

## Unpublished Writings of Henry Dunant

*Jointly with the Editions de l'Age d'homme, Lausanne, the Henry Dunant Institute has published a remarkable book of which the first part is Henry Dunant's Un Souvenir de Solférino and the second part various texts written by Dunant between 1864 and about 1897 under the general heading L'avenir sanglant*<sup>1</sup>. A foreword by the Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont brings out the novelty of the ideas in L'avenir sanglant and their contrast with Un souvenir de Solférino. The aim of the latter was "to reduce the horrors of war" whilst the former, of a more violent style, denounces war. As this preface says, L'avenir sanglant reveals "without the shadow of a doubt, Dunant's real feelings which he could perhaps not admit—even to himself—when he started writing A Memory of Solférino".

*These extracts from Dunant's writings in an exercise book during his loneliness at Heiden, the rough draft of a book he intended to publish, have been chosen by the Henry Dunant Institute as the best reflection of Dunant's thoughts on war and peace. We therefore considered it of interest to reproduce some extracts*<sup>2</sup> *which so far were unknown and which express the anger of a good man at the dangers which he saw gathering on the horizon. (Ed.).*

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<sup>1</sup> *Un souvenir de Solférino* followed by *L'avenir sanglant*, 1969, 200 pp. Swiss francs 16.50 in bookshops. Members of the Red Cross may obtain it at Swiss francs 14.— direct from the Henry Dunant Institute, 3, rue de Varembe, 1202 Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> Our translation.

### **Fact and Prejudice**

Men think by tradition rather than personal conviction; as a result militarism, which should fill them with horror, shocks hardly anyone. We are all reluctant to face the truth because we subordinate our own judgment to that of the public and more often than not to that of our own circle of acquaintances "who stagnate in the short moment of the present". Yet someone did say "it is the instant which is judged, not the century"; and there is much truth in this. Yet, for posterity, the only impartial judge, the century is a very small thing.

There are few people who, by transcending their own point of view, can dissipate a mist which conceals the truth. A point of view is really always derived from inherited prejudice, from the ideas and habits we have been accustomed to from childhood.

For most people, war—with which they have little or no acquaintance—is the most beautiful thing in the world. They forget the shattered limbs and heads; they are unaware of typhus, disentry, fever and the sordid conditions in hospitals which are their corollary; they discount the ravaged fields, the fruit-trees felled, the burnt-out cottages, the ransacked towns, the formerly prosperous country-side laid waste for years, the inhabitants put to ransom, molested, ill-treated, and all the other crimes of brutality perpetrated by enraged soldiery. They give no thought to the suffering and privations endured during campaigns in the depth of winter or the burning heat of summer; they think not of frozen limbs, fatal sunstroke, famine, desolated families, populations in mourning, the disabled, families deprived of their bread-winners and the mothers who weep for those they raised with care, tenderness and sacrifice. Who can comfort these poor mothers whose sons have been taken from them and sacrificed to Minotaur? Yes, war takes the children from mothers, husbands from wives, separates fiancés and the old people from those they rely on. It is war which "for causes which are stupid, inexplicable, incomprehensible" pits man against man in fierce slaughter; men who had never harmed each other nor wished each other any harm, but snatched forcibly from honest work in order to kill each other.

### **The yoke of preconceived ideas**

Our real enemy is not our neighbouring country, it is hunger, cold, poverty, ignorance, routine, superstition, prejudice. What can be said of the spirit of violence and destruction in war which makes "every soldier a professional killer"? Instead of striving together against misery and ignorance, men encourage each other and struggle to outdo each other in blind national fury, in senseless bloodshed, in really bestial slaughter, and not only do they kill each other during these crises of fratricide but even in time of peace they devote themselves with special care to advancing the applied science of destruction.

With eyes open they concentrate their energies, intelligence and talents to achieve better methods of increasing and perfecting anything which produces the most atrocious human butchery.

The beginning of the century was a time of trouble and large-scale wars and it is sad to think that the end of the century seems destined to be even worse, a prey to a nightmare of bloodshed, for it is a time of great confusion in men's minds and the dilapidated world no longer has any faith in itself amongst the confusion in which part of humanity is floundering.

### **Future bloodshed**

Much has been said about glory, but now it is mentioned rather less; but preparations are greater, with hope of obtaining the greatest possible advantage from future slaughter, coldly and scientifically premeditated. A climate of mistrust and hate spreads wider and wider among people who profess a form of christianity which is far removed from the spirit of Christ. Today, from the Pyrenees to the Urals, Europe bristles with the bayonets of more than 22 million soldiers; and when the hour of conflict strikes, when the times comes for those waves of so-called chivalrous rages in which, like wild animals blinded by rage, the nations fall upon each other, with what tragic sights shall we be confronted? The large beasts will begin; the small ones will suffer. It will be a case

of destroy or be destroyed and once the beasts are set loose it cannot be otherwise. The belligerents in the fury which has several times broken out over several centuries, are again ready for a fight, for a fight in which no quarter will be given, and are set on bringing in the whole of Europe with them—perhaps the entire world—and precisely at a time when royalty, the churches and all man's institutions honoured for their antiquity threaten ruin, and behind them many see nothing but the valley of the shadows. Into this conflict most of the civilized nations, whether they want it or not, will be drawn; they will forget their brilliant but deceptive civilization and return to barbarity—scientific barbarity! And midst this gigantic conflict of races, none shall entirely escape the frightful consequences . . .

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