, as Tolstoy shows, there is no other path

of advance. We can neither revert to the belief that to use violence is a divine right of kings, nor can we maintain the current belief that to do so is a divine right of majorities. To be subjected by force to a rule we disapprove of is slavery, and we are all slaves or slave-owners (sometimes both together) as long as our society bases itself on violence.

But can we abolish the use of violence, and cease to imprison and kill our fellow-men?

We can at least consider what Tolstoy says on the matter, and realise that organised violence exists claiming our approval, and that it is possible to withhold that approval. As for abolishing violence – it is for us not a question of yes or no, but it is a question of more or less. The amount of violence committed depends on the amount of support the violators receive. There are places where it is now impossible to get anyone to become a hangman, and even in England, comparatively brutal as we are, it would be impossible to re-enact the penal code of George III, under which 160 different crimes were punishable with death. To shake ourselves completely free from all share in violence, if we are not quite ready to become martyrs, may seem and does seem impossible. Tolstoy himself does not profess to have ceased to use postage-stamps which are issued, or the highway that is maintained, by a Government which collects taxes by force; but reforms come by men doing what they can, not what they can't. It would be a very easy, and a very silly, reply to the teaching of Jesus, to say that as He tells us to be perfect, and we can't be perfect, we can get no guidance from His teaching. In the same way anyone who wishes to be logical but not reasonable, may say that as Tolstoy tells us to stand aside from all violence, and as we cannot do so, his guidance is useless. Tolstoy relies on his readers to use common sense, and the common sense of the matter is, that if we are so enmeshed in a system based on violence, and if we ourselves are so weak and faulty, that we cannot avoid being parties to acts of violence, we should avoid this as much as we can.

The mind is more free than the body, – let us, at least, try to understand the truth of the matter, and not excuse a vicious system in order to shelter ourselves. When we have understood the matter, let us not fear to speak out; and when we have confessed our views, let us try to bring our lives more and more in harmony with them.

To free ourselves from the perplexity produced by the dual standard of *legality* and of *right*, would alone be an enormous gain. Take, for instance, the drink traffic in England; – what friction and waste of power has resulted from the attempts to legislate on the matter. How greatly brewers, distillers, and dealers have gained in respectability by the fact that their occupations were legal, if not right. And is it not becoming evident that it is not by laws that such evils as the drink trade can be met?

But, we are told, people are so inconsiderate and so wrong-headed that nothing but the strong arm of the law will restrain them. To disturb their respect for the law is dangerous.

Of course it is dangerous! Every great moral movement and every strong reform movement has its very real dangers. A century and a half after St. Francis of Assisi had stirred Europe by his example of self-renunciation and devotion to the service of others, such a crowd of impudent mendicants shirking the drudgery of a workaday world were preying on society in his name, that Wyclif denounced them as sturdy beggars, and strongly censured any "man who gives alms to a begging friar."

History is apt to repeat itself in such matters, and, no doubt, Tolstoy's views will be again and again exploited by unworthy disciples. But is humanity to stagnate because what is evil is so easily grafted on what is good? To think and to move may be dangerous, but to stagnate is to die;

and progress along the path of violence – as Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Rome, Spain, and many other nations have shown – is progress to destruction.

No doubt, too, many good people will be shocked at Tolstoy's statement that "Laws are rules made by people who govern by means of organised violence." They will plead that, in modern Governments, the administrative functions are becoming more and more predominant, and the coercive ones are falling more and more into abeyance. But the reply is, that Governments need only drop these dwindling and secondary functions in order to escape the criticism here levelled at them. Governments which, without insisting on having their services accepted, are content to offer to organise society on a voluntary basis – killing no one, imprisoning no one, and relying on reason and persuasion to make their decrees prevail – are not here attacked.

And whatever good-natured people may wish to believe about Governments, the fact is that existing Governments rely on force, and that when they do not rely on force we do not call them Governments, but voluntary associations.

That men concerned in governing others know this, is shown all through history, and has been again shown recently in South Africa. As long as Kruger and his party had the armed force, the Boer reform party, the miners, and even Messrs. Beit, Rhodes, & Co., had to submit. In the time of the Raid the question who, in future, should make the laws, hung in the balance – it might be Kruger, or Rhodes, or somebody else; but it was sure to be the man, or men, who could obtain the advantage of being allowed openly, systematically, and unblushingly, to do violence to those who disobeyed them. Men who were organising the buccaneers one day, might become (and may yet become) a "Government" another day. In fact, just as in Sparta it was considered immoral, not to thief, but to be caught thieving, so among modern moralists (such as Paley) it has been gravely argued that the morality of using violence against the men in power depends on the chance of being successful.

Tolstoy says that the systematic use of organised violence lies at the root of the ills from which our society suffers; and while agreeing in the indictment Socialism brings against the present system, he points out that the establishment of a Socialist State would involve the enforcement of a fresh form of slavery – direct compulsion to labour. And if he is not at one with the Socialists, neither is he at one with the Revolutionary party of Russian Anarchists usually spoken of in England as "Nihilists." They, indeed, are often very bitter in their denunciations of Tolstoy, whose influence has increased the moral repugnance felt for their policy of assassination. Their accusation that Tolstoy wishes to oppose despotism by mere metaphysics is, however, met in the present work by a direct and explicit appeal to conscientious people not voluntarily to pay taxes to Governments which spend the money on organising violence and murder.

This view of the duty of individuals towards Governments has had exponents in our own language. The saintly Quaker John Woolman wrote in his journal in 1757 –

"A few years past, money being made current in our province for carrying on wars, and to be called in again by taxes laid on the inhabitants, my mind was often affected with the thoughts of paying such taxes . . . there was in the depth of my mind a scruple which I never could get over; and at certain times I was greatly distressed on that account. I believed that there were some upright-hearted men who paid such taxes, yet could not see that their example was a sufficient reason for me to do so, while I believe that the spirit of truth required of me, as an individual, to suffer

patiently the distress of goods, rather than pay actively.” </quote>He found he was not alone among the Friends of Philadelphia in this matter.

Nearly a century later Henry Thoreau wrote in his admirable essay on “Civil Disobedience” –

” I heartily accept the motto – ‘That Government is best which governs least’; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe, – ‘That Government is best which governs not at all’; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of Government which they will have. . . .

” It is not a man’s duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may properly have other concerns to engage him ; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support.

” I do not hesitate to say that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the Government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they surfer the right to prevail through them. I think it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbours constitutes a majority of one already.”

Holding these views, he refused to pay the poll-tax, and was put in prison for one night, till someone paid the tax for him – much to his disgust.

Tolstoy, therefore, is in good company in holding the view that it were better to offer a passive resistance to Governments than voluntarily to pay what they demand and misapply. Such refusals might bring about the bloodless revolution of which Thoreau spoke –

” If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceful revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer or any other public officer asks me, as one has done, ‘But what shall I do?’ my answer is, ‘If you really wish to do anything, resign your office.’ When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished.”

But while we remember that Tolstoy is in good company in this matter, and that he here offers just what some people pine for – something definite and decided to do or to refuse to do – we shall, I think, make a sad mistake if we fail to differentiate between the main intention and drift of his work, and such a piece of practical advice as this.

The main intention and drift of the work is to show that progress in human well-being can only be achieved by relying more and more on reason and conscience,

and less and less on man-made laws; that we must be ready to sacrifice the material progress we have been taught to esteem so highly, rather than acquiesce in such injustice and inequality as is flagrant among us to-day; that what we desire is the supremacy of truth and goodness, and that consequently violence from man to man must more and more be recognised as evil, whether it boasts itself in high places or lurks in slums – and that we must more and more free ourselves from the taint of murder that clings to all robes of state.

These things, to my mind, seem certainly true; we must turn our back on the religion of Jesus if we would rebut them.

But as soon as it comes to any definite precept and external rule to do this, or not to do that – there is room for reply. What is really needed, and what Tolstoy is aiming at, is that mankind should steadily advance towards perfection, and no one action can be the next step for all men in all places. So when we come to the injunction to pay no tax, we may remember the passage (Matt. xvii. 24-27) in which Jesus is reported to have told Peter to catch fish and pay the tax for them both. The passage seems to mean: "We are in no way bound to pay, but if they demand the tax of you, give it, not because you are under any obligation, but because we must not resist him that is evil. If any man would take your cloak, give him your coat also." And that is what Tolstoy thought it meant when he wrote *The Four Gospels*.

In the present work, however, he is not interpreting the Gospels, but is dealing with present problems on the plane of thought of the jurists and the economists. And whatever may be the best method of undermining the authority of the prince of this world, his condemnation by Jesus makes in the same direction as Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and Tolstoy's theory of "Non-Resistance." Each in his own way says, "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke xxii. 25, 26).

The prince of this world is judged, – the change foreshadowed is a vast one, and must commence with a change of each man's inner self. But its outward manifestations may be as various as the flowers of the field which are all fed by the same rain and sunshine from above.

Gkeat Baddow, Chelmsford,

October 1900.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

"They that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

Nearly fifteen years ago the census in Moscow evoked in me a series of thoughts and feelings which I expressed as best I could in a book called *What Must We Do Then?* Towards the end of last year (1899) I once more reconsidered the same questions, and the conclusions to which I came were the same as in that book. But as I think that during these ten years I have reflected on the questions discussed in *What Must We Do Then?* more quietly and minutely in relation to the teachings at present existing and diffused among us, I now offer the reader new considerations, leading to the same replies as before. I think these considerations may be of use to people who are honestly trying to elucidate their position in society and clearly to define the moral obligations flowing from that position. I, therefore, publish them.

The fundamental thought both of that book and of this article is the repudiation of violence. That repudiation I learnt and understood from the Gospels, where it is most clearly expressed in the words: It was said to you, An eye for an eye," . . . i.e. you have been taught to oppose violence by violence, but I teach you: turn the other cheek when you are struck – that is, suffer violence, but do not employ it. I know that the use of those great words – in consequence of the unreflectingly perverted interpretations alike of Liberals and of Churchmen, who on this matter agree – will be a reason for most so-called cultured people not to read this article, or to be biased against it; but, nevertheless, I place those words as the epigraph of this work.

I cannot prevent people who consider themselves enlightened from considering the Gospel teaching to be an obsolete guide to life – a guide long outlived by humanity. But I can indicate the source from which I drew my consciousness of a truth which people are as yet far from recognizing, and which alone can save men from their sufferings. And this I do.

11 July, 1900.

"Ye have heard that it was said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth" (Matt. v.38; Ex. xxi. 24).

"But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. v.39).

"And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matt. v.40).

"Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again" (Luke vi. 30).

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke vi. 31).

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts ii. 44).

"And Jesus said, When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the heaven is red" (Matt. xvi. 2).

"And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times" (Matt. xvi. 3).

"The system on which all the nations of the world are acting is founded in gross deception, in the deepest ignorance, or a mixture of both; so that under no possible modification of the principles on which it is based can it ever produce good to man; on the contrary, its practical results must ever be to produce evil continually." –Robert Owen.

"We have much studied and much perfected of late the great civilized invention of the division of labour, only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men – divided into mere segments of men – broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail. Now, it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins a day; but if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished – sand of human souls – we should think there might be some loss in it also.

"Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin . . . into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with – this is to be slave – masters indeed. . It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine which is leading the mass of the nations into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth and against nobility is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine or the sting of mortified pride. These do much and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day.

"It is not that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and, therefore, look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.

"It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labour to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them." – From *The Stones of Venice*, by John Ruskin, Vol. II, Chap. VI., §§ 13-16.

THE SLAVERY OF OUR TIMES

CHAPTER I – GOODS-PORTERS WHO WORK THIRTY-SEVEN HOURS

An acquaintance of mine who works on the Moscow-Kursk Railway as a weigher, in the course of conversation mentioned to me that the men who load the goods on to his scales work for thirty-seven hours on end.

Though I had full confidence in the speaker's truthfulness I was unable to believe him. I thought he was making a mistake, or exaggerating, or that I misunderstood something.

But the weigher narrated the conditions under which this work is done so exactly that there was no room left for doubt. He told me that there are two hundred and fifty such goods-porters at the Kursk station in Moscow. They were all divided into gangs of five men, and were on piece-work, receiving from one rouble to R. 1.15 (say two shillings to two and fourpence, or forty-eight cents to fifty-six cents) for one thousand poods (over sixteen tons) of goods received or dispatched.

They come in the morning, work for a day and a night at unloading the trucks, and in the morning, as soon as the night is ended, they begin to reload, and work on for another day. So that in two days they get one night's sleep.

Their work consists of unloading and moving bales of seven, eight, and up to ten poods (say eighteen [253 lb.], twenty [280 lb.], and up to nearly twenty-six stone [364 lb.]). Two men place the bales on the backs of the other three who carry them. By such work they earn less than a ruble (2 shillings [48 cents] a day. They work continually without holiday.

The account given by the weigher was so circumstantial that it was impossible to doubt it, but, nevertheless, I decided to verify it with my own eyes, and I went to the Goods Station.

Finding my acquaintance at the Goods Station, I told him that I had come to see what he had told me about.

"No one I mention it to believes it," said I.

Without replying to me, the weigher called to some one in a shed. "Nikita, come here."

From the door appeared a tall, lean workman in a torn coat.

"When did you begin work?"

"When? Yesterday morning."

"And where were you last night?"

"I was unloading, of course."

"Did you work during the night?" asked I.

"Of course we worked."

"And when did you begin work to-day?"

"We began in the morning – when else should we begin?"

"And when will you finish working?"

"When they let us go; then we shall finish!"

The four other workmen of his gang came up to us. They all wore torn coats and were without overcoats, though there were about twenty degrees Reaumur of cold (thirteen degrees below zero, Fahrenheit).

I began to ask them about the conditions of their work, and evidently surprised them by taking an interest in such a simple and natural thing (as it seemed to them) as their thirty-six hour work.

They were all villagers; for the most part fellow countrymen of my own – from Tula; some, however, were from Orla, and some from Voronesh. They lived in Moscow in lodgings, some of them with their families, but most of them without. Those who have come here alone send their earnings home to the village.

They board with contractors. Their food costs them ten rubles (say £1 1s. [five dollars] per month). They always eat meat, disregarding the fasts. Their work always keeps them occupied more than hours running, because it takes more than half an hour to get to their lodgings and from their lodgings, and, besides, they are often kept at work beyond the time fixed.

Paying for their own food, they earn, by such thirty-seven-hour on-end work, about Rs. 25 (&Pound2, 12s, 6d.) a month .

To my question, "Why they did such convict work?" they replied –

"Where is one to go to?"

"But why work thirty-six hours on end? Cannot the work be arranged in shifts?"

"We do what we're told to."

"Yes; but why do you agree to it?"

"We agree because we have to feed ourselves. 'If you don't like it – be off!' If one's even an hour late, one has one's ticket shied at one, and is told to march; and there are ten men ready to take the place."

The men were all young, only one was somewhat older, perhaps about forty. All their faces were lean, and had exhausted, weary eyes, as if the men were drunk. The lean workman to whom I first spoke struck me especially by the strange weariness of his look. I asked him whether he had not been drinking today.

"I don't drink," answered he, in the decided way in which men who really do not drink always reply to that question.

"And I do not smoke," added he.

"Do the others drink?" asked I.

"Yes; it is brought here."

"The work is not light, and a drink always adds to one's strength," said the older workman.

This workman had been drinking that day, but it was not in the least noticeable.

After some more talk with the workmen I went to watch the work.

Passing long rows of all sorts of goods, I came to some workmen slowly pushing a loaded truck. I learned afterwards that the men have to shunt the trucks themselves and to keep the platform clear of snow, without being paid for the work. It is so stated in the "Conditions of Pay." These workmen were just as tattered and emaciated as those with whom I had been talking. When they had moved the truck to its place I went up to them and asked when they had begun work, and when they had dined.

I was told that they had started work at seven o'clock, and had only just dined. The work had prevented their being let off sooner.

"And when do you get away?"

"As it happens; sometimes not till ten o'clock," replied the men, as if boasting of their endurance. Seeing my interest in their position, they surrounded me, and, probably taking me for an inspector, several of them speaking at once, informed me of what was evidently their chief subject of complaint – namely, that the apartment in which they could sometimes warm themselves and snatch an hour's sleep between the day-work and the night-work was crowded. All of them expressed great dissatisfaction at this crowding.

"There may be one hundred men, and nowhere to lie down; even under the shelves it is crowded," said dissatisfied voices. "Have a look at it yourself – it is close here."

The room was certainly not large enough. In the thirty-six-foot room about forty men might find place to lie down on the shelves.

Some of the men entered the room with me, and they vied with each other in complaining of the scantiness of the accommodation.

"Even under the shelves there is nowhere to lie down," said they.

These men – who in twenty degrees of frost, without overcoats, carry on their backs twenty stone [240 pound] loads during thirty-six hours; who dine and sup not when they need food, but when their overseer allows them to eat; living altogether in conditions far worse than those of dray horses, it seemed strange that these people only complained of insufficient accommodation in the room where they warm themselves. But though this seemed to me strange at first, yet, entering further into their position, I understood what a feeling of torture these men, who never get enough sleep, and who are half-frozen, must experience when, instead of resting and being warmed, they have to creep on the dirty floor under the shelves, and there, in the stuffy and vitiated air, become still weaker and more broken down.

Only, perhaps, in that miserable hour of vain attempt to get rest and sleep do they painfully realize all the horror of their life-destroying thirty-seven-hour work, and that is why they are specially agitated by such an apparently insignificant circumstance as the overcrowding of their room.

Having watched several gangs at work, and having talked with some more of the men and heard the same story from them all, I drove home, having convinced myself that what my acquaintance had told me was true.

It was true that for money, only enough to subsist on, people considering themselves free men thought it necessary to give themselves up to work such as, in the days of serfdom, not one slave-owner, however cruel, would have sent his slaves to. Let alone slave-owners, not one cab-proprietor would send his horses to such work, for horses cost money, and it would be wasteful, by excessive, thirty-seven-hour work, to shorten the life of an animal of value.

CHAPTER II – SOCIETY'S INDIFFERENCE WHILE MEN PERISH

To oblige men to work for thirty-seven hours continuously without sleep, besides being cruel is also uneconomical. And yet such uneconomical expenditure of human lives continually goes on around us.

Opposite the house in which I live¹ is a factory of silk goods, built with the latest technical improvements. About three thousand women and seven hundred men work and live there. As I sit in my room now I hear the unceasing din of the machinery, and know – for I have been there – what that din means. Three thousand women stand, for twelve hours a day, at the looms amid a deafening roar; winding, unwinding, arranging the silk threads to make silk stuffs. All the women (except those who have just come from the villages) have an unhealthy appearance. Most of them lead a most intemperate and immoral life. Almost all, whether married or unmarried, as soon as a child is born to them send it off either to the village or to the Foundlings' Hospital – where 80 per cent of these children perish. For fear of losing their places the mothers resume work the next day, or on the third day after their confinement.

So that during twenty years, to my knowledge, tens of thousands of young, healthy women – mothers – have ruined and are now ruining their lives and the lives of their children, in order to produce velvets and silk stuffs.

I met a beggar yesterday, a young man on crutches, sturdily built, but crippled. He used to work as a navvy, with a wheelbarrow, but slipped and injured himself internally. He spent all he had on peasant-women healers and on doctors, and has now for eight years been homeless, begging his bread, and complaining that God does not send him death.

How many such sacrifices of life there are that we either know nothing of, or know of, but hardly notice, considering them inevitable.

I know men working at the blast-furnaces of the Tula Iron Foundry who, to have one Sunday free each fortnight, will work for twenty-four hours; that is, after working all day they will go on working all night. I have seen these men. They all drink *vodka* to keep up their energy, and obviously, like those goods-porters on the railway, they quickly expend not the interest, but the capital of their lives.

And what of the waste of lives among those who are employed on admittedly harmful work, in looking-glass, cardridge, match, sugar, tobacco, and glass factories; in mines or as gilders?

There are English statistics showing that the average length of life among people of the upper classes is fifty-five years, and the average of life among working people in unhealthy occupations is twenty-nine years.

Knowing this (and we cannot help knowing it), we who take advantage of labour that costs human lives should, one would think (unless we are beasts), not be able to enjoy a moment's peace. But the fact is that we – well-to-do people, liberals and humanitarians, very sensitive to the sufferings not of people only, but also of animals – unceasingly make use of such labour, and

try to become more and more rich, i.e. to take more and more advantage of such work. And we remain perfectly tranquil.

For instance, having learned of the thirty-seven-hour labour of the goods-porters, and of their bad room, we at once send there an inspector, who receives a good salary, and we forbid people to work more than twelve hours, leaving the workmen (who are thus deprived of one-third of their earnings) to feed themselves as best they can; and we compel the Railway Company to erect a large and convenient room for the workmen. Then with perfectly quiet consciences we continue to receive and dispatch goods by that railway, and we ourselves continue to receive salaries, dividends, rents from houses or from land, etc. Having learned that the women and girls at the silk factory, living far from their families, ruin their own lives and those of their children, and that a large half of the washerwomen who iron our starched shirts, and of the typesetters who print the books and papers that while away our time, get consumption – we only shrug our shoulders and say that we are very sorry things should be so, but that we can do nothing to alter it, and we continue with tranquil consciences to buy silk stuffs, to wear starched shirts and to read our morning paper. We are much concerned about the hours of the shop assistants, and still more about the long hours of our own children at school; we strictly forbid carters to make their horses drag heavy loads, and we even organize the killing of cattle in slaughter-houses, so that the animals may feel it as little as possible. But how wonderfully blind we become as soon as the question concerns those millions of workers who perish slowly, and often painfully, all around us, at labours the fruits of which we use for our convenience and pleasure!

Notes

1 This evidently relates to his wife's house in Moscow, where Tolstoy spends the winter months. (Trans.).

CHAPTER III – JUSTIFICATION OF THE EXISTING POSITION BY SCIENCE

This wonderful blindness which befalls people of our circle can only be explained by the fact that when people behave badly they always invent a philosophy of life which represents their bad actions to be not bad actions at all, but merely results of unalterable laws beyond their control. In former times such a view of life was found in the theory that an inscrutable and unalterable will of God existed which foreordained to some men a humble position and hard work and to others an exalted position and the enjoyment of the good things of life.

On this theme an enormous quantity of books were written and an innumerable quantity of sermons preached. The theme was worked up from every possible side. It was demonstrated that God created different sorts of people: slaves and masters; and that both should be satisfied with their position. It was further demonstrated that it would be better for the slaves in the next world; and afterwards it was shown that although the slaves were slaves and ought to remain such, yet their condition would not be bad if the masters would be kind to them. Then the very last explanation, after the emancipation of the slaves,¹ was that wealth is entrusted by God to some people in order that they may use part of it in good works, and so there is no harm in some people's being rich and others poor.

These explanations satisfied the rich and the poor (especially the rich) for a long time. But the day came when these explanations became unsatisfactory, especially to the poor, who began to understand their position. Then fresh explanations were needed. And just at the proper time they were produced.² These new explanations came in the form of science: political economy, which declared that it had discovered the laws which regulate division of labour and of the distribution of the products of labour among men. These laws, according to that science, are that the division of labour and the enjoyment of its products depend on supply and demand, and capital, rent, wages of labour, values, profits, etc.; in general, on unalterable laws governing man's economic activities.

Soon, on this theme as many books and pamphlets were written and lectures delivered as there had been treatises written and religious sermons preached on the former theme, and still unceasingly mountains of pamphlets and books are being written and lectures are being delivered; and all these books and lectures are as cloudy and unintelligible as the theological treatises and the sermons, and they, too, like the theological treatises, fully achieve their appointed purpose, i.e. they give such an explanation of the existing order of things as justifies some people in tranquilly refraining from labour and in utilizing the labour of others.

The fact that, for the investigations of this pseudo-science, not the condition of the people in the whole world through all historic time was taken to show the general order of things, but only the condition of people in a small country, in most exceptional circumstances – England at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries³ – this fact did not in the least hinder the acceptance as valid of the result to which the investigators arrived; any more than a

similar acceptance is now hindered by the endless disputes and disagreements among those who study that science and are quite unable to agree as to the meaning of rent, surplus value, profits, etc. Only the one fundamental position of that science is acknowledged by all—namely, that the relations among men are conditioned, not by what people consider right or wrong, but by what is advantageous for those who occupy an advantageous position.

It is admitted as an undoubted truth that if in society many thieves and robbers have sprung up who take from the labourers the fruits of their labour, this happens not because the thieves and robbers have acted badly, but because such are the inevitable economic laws, which can only be altered slowly by an evolutionary process indicated by science; and therefore, according to the guidance of science, people belonging to the class of robbers, thieves or receivers of stolen goods may quietly continue to utilize the things obtained by thefts and robbery.

Though the majority of people in our world do not know the details of these tranquilizing scientific explanations any more than they formerly knew the details of the theological explanations which justified their position, yet they all know that an explanation exists; that scientific men, wise men, have proved convincingly, and continue to prove, that the existing order of things is what it ought to be, and that, therefore, we may live quietly in this order of things without ourselves trying to alter it.

Only in this way can I explain the amazing blindness of good people in our society who sincerely desire the welfare of animals, but yet with quiet consciences devour the lives of their brother men.

Notes

1 The serfs in Russia and the slaves in the United States of America were emancipated at the same time 1861-64. (Trans.).

2 The first volume of Karl Marx's *Kapital* appeared in 1867. (Trans.).

3 Compare Walter Bagehot's words "The world which our political economists treat of is a very limited and peculiar world also. They (people) often imagine that what they read is applicable to all states of society, and to all equally; whereas it is only true of and only proved as to states of society in which commerce has largely developed, and where it has taken the form of development, or something near the form, which it has taken in England." – *The Postulates of Political Economy*. (Trans.).

CHAPTER IV – THE ASSERTION OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE THAT RURAL LABOURERS MUST ENTER THE FACTORY SYSTEM

The theory that it is God's will that some people should own others satisfied people for a very long time. But that theory, by justifying cruelty, caused such cruelty as evoked resistance, and produced doubts as to the truth of the theory.

So now with the theory that an economic evolution is progressing, guided by inevitable laws, in consequence of which some people must collect capital, and others must labour all their lives to increase those capitals, preparing themselves meanwhile for the promised communalisation of the means of production; this theory, causing some people to be yet more cruel to others, also begins (especially among common people not stupefied by science) to evoke certain doubts.

For instance, you see goods-porters destroying their lives by thirty-seven hour labour or women in factories, or laundresses, or typesetters, or all those millions of people who live in hard, unnatural conditions of monotonous, stupefying, slavish toil, and you naturally ask: what has brought these people to such a state? And how are they to be delivered from it? And science replies that these people are in this condition because the railway belongs to this company, the silk factory to that gentleman, and all the foundries, factories, typographies, and laundries to capitalists, and that this state of things will come right by work-people forming unions, co-operative societies, strikes, and taking part in government, and more and more swaying the masters and the government till the workers first obtain shorter hours and increased wages, and finally all the means of production will pass into their hands, and then – all will be well. Meanwhile, all is going on as it should go, and there is no need to alter anything.

This answer must seem to an unlearned man, and particularly to our Russian folk, very surprising. In the first place, neither in relation to the goods-porters, nor the factory women, nor all the millions of other labourers suffering from heavy, unhealthy, stupefying labour does the possession of the means of production by capitalists explain anything. The agricultural means of production of those men who are now working at the railway have not been seized by capitalists: they have land, and horses, and plows, and harrows, and all that is necessary to till the ground; also these women working at the factory are not only not forced to it by being deprived of their implements of production, but, on the contrary, they have (for the most part against the wish of the elder members of their families) left the homes where their work was much wanted, and where they had implements of production.

Millions of workpeople in Russia and in other countries are in like case. So that the cause of the miserable position of the workers cannot be found in the seizure of the means of production by capitalists. The cause must lie in that which drives them from the villages. That, in the first

place. Secondly, the emancipation of the workers from this state of things (even in that distant future in which science promises them liberty) can be accomplished neither by shortening the hours of labour, nor by increasing wages, nor by the promised communalisation of the means of production.

All that cannot improve their position. For the misery of the labourer's misery – alike on the railway, in the silk factory and in every other factory or workshop – consists not in the longer or shorter hours of work (agriculturists sometimes work eighteen hours a day, and as much as thirty-six hours on end, and consider their lives happy ones); nor does it consist in the low rate of wages, nor in the fact that the railway or the factory is not theirs, but it consists in the fact that they are obliged to work in harmful, unnatural conditions often dangerous and destructive to life, and to live a barracks life in towns – a life full of temptations and immorality – and to do compulsory labour at another's bidding.

Latterly the hours of labour have diminished and the rate of wages has increased; but this diminution of the hours of labour and this increase in wages have not improved the position of the worker, if one takes into account not their more luxurious habits – watches with chains, silk kerchiefs, tobacco, *vodka*, beef, beer, etc. – but their true welfare, i.e. their health and morality, and chiefly their freedom.

At the silk factory with which I am acquainted, twenty years ago the work was chiefly done by men, who worked fourteen hours a day, earned on an average fifteen rubles a month, and sent the money for the most part to their families in the villages. Now nearly all the work is done by women working eleven hours, some of whom earn as much as twenty-five rubles a month (over fifteen rubles on the average), and for the most part not sending it home, but spend all they earn here chiefly on dress, drunkenness and vice. The diminution of the hours of work merely increases the time they spend in the taverns.

The same thing is happening, to a greater or lesser extent, at all the factories and works. Everywhere, notwithstanding the diminution of the hours of labour and the increase of wages, the health of the operatives is worse than that of country workers, the average duration of life is shorter, and morality is sacrificed, as cannot but occur when people are torn from those conditions which most conduce to morality: family life, and free, healthy, varied and intelligible agricultural work.

It is very possibly true that, as some economists assert, with shorter hours of labour, more pay, and improved sanitary conditions in mills and factories, the health of the workers and their morality improve in comparison with the former condition of factory workers. It is possible also that latterly, and in some places, the position of the factory hands is better in external conditions than the position of the country population. But this is so (and only in some places) because the government and society, influenced by the affirmation of science, do all that is possible to improve the position of the factory population at the expense of the country population.

If the condition of the factory workers in some places is (though only in externals) better than that of country people, it only shows that one can, by all kinds of restrictions, render life miserable in what should be the best external conditions, and that there is no position so unnatural and bad that men may not adapt themselves to it if they remain in it for some generations.

The misery of the position of a factory hand, and in general of a town worker, does not consist in his long hours and small pay, but in the fact that he is deprived of the natural conditions of life in touch with nature, is deprived of freedom, is compelled to compulsory and monotonous toil at another man's will.

And, therefore, the reply to the questions, why factory and town workers are in a miserable condition, and how to improve their condition, cannot be that this arises because capitalists have possessed themselves of the means of production, and that the workers' condition will be improved by diminishing their hours of work, increasing their wages, and communalising the means of production.

The reply to these questions must consist in indicating the causes which have deprived the workers of the natural conditions of life in touch with nature, and have driven them into factory bondage, and in indicating means to free the workers from the necessity of foregoing a free, country life, and going into slavery at the factories.

And, therefore, the question why town workers are in a miserable condition includes, first of all, the question: what reasons have driven them from the villages, where they and their ancestors have lived and might live, where, in Russia, people such as they do now live? and what it is that drove and continues to drive them against their will to the factories and works?

If there are workmen, as in England, Belgium, or Germany, who for some generations have lived by factory work, even they live so not at their own free will, but because their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers were, in some way, compelled to exchange the agricultural life which they loved for life which seemed to them hard, in towns and in factories. First, the country people were deprived of their land by violence, says Karl Marx, were evicted and brought to vagabondage, and then, by cruel laws, they were tortured with pincers, with red-hot irons, and were whipped, to make them submit to the condition of being hired labourers. Therefore, the question how to free the workers from their miserable position should, one would think, naturally lead to the question how to remove those causes which have already driven some, and are now driving or threatening to drive, the rest of the peasants from the position which they considered and consider good, and have driven and are driving them to a position which they consider bad.

Economic science, although it indicates in passing the causes that drove the peasants from the villages, does not concern itself with the question how to remove these causes, but directs all its attention to the improvement of the worker's position in the existing factories and works, assuming, as it were, that the worker's position at these factories and workshops is something unalterable, something which must at all costs be maintained for those who are already in the factories, and must absorb those who have not yet left the villages or abandoned agricultural work.

Moreover, economic science is so sure that all the peasants have inevitably to become factory operatives in towns, that though all the sages and all the poets of the world have always placed the ideal of human happiness in the conditions of agricultural work, – though all the workers whose habits are unperverted have always preferred, and still prefer, agricultural labour to any other, – though factory work is always unhealthy and monotonous, while agriculture is the most healthy and varied, – though agricultural work is free,¹ that is, the peasant alternates toil and rest at his own will, while factory work, even if the factory belongs to the workmen, is always enforced, in dependence on the machines, – though factory work is derivative, while agricultural work is fundamental, and without it no factory could exist, – yet economic science affirms that all the country people not only are not injured by the transition from the country to the town, but themselves desire it and strive towards it.

Notes

1 In Russia, as in many other countries, the greater part of the agricultural work still is done by peasants working their own land on their own account. (Trans.).

CHAPTER V – WHY LEARNED ECONOMISTS ASSERT WHAT IS FALSE

However obviously unjust may be the assertion of the men of science that the welfare of humanity must consist in the very thing that is profoundly repulsive to human feelings – in monotonous, enforced factory labour – the men of science were inevitably led to the necessity of making this obviously unjust assertion, just as the theologians of old were inevitably led to make the equally evident unjust assertion that slaves and their masters were creatures differing in kind, and that the inequality of their position in this world would be compensated in the next.

The cause of this evidently unjust assertion is that those who have formulated, and who are formulating, the laws of science belong to the well-to-do classes, and are so accustomed to the conditions, advantageous for themselves, among which they live, that they do not admit the thought that society could exist under other conditions.

The condition of life to which people of the well-to-do classes are accustomed is that of an abundant production of various articles necessary for their comfort and pleasure, and these things are obtained only thanks to the existence of factories and works organized as at present. And, therefore, discussing the improvement of the workers' position, the men of science belonging to the well-to-do classes always have in view only such improvements as will not do away with the system of factory-production and those conveniences of which they avail themselves.

Even the most advanced economists – the Socialists, who demand the complete control of the means of production for the workers – expect production of the same or almost of the same articles as are produced now to continue in the present or in similar factories with the present division of labour.

The difference, as they imagine it, will only be that in the future not they alone, but all men, will make use of such conveniences as they alone now enjoy. They dimly picture to themselves that, with the communalisation of the means of production, they, too – men of science, and in general the ruling classes – will do some work, but chiefly as managers, designers, scientists or artists. To the questions, who will have to wear a muzzle and make white lead? who will be stokers, miners, and cesspool cleaners? they are either silent, or foretell that all these things will be so improved that even work at cesspools and underground will afford pleasant occupation. That is how they represent to themselves future economic conditions, both in Utopias such as that of Bellamy and in scientific works.

According to their theories, the workers will all join unions and associations, and cultivate solidarity among themselves by unions, strikes, and participation in Parliament till they obtain possession of all the means of production, as well as the land, and then they will be so well fed, so well dressed, and enjoy such amusements on holidays that they will prefer life in town, amid brick buildings and smoking chimneys, to free village life amid plants and domestic animals; and monotonous, bell-regulated machine work to the varied, healthy, and free agricultural labour.

Though this anticipation is as improbable as the anticipation of the theologians about a heaven to be enjoyed hereafter by workmen in compensation for their hard labour here, yet learned and educated people of our society believe this strange teaching, just as formerly wise and learned people believed in a heaven for workmen in the next world.

And learned men and their disciples – people of the well-to-do classes – believe this because they must believe it. This dilemma stands before them: either they must see that all that they make use of in their lives, from railways to lucifer matches and cigarettes, represents labour which costs the lives of their brother men, and that they, not sharing in that toil, but making use of it, are very dishonorable men; or they must believe that all that takes place takes place for the general advantage in accord with unalterable laws of economic science. Therein lies the inner psychological cause, compelling men of science, men wise and educated, but not enlightened, to affirm positively and tenaciously such an obvious untruth as that the labourers, for their own well-being, should leave their happy and healthy life in touch with nature, and go to ruin their bodies and souls in factories and workshops.

CHAPTER VI – BANKRUPTCY OF THE SOCIALIST IDEAL

But even allowing the assertion (evidently unfounded as it is, and contrary to the facts of human nature) that it is better for people to live in towns and to do compulsory machine work in factories rather than to live in villages and work freely at handicrafts, there remains, in the very ideal itself, to which the men of science tell us the economic revolution is leading, an insoluble contradiction. The ideal is that the workers, having become the masters of all the means of production, are to obtain all the comforts and pleasures now possessed by well-to-do people. They will all be well clothed, and housed, and well nourished, and will all walk on electrically lighted, asphalt streets, and frequent concerts and theaters, and read papers and books, and ride on motor cars, etc. But that everybody may have certain things, the production of those things must be apportioned, and consequently it must be decided how long each workman is to work.

How is that to be decided?

Statistics may show (though very imperfectly) what people require in a society fettered by capital, by competition, and by want. But no statistics can show how much is wanted and what articles are needed to satisfy the demand in a society where the means of production will belong to the society itself, i.e. where the people will be free.

The demands in such a society cannot be defined, and they will always infinitely exceed the possibility of satisfying them. Everybody will wish to have all that the richest now possesses, and, therefore, it is quite impossible to define the quantity of goods that such a society will require.

Furthermore, how are people to be induced to work at articles which some consider necessary and others consider unnecessary or even harmful?

If it be found necessary for everybody to work, say six hours a day, in order to satisfy the requirements of the society, who in a free society can compel a man work those six hours, if he knows that part of the time is spent in producing things he considers unnecessary or even harmful?

It is undeniable that under the present state of things most varied articles are produced with great economy of exertion, thanks to machinery, and thanks especially to the division of labour which has been brought to an extreme nicety and carried to the highest perfection, and that those articles are profitable to the manufacturers, and that we find them convenient and pleasant to use. But the fact that these articles are well made and are produced with little expenditure of strength, that they are profitable to the capitalists and convenient for us, does not prove that free men would, without compulsion, continue to produce them. There is no doubt that Krupp, with the present division of labour, makes admirable cannons very quickly and artfully; N. M. very quickly and artfully produces silk materials; X, Y, and Z. produce toilet-scents, powder to preserve the complexion, or glazed packs of cards, and K. produces whiskey of choice flavor, etc.; and, no doubt, both for those who want these articles and for the owners of the factories in which they are made it is very advantageous. But cannons and scents and whiskey are wanted by those

who wish to obtain control of the Chinese market, or who like to get drunk, or are concerned about their complexions; but there will be some who consider the production of these articles harmful. And there will always be people who consider that besides these articles, exhibitions, academies, beer and beef are unnecessary and even harmful. How are these people to be made to participate in the production of such articles?

But even if a means could be found to get all to agree to produce certain articles (though there is no such means, and can be none, except coercion), who, in a free society, without capitalistic production, competition, and its law of supply and demand, will decide which articles are to have the preference? Which are to be made first, and which after? Are we first to build the Siberian Railway and fortify Port Arthur, and then macadamize the roads in our country districts, or *vice-versa*? Which is to come first, electric lighting or irrigation of the fields? And then comes another question, insoluble with free workmen: which men are to do which work? Evidently all will prefer haymaking or drawing to stoking or cesspool cleaning. How, in apportioning the work, are people to be induced to agree?

No statistics can answer these questions. The solution can be only theoretical: it may be said that there will be people to whom power will be given to regulate all these matters. Some people will decide these questions and others will obey them.

But besides the questions of apportioning and directing production and of selecting work, when the means of production are communalised, there will be another and most important question, as to the degree of division of labour that can be established in a socialistically organized society. The now existing division of labour is conditioned by the necessities of the workers. A worker only agrees to live all his life underground, or to make the one-hundredth part of one article all his life, or to move his hands up and down amid the roar of machinery all his life, because he will otherwise not have means to live. But it will only be by compulsion that a workman, owning the means of production and not suffering want, can be induced to accept such stupefying and soul-destroying conditions of labour as those in which people now work. Division of labour is undoubtedly very profitable and natural to people; but if people are free, division of labour is only possible up to a certain very limited extent, which has been far overstepped in our society.

If one peasant occupies himself chiefly with bootmaking, and his wife weaves, and another peasant plows, and a third is a blacksmith, and they all, having acquired special dexterity in their own work, afterwards exchange what they have produced, such division of labour is advantageous to all, and free people will naturally divide their work in this way. But a division of labour by which a man makes one one-hundredth of an article, or a stoker works in 140 degrees (Fahrenheit) of heat, or is choked with harmful gases – such divisions of labour is disadvantageous, because though it furthers the production of insignificant articles, it destroys that which is most precious – the life of man. And, therefore, such division of labour as now exists can only exist where there is compulsion. Rodbertus¹ says that communal division of labour unites mankind. That is true, but it is only free division – such as people voluntarily adopt – that unites.

If people decide to make a road, and one digs, another brings stones, a third breaks them, etc., that sort of division of work unites people.

But if, independently of the wishes, and sometimes against the wishes, of the workers, a strategical railway is built, or an Eiffel tower, or stupidities such as fill the Paris exhibition; and one workman is compelled to obtain iron, another to dig coal, a third to make castings, a fourth to cut down trees, and a fifth to saw them up, without even having the least idea what the things

they are making are wanted for, then such division of labour not only does not unite men, but, on the contrary, it divides them.

And, therefore, with communalised implements of production, if people are free, they will only adopt division of labour in so far as the good resulting will outweigh the evils it occasions to the workers. And as each man naturally sees good in extending and diversifying his activities, such division of labour as now exists will evidently be impossible in a free society.

To suppose that with communalised means of production there will be such an abundance of things as is now produced by compulsory division of labour is like supposing that after the emancipation of the serfs the domestic orchestras and theaters, the home-made carpets and laces and the elaborate gardens which depended on serf-labour would continue to exist as before. So that the supposition that when the Socialist ideal is realized every one will be free, and will at the same time have at his disposal everything, or almost everything, that is now made use of by the well-to-do classes, involves an obvious self-contradiction.

Notes

- 1 A leader of German scientific Socialism (1805-75). (Trans.).

CHAPTER VII – CULTURE OR FREEDOM

Just what happened when serfdom existed is now being repeated. Then the majority of the serf-owners and of people of the well-to-do classes, if they acknowledged the serf's position to be not quite satisfactory, yet recommended only such alterations as would not deprive the owners of what was essential to their profit; now, people of the well-to-do classes, admitting that the position of the workers is not altogether satisfactory, propose for its amendment only such measures as will not deprive the well-to-do classes of their advantages. As well-disposed owners then spoke of "paternal authority," and, like Gogol,¹ advised owners to be kind to their serfs, and to take care of them, but would not tolerate the idea of emancipation,² considering it harmful and dangerous, just so the majority of well-to-do people to-day advise employers to look after the well-being of their workpeople, but do not admit the thought of any such alteration of the economic structure of life as would set the labourers quite free.

And just as advanced Liberals then, while considering serfdom to be an immutable arrangement, demanded that the government should limit the power of the owners, and sympathized with the serfs' agitation, so the Liberals of today, while considering the existing order immutable demand that Government should limit the powers of capitalists and manufacturers, and they sympathize with unions, and strikes, and, in general, with the workers' agitation. And just as the most advanced men then demanded the emancipation of the serfs, but drew up a project which left the serfs dependent on private landowners, or fettered them with tributes and land-taxes – so now the most advanced people demand the emancipation of the workmen from the power of the capitalists, the communalisation of the means of production, but yet would leave the workers dependent on the present apportionment and division of labour, which, in their opinion, must remain unaltered. The teachings of economic science which are adopted, though without closely examining their details by all those of the well-to-do classes who consider themselves enlightened and advanced, seem on a superficial examination to be liberal and even radical, containing as they do attacks on the wealthy classes of society; but essentially that teaching is in the highest degree conservative, gross and cruel. One way or another the men of science, and in their train all the well-to-do classes, wish at all cost to maintain the present system of distribution and division of labour, which makes possible the production of that great quantity of goods which they make use of. The existing economic order is – by the men of science and, following them, by all the well-to-do classes – called culture; and in this culture: railways, telegraphs, telephones, photographs, Roentgen rays, clinical hospitals, exhibitions, and, chiefly, all the appliances of comfort – they see something so sacrosanct that they will not allow even a thought of alterations which might destroy it all, or but endanger a small part of these acquisitions. Everything may, according to the teachings of that science, be changed except what it calls culture. But it becomes more and more evident that this culture can exist only while the workers are compelled to work. Yet men of science are so sure that this culture is the greatest of blessings that they boldly proclaim the contrary of what the lawyers once said: *fiat justitia, pereat mundus*⁴ They now say: *fiat cultura, pereat justitia*.⁵ And they not only say it, but act accordingly. Everything may be changed

in practice and in theory, but not culture; not all that is going on in workshops and factories, and certainly not what is being sold in the shops.

But I think that enlightened people, professing the Christian law of brotherhood and love to one's neighbor, should say just the contrary.

Electric lights and telephones and exhibitions are excellent, and so are all the pleasure-gardens, with concerts and performances, and all the cigars, and match-boxes, and braces, and motor cars, but they may all go to perdition, and not they alone, but the railways, and all the factory-made chintz stuffs and cloths in the world, if to produce them it is necessary that 99 per cent. of the people should remain in slavery and perish by thousands in factories needed for the production of these articles. If, in order that London or Petersburg may be lighted by electricity, or in order to construct exhibition buildings, or in order that there may be beautiful paints, or in order to weave beautiful stuffs quickly and abundantly, it is necessary that even a very few lives should be destroyed, or ruined, or shortened – and statistics show us how many are destroyed – let London or Petersburg rather be lit by gas or oil; let there rather be no exhibition, no paints, or materials, only let there be no slavery, and no destruction of human lives resulting from it. Truly enlightened people will always agree rather to go back to riding on horses and using pack-horses, or even to tilling the earth with sticks or with one's hands, than to travel on railways which regularly every year crush so many people as is done in Chicago⁶ merely because the proprietors of the railway find it more profitable to compensate the families of those killed than to build the line so that it should not kill people. The motto for truly enlightened people is not *fiat cultura, pereat justitia*, but *fiat justitia, pereat cultura*.

But culture, useful culture, will not be destroyed. Let justice be done, though the world perish. It will certainly not be necessary for people to revert to tillage of the land with sticks or to lighting up with torches. It is not for nothing that mankind, in their slavery, have achieved such great progress in technical matters. If only it is understood that we must not sacrifice the lives of our fellow-men for our pleasure, it will be possible to apply technical improvements without destroying men's lives, and to arrange life so as to profit by all such methods giving us control of nature as have been devised and can be applied without keeping our brother men in slavery.

Notes

1 N. V. Gdgol (1809-52), an admirable writer and a most worthy man. (Trans.).

2 Tolstoy himself set an example by voluntarily emancipating all his serfs. (Trans.).

3 It should be borne in mind that educated Russians, though politically much less free, are intellectually far more free than the corresponding section of the English population. Views on economics, and on religion, which are here held only by very "advanced" people, have been popular among Russian university students for a generation past. In particular, the doctrines of Karl Marx, and of German scientific socialism in general, have had a much wider acceptance there than here. (Trans.).

4 Let justice be done, though the world perish.

5 Let culture be preserved, though justice perishes.

6 We have a somewhat similar case nearer home. In 1899 the number of railway servants killed in the United Kingdom was 1085, besides nearly 5000 injured, yet Companies wish to defer the introduction of such a precaution as automatic couplings till yet more have been killed. (Trans.).

CHAPTER VIII – SLAVERY EXISTS AMONG US

Imagine a man from the country quite different from our own, with no idea of our history or of our laws, and suppose that, after showing him the various aspects of our life, we were to ask him what was the chief difference he noticed in the lives of people of our world? The chief difference which such a man would notice in the way people live is that some people – a small number – who have clean, white hands, and are well nourished and clothed and lodged, do very little and very light work, or even do not work at all, but only amuse themselves, spending on these amusements the results of millions of days devoted by other people to severe labour; but other people, always dirty, poorly clothed and lodged and fed, with dirty, horny hands, toil unceasingly from morning to night, and sometimes all night long, working for those who do not work, but who continually amuse themselves.

If between the slaves and slave-owners of to-day it is difficult to draw as sharp a dividing line as that which separated the former slaves from their masters, and if among the slaves of today there are some who are only temporarily slaves and then become slave-owners, or some who, at one and the same time, are slaves and slave-owners, this blending of the two classes at their points of contact does not upset the fact that the people of our time are divided into slaves and slave-owners as definitely as, in spite of the twilight, each twenty-four hours is divided into day and night.

If the slave-owner of our times has no slave, John, whom he can send to the cesspool, he has five shillings, of which hundreds of such Johns are in such need that the slave-owner of our times may choose any one out of hundreds of Johns and be a benefactor to him by giving him the preference, and allowing him, rather than another, to climb down into the cesspool.¹

The slaves of our times are not all those factory and workshop hands only who must sell themselves completely into the power of the factory and foundry-owners in order to exist, but nearly all the agricultural labourers are slaves, working, as they do, unceasingly to grow another's corn on another's field, and gathering it into another's barn; or tilling their own fields only in order to pay to bankers the interest on debts they cannot get rid of. And slaves also are all the innumerable footmen, cooks, porters, housemaids, coachmen, bathmen, waiters, etc., who all their life long perform duties most unnatural to a human being, and which they themselves dislike.

Slavery exists in full vigor, but we do not perceive it, just as in Europe at the end of the Eighteenth Century the slavery of serfdom was not perceived.

People of that day thought that the position of men obliged to till the land for their lords, and to obey them, was a natural, inevitable, economic condition of life, and they did not call it slavery.

It is the same among us: people of our day consider the position of the labourer to be a natural, inevitable economic condition, and they do not call it slavery. And as, at the end of the Eighteenth Century, the people of Europe began little by little to understand that what formerly seemed a natural and inevitable form of economic life – namely, the position of peasants who were completely in the power of their lords – was wrong, unjust and immoral, and demanded

alteration, so now people today are beginning to understand that the position of hired workmen, and of the working classes in general, which formerly seemed quite right and quite normal, is not what it should be, and demands alteration.

The question of the slavery of our times is just in the same phase now in which the question of serfdom stood in Europe² towards the end of the eighteenth century, and in which the questions of serfdom among us and of slavery in America stood in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The slavery of the workers in our time is only beginning to be admitted by advanced people in our society; the majority as yet are convinced that among us no slavery exists.

A thing that helps people today to misunderstand their position in this matter is the fact that we have, in Russia and in America, only recently abolished slavery. But in reality the abolition of serfdom and of slavery was only the abolition of an obsolete form of slavery that had become unnecessary, and the substitution for it of a firmer form of slavery and one that holds a greater number of people in bondage. The abolition of serfdom and of slavery was like what the Tartars of the Crimea did with their prisoners. They invented the plan of slitting the soles of the prisoners' feet and sprinkling chopped-up bristles into the wounds. Having performed that operation, they released them from their weights and chains. The abolition of serfdom in Russia and of slavery in America, though it abolished the former method of slavery, not only did not abolish what was essential in it, but was only accomplished when the bristles had formed sores in the soles, and one could be quite sure that without chains or weights the prisoners would not run away, but would have to work. (The Northerners in America boldly demanded the abolition of the former slavery because among them the new, monetary slavery had already shown its power to shackle the people. The Southerners did not perceive the plain signs of the new slavery, and, therefore, did not consent to abolish the old form.)

Among us in Russia serfdom was abolished only when all the land had been appropriated. When land was granted to the peasants it was burdened with payments, which took the place of the land-slavery. In Europe taxes that kept the people in bondage began to be abolished only when the people had lost their land, were unaccustomed to agricultural work and, having acquired town tastes, were quite dependent on the capitalists. Only then were the taxes on corn abolished in England. And they are now beginning, in Germany and in other countries, to abolish the taxes that fall on the workers and to shift them on to the rich, only because the majority of the people are already in the hands of the capitalists. One form of slavery is not abolished until another has already replaced it. There are several such forms. And if not one, then another (and sometimes several of these means together) keeps a people in slavery, i.e. places it in such a position that one small part of the people has full power over the labour and the life of a larger number. In this enslavement of the larger part of the people by a smaller part lies the chief cause of the miserable condition of the people. And, therefore, the means of improving the position of the workers must consist in this: First, in admitting that among us slavery exists not in some figurative, metaphorical sense, but in the simplest and plainest sense; slavery which keeps some people – the majority, in the power of others – the minority; secondly, having admitted this, in finding the causes of the enslavement of some people by others; and thirdly, having found these causes, to destroy them.

Notes

1 Moscow has a very defective system of drainage, and a large number of people are engaged, every night, pumping and baling the contents of the cesspools into huge barrels, and carting it away from the city. (Trans.).

2 I have left the distinction between Europe and Russia (quite natural and customary to a Russian writer) as it stands in the original. (Trans.).

CHAPTER IX – WHAT IS SLAVERY?

In what does the slavery of our time consist? What are the forces that make some people the slaves of others? If we ask all the workers in Russia and in Europe and in America alike in the factories and in various situations in which they work for hire, in towns and villages, what has made them choose the position in which they are living, they will all reply that they have been brought to it either because they had no land on which they could and wished to live and work (that will be the reply of all the Russian workmen and of very many of the Europeans), or that taxes, direct and indirect, were demanded of them, which they could only pay by selling their labour, or that they remain at factory work ensnared by the more luxurious habits they have adopted, and which they can gratify only by selling their labour and their liberty.

The first two conditions – the lack of land and the taxes – drive men to compulsory labour; while the third, his increased and unsatisfied needs – decoy him to it and keep him at it.

We can imagine that the land may be freed from the claims of private proprietors by Henry George's plan, and that, therefore, the first cause driving people into slavery – the lack of land – may be done away with. With reference to taxes (besides the single-tax plan) we may imagine the abolition of taxes, or that they should be transferred from the poor to the rich, as is being done now in some countries; but under the present economic organization one cannot even imagine a position of things under which more and more luxurious, and often harmful, habits of life should not, little by little, pass to those of the lower classes who are in contact with the rich as inevitably as water sinks into dry ground, and that those habits should not become so necessary to the workers that in order to be able to satisfy them they will be ready to sell their freedom.

So that this third condition, though it is a voluntary one (i.e. it would seem that a man might resist the temptation), and though science does not acknowledge it to be a cause of the miserable condition of the workers, is the firmest and most irremovable cause of slavery.

Workmen living near rich people always are infected with new requirements, and obtain means to satisfy these requirements only to the extent to which they devote their most intense labour to this satisfaction. So that workmen in England and America, receiving sometimes ten times as much as is necessary for subsistence, continue to be just such slaves as they were before.

Three causes, as the workmen themselves explain, produce the slavery in which they live; and the history of their enslavement and the facts of their position confirm the correctness of this explanation.

All the workers are brought to their present state and are kept in it by these three causes. These causes, acting on people from different sides, are such that none can escape from their enslavement. The agriculturalist who has no land, or who has not enough, will always be obliged to go into perpetual or temporary slavery to the landowner, in order to have the possibility of feeding himself from the land. Should he in one way or other obtain land enough to be able to feed himself from it by his own labour, such taxes, direct and indirect, are demanded from him that in order to pay them he has again to go into slavery.

If to escape from slavery on the land he ceases to cultivate land, and, living on some one else's land, begins to occupy himself with a handicraft, or to exchange his produce for the things he needs, then, on the one hand, taxes, and on the other hand, the competition of capitalists producing similar articles to those he makes, but with better implements of production, compel him to go into temporary or perpetual slavery to a capitalist. If working for a capitalist he might set up free relations with him, and not be obliged to sell his liberty, yet the new requirements which he assimilates deprive him of any such possibility. So that one way or another the labourer is always in slavery to those who control the taxes, the land, and the articles necessary to satisfy his requirements.

CHAPTER X – LAWS CONCERNING TAXES, LAND AND PROPERTY

The German Socialists have termed the combination of conditions which put the worker in subjection to the capitalists the iron law of wages, implying by the word "iron" that this law is immutable. But in these conditions there is nothing immutable. These conditions merely result from human laws concerning taxes, land, and, above all, concerning things which satisfy our requirements, i.e. concerning property. Laws are framed and repealed by human beings. So that it is not some sociological "iron law," but ordinary, man-made law that produces slavery. In the case in hand the slavery of our times is very clearly and definitely produced not by some "iron" elemental law, but by human enactments about land, about taxes, and about property. There is one set of laws by which any quantity of land may belong to private people, and may pass from one to another by inheritance, or by will, or may be sold; there is another set of laws by which every one must pay the taxes demanded of him unquestioningly; and there is a third set of laws to the effect that any quantity of articles, by whatever means acquired, may become the absolute property of the people who hold them. And in consequence of these laws slavery exists.

We are so accustomed to all these laws that they seem to us just as necessary and natural to human life as the laws maintaining serfdom and slavery seemed in former times; no doubt about their necessity and justice seems possible, and no one notices anything wrong in them. But just as a time came when people, having seen the ruinous consequences of serfdom, questioned the justice and necessity of the laws which maintained it, so now, when the pernicious consequences of the present economic order have become evident, one involuntarily questions the justice and inevitability of the legislation about land, taxes and property which produces these results.

As people formerly asked, Is it right that some people should belong to others, and that the former should have nothing of their own, but should give all the produce of their labour to their owners? so now we must ask ourselves, Is it right that people must not use land accounted the property of other people; is it right that people should hand over to others, in the form of taxes, whatever part of their labour is demanded of them? Is it right that people may not make use of articles considered to be the property of other people?

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Is it right that people should not have the use of land when it is considered to belong to others who are not cultivating it?

It is said that this legislation is instituted because landed property is an essential condition if agriculture is to flourish, and if there were no private property passing by inheritance people would drive one another from the land they occupy, and no one would work or improve the land on which he is settled. Is this true? The answer is to be found in history and in the facts of today. History shows that property in land did not arise from any wish to make the cultivator's tenure

more secure, but resulted from the seizure of communal lands by conquerors and its distribution to those who served the conqueror. So that property in land was not established with the object of stimulating the agriculturalists. Present-day facts show the fallacy of the assertion that landed property enables those who work the land to be sure that they will not be deprived of the land they cultivate. In reality, just the contrary has everywhere happened and is happening. The right of landed property, by which the great proprietors have profited and are profiting most, has produced the result that all, or most, i.e. the immense majority of the agriculturalists, are now in the position of people who cultivate other people's land, from which they may be driven at the whim of men who do not cultivate it. So that the existing right of landed property certainly does not defend the rights of the agriculturalists to enjoy the fruits of the labour he puts into the land, but, on the contrary, it is a way of depriving the agriculturalists of the land on which they work and handing it over to those who have not worked it; and, therefore, it is certainly not a means for the improvement of agriculture, but, on the contrary, a means of deteriorating it.

About taxes it is said that people ought to pay them because they are instituted with the general, even though silent, consent of all, and are used for public needs to the advantage of all. Is this true?

The answers to this question is given in history and in present-day facts. History shows that taxes never were instituted by common consent, but, on the contrary always only in consequence of the fact that some people having obtained power by conquest, or by other means over other people, imposed tribute not for public needs, but for themselves. And the same thing is still going on. Taxes are taken by those who have the power of taking them. If nowadays some portion of these tributes, called taxes and duties, are used for public purposes, for the most part it is for public purposes that are harmful rather than useful to most people.

For instance, in Russia one-third of the revenue is drawn from the peasants, but only one-fiftieth of the revenue is spent on their greatest need, the education of the people; and even that amount is spent on a kind of education which, by stupefying the people, harms them more than it benefits them. The other forty-nine fiftieths are spent on unnecessary things harmful for the people, such as equipping the army, building strategical railways, forts and prisons, or supporting the priesthood and the court, and on salaries for military and civil officials, i.e. on salaries for those people who make it possible to take this money from the people.

The same thing goes on not only in Persia, Turkey and India, but also in all the Christian and constitutional states and democratic Republics; money is taken from the majority of the people quite independently of the consent or non-consent of the payers, and the amount collected is not what is really needful, but as much as can be got (it is known how Parliaments are made up, and how little they represent the will of the people), and it is used not for the common advantage, but for what the governing classes consider necessary for themselves: on wars in Cuba or the Philippines, on taking and keeping the riches of the Transvaal, and so forth. So that the explanation that people must pay taxes because they are instituted with general consent, and are used for the common good, is as unjust as the other explanation that private property in land is established to encourage agriculture.

Is it true that people should not use articles needful to satisfy their requirements if these articles are the property of other people?

It is asserted that the rights of property in acquired articles is established in order to make the worker sure that no one will take from him the produce of his labour.

Is this true?

It is only necessary to glance at what is done in our world, where property rights are defended with especial strictness, in order to be convinced how completely the facts of life run counter to this explanation.

In our society, in consequence of property rights in acquired articles, the very thing happens which that right is intended to prevent: namely, all articles which have been, and continually are being, produced by working people, are possessed by (and as they are produced are continually taken by) those who have not produced them.

So that the assertion that the right of property secures to the workers the possibility of enjoying the products of their labour is evidently still more unjust than the assertion concerning property in land, and it is based on the same sophistry; first, the fruit of their toil is unjustly and violently taken from the workers, and then the law steps in, and these very articles which have been taken from the workmen, – unjustly and by violence, – are declared to be the absolute property of those who have taken them.

Property: for instance, a factory acquired by a series of frauds and by taking advantage of the workmen, is considered a result of labour and is held sacred; but the lives of those workmen who perish at work in that factory and their labour are not considered their property, but are rather considered to be the property of the factory owner, if he – taking advantage of the necessities of the workers – has bound them down in a manner considered legal. Hundreds of thousands of bushels of corn, collected from the peasants by usury and by a series of extortions, are considered to be the property of the merchant, while the growing corn raised by the peasants is considered to be the property of some one else if he has inherited the land from a grandfather or great-grandfather who took it from the people. It is said that the law defends equally the property of the millowner, of the capitalist, of the landowner, and of the factory or country labourer. The equality of the capitalist and of the worker is like the equality of two fighters when one has his arms tied and the other has weapons, but during the fight certain rules are applied to both with strict impartiality. So that all the explanations of the justice and necessity of the three sets of laws which produce slavery are as untrue as were the explanations formerly given of the justice and necessity of serfdom. All those three sets of laws are nothing but the establishment of that new form of slavery which has replaced the old form. As people formerly established laws enabling some people to buy and sell other people, and to own them, and to make them work – and slavery existed, so now people have established laws that men may not use land that is considered to belong to some one else, must pay the taxes demanded of them, and must not use articles considered to be the property of others – and we have the slavery of our times.

CHAPTER XI – LAWS THE CAUSE OF SLAVERY

The slavery of our times results from three sets of laws: those about land, taxes, and property. And, therefore, all the attempts of those who wish to improve the position of the workers are inevitably, though unconsciously, directed against those three legislations.

One set of people repeal taxes weighing on the working classes and transfer them on to the rich; others propose to abolish the right of private property in land, and attempts are being made to put this in practice both in New Zealand and in one of the American States (the limitation of the landlord's rights in Ireland is a move in the same direction); a third set – the Socialists – propose to communalise the means of production, to tax incomes and inheritances, and to limit the rights of capitalist employers. It would, therefore, seem as if the legislative enactments which cause slavery were being repealed, and that we may, therefore, expect slavery to be abolished in this way. But we need only look more closely at the conditions under which the abolition of those legislative enactments is accomplished or proposed to be convinced that not only the practical, but even the theoretical projects for the improvement of the workers' position are merely the substitution of one legislation producing slavery for another establishing a newer form of slavery. Thus, for instance, those who abolish taxes and duties on the poor, first abolishing direct dues and then transferring the burden of taxation from the poor to the rich, necessarily have to retain, and do retain, the laws making private property of landed property, means of production, and other articles, on to which the whole burden of the taxes is shifted. The retention of the laws concerning land and property keeps the workers in slavery to the landowners and the capitalists, even though the workers are freed from taxes. Those who, like Henry George and his partisans, would abolish the laws making private property of land, propose new laws imposing an obligatory rent on the land. And this obligatory land rent will necessarily create a new form of slavery, because a man compelled to pay rent, or the single tax, may at any failure of the crops or other misfortune have to borrow money from a man who has some to lend, and he will again lapse into slavery. Those who – like the Socialists – in theory, wish to abolish the legislation of property in land and in means of production, retain the legalization of taxes, and must, moreover, inevitably introduce laws of compulsory labour – i.e. they must re-establish slavery in its primitive form.

So that, this way or that way, all the practical and theoretical repeals of certain laws maintaining slavery in one form have always and do always replace it by new legislation creating slavery in another and fresh form.

What happens is something like what a jailer might do who shifted a prisoner's chains from the neck to the arms, and from the arms to the legs, or took them off and substituted bolts and bars. All the improvements that have hitherto taken place in the position of the workers have been of this kind.

The laws giving a master the right to compel his slaves to do compulsory work were replaced by laws allowing the masters to own all the land. The laws allowing all the land to become the private property of the masters may be replaced by taxation laws, the control of the taxes being in the hands of the masters. The taxation laws are replaced by others defending the right of

private property in articles of use and in the means of production. The laws of right of property in land and in articles of use and means of production it is proposed to replace by the enactment of compulsory labour.

So it is evident that the abolition of one form of legalization producing the slavery of our time, whether taxes, or landowning, or property in articles of use or in the means of production, will not destroy slavery, but will only repeal one of its forms, which will immediately be replaced by a new one, as was the case with the abolition of chattel slavery, of serfdom, and with the repeals of taxes. Even the repeal of all three groups of laws together will not abolish slavery, but evoke a new and as yet unknown form of it, which is now already beginning to show itself and to restrain the freedom of labour by legislation concerning the hours of work, the age and state of health of the workers, as well as by demanding obligatory attendance at schools, deductions for old-age insurance or accidents, by all the measures of factory inspection, etc. All this is nothing but the transference of legalization – preparing a new and as yet untried form of slavery.

So that it becomes evident that the essence of slavery lies not in those three roots of legislation on which it now rests, and not even in such or such other legislative enactments, but in the fact that legislation exists; that there are people who have power to decree laws profitable for themselves, and that as long as people have that power there will be slavery.

Formerly it was profitable for people to have chattel slaves, and they made laws about chattel slavery. Afterwards it became profitable to own land, to take taxes, and to keep things one had acquired, and they made laws correspondingly. Now it is profitable for people to maintain the existing direction and division of labour; and they are devising such laws as will compel people to work under the present apportionment and division of labour. Thus the fundamental cause of slavery is legislation: the fact that there are people who have the power to make laws.

What is legislation? and what gives people the power to make laws?

CHAPTER XII – THE ESSENCE OF LEGISLATION IS ORGANISED VIOLENCE

What is legislation? And what enables people to make laws?

There exists a whole science, more ancient and more mendacious and confused than political economy, the servants of which in the course of centuries have written millions of books (for the most part contradicting one another) to answer these questions. But as the aim of this science, as of political economy, is not to explain what now is and what ought to be, but rather to prove that what now exists, is what ought to be, it happens that in this science (of jurisprudence) we find very many dissertations about rights, about object and subject, about the idea of a state and other such matters which are unintelligible both to the students and to the teachers of this science, but we get no clear reply to the question – what is legislation?

According to science, legislation is the expression of the will of the whole people; but as those who break the laws, or who wish to break them, and only refrain from fear of being punished, are always more numerous than those who wish to carry out the code, it is evident that legislation can certainly not be considered as the expression of the will of the whole people.

For instance, there are laws about not injuring telegraph posts, about showing respect to certain people, about each man performing military service¹ or serving as a jurymen, about not taking certain goods beyond a certain boundary, or about not using land considered the property of some one else, about not making money tokens; not using articles which are considered to be the property of others, and about many other matters.

All these laws and many others are extremely complex, and may have been passed from the most diverse motives, but not one of them expresses the will of the whole people. There is but one general characteristic of all these laws, namely, that if any man does not fulfil them, those who have made them will send armed men, and the armed men will beat, deprive of freedom, or even kill the man who does not fulfil the law.

If a man does not wish to give as taxes such part of the produce of his labour as is demanded of him, armed men will come and take from him what is demanded, and if he resists he will be beaten, deprived of freedom, and sometimes even killed. The same will happen to a man who begins to make use of land considered to be the property of another. The same will happen to a man who makes use of things he wants, to satisfy his requirements or to facilitate his work, if these things are considered to be the property of some one else. Armed men will come and will deprive him of what he has taken, and if he resists they will beat him, deprive him of liberty, or even kill him. The same thing will happen to any one who will not show respect to those whom it is decreed that we are to respect, and to him who will not obey the demand that he should go as a soldier, or who makes monetary tokens.

For every non-fulfillment of the established laws there is punishment: the offender is subjected by those who make the laws to blows, to confinement, or even to loss of life.

Many constitutions have been devised, beginning with the English and the American, and ending with the Japanese and the Turkish, according to which people are to believe that all laws established in their country are established at their desire. But every one knows that not in despotic countries only, but also in the countries nominally most free – England, America, France, and others – the laws are made, not by the will of all, but by the will of those who have power; and, therefore, always and everywhere are only such as are profitable to those who have power: whether they are many, a few, or only one man. Everywhere and always the laws are enforced by the only means that has compelled, and still compels, some people to obey the will of others, i.e. by blows, by deprivation of liberty, or by murder. There can be no other way.

It cannot be otherwise. For laws are demands to execute certain rules; and to compel some people to obey certain rules (i.e. to do what other people want of them) cannot be done except by blows, by deprivation of liberty, or by murder. If there are laws, there must be the force that can compel people to obey them, and there is only one force that can compel people to obey rules (i.e. to obey the will of others) – and that is violence; not the simple violence which people do to one another in moments of passion, but the organized violence used by people who have power, in order to compel others to obey the laws they (the powerful) have made – in other words, to do their will.

And so the essence of legislation does not lie in the subject or object, in rights or in the idea of the dominion of the collective will of the people, or in other such indefinite and confused conditions; but it lies in the fact that people who wield organized violence have the power to compel others to obey them and to do as they like.

So that the exact and irrefutable definition of legislation, intelligible to all, is that: *Laws are rules made by people who govern by means of organized violence, for compliance with which the non-complier is subjected to blows, to loss of liberty, or even to being murdered.*

This definition furnishes the reply to the question, What is it that renders it possible for people to make laws? The same thing makes it possible to establish laws as enforces obedience to them, organized violence.

Notes

1 It must not be forgotten that conscription, with which we in England are only threatened, already exists in Russia. (Trans.).

CHAPTER XIII – WHAT ARE GOVERNMENTS? IS IT POSSIBLE TO EXIST WITHOUT GOVERNMENTS?

The cause of the miserable condition of the workers is slavery. The cause of slavery is legislation. Legislation rests on organized violence.

It follows that an improvement in the condition of the people is possible only through the abolition of organized violence.

”But organized violence is government, and how can we live without governments? Without governments there will be chaos, anarchy; all the achievements of civilization will perish, and people will revert to their primitive barbarism.”

It is usual, – not only for those to whom the existing order is profitable, but even for those to whom it is evidently unprofitable, but who are so accustomed to it they cannot imagine life without governmental violence, – to say we must not dare to touch the existing order of things. The destruction of government will, say they, produce the greatest misfortunes – riot, theft, and murder – till finally the worst men will again seize power and enslave all the good people. But not to mention the fact that all this – i.e. riots, thefts and murders, followed by the rule of the wicked and the enslavement of the good – all this is what has happened and is happening, the anticipation that the disturbance of the existing order will produce riots and disorder does not prove the present order to be good.

”Only touch the present order and the greatest evils will follow.”

Only touch one brick of the thousand bricks piled into a narrow column several yards high and all the bricks will tumble down and smash! But the fact that any brick extracted or any push administered will destroy such a column and smash the bricks certainly does not prove it to be wise to keep the bricks in such an unnatural and inconvenient position. On the contrary, it shows that bricks should not be piled in such a column, but that they should be rearranged so that they may lie firmly, and so that they can be made use of without destroying the whole erection. It is the same with the present state organizations. The state organization is extremely artificial and unstable, and the fact that the least push may destroy it not only does not prove that it is necessary, but, on the contrary, shows that, if once upon a time it was necessary it is now absolutely unnecessary, and is, therefore, harmful and dangerous.

It is harmful and dangerous because the effect of this organization on all the evil that exists in society is not to lessen and correct, but rather to strengthen and confirm that evil. It is strengthened and confirmed by being either justified and put in attractive forms or secreted.

All that well being of the people which we see in so-called well-governed states, ruled by violence, is but an appearance – a fiction. Everything that would disturb the external appearance of well-being – all the hungry people, the sick, the revoltingly vicious – are all hidden away where they cannot be seen. But the fact that we do not see them does not show that they do

not exist; on the contrary, the more they are hidden the more there will be of them, and the more cruel towards them will those be who are the cause of their condition. It is true that every interruption, and yet more, every stoppage of governmental action, i.e. of organized violence, disturb this external appearance of well-being in our life, but such disturbance does not produce disorder, but merely displays what was hidden, and makes possible its amendment.

Until now, say till almost the end of the nineteenth century, people thought and believed that they could not live without Governments. But life flows onward, and the conditions of life and people's views change. And notwithstanding the efforts of Governments to keep people in that childish condition in which an injured man feels as if it were better for him to have some one to complain to, people – especially the labouring people, both in Europe and in Russia – are more and more emerging from childhood and beginning to understand the true conditions of their life.

"You tell us but that for you we shall be conquered by neighboring nations: by the Chinese or the Japanese," men of the people now say, "but we read the papers, and know that no one is threatening to attack us, and that it is only you who govern us who, for some aims, unintelligible to us, exasperate each other, and then, under pretence of defending your own people, ruin us with taxes for the maintenance of the fleet, for armaments, or for strategical railways, which are only required to gratify your ambition and vanity; and then you arrange wars with one another, as you have now done against the peaceful Chinese. You say that you defend landed property for our advantage; but your defense has this effect: that all the land either has passed or is passing into the control of rich banking companies, which do not work, while we, the immense majority of the people, are being deprived of land and left in the power of those who do not labour. You with your laws of landed property do not defend landed property, but take it from those who work it. You say you secure to each man the produce of his labour, but you do just the reverse; all those who produce articles of value are, thanks to your pseudo-protection, placed in such a position that they not only never receive the value of their labour, but are all their lives long in complete subjection to and in the power of non-workers."

Thus do people, at the end of the century, begin to understand and to speak. And this awakening from the lethargy in which governments have kept them is going on in some rapidly increasing ratio. Within the last five or six years the public opinion of the common folk, not only in the towns, but in the villages, and not only in Europe, but also among us in Russia, has altered amazingly.

It is said that without governments we should not have those institutions, enlightening, educational and public, that are needful for all.

But why should we suppose this? Why think that non-official people could not arrange their life themselves as well as government people arrange it, not for themselves, but for others?

We see, on the contrary, that in the most diverse matters people in our times arrange their own lives incomparably better than those who govern them arrange for them. Without the least help from government, and often in spite of the interference of government, people organize all sorts of social undertakings – workmen's unions, co-operative societies, railway companies, *artels*,¹ and syndicates. If collections for public works are needed, why should we suppose that free people could not without violence voluntarily collect the necessary means, and carry out all that is carried out by means of taxes, if only the undertakings in question are really useful for everybody? Why suppose that there cannot be tribunals without violence? Trial by people trusted by the disputants has always existed and will exist, and needs no violence. We are so depraved by long-continued slavery that we can hardly imagine administration without violence. And yet,

again, that is not true: Russian communes migrating to distant regions, where our government leaves them alone, arrange their own taxation, administration, tribunals, and police, and always prosper until government violence interferes with their administration. And in the same way, there is no reason to suppose that people could not, by common consent, decide how the land is to be apportioned for use.

I have known people – Cossacks of the Oural – who have lived without acknowledging private property in land. And there was such well-being and order in their commune as does not exist in society, where landed property is defended by violence. And I now know communes that live without acknowledging the right of individuals to private property. Within my recollection the whole Russian peasantry did not accept the idea of landed property.² The defense of landed property by governmental violence not merely does not abolish the struggle for landed property, but, on the contrary, strengthens that struggle, and in many cases causes it.

Were it not for the defense of landed property, and its consequent rise in price, people would not be crowded into such narrow spaces, but would scatter over the free land, of which there is still so much in the world. But as it is, a continual struggle goes on for landed property; a struggle with the weapons government furnishes by means of its laws of landed property. And in this struggle it is not those who work on the land, but always those who take part in governmental violence, that have the advantage.

It is the same with reference to things produced by labour. Things really produced by a man's own labour, and that he needs, are always defended by custom, by public opinion, by feelings of justice and reciprocity, and they do not need to be protected by violence.

Tens of thousands of acres of forest lands belonging to one proprietor – while thousands of people close by have no fuel – need protection by violence. So, too, do factories and works where several generations of workmen have been defrauded, are still being defrauded. Yet more do hundreds of thousands of bushels of grain, belonging to one owner, who has held them back till a famine has come, to sell them at triple price. But no man, however depraved – except a rich man or a Government official – would take from a countryman living by his own labour the harvest he has raised or the cow he has bred, and from which he gets milk for his children, or the *sokhas*,³ the scythes, and the spades he has made and uses. If even a man were found who did take from another articles the latter had made and required, such a man would rouse against himself such indignation from every one living in similar circumstances that he would hardly find his action profitable for himself. A man so immoral as to do it under such circumstances would be sure to do it under the strictest system of property defense by violence. It is generally said, "Only attempt to abolish the rights of property in land and in the produce of labour, and no one will take the trouble to work, lacking the assurance that he will not be deprived of what he has produced." We should say just the opposite: the defense by violence of the rights of property immorally obtained, which is now customary, if it has not quite destroyed, has considerably weakened people's natural consciousness of justice in the matter of using articles, i.e. the natural and innate right of property, without which humanity could not exist, and which has always existed and still exists among all men.

And, therefore, there is no reason to anticipate that people will not be able to arrange their lives without organized violence.

Of course, it may be said that horses and bulls must be guided by the violence of rational beings – men; but why must men be guided, not by some higher beings, but by people such as themselves? Why ought people to be subject to the violence of just those people who are in

power at a given time? What proves that these people are wiser than those on whom they inflict violence?

The fact that they allow themselves to use violence toward human beings indicates that they are not only not more wise, but are less wise than those who submit to them. The examinations in China for the office of Mandarin do not, we know, ensure that the wisest and best people should be placed in power. And just as little is this ensured by inheritance, or the whole machinery of promotions in rank, or the elections in constitutional countries. On the contrary, power is always seized by those who are less conscientious and less moral.

It is said, "How can people live without governments, i.e. without violence?" But it should, on the contrary, be asked, "How can people who are rational live, acknowledging that the vital bond of their social life is violence, and not reasonable agreement?"

One of two things: either people are rational beings or they are irrational beings. If they are irrational beings, then they are all irrational, and then everything among them is decided by violence; and there is no reason why certain people should and others should not have a right to use violence. And in that case governmental violence has no justification. But if men are rational beings, then their relations should be based on reason, and not on the violence of those who happen to have seized power. And in that case, again, governmental violence has no justification.

Notes

1 The *artel*, in its most usual form, is an association of workmen, or employees, for each of whom the *artel* is collectively responsible. – (Trans.).

2 Serfdom was legalized about 1597 by Boris Godunof, who forbade the peasants to leave the land on which they were settled. The peasants' theory of the matter was that *they* belonged to the proprietor, but the *land* belonged to them. "We are yours, but the land is ours," was a common saying among them till their emancipation under Alexander II., when many of them felt themselves defrauded by the arrangement which gave much land to the proprietors. – (Trans.).

3 The *sokha* is a light plough, such as the Russian peasants make and use. – (Trans.).

CHAPTER XIV – HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS BE ABOLISHED?

Slavery results from laws, laws are made by governments, and, therefore, people can only be freed from slavery by the abolition of Governments.

But how can Governments be abolished?

All attempts to get rid of Governments by violence have hitherto, always and everywhere, resulted only in this: that in place of the deposed Governments new ones established themselves, often more cruel than those they replaced.

Not to mention past attempts to abolish Governments by violence, according to the Socialist theory, the coming abolition of the rule of the capitalists, i.e. the communalisation of the means of production and the new economic order of society, is also to be carried out by a fresh organization of violence, and will have to be maintained by the same means. So that attempts to abolish violence by violence neither have in the past nor, evidently, can in the future emancipate people from violence nor, consequently, from slavery.

It cannot be otherwise.

Apart from outbursts of revenge or anger, violence is used only in order to compel some people, against their own will, to do the will of others. But the necessity to do what other people wish against your own will is slavery. And, therefore, as long as any violence, designed to compel some people to do the will of others, exists there will be slavery.

All the attempts to abolish slavery by violence are like extinguishing fire with fire, stopping water with water, or filling up one hole by digging another.

Therefore, the means of escape from slavery, if such means exist, must be found, not in setting up fresh violence, but in abolishing whatever renders governmental violence possible. And the possibility of governmental violence, like every other violence perpetrated by a small number of people upon a larger number, has always depended, and still depends, simply on the fact that the small number are armed while the large number are unarmed, or that the small number are better armed than the large number.

That has been the case in all the conquests: it was thus the Greeks, the Romans, the Knights, and Pizarros conquered nations, and it is thus that people are now conquered in Africa and Asia. And in this same way in times of peace all governments hold their subjects in subjection.

As of old, so now, people rule over other people only because some are armed and others are not.

In olden times the warriors, with their chiefs, fell upon the defenseless inhabitants, subdued them and robbed them, and all divided the spoils in proportion to their participation, courage and cruelty; and each warrior saw clearly that the violence he perpetrated was profitable to him. Now, armed men (taken chiefly from the working classes) attack defenseless people: men on strikes, rioters, or the inhabitants of other countries, and subdue them and rob them (i.e. make

them yield the fruits of their labour), not for themselves, but for people who do not even take a share in the subjugation.

The difference between the conquerors and the governments is only that the conquerors have themselves, with their soldiers, attacked the unarmed inhabitants and have, in cases of insubordination, carried their threats to torture and to kill into execution; while the governments, in cases of insubordination, do not themselves torture or execute the unarmed inhabitants, but oblige others to do it who have been deceived and specially brutalized for the purpose, and who are chosen from among the very people on whom the Government inflicts violence. Thus, violence was formerly inflicted by personal effort, by the courage, cruelty and agility of the conquerors themselves; but now violence is inflicted by means of fraud.

So that if formerly, in order to get rid of armed violence, it was necessary to arm oneself and to oppose armed violence by armed violence, now when people are subdued, not by direct violence, but by fraud, in order to abolish violence it is only necessary to expose the deception which enables a small number of people to exercise violence upon a larger number.

The deception by means of which this is done consists in the fact that the small number who rule, on obtaining power from their predecessors, who were installed by conquest, say to the majority: "There are a lot of you, but you are stupid and uneducated, and cannot either govern yourselves or organize your public affairs, and, therefore, we will take those cares on ourselves; we will protect you from foreign foes, and arrange and maintain internal peace among you; we will set up courts of justice, arrange for you and take care of public institutions: schools, roads, and the postal service and in general we will take care of your well-being; and in return for all this you only have to fulfil those slight demands which we make, and, among other things, you must give into our complete control a small part of your incomes, and you must yourselves enter the armies which are needed for your own safety and government."

And most people agree to this, not because they have weighed the advantages and disadvantages of these conditions (they never have a chance to do that), but because from their very birth they have found themselves in conditions such as these.

If doubts suggest themselves to some people as to whether all this is necessary, each one thinks only about himself, and fears to suffer if he refuses to accept these conditions; each one hopes to take advantage of them for his own profit, and every one agrees, thinking that by paying a small part of his means to the Government, and by consenting to military service, he cannot do himself very much harm.

But as soon as the Governments have the money and the soldiers, instead of fulfilling their promises to defend their subjects from foreign enemies, and to arrange things for their benefit, they do all they can to provoke the neighbouring nations and to produce war; and they not only do not promote the internal well-being of their people, but they ruin and corrupt them.

In the Arabian nights there is a story of a traveller who, being cast upon an uninhabited island, found a little old man with withered legs sitting on the ground by the side of a stream. The old man asked the traveller to take him on his shoulders and to carry him over the stream. The traveler consented; but no sooner was the old man settled on the traveler's shoulders than the former twined his legs round the latter's neck and would not get off again. Having control of the traveler, the old man drove him about as he liked, plucked fruit from the trees and ate it himself, not giving any to his bearer, and abused him in every way.

This is just what happens with the people who give soldiers and money to the Governments. With the money the Governments buy guns, and hire, or train by education, subservient, brutal-

ized military commanders. And these commanders, by means of an artful system of stupefaction, perfected in the course of ages and called discipline, make those who have been taken as soldiers into a disciplined army. Discipline consists in this, that people who are subjected to this training, and remain under it for some time, are completely deprived of all that is valuable in human life, and of man's chief attribute – rational freedom – and become submissive machine-like instruments of murder in the hands of their organised, hierarchical stratocracy. And it is in this disciplined army that the essence of the fraud dwells, which gives to modern Governments dominion over the peoples. When the governments have in their power this instrument of violence and murder, that possesses no will of its own, the whole people are in their hands, and they do not let them go again, and not only prey upon them, but also abuse them, instilling into the people, by means of a pseudo-religious and patriotic education, loyalty to and even adoration of, themselves, i.e. of the very men who torment the whole people by keeping them in slavery.

It is not for nothing that all the kings, emperors, and presidents esteem discipline so highly, are so afraid of any breach of discipline, and attach the highest importance to reviews, maneuvers, parades, ceremonial marches and other such nonsense. They know that it all maintains discipline, and that not only their power, but their very existence depends on discipline.

Discipline armies are the means by which they, without using their own hands, accomplish the greatest atrocities, the possibility of perpetrating which give them power over the people.

And, therefore, the only means to destroy Governments is not force, but it is the exposure of this fraud. It is necessary people should understand: First, that in Christendom there is no need to protect the peoples one from another; that all the enmity of the peoples, one to another, are produced by the Governments themselves, and that armies are only needed by the small number of those who rule for the people it is not only unnecessary, but it is in the highest degree harmful, serving as the instrument to enslave them. Secondly, it is necessary that people should understand that the discipline which is so highly esteemed by all the governments is the greatest of crimes that man can commit, and is a clear indication of the criminality of the aims of governments. Discipline is the suppression of reason and of freedom in man, and can have no other aim than preparation for the performance of crimes such as no man can commit while in a normal condition. It is not even needed for war, when the war is defensive and national, as the Boers have recently shown. It is wanted and wanted only for the purpose indicated by William II.: for the committal of the greatest crimes, fratricide and parricide.

The terrible old man who sat on the traveler's shoulders behaved as the Governments do. He mocked him and insulted him, knowing that as long as he sat on the traveler's neck the latter was in his power.

And it is just this fraud, by means of which a small number of unworthy people, called the Government, have power over the people, and not only impoverish them, but do what is the most harmful of all actions – pervert whole generations from childhood upwards; just this terrible fraud which should be exposed, in order that the abolition of Government and of the slavery that results from it may become possible.

The German writer, Eugene Schmitt, in the newspaper *Ohne Staat*, that he published in Budapest, wrote an article that was profoundly true and bold, not only in expression, but in thought. In it he showed that Governments, justifying their existence on the ground that they ensure a certain kind of safety to their subjects, are like the Calabrian robber-chief who collected a regular tax from all who wished to travel in safety along the highways. Schmitt was committed for trial for that article, but was acquitted by the jury.

We are so hypnotized by the governments that such a comparison seems to us an exaggeration, a paradox, or a joke; but in reality it is not a paradox or a joke; the only inaccuracy in the comparison is that the activity of all the Governments is many times more inhuman and, above all, more harmful than the activity of the Calabrian robber. The robber generally plundered the rich; the Governments generally plunder the poor and protect those rich who assist in their crimes. The robber doing his work risked his life, while the Governments risk nothing, but base their whole activity on lies and deception. The robber did not compel any one to join his band, the Governments generally enroll their soldiers by force. All who paid the tax to the robber had equal security from danger. But in the state, the more any one takes part in the organized fraud the more he receives not merely of protection, but also of reward. Most of all, the emperors, kings and presidents are protected (with their perpetual body-guards), and they can spend the largest share of the money collected from the taxpaying subjects. Next in the scale of participation in the governmental crimes come the commanders-in-chief, the ministers, the heads of police, governors, and so on, down to the policemen, who are least protected, and who receive the smallest salaries of all. Those who do not take any part in the crimes of government, who refuse to serve, to pay taxes, or to go to law, are subjected to violence; as among the robbers. The robber does not intentionally vitiate people; but the governments, to accomplish their ends, vitiate whole generations from childhood to manhood with false religions and patriotic instruction. Above all, not even the most cruel robber, no Stenka Razin¹ or Cartouche² can be compared for cruelty, pitilessness and ingenuity in torturing, I will not say with the villain kings notorious for their cruelty, – John the Terrible, Louis XI., the Elizabeths, etc., – but even with the present constitutional and Liberal Governments, with their solitary cells, disciplinary battalions, suppressions of revolts, and their massacres in war.

Towards Governments, as towards Churches, it is impossible to feel otherwise than with veneration or aversion.

Until a man has understood what a Government is and until he has understood what a Church is he cannot but feel veneration towards those institutions. As long as he is guided by them his vanity makes it necessary for him to think that what guides him is something primal, great and holy; but as soon as he understands that what guides him is not something primal and holy, but that it is a fraud carried out by unworthy people, who, under the pretence of guiding him, make use of him for their own personal ends, he cannot but at once feel aversion towards these people, and the more important the side of his life that has been guided the more aversion will he feel.

People cannot but feel this when they have understood what Governments are.

People must feel that their participation in the criminal activity of Governments, whether by giving part of their work in the form of money, or by direct participation in military service, is not, as is generally supposed, an indifferent action, but, besides being harmful to one's self and to one's brothers, is a participation in the crimes unceasingly committed by all Governments and a preparation for new crimes, which Governments are always preparing by maintaining disciplined armies.

The age of veneration for governments, notwithstanding all the hypnotic influence they employ to maintain their position, is more and more passing away. And it is time for people to understand that Governments not only are not necessary, but are harmful and most highly immoral institutions, in which a self-respecting, honest man cannot and must not take part, and the advantages of which he cannot and should not enjoy.

And as soon as people clearly understand that, they will naturally cease to take part in such deeds, i.e. cease to give the Governments soldiers and money. And as soon as a majority of people ceases to do this the fraud which enslaves people will be abolished.

Only in this way can people be freed from slavery.

Notes

1 The Cossack leader of a formidable insurrection in the latter half of the seventeenth century. – (Trans.).

2 The chief of a Paris band of robbers in the early years of the eighteenth century. – (Trans.).

CHAPTER XV – WHAT SHOULD EACH MAN DO?

”But all these are general considerations, and whether they are correct or not, they are inapplicable to life,” will be the remark made by people accustomed to their position, and who do not consider it possible, or who do not wish, to change it.

”Tell us what to do, and how to organize society,” is what people of the well-to-do classes usually say.

People of the well-to-do classes are so accustomed to their role of slave owners that when there is talk of improving the workers’ condition, they at once begin, like our serf owners before the emancipation, to devise all sorts of plans for their slaves; but it never occurs to them that they have no right to dispose of other people, and that if they really wish to do good to people, the one thing they can and should do is to cease to do the evil they are now doing. And the evil they do is very definite and clear. It is not merely that they employ compulsory slave labour, and do not wish to cease from employing it, but that they also take part in establishing and maintaining this compulsion of labour. That is what they should cease to do.

The working people are also so perverted by their compulsory slavery that it seems to most of them that if their position is a bad one, it is the fault of the masters, who pay them too little and who own the means of production. It does not enter their heads that their bad position depends entirely on themselves, and that if only they wish to improve their own and their brothers’ positions, and not merely each to do the best he can for himself, the great thing for them to do is themselves to cease to do evil. And the evil that they do is that, desiring to improve their material position by the same means which have brought them into bondage, – the workers (for the sake of satisfying the habits they have adopted), sacrificing their human dignity and freedom, accept humiliating and immoral employment or produce unnecessary and harmful articles, and, above all, they maintain Governments, – taking part in them by paying taxes and by direct service – and thus they enslave themselves.

In order that the state of things may be improved, both the well-to-do classes and the workers must understand that improvement cannot be effected by safeguarding one’s own interests. Service involves sacrifice, and, therefore, if people really wish to improve the position of their brother men, and not merely their own, they must be ready not only to alter the way of life to which they are accustomed, and to lose those advantages which they have held, but they must be ready for an intense struggle, not against governments, but against themselves and their families, and must be ready to suffer persecution for non-fulfillment of the demands of Government.

And, therefore, the reply to the question – What is it we must do? – is very simple, and not merely definite, but always in the highest degree applicable and practicable for each man, though it is not what is expected by those who, like people of the well-to-do classes, are fully convinced that they are appointed to correct not themselves (they are already good), but to teach and correct other people; and by those who, like the workmen, are sure that not they (but only the capitalists)

are in fault for their present bad position, and think that things can only be put right by taking from the capitalists the things they use, and arranging so that all might make use of those conveniences of life which are now only used by the rich. The answer is very definite, applicable, and practicable, for it demands the activity of that one person over whom each of us has real, rightful, and unquestionable power, namely, oneself; and it consists in this, that if a man – whether slave or slave owner – really wishes to better not *his* position alone, but the position of people in general, he must not himself do those wrong things which enslave him and his brothers. And in order not to do the evil which produces misery for himself and for his brothers, *he should, first of all, neither willingly nor under compulsion take any part in Governmental activity, and should, therefore, be neither a soldier, nor a Field-Marshal, nor a Minister-of-State, nor a tax-collector, nor a witness, nor an alderman, nor a jurymen, nor a governor, nor a Member of Parliament, nor, in fact, hold any office connected with violence.* That is one thing.

Secondly, *such a man should not voluntarily pay taxes to governments, either directly or indirectly; nor should he accept money collected by taxes, either as salary, or as pension, or as a reward; nor should he make use of governmental institutions, supported by taxes collected by violence from the people.* That is the second thing.

Thirdly, *a man who desires not to promote his own well-being alone, but to better the position of people in general, should not appeal to Governmental violence for the protection of his own possessions in land or in other things, nor to defend him and his near ones; but should only possess land and all products of his own or other people's toil, in so far as others do not claim them from him.*

"But such an activity is impossible; to refuse all participation in Governmental affairs means to refuse to live" – is what people will say. "A man who refuses military service will be imprisoned; a man who does not pay taxes will be punished and the tax will be collected from his property; a man who, having no other means of livelihood, refuses Government service, will perish of hunger with his family; the same will befall a man who rejects Governmental protection for his property and his person; not to make use of things that are taxed or of Government institutions, is quite impossible, as the most necessary articles are often taxed; and just in the same way it is impossible to do without Government institutions, such as the post, the roads, etc."

It is quite true that it is difficult for a man of our times to stand aside from all participation in Governmental violence. But the fact that not every one can so arrange his life as not to participate in some degree in Governmental violence does not at all show that it is not possible to free one's self from it more and more. Not every man will have the strength to refuse conscription (though there are and will be such men), but each man can abstain from voluntarily entering the army, the police force, and the judicial or revenue service; and can give the preference to a worse paid private service rather than to a better paid public service. Not every man will have the strength to renounce his landed estates (though there are people who do that), but every man can, understanding the wrongfulness of such property, diminish its extent. Not every man can renounce the possession of capital (there are some who do) or the use of articles defended by violence, but each man can, by diminishing his own requirements, be less and less in need of articles which provoke other people to envy. Not every official can renounce his Government salary (though there are men who prefer hunger to dishonest Governmental employment), but every one can prefer a smaller salary to a larger one for the sake of having duties less bound up with violence; not every one can refuse to make use of Government schools¹ (though there are some who do), but every one can give the preference to private schools, and each can make less and less use of articles that are taxed, and of Government institutions.

Between the existing order, based on brute force, and the ideal of a society based on reasonable agreement confirmed by custom, there are an infinite number of steps, which mankind are ascending, and the approach to the ideal is only accomplished to the extent to which people free themselves from participation in violence, from taking advantage of it, and from being accustomed to it.

We do not know and cannot see, still less, like the pseudo-scientific men, foretell, in what way this gradual weakening of governments and emancipation of people will come about; nor do we know what new forms man's life will take as the gradual emancipation progresses, but we certainly do know that the life of people who, having understood the criminality and harmfulness of the activity of Governments, strive not to make use of them, or to take part in them, will be quite different and more in accord with the law of life and our own consciences than the present life, in which people themselves participating in Governmental violence and taking advantage of it, make a pretence of struggling against it, and try to destroy the old violence by new violence.

The chief thing is that the present arrangement of life is bad; about that all are agreed. The cause of the bad conditions and of the existing slavery lies in the violence used by Governments. There is only one way to abolish Governmental violence: that people should abstain from participating in violence. And, therefore, whether it be difficult or not, to abstain from participating in Governmental violence, and whether the good results of such abstinence will or will not be soon apparent, – are superfluous questions; because to liberate people from slavery there is only that one way, – and no other!

To what extent and when voluntary agreement, confirmed by custom, will replace violence in each society and in the whole world will depend on the strength and clearness of people's consciousness and on the number of individuals who make this consciousness their own. Each of us is a separate person, and each can be a participator in the general movement of humanity by his greater or lesser clearness of recognition of the aim before us, or he can be an opponent of progress. Each will have to make his choice: to oppose the will of God, building upon the sands the unstable house of his brief, illusive life, – or to join in the eternal, deathless movement of true life in accordance with God's will.

But perhaps I am mistaken, and the right conclusions to draw from human history are these, and the human race is not moving toward emancipation from slavery; perhaps it can be proved that violence is a needful factor of progress, and that the state, with its violence, is a necessary form of life, and that it will be worse for people if Governments are abolished and if the defense of our persons and property is abolished.

Let us grant it to be so, and say that all the foregoing reasoning is wrong; but besides the general considerations about the life of humanity, each man has also to face the question of his own life; and notwithstanding any considerations about the general laws of life, a man cannot do what he admits to be not merely harmful, but wrong.

"Very possibly the reasoning showing the state to be a necessary form of the development of the individual, and Governmental violence to be necessary for the good of Society, can all be deduced from history, and are all correct," each honest and sincere man of our times will reply; "but murder is an evil, that I know more certainly than any reasonings; by demanding that I should enter the army or pay for hiring and equipping soldiers, or for buying cannons and building ironclads, you wish to make me an accomplice in murder, and that I cannot and will not be. Neither do I wish, nor can I, make use of money you have collected from hungry people with

threats of murder; nor do I wish to make use of land or capital defended by you, because I know that your defense rests on murder.

"I could do these things when I did not understand all their criminality, but when I have once seen it, I cannot avoid seeing it, and can no longer take part in these things.

"I know that we are all so bound up by violence that it is difficult to avoid it altogether, but I will, nevertheless, do all I can not to take part in it; I will not be an accomplice to it, and will try not to make use of what is obtained and defended by murder.

"I have but one life, and why should I, in this brief life of mine, act contrary to the voice of conscience and become a partner in your abominable deeds? – I cannot, and I will not.

"And what will come of this? I do not know. Only I think no harm can result from acting as my conscience demands."

So in our time should each honest and sincere man reply to all the arguments about the necessity of governments and of violence, and to every demand or invitation to take part in them.

The conclusion to which general reasoning should bring us, is thus confirmed to each individual, by that supreme and unimpachable judge – the voice of conscience.

Notes

1 With reference to schools, the circumstances are different in Russia to what they are in England. Free England has compulsory education; Russia has not. But in Russia the Government hinders the establishment of private schools, and reduces even the universities to the position of Government institutions, watched by spies. (Trans.).

AN AFTERWORD

"But this is again the same old sermon: on the one hand, urging the destruction of the present order of things without putting anything in its place; on the other hand, exhorting to non-action, is what many will say on reading what I have written. "Governmental action is bad, so is the action of the landowner and of the man of business; equally bad is the activity of the socialist and of the revolutionary anarchists; that is to say, all real, practical activities are bad, and only some sort of moral, spiritual, indefinite activity which brings everything to utter chaos and inaction is good." Thus I know many serious and sincere people will think and speak!

What seems to people most disturbing in the idea of no violence is that property will not be protected, and that each man will, therefore, be able to take from another what he needs or merely likes, and to go unpunished. To people accustomed to the defense of property and person by violence it seems that without such defense there will be perpetual disorder, a constant struggle of every one against every one else.

I will not repeat what I have said elsewhere to show that the defense of property by violence does not lessen, but increases, this disorder. But allowing that in the absence of defense disorder may occur, what are people to do who have understood the cause of the calamities from which they are suffering?

If we have understood that we are ill from drunkenness, we must continue to drink, hoping to mend matters by drinking moderately, or continue drinking and take medicines that shortsighted doctors give us.

And it is the same with our social sickness. If we have understood that we are ill because some people use violence to others, it is impossible to improve the position of society either by continuing to support the governmental violence that exists, or by introducing a fresh kind of revolutionary or socialist violence. That might have been done as long as the fundamental cause of people's misery was not clearly seen. But as soon as it has become indubitably clear that people suffer from the violence done by some to others, it is already impossible to improve the position by continuing the old violence or by introducing a new kind. As the sick man suffering from alcoholism has but one way to be cured – by refraining from intoxicants which are the cause of his illness; so there is only one way to free men from the evil arrangement of society, and that is, to refrain from violence, the cause of the suffering, from personal violence, from preaching violence, and from in any way justifying violence.

And not only is this the sole means to deliver people from their ills, but we must also adopt it because it coincides with the moral consciousness of each individual man of our times. If a man of our day has once understood that every defense of property or person by violence is obtained only by threatening to murder or by murdering, he can no longer with a quiet conscience make use of that which is obtained by murder or by threats of murder, and still less can he take part in the murders or in threatening to murder. So that what is wanted to free people from their misery is also needed for the satisfaction of the moral consciousness of every individual. And, therefore,

for each individual there can be no doubt that both for the general good and to fulfil the law of his life he must take no part in violence, nor justify it, nor make use of it.

THE END

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