

Third Series

PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 34

THE REASONABLE
DIRECTION OF FORCE:

A PLEA FOR INVESTIGATION BEFORE WAR

BY

LOUISE E. MATTHAEI

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BASIS OF PUBLICATION

This series of Papers is issued under the auspices of a Committee drawn from various Christian bodies and political parties, and is based on the following convictions :

1. That Great Britain was in August morally bound to declare war and is no less bound to carry the war to a decisive issue ;
2. That the war is none the less an outcome and a revelation of the un-Christian principles which have dominated the life of Western Christendom and of which both the Church and the nations have need to repent ;
3. That followers of Christ, as members of the Church, are linked to one another in a fellowship which transcends all divisions of nationality or race ;
4. That the Christian duties of love and forgiveness are as binding in time of war as in time of peace ;
5. That Christians are bound to recognize the insufficiency of mere compulsion for overcoming evil, and to place supreme reliance upon spiritual forces and in particular upon the power and method of the Cross ;
6. That only in proportion as Christian principles dictate the terms of settlement will a real and lasting peace be secured ;
7. That it is the duty of the Church to make an altogether new effort to realize and apply to all the relations of life its own positive ideal of brotherhood and fellowship ;
8. That with God all things are possible.

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THERE are three great instruments for living the common life—love, reason, force. All three are liable to misuse, and all three have been in turn over-valued and in turn neglected ; but the consequences from the misuse of force are so appalling that there are men, and these among our greatest, who have refused to recognize it as an instrument in any sense. None the less, its use continues, alike between individuals and between nations. Only it is vital to notice that between individuals, in civilized countries at least, its use is rare and strictly regulated ; between nations, even highly civilized nations, its menace is perpetual and its use scarcely regulated at all.

Why is this ? Doubtless in part because the problems between individuals are simpler, and in some ways much easier to adjust. There are, it is true, sound analogies between the life of individuals and the life of nations, but there are also important differences, which are often overlooked.¹ (a) The life of a nation is continuous over a long stretch of time, but individuals incessantly replace each other by the processes of life and death, and death, though it is no solution of injustice, constantly puts an end to an unjust situation. (b) Other ways of escape

¹ For the following section see Mr. Bradley's lecture on *International Morality in The International Crisis in its ethical and psychological aspects* : Oxford University Press.

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are open to individuals through change, movement, growth : a partner in trade, unfairly treated, can leave to found business elsewhere, a workman finds fresh employment, an oppressed child grows up and emancipates himself, but States cannot remove themselves, and when they grow, intricate problems grow with them. (c) An individual often may, and often does, feel it his duty to sacrifice his own existence, but this can rarely be the duty of the State. There are millions of individuals in this world ; there are perhaps forty States, scarcely twenty that are civilized. It cannot be the same to surrender one out of millions, and one out of twenty existences, especially if we add the poignant thought that an incalculable sacrifice is being imposed on the future as well ; millions yet to be born are being deprived of their natural rights. And the contribution to human life made by a great nation is irreplaceable, beyond comparison with the contribution made by any ordinary individual, however noble. Nevertheless, this distinction should not be exaggerated. There is too much cant about the constant danger to national existence, whereas, in the last hundred years of European history most of the sacrifices needed, and refused, could not for a moment have imperilled the national life of any State ; the life of a nation is not the delicate plant that some would take it to be. The European States themselves have, on occasion, been better than some of their theorists,¹ and in general it is clear that the union of large countries like England, France, Italy, and Germany would have

¹ e. g. the South German States when surrendering their independent foreign relations for the sake of German unity in 1870 : England, when she handed the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1863.

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been impossible without self-sacrifice on the part of the smaller units which they replaced. But allowing for all this, the broad statement remains true that a nation cannot and ought not to surrender its existence or its rights as readily as an individual.

This truth, far more than the idea that human nature cannot change and that man is by nature a fighting animal, lends strength to the instinctive morality which says 'we shall always have war'. If there is no other way of defending national rights and national liberties except by war, then, it is felt, war must be accepted. And here it may be said that the present writer accepts the first article in the basis of these pamphlets, agreeing that England, having to choose between two evils in August 1914, was justified in choosing what was perhaps the lesser evil—war. But such a choice of the lesser evil remains morally right only so long as the mind refuses to accept either alternative as really satisfactory and struggles forward to a better way.

To that struggle we must give ourselves, and it is here we meet with a second instinctive morality, just as strong as the first, which believes that war, as we know war, must and shall be abolished. The strength of this instinct does not rest entirely on a sense of the horrors of war (which may be shared by those who say wars must last for ever), but rather on a sense of the guilt which war involves. Kant (*Zum ewigen Frieden*, 1795, note at the end of the chapter on the second article of peace) explains how he would think it 'not improper' (*nicht unschicklich*) if, at the end of a war or following a victory, after the usual rejoicings and services of thanksgiving, there should be prescribed a day of repentance, to be spent in asking pardon of Heaven in the name of the State

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for the great sin of which the human race is still guilty in not submitting its international relations to a legal settlement, but in its pride still preferring to use the barbaric method of war, which fails to secure the end sought, namely, the rights of each State.

This second instinctive morality has already accomplished much. Its greatest achievement is constantly ignored: in ancient times the normal condition between States was that of war, only interrupted by compacts of peace; gradually it has come to be that of normal peace rarely interrupted by a state of war. After the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga in June 1903, when diplomatic relations were broken off between England and Serbia, the resulting condition, which might be called the normal condition of modern countries, was not that of war, but of peace. Had we wished to go to war with Serbia at that time, we should have needed a regular declaration of war.

The second achievement of this instinctive morality is also great; war, it is felt now, must be justified on other grounds than those of mere acquisition; it matters little that the justification is often shallow, or even false: a public standard has been established, and it is one of incalculable value. The efforts made by all executives to justify themselves in the present war are only a single proof. It is remarkable with what vigour and tenacity the peoples concerned have taken up this question; their arguments all tend to the same end, to prove that they were attacked. It is dubious whether this is a valid line of argument; it springs, no doubt, from the perfectly right instinct that there is something wrong in the way we make wars at present, but as an attempt to save the situation, it is hopelessly inadequate.

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The distinction between offensive war and defensive cannot be made absolute; in the present case it has broken down completely: it has broken down in fact, for all sides claim to be on the defensive, which seems a *reductio ad absurdum*; apart from this the argument breaks down in theory, for, if the use of force in the shape of war is right at all, by what possible reasoning can it be made wrong for a State to attack voluntarily on behalf of right? Why must it wait until it can produce some shallow pretext of being attacked? We all admire the man who thrashes the bully found beating a victim, and no case is more constantly quoted by militarists to prove their position, yet the hero who beats the bully has not himself been attacked. We side with Garibaldi against the Austrians and Bourbons, yet it was undoubtedly Garibaldi who made the attack.

THE DEFICIENCIES OF OUR PRESENT SYSTEM

The conflict of these two instinctive moralities accounts for our present curious condition: the wrongness of war seems to be so patent, and yet—we have war.

Undoubtedly our international lags behind our national morality. The differences between States and individuals are, as we have seen, great; yet, after all, States are composed of individuals, and war and peace, coming within the general sphere of human right and wrong, depend for their existence on the operation of the human will. It is not a question of striking out into a visionary and untested Utopia, far in advance of our personal or even our communal morality, but of bringing international morality into line with the rest of human endeavour, of abolishing this amazing discrepancy. States, we admitted,

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are excluded from the benefit of rapid or easy change of circumstances or from that of the great solvents, birth and death ; but we need not on that account despair of finding a solution, for our own reason has already made a beginning in the work ; we need only courage to follow up our own discoveries.

War is the use of force, and the use of force is not in itself wrong at this stage of human life ; but war is the use of unregulated force, and as such profoundly unsatisfactory, entirely inadequate to the conception of justice which we have already evolved. It is claimed that war is a rough kind of international justice, and indeed, it is difficult to see on what other claim the horrors of war could be contemplated. But what kind of justice is war after all ? In civil justice we do not shoot our criminals at sight, or put them into prison for years before we try them, nor does civil justice involve that vicarious punishment which is so truly terrible in war, where it is not those who have made the war, whoever they may be, who suffer, but others, often women and children, who undergo the worst outrages. Moreover, even if we put the utmost confidence in the character of the accuser, we do not allow him to mete out punishment to the accused by a kind of swift and glorious instinct, without any impartial scrutiny, any application to the judgment of another than himself. It is well enough to talk of the commission of nations, but it is unendurable that we should put power into the hands of any single nation whatever to chastise in this haphazard and arbitrary way. In private life it would be thought insane to expect justice on such terms.

But it is claimed for war that it is, more or less, a successful adjuster of the relations between States : ' negotia-

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tions up to a certain point—yes, but after that war ; there are some situations which only war can adjust’—how often have we not heard the well-worn argument ? But does war adjust ? Is it successful ? Can it bring about a better state of things ? When all have the means of force at their disposal, the use of force evokes the answer of force. The victory of right, therefore, is dependent on securing for right the greatest force, and this can obviously only be secured if the preponderance of force is in the hands of those who will aid the preponderance of right. Unless these two coincide, force had better not have been evoked.

A desperate attempt to save the situation is made by those who argue that the innate justice of a cause will lead to victory. This was formerly an illusion of the human race, and as long as it obtained, men could not be blamed for the use of war. It was an illusion—but it should be one no longer. Experience should have taught us by now that victory depends, in the main, on factors quite distinct from moral right, on military and economic factors. The old fallacy is due to the optimism of the human race, which, in spite of bitter and long-repeated experience, cannot bear to confess that the wrong conquers on so huge a scale ; to admit even a temporary victory for evil seems to many good people a blasphemy against the good ; they will not face the forces of evil and content themselves with a general belief that the good triumphs. But an eventual triumph of good may be hastened or retarded ; the point of human effort is to hasten it, and experience shows it can be retarded.

‘ But a deeper investigation, a more profound analysis—history herself, looking over a long vista of past time, affirms the eventual justice of the verdicts given by war.’

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Why then should history struggle so hard to investigate the rights and wrongs of famous wars, if it were not just that she doubts war's brutal verdict? No: the judgement of history is sometimes inconclusive, sometimes it modifies, rarely it affirms, often it contradicts, the judgement of victory, for the reflective mind of man is wiser than his action done in heat and passion. Men may say that they accept victory as judgement: but they are better than their word. Is the total and amazing victory of Prussia in 1866 and of Germany in 1870 to prove that there was no right whatever on the side of Austria or France? Is there nothing to be said for Poland? or for Jerusalem? History contradicts these harsh and untrue verdicts of war.

After all, a few moments' reflexion should show us that it is really impossible on our present system to guarantee that the nation which happens to be most in the right shall at that moment of its history have the best guns, the biggest population, the most money, and the ablest leaders. The benefit of war, as we know war, is in fact so questionable that the nations of Europe have shrunk from it recently in a way that is almost cowardly: again and again they have slurred over serious questions and even hideous crimes, rather than have recourse to it, and the actual outbreak, when it has come at last, has been due not so much to the deliberate purpose of a whole nation as to the chicanery of a group, or the effect of sheer chance on those vague emotional factors that are so hard to calculate and so potent when aroused. In our whole system, or lack of system, what is there to ensure that the preponderance of force between nations should be used on the right side? But to ensure that is our crying necessity.

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THE PREPONDERANCE OF FORCE TO AID THE GREATER RIGHT

This should be our aim, and to help us in it we need some system that will achieve, first, a real inquiry into the question where lies the greater right, and next, some practical means for securing the preponderance of force in accordance with that inquiry. We need, in short, an international court of justice and a police. Force is used successfully within the nation by the invention of the police, the police courts and Parliament, and its success depends upon the fact that the majority use their preponderance of power in accordance, on the whole, with the accepted principles of good order. To count on such success involves, no doubt, the assumption that most people want the world to be peaceful and orderly, and that they can agree on their fundamental conceptions of order and peace, but this is an assumption that the author, for one, has no hesitation in making.

No, it is objected, the police-force rests eventually on the sanction of martial law, the use of the police is only a mild form of martial law disguised. This is a fallacy : a fallacy that depends on the confusion between the normal life of the State, when there is, on the whole, an essential agreement throughout the mass of the people as to the fundamental principles of order, and the abnormal, dislocated, diseased condition of far-reaching civil strife when the State is as a house divided against itself. Such abnormal conditions do occasionally arise, and pacifists should bear them in mind, but within the nation they are now recognized as abnormal. The declaration of martial law by a modern Government is a confessed failure of government, and no one expects the failure to be

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permanent. No Englishman could tolerate the thought of living year in, year out, under martial law; the one subject which Parliament has debated with real vigour lately is the question of courts martial as against the civil courts, and here the instinct of the nation has plainly condemned martial law. Obviously modern government is largely by consent, and the idea that it rests on force alone is even more ludicrous and misleading than the view that there is no force in the world at all; where consent breaks down, modern governments are apt to be peculiarly helpless—witness the suffragettes. Therefore we need not despair of regulating and restricting the use of force between nations as within nations, even though we admit the possibility that from time to time martial law between them, as within them, may have to be proclaimed. We may hope much from the federation of States, and yet recognize that not even federation can guarantee universal peace. The American Civil War arose from a split within a federation. But we shall not do ill if martial law is used as seldom, in proportion, between nations as within their borders.

The use of the police, then, may be taken as our type, a peculiarly successful instance of government both by consent and by coercion; it involves both these principles. No system of government, national or international, will be successful, which does not look facts in the face, and the facts are just these: that neither persuasion nor force, taken alone, are at present sufficient instruments for adjusting human relationships: both are needed. It is on this fundamental principle that we trace a true, and not a false analogy between the lives of States and the lives of individuals. The condition of the civilized world will continue to be wrong until the

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true connexion between persuasion and force has been established in the system of States. The use of force must no longer be arbitrary and unregulated ; it must follow, one might say, automatically, after an investigation into rights and wrongs on principles of reason.

Now the investigation into rights and wrongs is not an easy thing. It requires :

1. Time.
2. Impartiality and disinterestedness of mind.
3. The judgement of more than one person, i.e. a community of minds.

In international affairs, at present, the first condition can be obtained only by self-control, helped by some such arrangement as the new treaty between America and England, imposing a year's interval between open disagreement and the recourse to war. But anything in the shape of an international trial might also give the required condition, 'for justice refuses to be hurried ; the delays of the law are sometimes all to the good. The second and third conditions can be obtained only by *an international tribunal of neutral nations*, and it is on these neutral nations that will rest the responsibility of imposing their decision, by force if necessary. Yet the use of international inquiry alone might experimentally precede the use of international tribunals backed by the sanction of an international police. It would be a great point gained if the nations would submit to inquiry, even without binding themselves absolutely to accept a legal verdict. (For this point and a discussion of the different degrees of international arbitration which are or might be acceptable see Professor Adams' pamphlet, *International Control*, in this series.) Again, the 'economic sanction', i.e. the cutting off of all supplies

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from the offending nation, will be a perfectly sound application of police principles, where circumstances allow it ; it may range from a moratorium, or closing of all Stock Exchanges against the offending country, to a blockade preventing the entry of food or anything else whatever. The threat of it should in many cases be sufficient. It is further clear that in cases of what might be called assault, action must be taken by the neutral Powers simultaneously against both parties, even if all the wrong seems for the moment to lie only with one party ; it is decidedly instructive to notice that in cases of individual assault the police insist that both parties should proceed to the police station, where a preliminary investigation is held. If it is objected that it is one thing to walk quietly to a police station, and another thing to face troops and guns, the answer is that a nation conscious of the rightness of its cause will not oppose the entry of the international police to occupy some strategic points in the country ; there can be no question of a violation of national sovereignty, such as at present makes even mobilization on the borders of a neighbouring country cause such frightful resentment and emotion ; for such a precautionary entry of the international force is 'without prejudice'—to use a lawyer's phrase—to the rightness of a cause. It is clear that the international police must undertake the duty of protecting an occupied country from the other side, and from a practical point of view it is essential to arrange for the quick mobilization of the international force. But we are taking for granted that the international force will be in deed and fact a preponderant one, and most of these problems are, if difficult, only problems of mechanism and ingenuity ; the wit of man

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has solved far more difficult things, and the increasing quickness of world communication is a distinct asset.

Whatever may be the practical arrangements evolved, their primary aim will be to secure opportunity for an impartial tribunal to hear the causes of the nations. Then indeed can force be used in the right way—then will the new Europe come to birth. But if the tribunal is to be impartial, it will be essential that the decisive voice should not rest with either of the disputing nations. They must plead only as accusers and accused, not as sole and final judges, a condition that has been hopelessly lacking in most of the disputes concerning the present war. If it be argued that this is to take a very low view of human nature, and that even those who are interested may give a just verdict, the answer is, alas! to be drawn from our human experience. The truly extraordinary trouble taken to exclude all interest from modern juries and modern judges speaks for itself, and we cannot, at any rate as yet, afford to disregard such evidence. At the same time it would be well not to confuse the two distinct qualities of impartiality and holiness. Holiness is an attribute of the Divine justice; no human judge is holy. England flagrantly violated the neutrality of Denmark in 1807; let us be quite clear about this and not gloss over the sin or assume a quality of holiness which we never can possess. True; yet England may be right in her accusation concerning the violation of Belgian neutrality, and the author, for one, counts it not idle to dream of a future when Germany herself shall bear a distinguished part in asserting the sacred rights of international law.

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CONCLUSION

The reasonable direction of force in the lives of nations, i.e. the use of international tribunals and international police, will not always be satisfactory, just as the verdicts of our present courts of justice are not always satisfactory. Yet it will be worth while to accept the unsatisfactory for the sake of the satisfactory. We sometimes rail against the law, yet we should do very ill without law.

The reasonable direction of force in the lives of nations will be inadequate, and yet by no means so criminally inadequate as that state of the nations in which they were unable or unwilling to prevent the Armenian massacres, the dismemberment of Poland, the disfranchisement of Finland, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the devastation of Belgium, and in which for years they had to condone the Congo horrors. Nevertheless, it is true, it will be inadequate. For when all is said and done, neither reason alone nor force alone, nor the reasonable application of force, will adequately deal with international relations. Situations between nations, as between men, will be insoluble except with the help of the first among the three instruments of living, the most potent of them all—love. Goodwill between nations is the indispensable preliminary to universal peace.