

Tolstoy argues that the traditional attempts to overcome evil by the opposing force have only increased the amount of suffering in the world, and advocates the attitude of ‘non-resistance to evil’ as the only viable alternative with profound spiritual significance. He explicitly identifies Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (e.g., Mathew 5:39) as the primary source of the doctrine of non-resistance, but the Indian notion of *ahimsa* (non-violence) is clearly one of the original inspirations as well. On Tolstoy’s interpretation, the essence of Christianity consists precisely in the moral teaching of universal love and passive non-resistance to evil in all circumstances. A consistent application of *neprotivlenie* policy, both in private life and on a political scale, would typically entail vegetarianism, an ascetic life-style, teetotalism, and extreme pacifism.

The notion of non-resistance as a basic life-attitude has found its most vehement critic in the figure of a philosopher Ivan Ilyin, who has published an important book, entitled “On Resistance to Evil by Force” (1925), with a thorough critical analysis of Tolstoy’s moral teachings. Among other things, Ilyin argues that, contrary to Tolstoy, the teaching of Christ is quite compatible with the policy of opposing the wrongdoers by active force.

Tolstoy’s advocacy of *neprotivlenie*, as an effective practical method of struggle against oppression, had a significant influence on several important political figures of the 20th century, including Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. In a somewhat modified form, Tolstoy’s *neprotivlenie* has also been adopted as a core ethical belief by several modern religious movements, such as *Doukhobors* (in Russia, and later in Canada), *Cao Đài* (in Vietnam), and *Itto-en* (in Japan). (Andrei Zavaliiy)

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