What are you going to do about it?

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What are you going to do about it? The Case for Constructive Peace

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Feeling, willing, thinking—these are the three modes of ordinary human activity. To be complete, life must be lived simultaneously on all three planes. To concentrate on only one mode at the expense of the rest, or on two at the expense of the third, is to court immediate or postponed disaster. In any important vital situation it is never enough to feel, never enough to will, never enough merely to think. We must do all at once. Many naturally sensitive and gentle people have an intense feeling that there should be no more war. In some of these, feeling is accompanied by a determination that there shall be no more war, a will-to-peace that is ready to translate itself into action. But feeling without will or thought is impotent and tends to degenerate into mere self-indulgence. Feeling accompanied by will may result in action; but if there is no guiding thought, it is likely that the action will be ineffective because blind and misdirected. In this pamphlet an attempt is made to provide all those who feel that war is an abomination, all who will that it shall cease, with an intellectual justification for their attitude; to show that their feeling and willing are essentially reasonable, that what is called the utopian dream of pacifism is in fact a practical policy—indeed, the only practical, the only realistic policy that there is. Pacifists are people who have broken with an old-established convention of thought and, like all innovators, find themselves constantly subjected, off the platform as well as on it, to a process of more or less intelligent heckling. This being so, it has seemed best to state the pacifist case in terms of a series of answers to common antipacifist objections. It is proposed to deal with these objections in order, beginning with the most general, based on considerations of biology, and proceeding to the most specific, based on a consideration of contemporary politics.

I

The first objection raised by our imaginary heckler is that “war is a law of nature.” Therefore, it is argued, we cannot get rid of it. What are the facts? They are these: conflict is certainly common in the animal kingdom. But, with very rare exceptions, conflict is

between isolated individuals. “War” in the sense of conflict between armies exists among certain species of social insects. But it is significant that these insects do not make war on members of their own species, only on those of other species. Man is probably unique in making war on his own species. Tennyson wrote of “Nature red in tooth and claw.” But an animal can be bloodthirsty without being warlike. The activities of such creatures as tigers, sharks and weasels are no more warlike than those of butchers and sportsmen. The carnivores kill members of other species either for food or else, like fox- hunters and pheasant-shooters, to amuse themselves. Conflicts between individual animals of the same species are common enough. But again they are no more warlike than duels or pothouse brawls among human beings. Like human beings, animals fight mainly for love, sometimes (as with the birds that defend their “territory”) for property, sometimes for social position. But they do not make war. War is quite definitely not a “law of nature.”

II

Generals who inspect the O.T.C.‘s of public schools are fond of telling their youthful audiences that “man is a fighting animal.” Now, in the sense that, like stags, men quarrel for love, like white-throats, for property, and, like barndoor fowls, for position in society, this statement may be regarded as true. Like even the mildest animals-and it is probable that our pre-human ancestors were gentle creatures something like the tarsias of to-day-men have always done a good deal of “scrapping.” In some places and at some epochs of history this “scrapping” was a violent and savage affair; at others, relatively harmless: it has been entirely a matter of convention.

Thus, in Europe, three hundred years ago, “the best people” were expected to fight a duel on the slightest provocation; now they are not expected to do so. Within the life-time of men still with us, games of rugby football ended, and were meant to end, in broken legs. On the modern football field broken legs are no longer in fashion. The rules for casual individual “scrapping” and for those organized group-contests which we call sport, have been changed, on the whole, for the better. The rules of war, on the contrary, have changed in every way for the worse. In the eighteenth century Marlborough gave a day’s notice before beginning the bombardment of a town. To-day even a formal declaration of war is coming to be regarded as unnecessary. (Italy, for example, dispensed with it completely when attacking Abyssinia.) “A declaration of war,” writes General Ludendorff, “is a waste of time and also it sometimes unfortunately, brands the nation who makes it.” Therefore, if we want to win and at the same time to avoid being stigmatized as aggressors, we should attack without warning.

To sum up, man is a fighting animal in the sense that he is a

“scrapping animal.” It is for man and man alone to decide whether he shall do his “scrapping” murderously or according to rules which limit the amount of violence used or even, as in the case of nonviolent resistance, abolish it altogether. Mass murder is no more a necessity than individual murder. In 1600 duelling must have seemed to many intelligent people a law of nature. But the fact remains that we have abolished duelling. There is no reason why we should not abolish war.

III

At this point the objector appeals to Darwin. “The struggle for existence,” he insists, “goes on in the human as well as in the sub-human world. War is the method by which nature selects the fittest human beings.”

But whom or what does war select for survival? The answer is that, so far as individuals are concerned, it selects women, children and such men as are too old or infirm to bear arms. The young and the strong, who do the fighting, are eliminated; and the larger the army and the more efficient the weapons, the greater the number of young, strong men who will be killed. War selects dysgenically.

The objector now falls back on a second line of defence. War may be a clumsy way of selecting individuals; but its real value lies in its power to select the best stocks, governments and cultures. But if we look at the records of history we see that war has done its selection in a very erratic way. Sometimes, it is true, victory in war does unquestionably lead to replacement of the defeated by the victorious stock. But this can happen only when the victors exterminate their enemies or else drive them out of the territories previously occupied by them. This was the case, for example, in North America—a very thinly inhabited country. More often, however, the conquerors do not exterminate the conquered, but settle down among them as a ruling minority. Miscegenation takes place and the victors soon lose whatever racial purity they may have possessed and become ethnically assimilated to the vanquished. A stock may lose the military, but win the biological, battle.

What is true of race is true of cultures and governments. Sometimes conquerors impose their cultures and governmental methods on the vanquished. Sometimes they fail to do so. Of the cultures by which the modern world has been most profoundly influenced, two—the Hebrew and the Greek—were the cultures of peoples who suffered final and complete military defeat at the hands of their enemies. War, we may agree, selects races, cultures and governments. But with a fine impartiality it selects those of the vanquished at least as often as it selects those of the victors.

IV

So much for the third objection; now for the fourth. “We may dislike war,” says the heckler, “but war has always been used as an instrument of policy and we must presume that it always will be so used. Consider the lessons of history and be resigned to the inevitable evil.”

Now, until recent years, the lessons of history lent a certain support to the militarists. Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians, Sumerians—all used war as an instrument of policy. The written records and archaeological documents seemed to show that wars had been invariably correlated with civilization. Primitive peoples, like the Eskimos, might be ignorant of war and find the very idea of it inconceivable. But the civilized had always used it—and presumably would always continue to use it. Recent archaeological research has shown that this correlation between war and civilization has not been invariable. The civilization of the Indus Valley was as rich and elaborate as those of Sumer and Egypt.

But it was a civilization that knew nothing of war. No weapons have been found in its buried cities, nor any trace of fortification. This fact is of the highest significance. It proves that it is possible for men to enjoy the advantages of a complex urban civilization without having to pay for them by periodical mass-murders. What men have done, they can do again. History teaches us that war is not inevitable. Once again, it is for us to choose whether we use war or some other method of settling the ordinary and unavoidable conflicts between groups of men. Where there’s a will—and, along with will, feeling and intelligence—there’s a way. The nature of that way will be discussed later.

V

The fifth objection comes from those who insist that the only sanction of social order is violence. “If there is to be peace or justice, it must be imposed by force. In the case of the international community of sovereign states, this peace-securing, justice-creating force is war. Therefore there must be war.”

(I) This objection raises three points which must be dealt with separately. First, is it true that social order rests on force? When we come to look at the facts, we find that, though force plays a part in preserving order within a community, that part is extremely small. Moreover, the part played by force becomes proportionately smaller the longer peaceful methods have been used. The resolute refusal of the English to arm their police is one of the reasons why

England is a law-abiding country, in which it is so seldom necessary to use force. But even in the least law-abiding of countries the real sanctions for order and justice are public opinion and the desire felt by every individual to be thought well of by his fellows. Force cannot impose permanent order on a people which is hostile to the wielders of force. There can be no stable government that is not government by consent.

Even dictators realize that ruthlessness is not enough. Hence that flood of propaganda designed to make their regime popular, not only at home but also beyond their own frontiers. Even in prisons where the governor has more absolute control over his subjects than any dictator, it has been found that a man who is unpopular with the prisoners cannot rule them. Societies exist and are orderly because, in the last resort, the forces in human nature making for co-operation are stronger than those divisive forces making for anti-social conduct.

Incidentally, war itself presupposes this preponderance of co-operative over divisive tendencies. An army could not be raised or, once raised, held together, if it were not for the co-operative spirit in each of its members. Once more, the choice is ours: we may either arbitrarily limit the co-operative spirit within the boundaries of a clan or nation; or we may allow it to have free play over the whole world. To love one's neighbour as oneself may mean much or little, according to our interpretation of the word "neighbour." It is left to us to decide whether that interpretation shall be narrow or broad.

(II) Now for the second point: Can the force employed by the police within a national community be assimilated to the forces used by armies in settling disputes between such communities? Certainly not. Except in times of revolutions, civil war or political anarchy, the amount of force employed within the national community is strictly limited by law and by public opinion. (In England policemen are unarmed, and their power to use force is thus physically reduced to a minimum.) Modern war, on the contrary, is the deliberate use of practically unlimited violence and fraud. A difference in degree, if sufficiently great, turns into a difference in kind. Moreover the aim of war is radically different from the aim of police action. War aims at destruction. Police action does not. From the social point of view the "force" that is war is something quite different from the "force" that is police action. The end of war is destruction, and it employs unrestricted violence as its means. The end of police action is restraint, and its methods are to a great extent nonviolent.

(III) The third point to be considered is this. Even the most ruthless militarists have generally proclaimed that the end they were pursuing was peace. Theologians and philosophers have often justified war on the same grounds: war is permissible because it is a method for securing peace and justice. But, in point of fact, have peace and justice ever been secured by war? Is it possible, in the nature of things, that they can be secured by war? In so far as we

are scientists, technicians, or artists, we all admit that the means employed determine the ends achieved. For example, a village blacksmith may be earnestly and sincerely desirous of making a Rolls-Royce engine. But the means at his disposal fatally determine his ends and the thing which finally emerges from the smithy will be very different from the instrument of precision that he intended to make.

What is so obviously true of technology and science is no less true of all human activities. The man who uses violence as a means for securing the love of his family will certainly achieve quite another end. The state which makes war on a neighbour will create, not peace, but the makings of a war of revenge. The means determine the ends; and however excellent intentions may be, bad or merely unsuitable means must inevitably produce results quite unlike the good ends originally proposed. The heckler who adjures us to consider the lessons of history is in fact adjuring us to realize that once war has been adopted as a regular instrument of policy, once the idea that violence is the proper way of getting things done has become established as a truism, there can be no secure and lasting peace, only a series of truces between wars.

For war, however “just” it may seem, cannot be waged without the commission of frightful injustices; frightful injustices cannot be committed without arousing the resentment and hatred of those on whom they are committed, or on their friends or successors; and resentment and hatred cannot be satisfied except by revenge. But how can military defeat be avenged except by a military victory? The successive wars to which the historian points are the strongest possible argument against war as a method of securing peace and justice. The means determine the ends, and the end achieved by war is not peace, but more war.

In the past, very fortunately, the means for making war were inadequate. To-day they are so effective that, for the first time in history, indiscriminate and even unintentional massacre has become not only possible but even inevitable. There was a time when civil populations were not slaughtered except by the deliberate order of the conqueror. From this time forward, however humane the commanders of the opposing armies, civil populations can hardly fail to be massacred. Planes, gas, thermite make it all but inevitable. The means of destruction have become so efficient that destruction will be more complete and more indiscriminate than ever before. In clinging to war as an instrument of policy, we are running risks which our ancestors never ran.

VI

The sixth objection to pacifism is based on moral grounds. “War,” we are told, “is a school of virtues; peace, a school of effeminacy,

degeneracy and vice."

In his Philosophy of War Steinmetz went much further than this and affirmed that war was not merely a school of virtues, but actually the source of all the virtues, even the most unwarlike. How did early men learn to co-operate with one another? By making war on their fellows. Where did love and mutual aid originate? On the battlefield, among brothers in arms. And so on. Steinmetz's views are so manifestly absurd that it is unnecessary to discuss them. But our theoretical heckler's more modest attempt to justify war on moral grounds deserves to be treated seriously. For that war is a school of virtues is in fact true. Courage, self-control, endurance, a spirit of comradeship, a readiness to make the sacrifice of life itself—these are the qualities without which men cannot become good soldiers, or at any rate good subordinate soldiers; for history shows that a man may become a brilliant commander and yet be almost a moral imbecile.

The two greatest military geniuses of modern times, Marlborough and Napoleon, were despicable human beings. There was something almost diabolic in the character of Frederick the Great. At the end of the world war almost the only member of the German High Command who displayed the military virtues was Hindenburg. The others disguised themselves and hurried across the frontier into the safety of a neutral country. Such examples could be multiplied. "Great soldiers" have often lacked all the good qualities which we associate with the military profession.

To return to the virtues of the subordinate soldier: these are intrinsically admirable. But do they justify war? This question cannot be answered unless we know, first, what is the price of these virtues in terms of individual vice and social ruin, and, second, whether war is the only school in which they can be learnt.

Now, it is obvious that the soldier's characteristic virtues are accompanied by equally characteristic vices. The efficient soldier must hate and be angry, must know how to be inhuman, must be troubled, where his enemies are concerned, with no scruples or sensibilities. Moreover, his way of life tends to encourage in him a certain recklessness. He doesn't care for anything or anyone except his fellows and the traditions of his corps. Recklessness is a soil from which some good and much evil may spring—acts of uncommon generosity, but also acts of uncommon brutality.

Nor is this all. Military discipline demands unquestioning obedience. The subordinate soldier is a man who has handed over his reason and his conscience into the keeping of another. But a man who has given up reason and conscience is a man who has given up the most typically human characteristics of human beings. The government of an army is a special and extreme case of that most souldestroying of all forms of government, a tyranny or, as we now prefer to call it, a dictatorship.

War, then, exacts a gigantic price for the military virtues. Vice

and crime are the conditions of their very existence. Can it be right to cultivate virtue by means of wickedness? Those who believe that there exists, apart from selfinterest and social convention, a real and absolute goodness, will answer at once that it cannot be right. No man is justified in doing an evil thing that good, as he believes, may come of it.

This view of what ought to be is confirmed by our investigations into what is. For we find that the military virtues can and do exist in individuals devoted not to war, but to the furtherance of peace. The causes of religion and humanitarianism have had their noble soldiers-soldiers whose courage, endurance and self-control were not set off by any personal vice, any crime against society. War is only one, and that the worst, of schools in which men can learn the military virtues.

VII

“You have made a good case against war,” says the objector; “but you have failed to show what is the practical alternative to war. Indeed, you can’t do so, because there is no practical alternative. Pacifism doesn’t work.”

The answer to this is a flat contradiction. Pacifism does work. True, there is no pacifist technique for arresting shells in mid-trajectory or even for persuading the airmen circling above a city to refrain from dropping their bombs. Pacifism is in the main preventive. If the principles of Pacifism are consistently put into practice the big guns will never be let off and the airmen will never be ordered to drop their bombs. The best way of dealing with typhoid is not to cure it, but to prevent its breaking out. Pacifism is to war what clean water and clean milk are to typhoid; it makes the outbreak of war impossible. But though mainly preventive, pacifism is also, as we shall see, a technique of conflict-a way of fighting without the use of violence.

If you treat other people well, other people will generally treat you well. It is possible to go further and to say that, if you have the opportunity of going on treating them well, they will at last invariably reciprocate your treatment. Suspicious people may start by reacting badly; but in the long run, trust, affection and disinterestedness will always be answered by trust, affection and disinterestedness. This fact, the truth of which we have all had occasion to demonstrate in our relations with our fellows, is the sure foundation upon which the theory and technique of pacifism are based.

The theory and technique of militarism are based on a psychological assumption that is self-evidently absurd. The militarist sets out to secure other people’s good will by making war on them-that is to say

by treating them as badly as he possibly can. But it is a matter of everyday experience that if you treat other people badly they will answer (unless, of course, they happen to be saints or trained pacifists) either by treating you badly at once, or, if the power to return evil for evil is lacking, by waiting in fear, anger and hatred for an opportunity to treat you badly later on. Unless followed by an act of reparation, war will always be answered by war. Hate breeds hate, and violence, violence.

In our relations with other human beings we have all of us, at some time or another, made use of the pacifist technique. By treating people well, we have prevented them from treating us badly or have persuaded them to change their malevolence into kindness. More consciously and consistently, preventive pacifism is employed by doctors when they treat lunatics, by anthropologists when they approach suspicious and unfriendly savages, by naturalists in their dealings with wild animals.

On a large scale the methods, not only of preventive, but also of what may be called combative, pacifism were successfully practised by the early Christians in their conflict with the authorities of the Roman Empire; by William Penn and the first settlers of Pennsylvania towards the Redskins; by practically the whole Hungarian nation when, in the sixties of last century, the Emperor Francis Joseph was trying to subordinate that country to Austria in violation of the existing treaty of union; by Gandhi and his followers, first in South Africa and then in India.

Furthermore, large numbers of industrial strikes have been conducted on strictly pacifist lines, often with remarkable success. There is enough historical evidence to show that the pacifist technique is unquestionably effective. Why, then, has it not been more widely used as an instrument of policy, a method for preventing the outbreak of disputes between individuals and groups or (once the conflict has begun) for conducting the struggle in a nonviolent way? Once more it is a question, not of impossibilities, not of obstacles existing in the nature of things, but of our own free will. If pacifism has been used less frequently than war, the reason is simple. We have refused to take the trouble to anticipate impending evil, and so prevent its coming to pass; when the conflict has broken out, we have refused to control our passions of anger, hatred and malice, and have allowed them full rein in acts of violence. It is in our power to make a different choice.

In the following paragraphs we shall try to describe two kinds of pacifism, combative and preventive. Combative pacifism may be defined as the strategy and tactics of nonviolent resistance to violence. Nonviolent resistance is a technique which relies on the fact that it is impossible to display the virtues of courage, patience, devotion and disinterestedness without evoking sooner or later a response from even the most ardent and highly trained practitioners of the militaristic technique.

It takes two to make a quarrel. Most men find that they can be

violent only towards people who show the appropriate reactions—fear, rage, or a mixture of the two. One can use violence on a man who angrily resists and one can use it on a man who shows terror. But when someone turns up who reacts to violence without anger and without fear, it becomes very difficult to go on using the violence. The nonviolent resister is a man who refuses to play the part assigned to him by the rules of the game; the result is that the other player finds it difficult and at last impossible to go on playing his part. In mass movements of nonviolent resistance, detachments of volunteers present themselves without fear and without anger to the forces sent against them. As one falls, another takes his place, until at last even highly disciplined soldiers or policemen find it impossible to go on using the militaristic technique in which they have been trained.

Meanwhile the spectacle of suffering voluntarily accepted creates in the minds of all who witness the scene or who read of it, a feeling of sympathy for the nonviolent and indignation against the violent. Nor is that all. In the end it evokes from the violent themselves a reluctant feeling of respect and admiration for their victims. A situation arises in which it becomes relatively easy for violent attackers and nonviolent resisters to negotiate an honourable settlement, reasonably satisfactory to both parties. All those who use violence instinctively recognize the peculiar power of nonviolent resistance and do their best to prevent it from being used by their opponents.

Faced by determined but peaceful strikers, industrialists have frequently made use of agents provocateurs, to foment a spirit of violence. They want to have their windows broken; they want stones to be thrown at the police. Why? Because they know that, once the strikers take to violence, their fate is sealed. They can be coerced, and public opinion will be on the side of the coercers.

A display of nonviolent resistance has the effect of emphasizing among all concerned the great truth of human solidarity. The fact that noble behaviour should have power to evoke a response, even among the enemies of those who are so behaving, is a most reassuring reminder that all men are at one in a profound spiritual unity.

Nonviolent resistance can be successfully undertaken only by trained troops. In a later paragraph the nature of the training required and the functions of these soldiers of peace will be discussed.

From this description of nonviolence it must be fairly obvious that nonviolent resistance cannot be used to any considerable extent in modern war, which is waged almost exclusively by means of long-range weapons inflicting indiscriminate destruction. Once war has broken out, pacifists are almost helpless. Therefore it must be prevented from breaking out. But it can only be prevented from breaking out if at least one government of an important sovereign state chooses to act pacifistically towards its neighbours. The practical task before pacifists in this country is to persuade the government to act pacifistically towards other governments. In later sections we shall

discuss, first, the sort of policy that a government determined to prevent an outbreak of war should pursue (section X); second, the means by which individual pacifists should seek to induce their government to adopt such a policy (section XII).

VIII

“The Church does not condemn war,” says an orthodox heckler. “Why am I expected to be more pacifist than the bishops?”

The Church does not condemn war; but Jesus did condemn it. Moreover, the Christians who lived during the first three centuries of our era not only believed that Jesus had condemned war, but themselves repeated the condemnation in more specific terms. Here it is possible to give only the briefest summary of the historical evidence. Those who wish to study this subject in detail should consult the articles on war in Hastings’ Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics and in The Dictionary of the Apostolic Church. A fuller account is given by C. J. Cadoux, D.D., in his book The Early Christian Attitude to War.

Among the Early Fathers, Justin Martyr and Tatian in the second century, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian and Hippolytus in the third, Arnobius, Eusebius and Lactantius in the fourth, all regarded war as organized iniquity. Here are a few characteristic quotations from their writings on the subject.

The first two are from the Divinae Institutiones of Lactantius. “When God prohibits killing, He not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed even by the public laws; but He warns us that not even those things which are regarded as legal among men are to be done. And so it will not be lawful for a just man to serve as a soldier … nor to accuse anyone of a capital offence, since it makes no difference whether thou killest with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so in this commandment of God no exception at all ought to be made that it is always wrong to kill a man.”

“How can he be just who injures, hates, despoils, kills? And those who strive to be of advantage to their own country (in war) do all these things.”

Tertullian remarks that truth, gentleness and justice cannot be obtained by means of war. “Who shall produce these results with the sword and not rather those which are the contrary of gentleness and justice, namely deceit and harshness and injustice, which are of course the proper business of battles?” (An excellent statement of the almost invariably neglected truth that means determine ends and that good ends cannot be achieved by bad or even inappropriate means.)

Origen writes of his co-religionists that “we no longer take ‘sword’ against a ‘nation,’ nor do we learn ‘any more to make war,’ having become sons of peace for the sake of Jesus who is our leader, instead of following the ancestral customs in which we were strangers to the covenants.”

In the Canons of Hippolytus we read that a soldier who professes Christianity is to be excluded from the sacrament, until such time as he has done penance for the blood he has shed.

In the early part of the fourth century Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Cross was used as a military standard and the pious Constantine had the nails with which Jesus had been crucified converted into a helmet for himself and bits for his war-horse. The act was profoundly symbolical. In the words of Dean Milman, “the meek and peaceful Jesus had become a God of battle.”

The new political situation soon found reflection in Christian theory. Already in the middle years of the fourth century, Athanasius, the father of orthodoxy, is saying that “to destroy opponents in war is lawful and worthy of praise.” St. Ambrose thirty years later and St. Augustine at the beginning of the fifth century repeat and elaborate this argument. We find Augustine saying that “many things have to be done in which we have to pay regard, not to our own kindly inclinations, but to the real interests of others, and their interests may require that they should be treated, much as they may dislike it, with a certain benignant asperity.” It is a justification in advance of the Inquisition and the wars of religion-indeed of war of every kind; for now that infallibility has been claimed by sovereign states, the rulers of each nation know exactly what is best for all other nations and feel it their duty, merely in the highest interests of their neighbours, to use a “certain benignant asperity” towards them.

Modern Christians have used a number of arguments to justify their complete disregard of the precepts of Jesus in regard to war. Of the two most commonly employed, the first is the argument which asserts that Jesus meant his followers to accept the “spirit” of his teachings, without being bound by the “letter.” In other words, that he meant them to ignore his words completely and go on behaving, in all the practical details of life, as though they had never been uttered. The Pauline distinction between “letter” and “spirit” has been made the justification for every kind of iniquity.

The second argument is that Jesus meant his ethical system to apply only to relations obtaining between persons, not to those obtaining between nations. This is to imply that Jesus sanctioned mass murder between any two groups which at any given moment of history happen to regard themselves as autonomous and sovereign. It is hardly necessary to say that there is nothing in the gospels to substantiate such an interpretation of Christ’s teaching.

IX

“The causes of war are economic and can be eliminated only by a change in the economic system.”

First of all, the causes of war are not exclusively economic. There have been wars of religion, wars of prestige, even wars for the sake of destruction. In the second place, even in those cases where the immediate cause of conflict between nations have been economic in character the fact that nations exist and act as war-making units cannot be explained in economic terms. Wars, we are told, are made by capitalists and armament makers for their own private interests. But capitalists and armament makers need troops to do the fighting, an electorate to back their policy. They get their troops and their electorate because the violent divisive passions of nationalistic pride, vanity and hatred are present in the masses of their countrymen. Hence the need for pacifist organizations pledged to the realization of human unity through nonviolence.

Wars, then, are not exclusively economic in origin. Let us, however, admit for the sake of argument that the factors which make for war are mainly economic and that a suitable change in the existing economic system would eliminate those causes. We are still faced by the all-important question: How do you propose to change the existing system? By violence, say the revolutionaries. But if violence is used as the means, the end achieved will inevitably be different from the end proposed. In Russia, the end proposed was Communism. Ruthless and prolonged violence was used to achieve that end. With what result?

That contemporary Russian society is not communistic; it is an elaborately hierarchical society, ruled by a small group of men who are ready to employ the extremes of physical and economical coercion against those who disagree with their views; a society in which, according to reliable observers, the exclusive and ultimately bellicose spirit nationalism is growing in intensity; a society in which the principle of authority is accepted without question, and violence is taken for granted.

Within Russian society the economic system has been changed to this extent, that individuals cannot own the means of production and are therefore unable, as owners, to coerce their fellow human beings. But though individuals cannot coerce as owners, they can coerce as representatives of the State. (Let us remember, incidentally, that “the State” is merely a name for certain individuals using power either lawlessly or else according to certain rules.) The principle of coercion has survived the revolution and is in fact still ruthlessly applied. As the revolution was violent and coercive, it could not be otherwise. The violent means so conditioned the end proposed that it was impossible for that end to be what the

revolutionaries had intended it to bethat is, Communism within the country and international co-operation without its borders.

True, other countries have not done anything to make such co-operation easy; but the fact remains that Russia possesses the largest army in the world and that pride in this army is inculcated in Russian citizens from their tenderest years. Countries which possess and are proud of large armies almost invariably end, as history shows, by making use of them against their neighbours. To sum up, the economic system has been changed in Russia; but it was changed with violence; therefore it has remained natural for Russians to regard the use of violence, both within the country and without, as normal and inevitable.

International war and coercion at home will continue to exist for just so long as people regard these things as suitable, as even conceivable, instruments of policy. The pacifist does not object to the ends originally proposed by the revolutionaries; on the contrary, he regards such ends as being intrinsically desirable. What he rejects is the means by which the revolutionaries set out to realize these ends. And he rejects them for two reasons; first, because he believes that an evil act is always evil, whatever the reason given for its performance; and, second, because he sees that, as a matter of fact, bad means make the good ends unrealizable. If Communism is to be achieved it can only be by nonviolent means.

The pacifist differs from the Marxian revolutionary on another important issue. While the Marxian puts the whole blame for the present state of the world on the existing economic system and on those who profit by that system, the pacifist is prepared to admit that he also may be to some extent responsible. The pacifist does not believe that the Kingdom of God can be imposed on mankind from without, by means of a change of organization. He believes that, if the Kingdom is to be realized, he himself must work for it, and work for it not only as a public figure, but also in his private life.

“It is not the munition makers but the masses, who by their votes elect and support governments and administrations committed to the pursuit of policies of economic nationalism, who are the real ‘merchants of death.’ Italian Fascists, German National Socialists and Japanese Imperialists, despite their common doctrine of violence, have done no more to make future wars inevitable than has the American Democracy by means of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, the war debt policy and its performance at the London Economic Conference. It is, to be sure, unmistakable that a country as richly endowed materially as is the United States can, at least temporarily, achieve domestic prosperity by means of purely monopolistic economic policies. But it should be equally evident that a people which permits and encourages its government to pursue such politics, deliberately bolts and bars the door to world peace.” These words are taken from the concluding chapter of The Price of Peace, a book published in 1935 by two American economists, Frank H. Simonds and Brooks Emeny.

They are writing of the American Democracy; but every word of what they say applies mutatis mutandis to the British Democracy. In a later paragraph the authors specifically mention our country. The British and American people, they say, have resolved “to combine the profits of exclusive nationalism with the benefits of internationalism… . They have invited all peoples to join them in a partnership to preserve peace, but have reserved to themselves the profits of such peace, while leaving to the others the privilege of paying the costs.” Not unnaturally the others are declining the invitation. The pacifist insists that if we want other people to make sacrifices we must begin by making sacrifices ourselves; that it is only by being generous (even at our own expense) and by telling the truth (even though that truth be to our own discredit) that we shall elicit generosity and truth from others.

X

“General principles,” says the objector, “are all very fine; but we live in a world of particular and specific realities. How do you expect your pacifism to work in the circumstances of the present moment? What about Italy and Abyssinia, for example? What about sanctions? What about Germany? What about Japan?”

The pacifist solution to these pressing contemporary problems can be outlined quite briefly. Let us begin by describing the historical antecedents which have led up to the present situation. Germany, Italy and Japan are three countries whose position in the post-war world is fundamentally similar. All suffer from a sense of grievance—of grievance, moreover, which the existing circumstances of the world very largely justify. Germany suffered military defeat and prolonged humiliation at the hands of her conquerors. During the boom years, she was helped, for purely commercial motives, by Allied and American capitalists, who helped to earn large profits by financing German industry; then came the slump; as much foreign capital as could be withdrawn was withdrawn, tariff barriers were everywhere set up or, if they already existed, raised still higher. It became more and more difficult for German industrialists either to sell what they had manufactured or, owing to monetary difficulties and the absence of colonies, to procure raw materials. The Nazis have promised to extricate Germany from this intolerable situation by force of arms, if necessary.

Italy emerged from the War nominally a victor, but in fact little the better off for her espousal of the Allied cause. The clauses of the disgraceful Secret Treaties were not, because they could not be, fulfilled, and the Italians received no colonial mandates. Emigration of Italians was progressively restricted until during the slump it fell almost to zero. For more than thirteen years the Fascists have been promising to make Italy great and prosperous. Since October, 1935 they have been attempting to keep that promise

at the expense of Abyssinia.

At the Versailles Peace Conference, the Japanese were collectively insulted by President Wilson, who insisted that a nation of yellow men could not be treated on the same terms as a nation of white men. During the succeeding years tariff barriers have everywhere been raised against cheap Japanese goods, while America and the British Dominions have completely prohibited the immigration of Japanese citizens. Meanwhile, in Japan, population has rapidly increased. In Japan the army has done what the Nazis and the Fascists did in Germany and Italy; it has promised to rescue the country from its present plight by force of arms. What is more, it has begun to fulfil this promise—at the expense of China. What the Japanese have done in Manchuria, the Italians are at present trying to do in Abyssinia and the Germans are hoping to do in Middle Europe and possibly Russia.

Over against these three hungry and thwarted powers stand four satiated powers, possessing between them the greater part of the world's surface and most of the raw materials indispensable to modern industry. These four powers are the British Empire, the United States, France and Russia. To these must be added Holland, Belgium and Portugal—three small powers whose considerable colonial possessions are guaranteed (for as long as it suits them to do so) by England and France. The satisfied powers enjoy their present privileged position in regard to materials, land and markets, partly as a result of historical accident, partly in virtue of a policy of conquest pursued above all during the nineteenth century.

So long as these four powers remain possessed of what they now own and so long as they persist in their present monopolistic policies, the three great unsatisfied powers must of necessity remain unsatisfied. Objectively, this means that the standard of living among the unsatisfied must continue steadily to decline; subjectively, it means that they will cherish a feeling of intense resentment against the satisfied, together with a passionate conviction that they have been given less than justice.

The re-distribution of territory after the Napoleonic wars was ethnically unsound. Ruled by alien governments, large bodies of men and women—Italians, Greeks, Poles and many others—felt that they were being treated unjustly; and this sense of injustice was so intense that people preferred the risks and horrors of war to a peace which they felt to be humiliating. The peace of Versailles was, ethnically speaking, a tolerably good peace. Economically, however, it was a thoroughly bad peace. The peoples of three great countries (as well as of numerous small countries) feel that they have been and are being treated unjustly. And so intense is this feeling, so painful is the process of gradual and steady impoverishment to which they are being subjected, that for great masses of these people war—even modern war—seems preferable to peace, as they know it to-day.

That the existence of unsatisfied powers represents a source of

constant danger to world peace is clearly recognized. To guard against this danger the monopolistic powers spend ever-increasing sums on armaments. They hope by this threatening display of force to frighten the unsatisfied powers into renouncing their claims for justice. In the event of the unsatisfied powers refusing to renounce these claims and going to war, the monopolistic powers expect to be able to win.

Militarists are incurably romantic, constitutionally incapable of facing facts. To the realistic pacifist it is obvious that the present policy of the monopolistic states is hopelessly chimerical. For, first of all, the peoples of the unsatisfied countries are so desperate that threats will not deter them from resorting to a war which to them may seem actually preferable to peace, as they know it at present. And, secondly, once war is made, it is quite impossible to predict what will happen. The monopolistic powers may emerge victorious—that is if anyone emerges at all. Or they may not. And even if they win, victory may be obtained at a cost too great for men to pay.

Up till now militarism has been a policy, bad indeed, but, thanks to the inefficiency of armaments, not so destructive as many conquerors would doubtless have liked it to be. One war, it is true, inevitably led to another; but in the interval the warring countries and their cultures managed to survive. Where societies are highly complex and weapons extremely destructive, militarism ceases to be a policy of anything but mass suicide.

The pacifist’s alternative to militarism is a policy that has the double merit of being not only morally right, but also strictly practical and business-like. Guided by the moral intuition that it can never in any circumstances be right to do evil and by the two empirically verified generalizations, first, that means determine ends and, second, that by behaving well to other people you can always, in the long run, induce other people to behave well to you, he lays it down that the only right and practical policy is a policy based on truth and generosity. How shall such a policy of truth and generosity be applied to the particular circumstance of the present time? The answer is clear. The great monopolistic powers should immediately summon a conference at which the unsatisfied powers, great and small, should be invited to state their grievance and claims.

When this has been done it would be possible, given intelligence and good will, to work out a scheme of territorial, economic and monetary readjustments for the benefit of all. That certain immediate sacrifices would have to be made by the monopolistic powers is inevitable. These sacrifices would be in part sacrifices of economic advantages, in part, perhaps mainly, of prestige—which is the polite and diplomatic word for pride and vanity. It is unnecessary to go into details here. Suffice it to say that there would have to be agreement as to the supply of tropical raw materials; an agreement on monetary policy; an agreement with regard to industrial production and markets; an agreement on tariffs; an

agreement on migration.

The calling of such a conference as has been described above constitutes the only practical solution of the difficult problem of sanctions against Italy. People of good will are painfully perplexed because it seems to them that sanctionist countries are on the horns of a dilemma. Either sanctions must be intensified, in which case it is probable that Italy will in desperation, precipitate a European war; or else Abyssinia must be sacrificed, in which case a wanton act of aggression will have been rewarded at the expense of the victim. In fact there is a third and better alternative, a more excellent way between the horns of the dilemma. A world conference can be called immediately for the permanent settling of the justifiable claims, not only of Italy, but of all the other dissatisfied powers. The immediate application of pacifist principles offers the hope of the solution of problems which, if they are left to complicate themselves, may become almost insoluble.

To reach any kind of international agreement is difficult, for the simple reason that nations are regarded by their representatives as wholly immoral beings, insanely proud, touchy, fierce and rapacious. In spite, however, of this monstrous conception of sovereignty, agreements do in fact get made and, what is more remarkable, are often observed, at any rate for a time, quite honourably. What can be and has been done piece-meal and on a small scale can be done, if we so desire, on a large scale and consistently.

The greatest immediate sacrifices, as has been said before, will have to come from those who possess the most. These sacrifices, however, will be negligible in comparison with the sacrifices which will be demanded from us by another war. Negligible in comparison even with those which are at present being demanded by the mere preparation for another war.

What of the League of Nations? There is, unhappily, much truth in the Italian contention that the League in its present form is an instrument for preserving the status quo. The League is in fact controlled by the two great monopolistic nations of Western Europe, England and France. These nations are unwilling to sacrifice their present superiority and, though this superiority was won by the use of violence in the past, they prefer to seem righteously indignant (and in fact since successful nations always have short memories, are righteously indignant) at the use of violence by unsatisfied countries at the present time. To be of value, the League must continue permanently the work begun by our proposed conference and become an instrument for securing equality of opportunity for all nations through the international control of raw materials, markets, production and currency.

“Talking about Leagues and Conferences in the present crisis,” objects the heckler, “is like fiddling while Rome burns. Our civilization is in danger; our political system, one of the few democracies left in the world, is menaced. We must be prepared to fight for their preservation and, in order to fight, we must be well armed. Ours is a sacred trust, and we therefore have no right to take the risks of pacifism.”

That time presses is, alas, only too true. Pacifists must act quickly. The sooner they can persuade their government to summon a conference of the kind described above, the better its chances will be. During recent months official spokesmen have several times stated the government’s intention of some day summoning a preventive conference of all the nations. Unhappily they have always gone on to make nonsense of this profession of good intentions by insisting that the moment for putting them into practice had not yet arrived. The government’s peace policy may be briefly stated as follows: “We agree that a preventive conference should be summoned; but we think that the international situation is not at present auspicious. Therefore we shall not summon the conference now.

Meanwhile we propose to treble our air force, strengthen our navy and increase our military effectives.” But if, in existing circumstances, international feeling is too bad for it to be possible to call a conference, what will it be after we have increased our armaments? Incomparably worse; for the unsatisfied powers will see in our military preparations only another threat to themselves, an attempt to perpetuate by force of arms the present injustices. Many people who genuinely desire peace believe that large-scale rearmament will bring peace nearer. The theory is that potential peace-breakers will be frightened by our display of force into good behaviour. Such belief is wholly at variance with the facts of history. Accumulation of armaments by one power has always led, first, to accumulation of armaments by other powers and then, when the financial strain became unbearable, to war. As usual, it is a matter of relating means to ends. Armaments, as history shows, are not appropriate means for achieving peace.

Let us consider the other objections made by our heckler. Pacifism certainly has its risks. But so has militarism; and the risks of militarism are far greater than those of pacifism. Militarism cannot fail to lead us into war, whereas pacifism has a very good chance of preventing war from breaking out.

The nations of the world live within a malevolently charmed circle of suspicion, hatred and fear. By pursuing a policy of pacifism, and only by pursuing a policy of pacifism, we can break out of the circle. One generous gesture on the part of a great nation might be enough to set the whole world free. More than any other nation, Britain is in a position to make that gesture. “To make it,” protests the militarists, “is to court disaster.” But to go on preparing for war and thereby rendering war inevitable is also to court disaster—disaster more certain and more complete.

Which is better, to take a risk for a good cause, or to march to certain perdition for a bad one?

XII

This time the questioner is not hostile. “I am a convinced pacifist,” he begins,

“I have signed a pledge that I will take no part in another war. But war is

still in the future, I want to do something now—something that will prevent the

war from breaking out. What can I do?”

Let us try to answer this as briefly as possible. To sign a pledge refusing to take any part in another war is commendable. But it is not enough. Prevention is always better than cure; and where modern war is concerned it is in fact the only course open. For the next European war will begin without warning, will be waged at long range by scientific weapons capable of spreading indiscriminate destruction. Pacifists may have the best will in the world; but in these circumstances they will be able to do very little to cure the disease once it has broken out. Therefore, while there is yet time, they must do all in their power to prevent the disease from breaking out.

In a vague way practically everyone is now a pacifist. But the number of those who are prepared to put themselves to inconvenience for their opinions is always small. Most pacifists will go to the trouble of voting for peace; for the rest, they will be what the pun upon their name implies—merely passive. Active or Constructive Pacifists are, and must be content to remain, a minority. How is this minority to make itself effective? By uniting, first of all. But there are unions and unions. The formation of yet another subscription-collecting, litenature-distributing and possibly pledge-signing society is not enough. The Constructive Peace Movement must be all these things; but it must be something else as well. It must be a kind of religious order, membership of which involves the acceptance of a certain way of life, and entails devoted and unremitting personal service for the cause.

What is the best form for such an organization to take? History leaves us in no doubt. The Early Christians, the founders of the monastic and mendicant orders, the Quakers, the Wesleyans, the Communists (to mention but a few of those responsible for important social movements)—all used fundamentally the same type of organization: an affiliation of small groups. Here are a few

tentative suggestions for the organization of the Constructive Peace Movement. The local unit is a small team of not less than five or more than ten members. These teams meet at least once a week for discussion, for mutual help and criticism, for mutual strengthening in the common faith, for the performance in common of spiritual exercises. In any district where a number of teams exist, particular tasks may be assigned to each. Some teams should undertake propaganda; others should form themselves into study circles to investigate particular aspects—whether personal, social or international—of the general problem of peace.

All should attempt to put the principles of Constructive Peace into regular practice. Thus, every group should be an unlimited liability company, in which each member assumes responsibility for all the rest. In some cases groups may feel inclined to assume special social responsibilities, as for example, towards a particular destitute family or a certain category of people, such as released prisoners, patients in a local hospital and the like. At monthly intervals all the groups of the district should meet to pool information and experience. Larger meetings and demonstrations would be organized from time to time by a central office.

At the present time Constructive Pacifists have one immediate task to which they should devote a good part of their energies. This immediate task is to persuade the government of this country to apply the obvious principles of preventive pacifism to the present international situation. This it can do by calling at the earliest possible date a conference for the discussion of the economic and political causes of war and the elaboration of a world-wide scheme for eliminating those causes. Constructive Pacifists must try to get the eleven millions of well-meaning but passive pacifists who voted for the Peace Ballot to implement their rather vague aspirations by a signature in favour of this particular policy—the only policy that is in the least likely to give them the peace for which they expressed their desire last year. Time will show what other tasks must be undertaken; but for the moment this is certainly the most important.

So much for the organization and immediate policy. In these concluding paragraphs we shall offer a few haphazard remarks of a more general nature.

The philosophy which underlies Constructive Pacifism has been described by implication in an earlier paragraph. But it seems advisable to state it more explicitly here. The philosophy of Constructive Pacifism proceeds from a consideration of what is to a statement of what ought to be—from empirical fact to idea. The facts upon which the doctrine is based are these. First, all men are capable of love for their fellows. Second, the limitations imposed upon this love are of such a nature that it is always possible for the individual, if he so desires, to transcend them. Third, love and goodness are infectious. So are hatred and evil.

The Constructive Pacifist formulates his belief in some such words

as these. The spirit is one and all men are potentially at one in the spirit. Any thought or act which denies the fundamental unity of mankind is wrong and, in a certain sense, false; any thought or act which affirms it is right and true. It is in the power of every individual to choose whether he shall deny or affirm the unity of mankind in an ultimate spiritual reality.

The political, social and individual ideals of Constructive Peace follow logically from its doctrine. The pacifist's social and international policy have already been sufficiently described. It is necessary, however, to say a few words about his individual way of life. The whole philosophy of Constructive Peace is based on a consideration of the facts of personal relationship between man and man. Hence it is impossible that Constructive Pacifism should be merely a large-scale and, so to speak, abstract policy. It must also be a way of life.

There are men who profess to be pacifists in international politics, but who are tyrants in their families, bullying employers, ruthless and unscrupulous competitors. Such men are not only hypocrites; they are also fools. Nobody but a fool can suppose that it is possible for a government to behave as a pacifist, when the individuals it represents conduct their private affairs in an essentially militaristic way.

Constructive Peace must be first of all a personal ethic, a way of life for individuals; only on that condition will it come to be embodied, permanently and securely, in forms of social and international organization. There is another, immediately cogent reason why those who accept the doctrines and responsibilities of Constructive Peace should do their best to conform to the pacifist way of life. The finally convincing argument in favour of any doctrine is personal example. By their fruits ye shall know them; and unless the moral fruits of Constructive Peace are good, its doctrine will not be accepted. Soldiers are admired for their courage, their endurance, their self-sacrifice; the military virtues are the best propaganda for militarism. The Constructive Pacifist must exhibit all the finest military virtues together with others that the soldier cannot possess; if he does, his life will be his best propaganda.

It is easy to talk about a more excellent way of life, immensely difficult to live it. Five Latin words sum up the moral history of every man and woman who has ever lived.

Video meliora, proboque; Deteriora sequor.

"I see the better and approve it; the worse is what I pursue." Hell is paved, not only with good intentions, but also with the most exquisite sensibilities, the noblest expressions of fine feeling, the profoundest insights into ethical truths. We know and we feel; but knowledge and feeling are not able, in a great many cases, to affect the sources of our will. For the sources of the will lie below the level of consciousness in a mental region where intellect

and feeling are largely inoperative. Whatever else they may be—and many theological and psychological theories have been elaborated in order to explain their nature and their mode of action—religious rites, prayer and meditation are devices for affecting the sources of the will. It is a matter of empirical experience that regular meditation on, say, courage or peace often helps the meditate to be brave and serene. Prayer for moral strength and tenacity of purpose is in fact quite often answered.

Those who, to express in symbolic action their attachment to a cause, take part in impressive ceremonies and rites, frequently come away strengthened in their power to resist temptations and make sacrifices for the cause. There is good evidence that the practice of some kind of spiritual exercise in common is extremely helpful to those who undertake it. Groups whose members are believing Christians will naturally adopt Christian forms of devotion. To those who are not affiliated to any Christian church we would tentatively recommend some form of group meditation on such subjects as peace, man’s unity, the spiritual reality underlying all phenomena and the virtues which Constructive Pacifists should exhibit in their daily lives. Meditation is a psychological technique whose efficacy does not depend on previous theological belief. It can be successfully practised by anyone who is prepared to take the necessary trouble. It is an exercise of the soul, just as running or jumping are exercises of the body. Constructive Pacifists are athletes in training for an event of much more than Olympic importance. They will be wise to use all the exercises that their predecessors in the endless struggle for the embodiment of goodness upon the earth have tested out and found to be useful.

The end