

# MANIFESTO OF NONVIOLENCE: TOLSTOY, GANDHI AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

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In the year 1919, Rabindranath Tagore had a letter exchange with the French novelist and pacifist, Romain Rolland, biographer of Tolstoy, Gandhi, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Both, Tagore as well as Rolland, were concerned about the intellectuals' responsibility during and before war time. Rolland spread his "Declaration of Independence of the Spirit" signed among others by Jane Addams (USA), Henri Barbusse (France), Tolstoy's secretary Pavel Birukov (Russia), Benedetto Croce (Italy), Georges Duhamel (France), Albert Einstein (Germany), August Forel (Switzerland), Alfred Hermann Fried (Austria), Hermann Hesse (Germany), Selma Lagerloef (Sweden), Heinrich Mann (Germany), Frans Masereel (Belgium), Georg Friedrich Nicolai (Germany), Edmond Picard (Belgium), Leonhard Ragaz (Switzerland), Bertrand Russell (England), Fritz von Unruh (Germany), Henry van de Velde (Belgium) and Stefan Zweig (Austria) quoted from: Rolland and Tagore (ed. by Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, September 1945, pp. 20-24)

"Toilers of the spirit, companions, scattered all over the world, separated from one another for five years by armies, by censorship and hate of nations at war, we take this opportunity, when barriers are falling and frontiers are re-opening, of making an appeal to you to re-form your fraternal union, - but let it be a fresh union, firmer and stronger than the one which existed before.

The war has thrown our ranks into disarray. The majority of intellectuals have placed their science, their art and their mind at the service of States. We do not wish to accuse or reproach anybody. We know the weakness of individual souls and the elemental strength of great collective currents: the latter have in an instant swept away the former, as no provision had been

made for resisting. Let this experience at least serve us for the future!

And first of all, let us take note of the disasters that have resulted from the almost total abdication of the intelligence of the world and its voluntary subjection to the forces let loose. To the pestilence which is corroding Europe in body and spirit, thinkers and artists have added an incalculable amount of poisoned hate; they have searched in the arsenal of their knowledge, their memory and their imagination for old and new reasons, historical, scientific, logical and poetic reasons, for hating; they have laboured to destroy love and understanding between men. And in so doing they have disfigured, dishonoured, debased and degraded Thought, whose ambassadors they were. They have made it an instrument of passions and (perhaps without knowing it) of the egotistic interests of a social or political clan, of a state, of a country or of a class. And now from this savage struggle, from which all the warring nations, victorious and vanquished, are emerging bruised, impoverished and in their heart of hearts (though they do not admit it to themselves) ashamed and humiliated at their orgy of madness, Thought emerges fallen with them, compromised by their conflict.

Arise! Let us extricate the spirit from these compromises, these humiliating alliances, this secret slavery! The spirit is the servant of none. It is we who are servants of the spirit. We have no other master. We are born to bear its torch, to defend it, to rally round it all those who have strayed. Our part, our duty is to maintain a fixed point, to point out the polar star, amidst the whirl of passions in the night. Amongst these passions of pride and mutual destruction, we shall choose none; we shall reject all. We serve Truth alone which is free, with no frontiers, with no limits, with no prejudices of race or caste. Of course we shall not dissociate ourselves from the interests of Humanity! We shall work for it, but for it as a whole. We do

not recognise nations. We recognise the People - one and universal, - the People who suffer, who struggle, who fall and rise again, and who ever march forward on the rough road, drenched with their sweat and their blood, - the People comprising all men, all equally our brothers. And it is in order to make them, like ourselves, aware of this fraternity, that we raise above their blind battles the Arch of Alliance, of the Free Spirit, one and manifold, eternal."

Rabindranath Tagore added his signature to the list of names (The only other Indian whose signature was appended to the Declaration was Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy.); Tagore replied to Rolland's request dated July 9, 1919 in an open letter published in the *Modern Review*, July 1919, p. 81

"When my mind was steeped in the gloom of the thought, that the lesson of the war had been lost, and that people were trying to perpetuate their hatred and anger into the same organised menace for the world which threatened themselves with disaster, your letter came and cheered me with its message of hope. The truths that save us have always been uttered by the few and rejected by the many and have triumphed through their failures. It is enough for me to know that the higher conscience of Europe has been able to assert itself in one of her choicest spirits through the ugly clamours of passionate politics; and I gladly hasten to accept your invitation to join the ranks of those freed souls, who in Europe have conceived the project of a Declaration of Independence of the Spirit..."

In 1925, Runham Brown, Hon. Secretary of "War Resisters' International" (11 Abbey Road, Enfield, Middlesex, England) issued the following "innocent" Anti-Conscription Manifesto directed at the League of Nations. The English language original of the Anti-Conscription Manifesto as well as Gandhi's comment are quoted from: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 31 (1926), Ahmedabad

1969, pp. 414 f. (article in *Young India*, 16.9.1926): "During the War people in all the countries determined to throw off for ever the yoke of militarism, and, when peace came, the League of Nations was welcomed as the offspring of this hope. It is our duty to see that the terrible suffering of the War does not recur!!"

We call for some definite step towards complete disarmament, and the demilitarizing of the mind of civilized nations. The most effective measure towards this would be the universal abolition of conscription. We therefore ask the League of Nations to propose the abolition of compulsory military service in all countries as a first step towards true disarmament.

It is our belief that conscript armies, with their large corps of professional officers, are a grave menace to peace. Conscription involves the degradation of human personality, and the destruction of liberty. Barrack life, military drill, blind obedience to commands, however unjust and foolish they may be, and deliberate training for slaughter undermine respect for the individual, for democracy and human life.

It is debasing human dignity to force men to give up their lives, or to inflict death against their will, or without conviction as to the justice of their action. The State which thinks itself entitled to force its citizens to go to war will never pay proper regard to the value and happiness of their lives in peace. Moreover, by conscription the militarist spirit of aggressiveness is implanted in the whole male population at the most impressionable age. By training for war men come to consider war as unavoidable and even desirable.

By the universal abolition of conscription, war will be made less easy. The Government of a country which maintains conscription has little difficulty in declaring war, for it can silence the whole population by a mobilization order. When Government have to depend for support upon the voluntary consent of their peoples, they must necessarily exercise caution in their foreign policies.

In the first draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations, President Wilson proposed to make conscription illegal in affiliated countries. It is our

duty to restore the original spirit which created the League, a spirit shared by many of those who fought in the war, and professed by many of the statesmen of the countries concerned. By the universal abolition of conscription we can take a decisive step towards peace and liberty. We therefore, call upon all men and women of good-will to help create in all countries a public opinion which will induce Governments and the League of Nations to take this definite step to rid the world of the spirit of militarism, and to open the way to a new era of freedom within nations and of fraternity between them."

Gandhiji joined the signatories who stressed the Anti-Conscription Manifesto publicly; it was signed among others by: C.F. Andrews (India), Norman Angell (England), Henri Barbusse (France), A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (Germany), Annie Besant (India), Martin Buber (Germany), Edward Carpenter (England), Miguel de Unamuno (Spain), Georges Duhamel (France), Albert Einstein (Germany), August Forel (Switzerland), Kurt Hiller (Germany), Toyohiko Kagawa (Japan), George Lansbury, M.P. (England), Arthur Ponsonby (England), Emanuel Rádl (Czechoslovakia), Leonhard Ragaz (Switzerland); Lajpat Rai (India), Romain Rolland (France), Bertrand Russell (England), Rabindranath Tagore (India), Fritz von Unruh (Germany) - Gandhi's solidarity was inspired by pure realism. The list of signatories is fully documented in and quoted from: *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit. Handbuch des aktiven Pazifismus (Violence and Non-Violence. Manual of Active Pacifism)*, ed. by Franz Kobler, Zürich (Switzerland) 1928, pp. 362-364

:"The manifesto is signed by well-known men and women from England, Finland, France, Germany, India, Sweden, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Japan and Norway. The first step towards the abolition of the military spirit is no doubt abolition of conscription. But the reformers will have to put up an immense struggle to secure State action in the desired direction. Each is afraid and distrustful of his neighbour."

In 1930, the "Joint Peace Council",

a coalition of international peace organizations, issued the Manifesto "Against Conscription and the Military Training of Youth" from: *Die Menschenrechte*, Berlin 1930, vol. 5, no. 9, pp. 18-20 (translated into English language by Christian Bartolf, Berlin, and Michael Graaf, Durban.)

:"The governments of all countries have at last officially recognized the right of nations to peace and renounced war as a means of national politics in the Kellogg-Pact.

Despite this, preparations are being made for war. In blatant contradiction of the peaceful postures of governments stands the maintenance and expansion of military training of youth.

Two kinds of military training prevail: in many countries it occurs as legal conscription, in others it actually is voluntary in name, but is imposed on youth by moral and economic pressure. Besides this, all governments consider it their right to demand military service of their male and female citizens.

We declare that whoever sincerely wants peace must promote the abolition of the militarisation of youth and deny the right of governments to impose conscription on their citizens.

Conscription subjects individual personalities to militarism. It is a form of servitude. That nations routinely tolerate it, is just one more proof of its debilitating influence.

Military training is schooling of body and spirit in the art of killing. Military training is education for war. It is the perpetuation of the war spirit. It hinders the development of the desire for peace. The older generation sins gravely against the future, if it teaches the skills of war to youth in schools and universities, in state and private organizations, often under the banner of physical training. The suspension of military training of youth and the abolition of conscription have been imposed on the defeated nations by peace treaties. The nations of the whole world should finally reject them (military training of youth and conscription) of their own accord. If the governments fail to recognize the great outrage at and opposition to war, then they must reckon with the resistance of all those whose highest law is dedication to humanity and to the voice of their conscience.

Nations of the world, resolve:  
Away with militarisation!  
Away with conscription!  
Educate youth for humanity and for peace!"

According to the spirit of Briand-Kellogg-Pact in 1928 (the official prohibition of military aggressions in International Law), this Manifesto was signed among others by: Jane Addams (U.S.A.), Tolstoy's secretaries Pavel Birukov (Switzerland, originally Russia) and Valentin Bulgakov (Russia), John Dewey (U.S.A.), Albert Einstein (Germany), August Forel (Switzerland), Sigmund Freud (Austria), Arvid Jaernefelt (Finland), Toyohiko Kagawa (Japan), Selma Lagerloef (Sweden), Judah L. Magnes (Palestine), Thomas Mann (Germany), Ludwig Quidde (Germany), Emanuel Rádl (Czechoslovakia), Leonhard Ragaz (Switzerland), Henriette Roland Holst (Netherlands), Romain Rolland (France), Bertrand Russell (Great Britain), Upton Sinclair (U.S.A.), Rabindranath Tagore (India), H.G. Wells (Great Britain) and Stefan Zweig (Austria).

In 1981, the Nobel Prizes Manifesto Appeal was published speaking out for "the undersigned, men and women of science, letters, men and women of peace, of different religions, history and culture, we who have been honoured because we look for and celebrate truth in life and life in truth, in order that our work may serve as a universal testimony of dialogue, fraternity and a common civilization of peace and progress", raising their voices "for tens of millions of people on the point of dying from hunger and underdevelopment, victims of the international political and economic disorder which prevails in the world today, to be restored to life.

An unprecedented holocaust, encompassing in a single year all the horror of the exterminations experienced in the first half of the century is now being perpetrated and, with every moment that passes, is extending the frontiers of barbarism and death in the real world as well as in our consciences.

All of those who denounce and combat this holocaust are unanimous in maintaining that the causes of this tragedy are political."

"If the helpless take their fate into

their own hands, if increasing numbers refuse to obey any law other than the fundamental human rights, the most basic of which is the right to life, if the weak organize themselves and use the few but powerful weapons available to them: non-violent actions exemplified by Gandhi, adopting and imposing objectives which are limited and suitable: if these things happen, it is certain that an end could be put to this catastrophe in our time."

"We cannot stand idly by and watch as disaster approaches. Our knowledge tells us that the whole of humanity is increasingly in danger of death and we must use this knowledge to create hope and salvation to give substance to our beliefs and opinions.

If the news media and those who granted us the honours we have received, listen to our voices now and make them heard, give heed to our work and to the work of all those who have been making efforts in the same direction, if people know or are informed we have no doubt that the future can be changed for all the people of the world.

But only if this is done.

Now is the time to act, now is the time to create, now is the time for us to live in a way that will give life to others." drafted by Marco Pannella of the Italian Radical Party (Partito Radicale)

The list of signatories was limited to Nobel Prize Laureates:

Vincente Alexandre (Literature 1977), Hannes Alfvén (Physics 1970), American Friends Service Committee (Peace 1947), Philip Anderson (Physics 1977), Christian Anfinsen (Chemistry 1972), Kenneth Arrow (Economics 1972), Julius Axelrod (Medicine 1970), David Baltimore (Medicine 1975), Samuel Beckett (Literature 1969), Saul Bellow (Literature 1976), Baruj Benaceraff (Medicine 1980), Baruch S. Blumberg (Medicine 1976), Heinrich Boell (Literature 1972), Norman Ernest Borlaug (Peace 1970), Willy Brandt (Peace 1971), Bureau International de la Paix (Peace 1970), Elias Canetti (Literature 1981), Owen Chamberlain (Physics 1959), Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar (Physics 1983), Mairaud Corrigan (Peace 1976), André Cournand (Medicine 1956), Jean Dausset (Medicine 1980), Gérard

Debreu (Economics 1983), John Carew Eccles (Medicine 1963), Odysseus Elytis (Literature 1979), Ernst Otto Fischer (Chemistry 1973), Paul John Flory (Chemistry 1974), William Alfred Fowler (Physics 1983), Alfonso Garcia Robles (Peace 1982), William Golding (Literature 1983), Ragnar Granit (Medicine 1967), Roger Guillemin (Medicine 1977), Charles Hard Townes (Physics 1964), Haldan Keffer Hartline (Medicine 1967), Odd Hassel (Chemistry 1969), Gerhard Herzberg (Chemistry 1971), Robert Hofstadter (Physics 1961), David Hubel (Medicine 1981), Francois Jacob (Medicine 1965), Brian Josephson (Physics 1973), Alfred Kastler (Physics 1966), Lawrence R. Klein (Economics 1980), Georges Kohler (Medicine 1984), Polykarp Kusch (Physics 1955), Wassily Leontief (Economics 1973), Salvador Luria (Medicine 1969), André Lwoff (Medicine 1965), Sean Mac Bride (Peace 1974), Czeslaw Milosz (Literature 1980), César Milstein (Medicine 1984), Eugenio Montale (Literature 1975), Nevill Mott (Physics 1977), Gunnar Myrdal (Economics 1974), Daniel Nathans (Medicine 1978), Louis Neel (Physics 1970), Marshall Nirenberg (Medicine 1968), Philip Noel-Baker (Peace 1959), Severo Ochoa (Medicine 1959), Linus Pauling (Chemistry 1954 & Peace 1962), Arno Penzias (Physics 1978), Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Peace 1980), Rodney Robert Porter (Medicine 1972), Ilya Prigogine (Chemistry 1977), Quaker Peace and Service (Peace 1947), Isidor Isaac Rabi (Physics 1944), Tadeus Reichstein (Medicine 1950), Burton Richter (Physics 1976), Carlo Rubbia (Physics 1984), Martin Ryle (Physics 1974), Anwar El Sadat (Peace 1978), Andrei D. Sakharov (Peace 1975), Abdus Salam (Physics 1979), Frederik Sanger (Chemistry 1958 & 1980), Arthur Schawlow (Physics 1981), Jaroslav Seifert (Literature 1984), Kai Siegbahn (Physics 1981), Albert Szent Gyorgyi (Medicine 1937), Henry Taube (Chemistry 1983), Hugo Theorell (Medicine 1955), Jan Tinbergen (Economics 1969), Nikolaas Tinbergen (Medicine 1973), Sir Alexander Todd (Chemistry 1957), Desmond Tutu (Peace 1984), Simon van der Meer (Physics 1984), Ulf von Euler (Medicine 1970), George Wald

(Medicine 1967), Lech Walesa (Peace 1983), Ernest Walton (Physics 1951), James Dewey Watson (Medicine 1962), Patrick White (Literature 1973), Torsten Wiesel (Medicine 1981), Maurice Wilkins (Medicine 1962), Betty Williams (Peace 1976).

From 1993 until 1999, an International Society for Education and Culture; the Gandhi Information Center, Research and Education for Nonviolence (P.O. Box 210109, D-10501 Berlin) has collected signatories and translations of the "Manifesto against Conscription and the Military System". The International Conscientious Objectors' Meeting taking place in Turkey drafted this new Manifesto as result of an international five days' multilogue of 90 representatives from 19 nations. The final version was drafted in Budapest in August 1993: by Mr. Gyoergy Gadoe (Alba Koer „White Circle“ Grassroots Activists for Pacifism and Ecology) and the author of this article. We followed the lines of the previous manifestos and we wanted to learn from the past:

### **"MANIFESTO AGAINST CONSCRIPTION AND THE MILITARY SYSTEM**

In the name of humanity, for the sake of all civilians threatened by war crimes, especially women and children, and for the benefit of Mother Nature suffering from war preparations and warfare,

We, the undersigned, plea for the universal abolition of conscription as one major and decisive step towards complete disarmament.

We remember the message of 20th century-humanists:

"It is our belief that conscript armies, with their large corps of professional officers, are a grave menace to peace. Conscription involves the degradation of human personality, and the destruction of liberty. Barrack life, military drill, blind obedience to commands, however unjust and foolish they may be, and deliberate training for slaughter undermine respect for the individual, for democracy and human life.

It is debasing human dignity to force men to give up their life, or to inflict death against their will, or

without conviction as to the justice of their action. The State which thinks itself entitled to force its citizens to go to war will never pay proper regard to the value and happiness of their lives in peace. Moreover, by conscription the militarist spirit of aggressiveness is implanted in the whole male population at the most impressionable age. By training for war men come to consider war as unavoidable and even desirable." Anti-Conscription Manifesto 1925, signed among others by Henri Barbusse, Annie Besant, Martin Buber, Edward Carpenter, Miguel de Unamuno, Georges Duhamel, Albert Einstein, August Forel, M.K. Gandhi, Kurt Hiller, Toyohiko Kagawa, George Lansbury, Paul Löbe, Arthur Ponsonby, Emanuel Rádl, Leonhard Ragaz, Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore, Fritz von Unruh, H.G. Wells

"Conscription subjects individual personalities to militarism. It is a form of servitude. That nations routinely tolerate it, is just one more proof of its debilitating influence.

Military training is schooling of body and spirit in the art of killing. Military training is education for war. It is the perpetuation of war spirit. It hinders the development of the desire for peace." Against Conscription and the Military Training of Youth 1930, signed among others by Jane Addams, Paul Birukoff and Valentin Bulgakoff (secretaries of Leo Tolstoy), John Dewey, Albert Einstein, August Forel, Sigmund Freud, Arvid Järnefelt, Toyohiko Kagawa, Selma Lagerlöf, Judah Leon Magnes, Thomas Mann, Ludwig Quidde, Emanuel Rádl, Leonhard Ragaz, Henriette Roland Holst, Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Upton Sinclair, Rabindranath Tagore, H.G. Wells, Stefan Zweig

We encourage all people to emancipate themselves from the military system and, therefore, apply methods of non-violent resistance in the line of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, as they were: Conscientious Objectors (by conscripts and professional soldiers, in war and peace time), Civil Disobedience, War Tax Resistance, Non-Cooperation with military research, military production and arms trade.

In our age of electronic warfare and

media manipulation, we cannot deny our responsibility to act in time, according to our consciences. It is high time to demilitarize our minds and our societies, to speak out against war and all preparations for it.

Now is the time to act, now is the time to create and to live in a way that saves the lives of others."

Meanwhile, this new Manifesto has been spread worldwide by Gandhi Information Centre translated by friends in more than 25 languages. More than 500 celebrities in the fields of Science and Culture and/or engaged in the issues of Peace, Ecology and Human Rights signed.

The Manifesto will be published during the millennium year 2000. By his book "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" (1893), Leo Tolstoy influenced Gandhiji profoundly drawing our attention to the corner-stone of future activities towards Peace: **We Shall Overcome Conscription and the Military System by eradicating the Roots of War. see my article on "Tolstoy and Gandhi (Non-Violent Resistance)", Berlin 1994 (ed. by Gandhi Information Centre)**

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