

#### IV

Ask a soldier, a private, a corporal, a non-commissioned officer, who has abandoned his old parents, his wife, his children, why he is preparing to kill men whom he does not know; he will at first be astonished at your question. He is a soldier, he has taken the oath, and it is his duty to fulfil the orders of his commanders. If you tell him that war--i.e. the slaughter of men--does not conform to the command, "Thou shalt not kill," he will say: "And how if ours are attacked--For the King--For the Orthodox faith?" (One of them said in answer to my question: "And how if he attacks that which is sacred?" "What do you mean?" I asked. "Why," said he, "the banner.") And if you endeavor to explain to such a soldier that God's Commandment is more important not only than the banner but than anything else in the world, he will become silent, or he will get angry and report you to the authorities.

Ask an officer, a general, why he goes to the war. He will tell you that he is a military man, and that the military are indispensable for the defence of the fatherland. As to murder not conforming to the spirit of the Christian law, this does not trouble him, as either he does not believe in this law, or, if he does, it is not in the law itself, but in that explanation which has been given to this law. But, above all, he, like the soldier, in place of the personal question, what should he do himself, always put the general question about the State, or the fatherland. "At the present moment, when the fatherland is in danger, one

should act, and not argue," he will say.

Ask the diplomatists, who, by their deceits, prepare wars, why they do it. They will tell you that the object of their activity is the establishment of peace between nations, and that this object is attained, not by ideal, unrealizable theories, but by diplomatic action and readiness for war. And, just as the military, instead of the question concerning one's own action, place the general question, so also diplomatists will speak about the interests of Russia, about the unscrupulousness of other Powers, about the balance of power in Europe, but not about their own position and its activities.

Ask the journalists why, by their writings, they incite men to war; they will say that wars in general are necessary and useful, especially the present war, and they will confirm this opinion of theirs by misty patriotic phrases, and, just like the military and diplomatist, to the question why he, a journalist, a particular individual, a living man, acts in a certain way, he will speak about the general interests of the nation, about the State, civilization, the white race. In the same way, all those who prepare war will explain their participation in that work. They will perhaps agree that it would be desirable to abolish war, but at present this is impossible. At present they as Russians and as men who occupy certain positions, such as heads of the nobility, representatives of local self-government, doctors, workers of the Red Cross, are called upon to act and not to argue. "There is no time to argue and to think of oneself," they will say, "when there is a great common work to be done."

The same will be said by the Tsar, seemingly responsible for the whole thing. He, like the soldier, will be astonished at the question, whether war is now necessary. He does not even admit the idea that the war might yet be arrested. He will say that he cannot refrain from fulfilling that which is demanded of him by the whole nation, that, although he does recognize that war is a great evil, and has used, and is ready to use, all possible means for its abolition--in the present case he could not help declaring war, and cannot help continuing it. It is necessary for the welfare and glory of Russia.

Every one of these men, to the question why he, so and so, Ivan, Peter, Nicholas, whilst recognizing as binding upon him the Christian law which not only forbids the killing of one's neighbor but demands that one should love him, serve him, why he permits himself to participate in war; i.e. in violence, loot, murder, will infallibly answer the same thing, that he is thus acting in the name of his fatherland, or faith, or oath, or honor, or civilization, or the future welfare of the whole of mankind--in general, of something abstract and indefinite. Moreover, these men are always so urgently occupied either by preparation for war, or by its organization, or discussions about it, that in their leisure time they can only rest from their labors, and have not time to occupy themselves with discussions about their life, regarding such discussions as idle.