

## Open Letter to the President

September 25, 1962

Honorable John F. Kennedy  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

I DO NOT WANT TO DIE FROM STARVATION.

Eichman, Dukes, and Max Sandin: These three human beings were sentenced to pay their lives for the crimes they committed against their fellow human beings.

**No.1** — Everybody knows who Mr. Eichman was. He was sentenced to die for the killing of thousands of men, women and children. He was hanged.

**No.2** — from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Friday, August 24, 1962: “*Duke dies in the chair.*” James Duke, 37, paid with his life in the electric chair early Friday, August 24, 1962, for the murder of a policeman. The death penalty was exacted at the Cook County Jail after a last desperate series of legal moves and an 11th hour appeal to the Governor Kerner failed to win a stay of execution. Outside some 40 pickets protesting capital punishment marched in front of the Criminal Building near the Jail.” I was one of them.

We, the Peacemakers and the tax refusers had a conference in Chicago from August 19 to September 4, 1962. And we picketed the Cook County Jail where Mr. Dukes was waiting for a reply from Governor Kerner of Illinois on his appeal. The appeal was rejected and at 12:01 Friday, August 24th, he was electrocuted. We were on the picket line all day and all night on Thursday, the 23rd of August, 1962.

These two men were killed by the community because they KILLED.

**No.3** — Now, the third criminal who was sentenced to be shot was Mr. Max Sandin. His crime was HE REFUSED TO KILL.

*New York Times*, March 3, 1919: *Disapproval by President Wilson of the death sentence imposed by a military court-martial upon Private Max Sandin, a conscientious objector at Camp Funston, Kansas, was announced today by the War Department. A sentence of fifteen years was approved. Sandin was found guilty of having refused to obey an order of his superior officer to clean up a pile of refuse in the camp.*

Major General Leonard Wood, commanding at Camp Funston at the time of the trial, recommended that the sentence be commuted to confinement at hard labor for twenty five years, in a view of the fact that at the present time the ends of discipline of this command do not demand the execution of the extreme penalty.”

As a Conscientious Objector, I refused to kill my fellow human beings. It was more than to clean up a pile of refuse. It was to kill. Here, here are two men who were sentenced to be killed because they killed, and I was sentenced because I refuse to kill.

In the First World War, I refused to kill with bullets and eventually was released from prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where I had been sent for 15 years... I refused to kill my fellow man with dollars to pay hired soldiers to kill. I refuse to pay income tax because about 70-80% goes for killing.

In the Second World War, I was one of the overaged, less than 65 years old who refused to register. I was arrested but was not prosecuted.

For about 19 years I refused to pay war taxes and was not arrested and had no trial. But now on August 1, 1961, at 72 years of age, I received a notice from the Social Security Administration that the Internal Revenue Service had attached my monthly payments, \$116 a month and also \$35 a month of my Painters Union Pension Fund. This was the only income I had to live on. The United States Government does not shoot Conscientious Objectors but they starve them to death.

On August 1, 1961, I received a notice from the Social Security Administration:

*Dear Mr. Sandin:*

*In Compliance with a notice of Levy issued by the Internal Revenue Service of the Treasury Department under Section 6311, Internal Revenue Code of 1954, your social security benefit for July 1961 has been surrendered to Internal Revenue Service. If you have any questions with regard to this action, you should contact the local office of the Internal Revenue Service.*

*Sincerely yours,  
(Signed) Joseph J. Tighe  
Chief, Payment Center*

In 1961 I went into the United States Treasury Department to do a sit in and hunger strike. I was arrested and put in the Psychiatric Ward of the Washington General Hospital for 30 days observation. On September 11, 1961, I had a hearing and was released as a SANE and healthy person.

The result was that the Internal Revenue Service started to send me my Social Security Checks every month. They also attached my Painters Union Pension of \$31 a month. One month I received Social Security of \$116 and the next month \$31 from the Painters Pension Fund. Now, since June 1962, I have not received any check.

I do not want to die yet. But if the government wants to starve me, I will do my best to help it out — by your taking away my food.

As a Conscientious Objector and Pacifist I do believe in direct action and in Non-Violence. I will not do action as Mr. Eatherly the pilot who bombed Hiroshima. He only obeyed orders, but when he saw the results, his conscience did not give any rest, so he committed a few criminal acts in order to get punishment for his deeds and was sent to prison as a mental patient.

But my conscience does not bother me. I refused to obey orders to kill. But my punishment is unbelievable. In 1918 I was sentenced to be shot only. But in 1961, I was sentenced to starve. You, Mr. President, ordered others to grab my social security also a pension from the Painters Union where I have been a member for 52 years. I have nothing against the Internal Revenue clerks for they only obey orders. That was the alibi of the Nazis under Hitler, I do not want to die as a martyr: or, as a college professor said to me once, "You are not the first to die for the people: 2000 years ago, another man was crucified for preaching peace. He was called: "The Prince of Peace."

Mr. President, yes, I am now 73 years old and I want to live more and more. I want back my Social Security and my Painters Union checks for which I have paid since 1937. I Hope that your conscience will be your guide, because I am not asking for mercy or pardon.

Please: Do not commit murder.

Max Sandin  
Washington 10 D.C