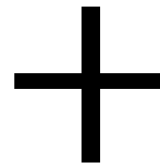


WAR

And

PEACE



“Hélène, who has never cared for anything but her own body and is one of the stupidest women in the world,” thought Pierre, “is regarded by people as the acme of intelligence and refinement, and they pay homage to her. Napoleon Bonaparte was despised by all as long as he was great, but now that he has become a wretched comedian the Emperor Francis wants to offer him his daughter in an illegal marriage. The Spaniards, through the Catholic clergy, offer praise to God for their victory over the French on the fourteenth of June, and the French, also through the Catholic clergy, offer praise because on that same fourteenth of June they defeated the Spaniards. My brother Masons swear by the blood that they are ready to sacrifice everything for their neighbor, but they do not give

a ruble each to the collections for the poor, and they intrigue, the Astrea Lodge against the Manna Seekers, and fuss about an authentic Scotch carpet and a charter that nobody needs, and the meaning of which the very man who wrote it does not understand. We all profess the Christian law of forgiveness of injuries and love of our neighbors, the law in honor of which we have built in Moscow forty times forty churches—but yesterday a deserter was knouted to death and a minister of that same law of love and forgiveness, a priest, gave the soldier a cross to kiss before his execution.” So thought Pierre, and the whole of this general deception which everyone accepts, accustomed as he was to it, astonished him each time as if it were something new.

men disfigured by fear of death
now crowded together, crushing
one another, dying, stepping
over the dying and killing one
another, only to move on a few
steps and be killed themselves in
the same way.

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It was evident that he had long been convinced that it was impossible for him to make a mistake, and that in his perception whatever he did was right, not because it harmonized with any idea of right and wrong, but because he did it.

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war began, that is, an event
took place opposed to human
reason and to human nature.



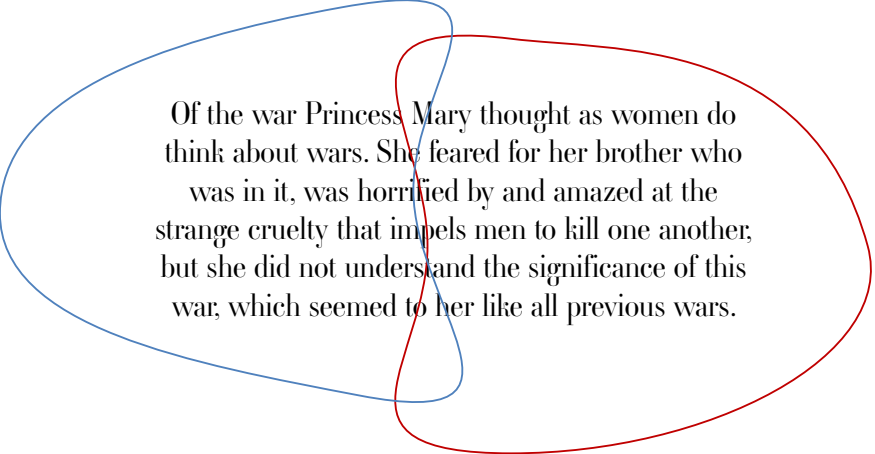
...for had he not wished to serve, and had a second, a third, and a thousandth corporal and private also refused, there would have been so many less men in Napoleon's army and the war could not have occurred.

It was necessary that millions of men in whose hands lay the real power—the soldiers who fired, or transported provisions and guns—should consent to carry out the will of these weak individuals, and should have been induced to do so by an infinite number of diverse and complex causes.

Then why those severed arms and legs and those
dead men?

Life meanwhile—real life, with its essential interests of health and sickness, toil and rest, and its intellectual interests in thought, science, poetry, music, love, friendship, hatred, and passions—

went on as usual



Of the war Princess Mary thought as women do think about wars. She feared for her brother who was in it, was horrified by and amazed at the strange cruelty that impels men to kill one another, but she did not understand the significance of this war, which seemed to her like all previous wars.

excerpts from Tolstoy's War and Peace

NSB 2023

I have always felt the deepest mistrust for those who take up arms in the name of whatever cause. I have always felt there was something deeply unwholesome about warmongers, troublemakers, rubble-rousers. What is a war or a revolution, in the end, but a hobby fueled by spite, a bloody, cruel sport?

(Michel Houellebecq ↑↓)

Let's state the obvious: man is not, in general, a morally admirable creature.