

## “I CANNOT KEEP SILENT.”

FROM THE RUSSIAN OF COUNT LEO H. TOLSTOI.

Translated expressly for THE ARENA by W. G. Hastings and Felix Newton.

### I.

SEVEN death sentences, two in St. Petersburg, one in Moscow, two in Penza and two in Riga. Four executions, two in Cherson, one in Vilna and one in Odessa.”

Information like the above is repeated by all the newspapers from day to day, not for a week, not for months, not for a year, but for years; and this is in Russia, that same Russian nation which looks upon every criminal with sentiments of mercy and where until recent times capital punishment was not recognized by law. I recollect how proud of this I felt in talking with persons from Western Europe. Yet now for three years how unceasingly have gone on among us executions, executions and executions.

I glanced into to-day's paper. To-day, May 22d, what a dreadful stroke! The paper states in a few words: “To-day on the shooting ground at Cherson twenty peasants were hanged for their attack with intention of robbery upon the estate of a landholder in Elisavelgrad county.”

Twenty men of those by whose labor we are fed, of those same people whom we deprave and continue to deprave, so far as we can, beginning with intoxication by poisonous vodka, and ending with a horribly lying religion in which we ourselves do not believe, though we bind them with it, not respecting our own understandings. Twenty such people were strangled by a rope in the hands of those whom they fed, clothed and sheltered, and who had themselves depraved and continually depraved their victims.

Twelve men, fathers and sons, from that number whose goodness, laboriousness and simplicity is the basis of the entire Russian national life, were seized,

thrown into prison and chained in irons. Then, their hands were bound behind their backs, that they might not catch the rope on which they were to hang, and they were driven to the gallows. Several peasants, similar to those collected to be hanged, but clothed in clean military uniforms, and with good boots on their feet, and guns in their hands, led out the convicts. In the same row with them goes a man with long hair on his head, clothed in stole and chasuble, with gold and silver threads interwoven, and with the cross in his hands. The procession stops.

The commandant says something. The secretary reads a certain paper. When the paper is read through, the long-haired man turns to those whom the others were gathered to strangle with ropes, and says something about God and Christ. Immediately after these words the executioners—several of them—dissolves a little soap and rubs on the rope's noose in order that it may draw tighter, seizes the persons in chains, puts on them a face cloth, leads them on the scaffold, and fits around their necks the well-soaped noose. After that he pushes the living people from the bench, pulling the latter from under their feet, and by this means, through their own weight, at once tightens the noose around the neck and strangles them painfully. For a minute, after this, those persons are still alive; their bodies turn and twist upon the ropes. Then they rock slowly. Presently they stop and remain motionless.

All this was carefully thought out and arranged by the instructed and educated people of the higher classes. They take pains that such things be done secretly at daybreak, that no one may see how they are done. Besides this, they arrange

it so that responsibility for this injustice shall be divided among those who have performed it, so that each of them can think and say that the fault is not his.

They find out the most debased and unfortunate of men, and compel him to perform this work, devised by them for him, and with which he is pleased. At the same time they show him, however he has answered their purpose, a countenance which inspires dread and disgust. They resort to such a transparent artifice. The decree is rendered by a military court, but the participants in the punishment come, not from military, but from civil life. This entire work is brought to accomplishment by the unfortunate, the deceived, the perverted, the despised people, who have nothing left but to smear well with soap the rope, that it may be strong, and without fail catch the neck; and after this that they may drink, to utter sottishness, that poison which is sold to them by those same educated people of the higher class, in order that they may the quicker and more fully forget their own souls, and personal characters as men. A doctor walks around the body, feels of it, reports to the government that the job was done according to all the rules of science, and that all the twenty are undoubtedly dead. The government approves, ordinarily, upon such information, and says that they have performed an unpleasant but necessary act. As soon as the bodies become cold they are taken from the rope and consigned to the earth. All this is terrible, and this is not done simply once with those twenty unfortunates, stricken from men's path and from the very best class of Russian population, but during a whole series of years it unceasingly goes on, over hundreds and thousands, stricken from the path of humanity, stricken by the same people who practice on them, too, the same terrible things. Not only are those same terrible acts done, but they are done under the same pretenses, and with the same cold-blooded cruelty, as are done all sorts of torturing and violence in the

dungeons, the fortresses, and the convict settlements. At the same time in which all these things throughout a series of years are done in Russia, those chiefly guilty of these deeds, persons by whose command these things are done, the persons who could abolish it, are fully convinced that such kinds of deeds are useful, and are absolutely necessary, or are occupied with inventing schemes and making speeches about how not to permit the Finns to live in the way in which they want to live, and how to compel them to live in the way some important Russian personages wish them to do; or these people concern themselves with the publication of orders of this sort: "In the Hussar regiments the collars and the cuffs of the jacket must be of one and the same color with the collars of the soldiers' jackets; but the short fur cloaks must not have around the cuffs at their upper part bands of fur."

## II. THAT IS TERRIBLE.

Most terrible of all in these acts is this, that all this inhuman violence and killing, directed against evil done to other victims and their families, brings still vastly more evil to the entire nation; and spreads among all classes in Russia destruction like swift fire in dry straw. This corruption with especial swiftness spreads in the very midst of the common working people, because all that depravity by a hundred times exceeds what is done by thieves, robbers, murderers and revolutionists all taken together. All this depravity is carried on as being necessary and good. It is not only permissible, but supports the different institutions which are inseparably connected in the popular mind with morality, and even with holiness, such as the senate, the synod, the дума, the church and czar. This corruption spreads with remarkable swiftness.

Not long ago two executioners could not yet be found in Russia. In the eighties there was only one. I remember with what joy Vladimir Solovjov told me

Drawn expressly for THE ARENA by Ryan Walker.

**"AND THIS IS RUSSIA!"**

then that it was impossible to find in Russia an additional executioner, so it seemed needful to take that single one from one place to another. Now it is not so. A small tradesman of Moscow, as a work of pleasure, rendered his services to accomplish the killing prepared by the government at one hundred roubles for each strangled person. Soon he was so established in this new business that he no longer needed his former little gains. Now he is expanding his former business.

Last month at Ariol, as everywhere, there was need of an executioner. Immediately a fellow was found who agreed with this government of organized murder to undertake the work for fifty rubles per head. But this volunteer executioner, after doing his work, found out that in other cities the pay was greater. At the time of execution, throwing the face-cloth on the victim he does not lead the unfortunate to the scaffold, but, stopping and turning to the supervisor, he said, "Your eminent highness must give twenty-five rubles additional. Otherwise I will not do it." He got the addition and performed the crime. The next time five were to be hanged. The day before the execution a certain man came to the organizer of government murders, and asked a private conversation. The organizer went out to him and was addressed by the man in the following words: "Three days ago a certain party required of you seventy-five rubles per head. Assign to me the entire work for fifteen rubles per head, and you can be assured that I will perform it in the best scientific manner."

I do not know whether this proposition was accepted or not; but I know the work was done.

In such a way murders by law influence the very worst of characterless people. But those terrible actions must have a similar influence upon the great mass of the people of medium morals. Through constant reading and hearing of these most horrible actions of inhuman brutality, performed by the government, that is, by

the people which the nation is accustomed to honor as its best—most of the middle class, the younger generation, especially, occupied with their own actions instead of these, lest it should come to their thoughts that their actions are unworthy of esteem, unwillingly brings them to a wholly contrary conclusion. They judge that if the people high in honor perform such actions, which appear terrible to us, those things in reality are not so terrible as we represent. About executions, hangings, murders and bombs they now talk, and write, as once they used to speak and write about the weather. The children play at strangling. The young people of the higher schools, still almost children, take up with expropriation of lands, ready to kill in the same way as they would go hunting. Now very many think that the best conclusion about the land question would be to kill the small land-owners with the aim to get all their land.

In general, thanks to the actions of the government, permitting killing as a means for reaching their own aims, all the crimes—robbing, stealing, lying, drinking, murder—all this now is in the view of the unfortunate nation, corrupted by its government, regarded as most natural and seemly for the people to do.

Yes, terrible in themselves are those actions. But incomparably terrible is the invisible spiritual and moral evil which results.

### III.

You declare that you are perpetrating all these horrors to establish order and peace. You sustaining peace and order! By what means are you doing it? Is it not the fact that you, representing Christian government, leaders and teachers, consecrated and stimulated servants of the church, you destroy the last remnants of religion and morals in the people by means of your crimes of the highest order, falsehood, treachery, drinking, and finally, thanks to the very terribleness of all your crimes, the very last offense against hu-

manity not ending with perversion of the heart, not common murder, the single case, but unnumbered organized murders, which you think to justify with idiotic references to such, or such statutory enactments, written by your own selves in your senseless, lying books, which you sacrilegiously call laws.

You say that it is the only means for pacifying the nation and crushing revolution. But this is visibly false. Indeed, it is entirely clear that you cannot pacify the nation without satisfying the need for elementary honesty implanted in the whole Russian agricultural population, namely: the need of reducing private landholding and reducing its burden, thus allaying the whole peasant irritation, and removing the disturbances among the enraged people, who began together with you the murderous riot. You cannot pacify the nation by inflicting tortures upon its tortures, griefs, exile, prisons, confinement, and inflicting strangulation upon women and children. However eagerly you strive to suppress in yourselves reason and love, and the natural feelings of humanity, you, nevertheless, carry them in yourselves, and it is necessary only for you to come to yourselves, and reflect, in order that you may see that, proceeding thus, as you are doing, namely—taking part in so many terrible crimes—you not merely fail to heal that disease, but you drive it inside, and make it still worse. This is clear as God's day.

The cause of this as it comes out, lies not in physical facts, but depends entirely upon the spiritual conditions of the nation, which are changed, and which under no power can turn back to its previous form, as there is no power which can change a grown-up man back to childhood. General irritation, or peacefulness, does not depend upon whether Peter is alive or hanged, or upon Ivan's being in Tambov, or in exile in Nerchinsk. General agitation or quiet does not depend upon how Peter and Ivan look on their own condition, but how the mass of the population looks upon it; how the mass regards the

government, and private land ownership, and their own religious obligations; upon what the mass thinks good or bad. The force of events is not controlled in any way by material conditions of life, but through the conditions of the nation's spiritual life. If you were to kill off and torture a tenth part of the entire Russian nation, even then, the state of mind resulting would not be such as you are endeavoring to get.

In that way all that you are now doing with all your searches, spyings, prisons, exilings and gallows, will not in the least bring the nation to the condition you wish. Quite the contrary, the irritation increases, grows stronger, and destroys all possibility of gaining peace.

But what is to be done, you are asking? What is to be done? How stop that injustice which has been accomplished?

The answer is very simple. You stop doing that which you are doing.

If nobody would know what is necessary to do to pacify the nation, the entire nation (very many well know that the most necessary thing to pacify the Russian nation—is to buy the land from the private owners—as, for example, fifty years ago, it was necessary to free the peasants from serfdom) even if nobody knew this, nevertheless, it would be evident that to pacify the nation, it is not required to do that which strengthens such irritation. But that, in fact, is the very thing which you are doing.

What you are doing is not for the nation, but for your own selves, for this, to maintain the position, which you occupy and which you mistakenly think is very useful, while in reality it is most pitiful and adverse. It would be better not to say you are doing it for the nation. That is not true. All that reptiliousness which you are carrying on, you are doing for your own aims, for your own vain-glorious, boastful, revengeful, personal self-seeking aims; you are doing it for this, in order to lengthen out a little further the lives of a few in that depravity in which you live and which suits you.

CARLETON  
COMPLICES  
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However, you may say that all that which you are doing you do for the national welfare, the people more and more begin to understand all, and more and more to despise all, and see through all your measures of restriction and repression, seeing them not in the same light as you wish it, namely, as measures for the higher collective existence of the government, but as the personal, crafty actions of a few egoists.

## IV.

Further you say that not we, but the revolutionists, started all this; and that the terrible violence of the revolutionists can be suppressed only by severe measures (as you call your own violence) on the part of your own government.

You say that the brutalities, committed by the revolutionists, are very terrible. With that I do not quarrel. On the contrary, I add that they are not only terrible, but senseless. Like your own deeds; they lead to no results whatever. Nevertheless, however terrible or senseless their actions are, all these bombs, plots, these repulsive murders and expropriations—still, these depravities by no means approach the criminality and senseless depravities perpetrated by you.

They are acting precisely as you are, and from the same motives. They are in the same way (I would say comically, if the consequences were not so terrible), under the delusion that the people, deciding for themselves what plan is best, and, according to their idea, most useful and beneficial, for the general welfare and public order, have the right, and the power, to arrange other people's lives according to the needs of that plan. Self-deceit, in this way or in that way, is all one. The means for reaching this is violence of all kinds, even to the destruction of life. The corrupting justification of infamous crime, that it is committed for the good of many, ceases to be immoral, and therefore it is possible, without violating moral laws, to lie, to rob, to kill constantly, when this leads to the reaching

of the proposed good for others, which it seems to us we can understand, foresee and bring about.

You members of the government call all those actions of the revolutionists "brutalities and terrible crimes." But they have not done and are not doing anything of this sort which you are not doing, and on a greater scale. They are doing the same things you are doing. You maintain spies. You deceive, you spread printed falsehoods, and so do they. You seize upon the national property by the use of every kind of violence, and employ it as you please, and so do they. You execute those you deem dangerous, and so do they, also.

Since you employ for attaining your ends the same depraved means as they do, you certainly cannot then accuse the revolutionists. All which you can put out for your own justification, they, equally, can set forth for theirs—not to say anything of the fact that you are accomplishing much of such evil which they do not commit. For instance, squandering the national wealth, declaring wars, and preparing for wars, subduing and oppressing alien nationalities, and many other such things.

You say you must preserve the traditions, for instance, point out the actions of the great men in the past. They, the revolutionists, also have their traditions, coming down from past times, even earlier than the French Revolution. As concerns great men, characters for imitation, martyrs sacrificed for truth and freedom, they have such not less than you.

In such way, if, in general, between you there exists a difference, it is only in this, that you wish things to remain as they were and are, and they want a change. Taking into consideration that everything cannot remain as it was once, they are nearer right than you are, if they would not take from you that terrible and destructive self-deception, as if a certain circle of distinguished people could know the form of life which is for the best advantage of all future generations and that form could be brought in by force.

Lastly, they proceed just as you do, using the same means. They are entirely pupils of yours. They, as the proverb says, combined in themselves all your shortcomings. They are not only your pupils, but your product, your children. If you were not, they would not be. When you try to suppress them with force, you are like a person pressing all his weight against a door which opens towards him.

If there is any kind of difference between you and them it is, without doubt, not to your advantage, but to theirs. This is the first ground of leniency in their favor, that their crimes are performed under conditions more dangerous than those incurred by yourselves. Risk and danger justify very many things in the eyes of impressionable youth. Secondly, a great mass of them are young people, and under delusions natural to their age. You for the most part are people of mature years, old persons, for whom coolness of blood and mildness towards the deluded ought to be more natural. Thirdly, an alleviating condition to their advantage, whatever murders must be charged to them, they are not so cool, systematic and outrageous as your Schliselburgs, exilings, gallows and shootings. The fourth alleviation in favor of the revolutionists is this, that they, nearly all, belong to the category of those who cast aside all religious learning and lay down the proposition that the end justifies the means. They, therefore, as a result, kill one or more persons for the public interest; but you are members of the government, from the lowest executioners to the highest of those, who command them; you are all supporters of religion and Christianity, although it, to be sure, does not harmonize with the doing of your actions.

And it is you, old people, leaders of others, professing Christians, it is you, who, like quarreling children, say, "We did not start it, but they." The best that you can say you have taken on yourselves the duty of managing the nation. But permit us to know who you are. A

people, acknowledging as a God, one who not only forbade in the most positive way, either sentencing or punishing, but also even criticizing a brother; one who, in his own shining expressions, cast away all punishment whatever, and strenuously affirmed the necessity of perpetual pardon, however often the crime is perpetrated; one who commanded us to turn the other cheek to the striker, and not to repay evil with evil—one who, in the case of the woman who was sentenced to be stoned, clearly and plainly showed the impossibility of the sentencing and punishing of one man by another; and after acknowledging that teacher as a God, you can say nothing better for your justification than simply: "They started to kill, therefore let us kill them."

v.

An acquaintance of mine, an artist, wished to make a picture, "Punishment." He needed a model of an executioner. He heard that at that time the duty of executioner was performed at Moscow by a janitor. The artist went to him. It was Easter-time. The family of the janitor were sitting in their best clothes at the table, but the husband himself was not there. Afterwards, it appeared that, seeing a stranger, he hid himself. His wife, also, was in appearance troubled, and said that the husband was not home. But his little daughter exposed him, saying, "Papa is in the garret." She did not know what her father understood, that his acts were wrong, and that, therefore, he could not help fearing every one. The artist explained to the woman that he wanted to see her husband and to get him as a sitter for the picture; that his face precisely suited the intended picture. (The artist certainly did not say for what reason it was necessary to have for that picture the face of the janitor.)

Talking with the wife, the artist, to make her willing, offered to take her son as a pupil. This offer, apparently, tempted the woman. She went out, and in a few minutes her husband came in,

gloomy, restless, frightened, and turning his eyes in all directions. For a long time he tried to find out from the artist why, and for what purpose, he in particular was wanted. When the artist answered that he met the man once on the street, and that the latter's face appeared to resemble the proposed picture, the janitor started to inquire where and when the artist saw him, at what time, and how he was dressed. Naturally fearful, and suspicious that it was something bad, he was by no means willing to agree to the artist's proposal.

Certainly that executioner, at least, recognizes that he is an executioner; that he is doing wrong; that he is hated, and therefore he fears the people. And I think that this consciousness, and fear of his people, ought to redeem his guilt. But you all—from the court minister, chairman of the council, and adviser of the Czar—you indirect participants in causing the daily injustice, you apparently do not feel your guilt, your shame, which must attach to you from taking part in those terrors. True, you also, like that executioner, fear the people, and you fear more and more your answerableness for such crimes. The prosecutor fears more than the secretary; the president of the court more than the prosecutor; the governor-general more than the president of the court; and the president of the ministers' council still more; and most of all the Czar. You are all fearful, but, unlike the executioner, your fear does not come from the consciousness of your own bad actions, but because that other people are doing evil.

Therefore, I think that however far that unfortunate janitor has lowered himself, morally, he stands incomparably higher than you, the frequent participants in the guilt of those terrible crimes, you who judge others, instead of yourselves, and walk with high-lifted heads.

## VI.

I know that people—mere people—we are all weak, all liable to mistake, and not

one of us can judge another. I am greatly incensed with those persons who appeared to me to be the ones responsible for these terrible crimes. That feeling rises the stronger, the higher those persons stand in the social scale. I no more can, nor will resist that feeling. I cannot and will not. In the first place, for the convincing of those people who do not understand all the wickedness of their actions, which is indispensable for themselves and for the mass, which, under such impressions are showing such persons public honors and praise and looking approvingly upon their horrible actions; and also they try to imitate them. In the second place, I cannot and will not more resist this inclination, because that (as I publicly acknowledge) I hope that my convincing of these people will in some way or another have the effect, according to my wish, of my expulsion from this circle in which I now live in which I cannot help feeling myself a participant in the accomplishment around me of these crimes.

All that which is now done in Russia is done in the name of the general welfare, and in the name of peace and protection to the inhabitants. If this is so, then it is for me, for I live in Russia. For me it has come to pass that there exists such poverty in the nation, which is deprived of the original simplest natural human right, the right to use the land on which one was born. For me, half a million people torn away from their healthful peasant life, dressed in uniform and taught the art of killing; for me exists that false so-called clerical body, the sole duty of which consists in perverting and concealing the truth of Christianity; for me come forth all those exilings of people from one place to another; for me those hundreds of thousands of hungry workmen who tramp over Russia; for me those hundreds of thousands of unfortunates who die of typhus and scurvy in fortresses and prisons which are not spacious enough for such a multitude of captives; for me suffer the mothers, wives and fathers of the exiles, arrested and carried

away; for me all those spies and venality; for me the burial of those tens and hundreds of persons shot; for me came forth all that terrible work of the executioners so hard to find at first, but which now at length are no more concerned about avoiding that kind of work; for my sake arise those gallows with their well-soaped ropes on which they hang women, children and peasants; for my sake exists that terrible exasperation of one people against another. How strange such statements that all this is done for my sake, and that I am a participant in those savage actions. I cannot but feel that there is an undoubted mutual dependence between my roomy lodgings and my dinner, my clothes, my free time and those terrible crimes committed with the aim of getting rid of those who would desire to take away from me that which I enjoy; and although I know that all these homeless, wretched, criminalized, depraved people, who, despite the government's threat, would take away all those things I make use of—product of these very governmental crimes, nevertheless—I cannot but feel that in the present time my security actually rests upon those terrors now being wrought by the government.

Admitting this, I can no more bear it, but must free myself from this unbearable situation. To live so is impossible. I, at least, cannot and do not want to so live. Therefore, I write this: and with all the means at my command I am going to spread these things in Russia, as well as abroad. Let one thing or the other happen—either stop these inhuman actions, or stop my connection with them, and put me in prison where my conscience will be clear, that those terrors are not created for my sake; or still better—(that would be so good that I certainly would not dare to imagine such felicity)—let them put on me the face-cloth, as they did to those twenty peasants; and let me, also, be pushed from the scaffold, in order that my own weight may pull tight the well-soaped noose around my old neck.

In order to reach one or the other of

these aims, I appeal to all the participants in those terrible deeds, beginning with those who put on my brother men, on women, and on children, the face-cloth and the noose, from the gate-keepers of the prison, and ending with you, the head organizers and arrangers of those terrible crimes.

Brethren, people! bethink yourselves! Stop and think! Think over what you are doing. Remember who you are!

Before becoming executioners, generals, prosecutors, judges, prime ministers and czars, you are only mortals. To-day is given you to look upon God's world. To-morrow you will cease to exist (especially you executioners of all ranks, who are awakening against yourselves the general hatred. You must remember this). Is it possible that you would, taking even a slight look on God's world (because if you were not killed, death would surely be at each one's back), not see in the moment of your light that your calling in life is not to torture and to kill people? Do not you, yourselves, tremble from fear of being killed? Is it possible that you are clean before yourselves, to others, and to God, persuading yourselves and others that by your participation in those actions you are accomplishing a great work for the welfare of millions? Is it possible that you, intoxicated by those around you with flattery, and very common sophisms, you collectively, and each separately, did not know that all this, in few words, is a contrivance with this aim, that you, while bringing about the most terrible crimes, may call yourselves good people?

You cannot know that you, as well as each of us, have only one real duty including in itself all the rest: the duty to live the short time which is allotted to us in accordance with the purpose with which you were sent into this world, and to leave this world in accordance with the same purpose, and this purpose only requires one thing, that one man should love another.

But, nevertheless, what are you doing? To what do you devote your spiritual