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**CONTENTS Vol. VII, No. 9**

<b>Editorials</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>American and Soviet Policy on Cuba</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>A. J. Muste</b>
<b>Mississippi Muddle</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>The Editors</b>
<b>Courage for the New Age</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Barbara Deming</b>
<b>Nonviolent Action for Survival</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>April Carter</b>
<b>The Man in Orbit Show</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Theodore Roszak</b>
<b>False Alert (poem)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Walter Lowenfels</b>
<b>The Poet as Radar System (review)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Robert Anton Wilson</b>
<b>Gaels and Eskimos (review)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Robert Gustafson</b>
<b>The Glorious Revolution (poem)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>David Oettinger</b>

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## Acknowledgements

*I am grateful to my comrades in the Schools for Non-Violence for deciding to reprint my contributions to ANARCHY 13 and 14, and I am glad to have had this opportunity of revising them. I have tried to put the two articles together into a single argument, and I have also removed some dead wood, corrected some mistakes, and added some new material I have found during the last year. I haven't tried to give any account of recent non-violent resistance movements outside this country, because I don't have enough knowledge or space.*

*I should like to express my gratitude to many other people as well—to Vernon Richards, Colin Ward, Alfred Reynolds, and Ralph Samuel, who gave me the original opportunities to write about the unilateralist movement in FREEDOM, ANARCHY, the LONDON LETTER, and NEW LEFT REVIEW, and let me use material first published by them; to Colin Ward again, who has always given me unlimited time and invaluable help; to Hugh and Eileen Brock, who let me go through the back-numbers of PEACE NEWS; to April Carter, who took the trouble to point out some of my mistakes; to Alex Comfort and Colin MacInnes, who have helped me more than they know; to Dennis Gould and Ann Davidson, who have done the work on this pamphlet; to all my friends in the Committee of 100 and the London Federation of Anarchists, who have never hesitated to encourage me or discourage me, as the case may be; to my wife, Ruth, who has made everything worth while; and to Helen Allegranza, who lives in our memory.*

April, 1963.

N.W.

*We are grateful to Colin Johnson for the cover photograph, taken (in Whitehall) during the Committee of 100's CUBA demonstration in October 1962.*

D.G.

information :

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**Nonviolent Resistance**

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## Preface

### Nonviolent Resistance

Between the Wethersfield Demonstration and the Wethersfield—Official Secrets—Trial of the Committee of 100 members, Nicolas Walter wrote two articles for *Anarchy on Direct Action and the New Pacifism* and *Civil Disobedience and the New Pacifism*. These two essays had far too little circulation. Some supporters of Nonviolent Resistance to the institutions supporting nuclear violence and other forms of violence (for example, the State) decided to ask the author to compile his essays into one. We hope the result will help readers to develop their own ideas about Nonviolent Resistance.

The military, nation State is exemplified by France with its paratroopers of unlimited ruthlessness and authority shown towards the Algerians. In the book *Torture: Cancer of Democracy* by Pierre Vidal-Naquet one sees the acceptance of torture, throughout the ranks, as a weapon to be used against the Algerians (civilians as well as the nationalist army, F.L.N.).

The campaign against torture had raised problems far wider than the Algerian question. It is not the police, nor even the Army, which was in the dock. It was the State itself, in its modern capacity as the guiding force of modern society . . . page 149.

*Torture: Cancer of Democracy.*

Substitute *nuclear weapons* for *torture*, and *disarmament* for *Algerian*, and one has the same dilemma. The State supports the use of weapons for mass destruction—nuclear, chemical, biological, conventional—whatever the party in power. For the State and the party in power rely, finally, on the military. Therefore, are we to support parliament? Can we support parliament, with its violent legislation? Every State which has weapons of mass power is totalitarian military-wise. Now we must recognise that our “enemy” is within our own society. It is not only Russian and American Military States that are to be feared, but our own military-economic structure. The *Peace News* editorial of December 28th (1962) commented aptly:

Democracy went out of the window when the H-bomb came in at the door.

As writers in the American monthly *Liberation* have stressed, those who support Nonviolent Action and Civil Disobedience are “nonviolent revolutionaries”. For Nonviolent Action is revolutionary. Put in this perspective it is easier to grasp why one cannot support an institution which ultimately relies on the weapons and ideas one is directly opposing. To give an example, if one goes to Wethersfield Air base and takes part in Nonviolent Action against the base and its purpose, it is contradictory, then, to return to London and vote for parliamentary action which one denies by the Nonviolent Resistance to the State’s purpose. That is, of defending itself through police, military, civil service and parliament.

The nuclear disarmament and anti-war movements are now looking for more creative ways of expressing their ideas. Ways which allow a fuller commitment than just the odd public demonstration. So the Factory project for Peace, the convenor of which is an active Scottish Committee of 100 member-supporter. So the increased concern about Housing and the lack of community welfare.

C.N.D., nationally, is losing ground to the government with a *steps to peace* policy. This was directed to government rather than to people, and it seems C.N.D. has forgotten why it came into existence . . . to win over people, not government. The very reason for American, Canadian, French, German, Swiss, Danish, Scandinavian *unilateralist* movements is because they know their governments will not be swayed by any British decision

to “give up” the bomb; though they know they will be encouraged, and their supporters will be encouraged by such a decision—when it has come about through the people of the British Isles taking up unilateralism! Which is international and revolutionary.

The Committee of 100 Working-Groups are now establishing themselves within their local communities. Civil Disobedience is now recognised as a means of Direct Action. But Nonviolent Action and Nonviolent Resistance to Civil Government need greater understanding yet. In order to reach the minds of many open to fresh thought, especially young people who see violence as just a stepping stone to greater violence, this pamphlet is being published. We shall be happy to send out further copies on request. If you can afford to send a donation so that we can publish further pamphlets and send speakers to meetings all over the country (to your group), this will be very practical help, and appreciated. But overall we would prefer that you began a Working-Group to investigate and study Nonviolent Resistance, and eventually plan your own action in your own locality.

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## Nonviolent Resistance

### MEN AGAINST WAR

by NICOLAS WALTER

We know from Aristotle's *Politics*, written in the first dawn of Western political thought, that "man is by nature a political animal". That is, men want to rule and to be ruled. They are *authoritarian*, obsessed with power and obedience and slavery and inequality and competition and pain and hatred. But, as Oscar Wilde said in *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891), "wherever there is a man who exercises authority, there is a man who resists authority". For men also want to rebel. They are *libertarian*, obsessed with freedom and disobedience and liberty and equality and fraternity and pleasure and love. The motto of the ruler is *Befehl ist Befehl*. The motto of the rebel is *Non serviam*.

The myths of Prometheus and Lucifer, of the revolt of the small against the great, are some of the oldest and finest of all. Adam's first action (even before he "knew" Eve) was to disobey his creator. Nor is mythological disobedience mere nihilism. Prometheus brought fire to the earth, Lucifer brought light; Adam ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and he did not die, as God had threatened, but his eyes were opened. "Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history", said Oscar Wilde, "is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion."

### Disobedience

According to *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". That is, haves try to remain haves and have-nots try to become haves. But there are two factors which confuse the simple issue of revolution. One is that many have-nots accept inequality, and many haves accept equality. The great majority of men are willing slaves—they must be, or they wouldn't be slaves. The great majority of revolutionary leaders, on the other hand, begin with all sorts of advantages of birth, wealth, education, or luck. Marx and Engels, Bakunin and Kropotkin, nearly all such men were haves who turned their coats. (Prometheus and Lucifer were not men—one was a Titan, and the other was an Angel.)

The other confusing factor is that the revolt against a present inequality usually intends not so much to destroy it as to replace it by a future inequality based on a different principle—to expropriate the expropriators—and even without this intention the result is the same. Every revolution is "betrayed", even if it has no Eighteenth Brumaire, simply because power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Commonwealth of 1649 is followed by the Protectorate of 1653, the Declaration of Rights by the Reign of Terror, the February Revolution by the October Revolution, the new dawn by the new darkness at noon. The classless society never comes, the State never withers away. "Revolution is the most authoritarian thing imaginable", said Engels.

Gustav Landauer, the German anarcho-socialist, developed a remarkable theory of revolution in his book *The Revolution* (1907), which has unfortunately never been translated into English. The core of his theory is as follows:

Revolution concerns every aspect of human life—not just the State, the class-structure, industry and commerce, arts and letters, education and learning,

but a combination of all these social factors which is at a given moment in a state of relative stability. This general combination of social factors in a state of relative stability I will call the *topia*.

The *topia* is the source of wealth as well as hunger, of housing as well as homelessness. The *topia* rules all the details of human existence. It fights wars abroad, it exports and imports goods, it opens and closes frontiers. The *topia* encourages intelligence as well as stupidity, good behaviour as well as bad, happiness as well as unhappiness, satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction. The strong hand of the *topia* is felt even where it does not belong, in the private life of the individual and the family . . .

The relative stability of the *topia* gradually changes until it reaches a point of delicate equilibrium. This change in the stability of the *topia* is caused by the *utopia*. The *utopia* belongs by nature not so much to social as to personal life. It is the combination of individual efforts and wishes which usually exist singly and separately, but which in a moment of crisis and under the influence of intoxicating enthusiasm can unite and organise themselves into a whole, into a form of social life, with the purpose of creating a perfect *topia* which will have no unpleasant or unjust factors at all.

But the *utopia* leads to a new *topia*, which is essentially different from the old *topia*, but is still a *topia*.

From this, Landauer derived the "first law of revolution", which is that "every *topia* is followed by a *topia*, which is followed by a *utopia*, and so on", and he went on to define revolution:

Revolution is the period between the end of the old *topia* and the beginning of the new *topia*. It is therefore the path from one *topia* to the next, from one relative stability to another, through chaos and revolt, individualism, heroism and bestiality, the loneliness of the great and the total disappearance of the atom in the mass.

It is hardly surprising to learn that Landauer was killed during the collapse of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919, when a *utopia* turned back into a *topia*.

A similar idea was developed by the Russian writer Yevgeni Zamyatin, the author of the anti-Bolshevik novel *We*. In 1925 he confessed that he was no longer a Bolshevik, and a few months before he had written a remarkable essay *On Literature, Revolution & Entropy* (1924):

Revolution is everywhere and in all things; it is infinite, there is no final revolution, no end to the sequence of integers. Social revolution is only one in the infinite sequence of integers. The law of revolution is not a social law, it is immeasurably greater—it is a cosmic, universal law, such as the law of the conservation of energy and the law of the loss of energy, or entropy . . . Red, fiery, death-dealing is the law of revolution; but that death is the birth of a new life, of a new star. And cold, blue as ice, as the icy interplanetary infinities, is the law of entropy. The flame turns from a fiery red to an even, warm pink, no longer death-dealing but comfort-producing. The sun ages and becomes a planet suitable for highways, shops, bed, prostitutes, prisons—that is a law. And in order to make the planet young again, we must set it on fire, we must thrust it off the smooth highway of evolution—that too is a law.

But infinite revolution needs an infinite number of revolutionaries.

Explosions are not comfortable things. That is why the exploders, the heretics, are quite rightly annihilated by fire, by axes, and by words. Heretics are harmful to everybody today, to every evolution, to the difficult, slow, useful—so very useful—constructive process of coral reef building. Imprudently and foolishly they leap into today from tomorrow. They are romantics . . . It is right and proper that heretical literature, literature that is damaging to dogma, should have its head cut off—such literature is harmful. But harmful literature is more useful than useful literature, because it militates against calcification, sclerosis, encrustation, moss, peace. It is ridiculous and utopian . . . Ideas which feed on minced meat lose their teeth

just as civilised men do. Heretics are necessary to health. If there are no heretics, they have to be invented.

This is what Alex Comfort meant when he turned Marx on his head: "The war is not between classes . . . The war for freedom is a war against society . . . Revolution is not a single act, it is an unending process based upon individual disobedience". This is what Max Stirner meant when in *The Ego & His Own* (1845) he distinguished between revolution and insurrection: "Revolution aims at new arrangements—insurrection aims not at any new arrangements of ourselves but at arrangements by ourselves". And this is what Albert Camus meant when in *The Rebel* (1951) he distinguished between revolution and rebellion: "The claim of rebellion is unity, the claim of revolution is totality . . . One is creative, the other is nihilist . . . Instead of killing and dying to create what we are not, we should live and let live to create what we are."

The revolutionary goal is liberty, equality, and fraternity, but the revolutionary way leads straight to slavery, inequality, and misery. The idea of libertarian revolution—of rebellion or insurrection—is that there is no distinction between ends and means, because *means are ends*. Revolution simply overturns the State, rebellion and insurrection overthrow it. The libertarian revolution is permanent protest, permanent disobedience, refusing assent to superiors without demanding it from inferiors, the *utopia* without any *topia*.

This idea of revolution lies at the centre of what Alex Comfort in his *Art & Social Responsibility* (1942) called the "ideology of romanticism". This ideology is based on the conviction "that the common enemy of man is death, that the common tie of man is victimhood, and that anyone who in attempting to escape the realisation of that victimhood in himself increases its incidence upon others, is a traitor to humanity and an ally of death". Thus "the romantic has only two basic certainties—the certainty of irresolvable conflict which cannot be won but must be continued, and the certainty that there exists between all human beings who are involved in this conflict an indefeasible responsibility to one another. The romantic has two enemies, death, and the obedient who by conformity to power and irresponsibility ally themselves with death".

In his lecture on *Politics as a Vocation* (1918), the German sociologist Max Weber distinguished between the "ethic of ultimate ends" and the "ethic of responsibility". I would deny this distinction. I would say that the way and the goal are one—that "he who would do good to another", in Blake's words, "must do it in minute particular"—and that there is no one more irresponsible than the so-called "responsible" people who have the Bomb, and no one more responsible than the so-called "irresponsible" people who resist the Bomb in the name of ultimate ends. I would go back to what Alex Comfort said in *The Pattern of the Future* (1949):

Responsibility to our fellow men as individuals transcends all other allegiances—to local groups, to nations, to political parties. All these subsidiary allegiances, which are so numerous, are substitutes for human beings . . .

For us as individuals, the only immediate defence against official delinquency lies in our own action. The concentration camps and the atom bombs are the fantasies of psychopaths. They become realities when other individuals are ready to acquiesce in them, to guard them, to make them, and to use them . . .

There is no tyranny which is independent of its public. There is no delinquent policy in any contemporary culture which could be carried out in the face of sufficiently widespread public resistance . . . There is one revolution we can all produce at once, in the privacy of our own homes. We may not be able to prevent atrocities by other people, but we can at least decline to commit

them ourselves . . . this revolution is something no party or government is going to do for you. You have to do it yourself, beginning tomorrow.

This takes us straight back to Henry David Thoreau, the American writer. Thoreau was so unpolitical that he preferred to live completely alone, but he had nothing to learn about the realities of politics. He refused to pay his poll-tax to a State which was maintaining slavery and was fighting a war of conquest, and he was imprisoned in the town jail at Concord, Massachusetts, for his pains. His reflections on that experience, which he put into a lecture called *Resistance to Civil Government* (1848)—though it is usually known as *The Duty of Civil Disobedience*—are a classic text of libertarian revolution:

It is not a man's duty as a matter of course to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him. But it is his duty at least to wash his hands of it, and if he gives it no thought longer not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see at least that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders . . . What I have done is to see at any rate that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

Yes, says the conventional dissenter, but why break the law? Why not get it changed?

Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavour to amend them and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? . . . Under a government which imprisons any unjustly the true place for a just man is also a prison . . . As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something.

Thoreau wasn't an anarchist. He agreed with Jefferson's motto, "That government is best which governs least", and with its corollary, "That government is best which governs not at all". But he added: "To speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for not at once no government but at once a better government". Nevertheless, the implications of his deeds and his words alike are purely anarchic, and no anarchist would deny his judgement of his self-righteous, law-abiding fellow-citizens:

I think we should be men first, and subjects afterwards . . . I quarrel not with far-off foes, but with those who near at home co-operate with and do the bidding of those far away and without whom the latter would be harmless . . . There are thousands who are *in opinion* opposed to slavery and to the war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them . . . They hesitate, and they regret, and sometimes they petition, but they do nothing in earnest and with effect. They will wait, well disposed, for others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret. At most, they give only a cheap vote and a feeble countenance and god-speed to the right as it goes by them. There are 999 patrons of virtue to one virtuous man . . . Even voting for the right is *doing* nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail . . . How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it? . . . Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight.

And anyone who has spent only a few hours in jail after a unilateralist demonstration will recognise Thoreau's reaction to his single night inside:

I saw that if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they

could get to be as free as me . . . I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was as timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it . . . I saw more distinctly the State in which I lived. I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbours and friends—that their friendship was for summer weather only, that they did not greatly propose to do right . . . I think sometimes, "Why, these people mean well, they are only ignorant, they would do better if they knew how—why give your neighbours this pain to treat you as they are not inclined to?" But I think again, "This is no reason why I should do as they do, or permit others to suffer much greater pain of a different kind".

It is easy to think of Thoreau's disobedience as inner-directed, as a form of conscientious objection; but he certainly thought of it as other-directed, as a form of propaganda by deed. Remember that he read his lecture to the very fellow-citizens he despised. He was an individualist and a transcendentalist first and a man of action afterwards, but all the same he wanted to improve society, and he did what he could. More, he called for other people to follow his example. "Any man more right than his neighbours constitutes a majority of one", he declared; and "if one honest man in this State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America." And Thoreau was one of the few people who spoke out for John Brown when he withdrew from the co-partnership and defied the State of Virginia at Harper's Ferry in October 1859, and was hanged therefor—John Brown, whose body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on, and the abolition of slavery in America came in less than three years.

It may seem surprising that a gentle person such as Thoreau should support a violent person such as John Brown. Not so, as you can see in Thoreau's own words:

If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is in fact the definition of a peaceful revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer or any other public officer asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office". When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

The same sort of attitude may be found in another gentle person, the English novelist E. M. Forster, who coined the motto *Only connect*. Just before the last War, he wrote an essay called *What I Believe* (1939). "I do not believe in Belief", he began. "I have, however, to live in an Age of Faith", he went on, "and I have to keep my end up in it. Where do I start? With personal relationships". And he went on to make his confession:

I hate the idea of causes, but if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country . . . Probably one will not be asked to make such an agonising choice. Still, there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard, for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbane and mild though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of a State. When they do—down with the State, say I, which means that the State would down me.

Forster isn't an anarchist either, though his creed of "personal relationships" is no distance at all from Kropotkin's principle of "mutual aid". He expresses some support for democracy ("two cheers for democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism") and some for aristocracy:

Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky . . . They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos . . . an invincible army, yet not a victorious one . . . All words that describe them are false, and all attempts to organise them fail . . . The Saviour of the future—if he ever comes—will not preach a new Gospel. He will merely utilise my aristocracy, he will make effective the good will and the good temper which are already existing. In other words he will introduce a new technique.

And this leads on to what Herbert Read said at the end of the last War, in *The Politics of the Unpolitical* (1945):

The world is waiting for a new faith—especially the youth of the world is waiting for a new faith. The old institutions, the old parties, are dead at the roots: they receive no refreshment. The young men and women stand apart, indifferent, inactive. But do not let us mistake their indifference for apathy, their inactivity for laziness. Intellectually, they are very wide awake. But they have rejected our abstract slogans and the hollow institutions in which old men gibber about freedom, democracy and culture. They don't want freedom if it means the freedom to exploit their fellow-men: they don't want democracy if it means the ridiculous bagmen of Westminster: they don't want culture if it means the intellectual dope of our academies and universities . . . They want a world that is morally clean and socially just, naturally productive and aesthetically beautiful. And they know they won't get it from any of the existing parties, from any of the existing political systems. They hate fascism, they recoil from communism, and they despise democracy. They are groping towards a new faith, a new order, a new world. They are not a party and never will be a party: they have no name and will perhaps never have a name. But they will act, and onto the ruins of war they will cast the tarnished baubles and stale furnishings of those parliaments which brought death and despair to two successive generations of young men.

At the end of the last War, too, Alex Comfort wrote its obituary in *The End of a War* (1945):

This war has not been unique. Its lesson is identical with the lesson of every previous war. The record of it is the record of the incredible, somnambulant heroism of the people of both sides, and the corruption and duplicity of their governments. The outcome of it has been the same outcome as in every previous war—the peoples have lost it . . . Yet the war has been unique in one respect. It has shown as never before that society is the enemy of man—not one economic form of society, capitalist or socialist, but all irresponsible society—and that in peace as in war *the only final safeguard of freedom is the ultimate willingness of the individual to disobey* . . .

Barbarian society is rooted today in obedience, conformity, conscription, and the stage has been reached at which, in order to live, you have to be an enemy of society . . . The choice is not between socialism and fascism but between life and obedience. Every atrocity of the war was the direct consequence of somebody obeying when he should have thought. We have to learn the lesson of resistance, evasion, disappearance, which the occupation taught the people of France . . . I hope so to instruct my sons that they will give the recruiting agent the one reply he merits—a good eyeful of spit . . . War is a two-headed penny, and the only way to treat it is to sling it back at those who offer it to you . . . It will be a new just cause next time, and when they begin to say, "Look, injustice!" you must reply, "Whom do you want me to kill?" . . .

You can abolish firing-squads only by refusing to serve in them, by ramming the rifle down the throat of the man who offers it to you if you wish—not by forming a firing-squad to execute all other firing-squads. We cannot salvage society by obeying it: we cannot defend the bad against the worse . . . Armed revolution can succeed, but armed revolution, being based on power, has never succeeded in producing anything but tyranny . . .

The *maquis* of the war may allow themselves to be reabsorbed into the structure of citizenship. We will be the *maquis* of the peace . . . Up till now, it has been an article of pride among English politicians that the public would shove its head into any old noose they might show it—unflinching, steadfast patriotism, unshakable morale—obedience and direct action. *We are going to alter that* . . . When enough people respond to the invitation to die not with a salute but with a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war empties the factories and fills the streets, we may be able to talk about freedom.

This must be our aim. We must be revolutionaries, but we must remember what Bart de Ligt said in 1937: "The more violence, the less revolution". We must be agitators, and remember what Oscar Wilde said in 1891: "Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community and sow the seeds of discontent among them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance towards civilisation". And we must be utopians and remember what Oscar Wilde said again: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there it looks out and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias".

But how?

## Anti-Militarism

There are two obvious ways of rebelling against war—a mutiny by those who fight, or a strike by those whose work supports those who fight.

In fact mutineers have usually protested against their low standard of living rather than against their low way of life, against those who give them their orders to kill rather than against the orders themselves. Mutiny is anyway a rebellion of armed men, and armed men don't disarm themselves (see *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*). A soldier, said Swift, is "a yahoo hired to kill", and once he has let himself be hired (or conscripted) to kill it is hard for him to stop killing and start being a man again. If he does, he immediately ceases to be a soldier, and his protest is no longer mutiny. True, soldiers are often the most resolute of pacifists, *after* they get out of uniform. "If my soldiers learnt to think", said Frederick the Great, "not one would remain in the ranks". But soldiers are carefully taught *not* to think, and a soldier who begins to think is on the way to discharge. Mutiny only works when it involves thousands of men, as it did in Russia, Germany and France at the end of the First World War; and then it is often the beginning of civil war.

But the mutiny of the soldier is an interesting model of disobedience, just as the discipline of the soldier is an interesting model of obedience. A soldier is an ordinary citizen, only more so. This point was well understood by Thoreau:

A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay against their common sense and consciences, which makes it

very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now what are they—men at all? or small moveable forts and magazines at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? . . . The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, gaolers, constables, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses or dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens.

A strike against war seems more feasible than a mutiny. The working classes aren't committed to war or subjected to military discipline, and they have a long tradition of strike action against their superiors. But the hard fact is that the Left—socialist, communist, and anarchist—has a shocking war record. People who are quite willing to strike against their employers for higher pay are less willing to strike against their rulers for peace. Most wartime strikes have been intended not to stop the war but to stop rulers and employers using the war as an excuse to increase discipline or decrease wages. Even when a strike is against a war, it is almost always against that particular war, not against *all* war; and even when it really is against all war, it is almost always against *national* war and not against *civil* war as well (or *vice versa*). But war is only a name for organised mass violence, and a vertical war between social classes is just as much a war as a horizontal war between national states. Nevertheless, left-wing disapproval of horizontal war is usually in direct proportion to approval of vertical war. The man who won't fight the enemy abroad will fight the enemy at home. When it comes to the point the Left will fight as willingly as the Right, and as often as not they fight on the same side. Even people who oppose the use of violence in theory resort to the use of violence in practice, and no one who accepts the use of violence really rejects war. "All men desire peace", said Thomas à Kempis, "but very few desire those things which make for peace".

The strongest opponents of war on the Left used to be the anti-militarists who, before 1914, were close to (or the same as) the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists as well as the extreme socialists. The proclaimed weapon of the anti-militarists was the general strike against war, but in the event this proved to be as much of a myth as the general strike described by Georges Sorel—except that Sorel *meant* his to be mythical. Not only moderate leaders like Bebel, Jaurès and Keir Hardie, but even the really determined anti-militarists deceived themselves as well as their followers, and were genuinely surprised when the Labour Movement first let the First World War begin *and then joined it*. Only a few hard-headed realists such as Gustav Landauer and Tom Keell realised the true weakness of left-wing anti-militarism, and no one imagined that formerly passionate anti-militarists such as Gustave Hervé and Benito Mussolini would actually *lead* the Labour Movement into the war effort.

In fact anti-militarists have had little *anti-militarist* influence on the official or unofficial Labour Movement, whatever other influence they have had, and the little influence they have melts away to nothing when the political temperature rises and *la patrie est en danger*. Consider Keir Hardie and George Lansbury and Aneurin Bevan in this country alone. For all the fine talk at peacetime conferences and all the big demonstrations at times of crisis, most social democrats become social patriots when the blast of war blows in their ears, and even the few who refuse to take up oars

with the rest also refuse to rock the boat. "The lads who have gone forth by sea and land to fight their country's battles", said Keir Hardie a few days after the beginning of the First World War, "must not be disheartened by any discordant note at home". And while Bevan opposed the conduct of the Second World War, he never opposed the war itself.

Among socialists, only the Marxists stood firm in 1870, and even Marx thought Bismark was fighting a "defensive" war. Only the extreme Marxists and some other left-wing socialists stood firm again in 1914; and of course the Marxists began fighting furiously four years later. In 1939 only a very few very extreme socialists still stood firm, and the Marxists made themselves thoroughly ridiculous. The anarchist record is better, but many sincere and loyal comrades followed Kropotkin in 1914 and Rudolf Rocker in 1939 when on two separate occasions the best-known anarchist leader split the anarchist movement by supporting a world war.

But even if all the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists and left-wing socialists *had* stood firmly by their anti-militarist convictions, war would still have come in 1870 and 1914 and 1939. For militarism is stronger than anti-militarism, nationalism is stronger than internationalism, conformism is stronger than non-conformism, obedience is stronger than disobedience—and never more so than at the end of a war crisis. A general strike against war before the State has contracted the war fever is difficult enough; a general strike against war *after* the State has succumbed is almost impossible. If the Left is reluctant to challenge the State when the circumstances are all favourable, how much more reluctant will it be when the circumstances are all completely *unfavourable*? Once the State is down with the fever, it is *already too late* to protest or demonstrate or strike, because the fever is so infectious that the people catch it before anyone realises what has happened; and when war breaks out at last, it comes as a relief, like vomiting after nausea.

The problem is one of timing. Randolph Bourne, the American liberal pragmatist whose observation of the First World War drove him to anarchist pacifism, poverty, disease and death, pointed out in his brilliant unfinished essay on *The State* (1918) that "it is States which make war on each other, and not peoples"; but "the moment war is declared, the mass of the people, through some spiritual alchemy, become convinced that they have willed and executed the deed themselves"—with the result that "the slack is taken up, the cross-currents fade out, the nation moves lumberingly and slowly, but with ever-accelerated speed and integration, towards the great end", towards "that peacefulness of being at war" (a phrase he took from L. P. Jacks, the English unitarian). Bourne didn't belong to the Labour Movement, but he had far more insight into the relationship of war with society and the State than the anti-militarists who did. "*War is the health of the State*. It automatically sets in motion throughout society those irresistible forces for uniformity, for passionate co-operation with the Government in coercing into obedience the minority groups and individuals which lack the larger herd sense." For war isn't just against foreigners. "The pursuit of enemies within outweighs in psychic attractiveness the assault on the enemy without. The whole terrific force of the State is brought to bear against the heretics". Of course, "the ideal of perfect loyalty, perfect uniformity, is never really attained"; but "the nation in wartime attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any other agency than war", and "a people at war have become in the most literal sense obedient, respectful, trustful children again". Nor are the working classes immune to "this regression



to infantile attitudes"; and "into the military enterprise they go, not with those hurrahs of the significant classes whose instincts war so powerfully feeds, but with the same apathy with which they enter and continue in the industrial enterprise". People whose highest ambition is to capture the State for themselves can't really be expected to destroy it in its hour of need.

Few of us can sneer at this, or evade Auden's description of the *Unknown Citizen*:

*When there was peace, he was for peace.  
When there was war he went.*

We are all for peace now. How many of us would still be for peace if war came? But the question has become academic. We'll all go together when we go, next time. The choice has been forced back so that we have to make it now, *before* war comes. In the past we had to decide not to become war criminals. Today we have to decide to become peace criminals, or else become war criminals by default. We have to be prisoners of our own side (like the Good Soldier Schweik), and spies against our own side (like Our Man in Havana). Those who were anti-militarists once have to go further now, and become pacifists.

## Pacifism

*Thou shalt not kill* was a religious command, and pacifism began as a religious or quasi-religious doctrine. A condemnation of individual retaliation appears in most "higher" religions and philosophies—non-resistance in Christianity, non-violence in Indian religion, non-assertion in Chinese Taoism, non-injury in Socratic philosophy. The power of apparent weakness over apparent strength, of right over might, of life over death, is illustrated in every mythology—David and Goliath or Daniel in the Lions' Den, Rama and Ravana or Gautama and Mara, the Battle of Marathon or the Battle of Britain, Horatius on the Bridge or a schoolboy's voice saying *Play up, play up and play the game*, Jack the Giant-Killer or Thurber's Termite.

The difference is that Jesus and Gautama and Lao-tze and Socrates made non-retaliation a moral command rather than just the moral to a story. But it was only *individual* non-retaliation—the State still had to punish offenders at home and fight enemies abroad. And there were personal inconsistencies—Jesus would not resist evil, but he drove the money-changers from the Temple by force; Socrates would not fight the Athenian State which condemned him, but he fought in the Athenian army; Marcus Aurelius as a philosopher was a pious Stoic, but as a Roman Emperor he was a persecutor of Christians and a campaigner against barbarians; Ashoka was converted to Buddhism and renounced war, but he kept his conquests and ruled India as firmly as before.

The contradiction between the known wrongness and the continued practice of violence is usually rationalised by the assertion that life in this world is either evil or illusory; so that either you have to do bad things for good reasons, or else it doesn't really matter what you do anyway. Followers of non-violent systems in theory tend in practice to make life tolerable by treating their more difficult beliefs as counsels of perfection, or to withdraw from life into asceticism or quietism or complete indifferentism. These tendencies are of course greatly reinforced if a religion or philosophy is established by the State. "Every Church", said Tolstoy, "excludes the

doctrine of Christ". This point was not quite understood by Thoreau. He wondered why the State did not "cherish its wise minority", and asked: "Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?" The "no-government men" could have told him that.

The story of pacifism is in fact the story of the way saints and heretics defended the doctrine of Christ against the Church. The early Christians, who were themselves saints and heretics, took non-resistance seriously. It is well-known that many of them refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods and were therefore martyred; it is less well-known that many of them similarly refused to bear arms in the Roman legions and were therefore martyred as well. Roland Bainton states in his book on *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (1960) that "the early Church was pacifist to the time of Constantine". But this naturally changed at the beginning of the fourth century, when Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire—when, said the Spanish humanist, Luis Vives, "Constantine entered the house of Christ with the Devil at his side". This was when Aristotle's revolting doctrine of the "just war" was developed into a Christian doctrine, though to see it at its best you must read Augustine or Aquinas. The Czech theologian Petr Chelcicky wrote a book called *The Net of Faith* (1443), based on an allegorical interpretation of a biblical text (Luke 5:4-7), which described how the net of faith had been strong enough to hold little fish like the early Christians, but was broken by big fish like Constantine, so that nearly all the fish got away.

But not quite all. The stream of pacifist (and anarchist) thought runs underground in Christian history, but never disappears altogether. The doctrine of non-resistance, which was specifically taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48 and Luke 6:27-35), was held by early heretical sects such as the Montanists and Marcionists, and by later ones such as the Albigenses and Waldenses. Sixteenth century humanists such as Erasmus and Vives condemned war in near-pacifist terms. But modern pacifism began in what George Huntston Williams calls *The Radical Reformation* (1962). The followers of Wyclif in England (called Lollards) and of Hus in Bohemia (called Hussites) tended towards anarchopacifism whenever it became clear that the Kingdom of Heaven was *not* of this world.

When the extreme Hussites (Taborites) were routed in 1434 by the moderate Hussites (Calixtines) after twenty years of bitter war, the surviving Taborites formed the new sect of Bohemian Brethren (the *Unitas Fratrum*, or *Jednota Ceskych Bratri*). The Bohemian Brethren were inspired by Chelcicky, himself an admirer of Wyclif and Hus, and they influenced the extremists in the Protestant Reformation during the sixteenth century. *The Net of Faith* was first printed in 1521, the year of the Diet of Worms. The "anabaptists" (i.e. extreme radical Protestants) were famous for their violence—at Mühlhausen in 1525, for instance, or at Münster in 1534—but they should have been famous for their non-violence. The Czech Bohemian Brethren and Moravian Brethren, the Dutch Mennonites and Collegiants, the German Hutterites and Schwenkfelders, and the English Brownists and Baptists were only a few of the unknown number of anabaptist sects who turned towards anarchopacifism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Schleithem Confession of the Swiss Anabaptists, which was drawn up in 1527, stated that no Christian could take part in government or war.

But of all the "peace sects", the best-known is the Society of Friends, which has been chiefly responsible for keeping Christian pacifism alive for

the last three hundred years. There have been plenty of later sects—the French Camisards, the Russian Molokans and Dukhobors, the Anglo-American Shakers, Christadelphians, Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses—but the Quakers have had by far the most influence; possibly because they have taken the maximum part in conventional life with the minimum compromise of their unconventional principles, and because they have been so much more tolerant than most other extremist sects. The "inner light" is after all a more peaceful basis for truth than the text of the Bible.

The "peace testimony" of the Friends appeared unmistakably in George Fox's brave reply to Cromwell's Army Commissioners in 1651, and again in James Naylor's last words in 1660; and it was formally stated for the first time in the official declaration of the Society in January, 1661:

We certainly know and do testify to the world that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world . . . When we have been wronged we have not sought to revenge ourselves. Never shall we lift up hand against any that thus use us, but desire the Lord may have mercy upon them, that they may consider what they have done.

This is a perfect formulation of the classic doctrine of non-resistance. It is also a close repetition of the views of Gerrard Winstanley, the leader of the Diggers of 1649, who held virtually non-religious versions of the religious doctrines of the inner light and of non-violence; how many disappointed Diggers became Quakers during the 1650s?

But the remarkable thing about the pacifism of the Quakers is that they never wavered from their first position. Penn's "Holy Experiment" of Pennsylvania was the nearest thing to a non-violent state in history, from its foundation in 1682 to the fall of the Quaker regime of 1756. Robert Barclay said in his *Apologia* (1676): "It is not lawful for Christians to resist evil or to war or fight in any cause". Jonathan Dymond said in his *Essay on War* (1829): "Either we must refuse to fight or we must abandon Christianity". This is still the Quaker view today. When A. C. F. Beales began writing his *History of Peace* (1931), he was "surprised to find that every single idea current today about peace and war was being preached by organised bodies over a century ago, and that the worldwide ramifications of the present-day peace movement can be traced back in unbroken continuity to a handful of forgotten Quakers in England and America at the close of the Napoleonic Wars".

The Quakers have taken a leading part in both official and unofficial peace movements. It was Quaker initiative that led to the formation of the British Peace Society in 1816 and of the National Peace Council in 1905, and the Quakers have always been active in war-relief work (which won them the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947). More important, it was at the same time Quakers who bore the brunt of resistance to the Militia Acts between 1757 and 1860, both by public protest and by personal refusal, and who led the conscientious objectors in the First World War. So they worked against war in the abstract and tried to wreck it in concrete terms as well.

The point is that the Quakers haven't really practised the doctrine of non-resistance at all. Fox told Cromwell in 1654: "My weapons are not carnal but spiritual". They were effective weapons for all that. ("The armed prophet triumphs", said Machiavelli, "the unarmed prophet perishes." Fox's soul goes marching on—but where is Cromwell's?) Quakers have constantly protested against social injustices and have frequently taken action against them. Elizabeth Fry's work for prisoners and Joseph Rowntree's work

for the poor are hardly examples of "non-resistance". Quakers led the campaign not only to improve the conditions of slaves but to abolish slavery altogether, right from the early protest of the German Friends in Pennsylvania in 1688 to the formation of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, and on to the end.

In fact one of the interesting things about the history of modern dissent is the close connection between professed non-resistance to evil and sustained resistance to racial oppression. William Lloyd Garrison, the Abolitionist leader in the United States, wasn't a Quaker because he wasn't a Christian at all, but he was a non-resistant (what we would call a pacifist) like most of his colleagues—Ballou, Musser, and Whittier. Garrison actually symbolises this curious connection, for he was not only the founder of the New England and American Anti-Slavery Societies and the editor of the Abolitionist paper the *Liberator*, but also the founder of the New England Non-Resistance Society and the editor of the pacifist paper the *Non-Resistor*.

The Boston Peace Convention of 1838, where the Non-Resistance Society was formed, deserves a detailed examination to itself. It passed a resolution that "no man, no government, has a right to take the life of man, on any pretext, according to the gospel of Christ", and it issued a *Declaration of Sentiments*, including the following: "We cannot acknowledge allegiance to any human government . . . Our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind [this was the motto of the *Liberator*, and had been said by Diogenes two thousand years earlier] . . . We repudiate all human politics, worldly honours and stations of authority . . . We cordially adopt the non-resistance principle." Here is pure Christian anarcho-pacifism, derived straight from sixteenth century anabaptism—no wonder it excited Tolstoy so much. But these gentle unwarlike unworldly cranks were right in the front of the battle against slavery, and Garrison was notorious for his violent language about the American slave-owners. Non-resistance indeed!

The fact is that non-resistance in theory only means non-resistance in practice when it remains silent. The mere declaration of conscientious objection to violence is a form of resistance, since it implies non-cooperation with the State's key functions of punishment and war. The State can tolerate the abolition of slavery, but not of violence as well. When Jesus abrogated the talion law of Jewish and Roman law, he was unknowingly challenging his State. When Dymond said in 1826, "Now is the time for anti-slavery exertion; the time will come for anti-war exertion", he was knowingly challenging his State—and ours. As Bourne said in 1918, "We cannot crusade against war without crusading implicitly against the State". Pacifism is ultimately anarchism, just as anarchism is ultimately pacifism.

It is because most pacifists never realise this that they are constantly surprised by the hostility they provoke. Most pacifists are really sentimentalists—hoping to get rid of war without changing anything else, so you can hurt people as long as you don't actually kill them. It was because the greatest of all pacifists—Tolstoy—saw through this sentimentalism that he became an anarchist as well as a pacifist. (He never called himself an anarchist, since he used the word to describe those who relied on violence, but his bitter condemnation of the State makes him one of the greatest of all anarchists too.) His remark that "the most frightful robber-band is not as frightful as the State", is simply an echo from Augustine's *City of God* without Augustine's pious reservation: "Without justice, what are States but great robber-bands?" And because Tolstoy utterly denied the

justice of the State's power, he had to proclaim the duty of "non-resistance" (that is, non-violent resistance) to the State's demands. It is ironical that he derived the right of resistance to the State from the same source that Augustine derived the right of oppression by the State—God.

"The clear and simple question is this", he said in his *Letter to the Russian Conscientious Objectors* (1909): "Which law do you consider to be binding for yourself—the law of God, which is your conscience; or the law of man, which is the State?" The answer is in no doubt. "Do not resist evil", he said in his *Letter to a Hindu* (1908), "but do not participate in evil either." The doctrine is still non-resistance, but the implication is total resistance. He had already said in his *Letter to the Swedish Peace Party* (1899): "Those in power neither can nor will abolish their armies". And the solution? "The people must take the matter into their hands". How?

This is where religious pacifism and political anti-militarism came to the same conclusion, for what Tolstoy was advocating was in fact a non-violent general strike against war—individual civil disobedience on such a scale that it becomes mass direct action, the revolutionary technique proposed by the proto-anarchists (such as Winstanley and Godwin) and the later peaceful anarchists (such as Proudhon and Tucker), an anarchist insurrection without the violence that disfigures the proposals of Bakunin and Kropotkin. But how can such a non-violent strike, such an anarchist insurrection be organised? Here the pacifists proved to suffer from the same false optimism as the anti-militarists, for when the First World War came their non-violent strike turned out to be just as mythical as the industrial strike; and they were reduced to individual conscientious objection.

## Conscientious Objection

It is often thought that military conscription was unknown in this country until the First World War, but there were the press-gangs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Militia Acts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Quakers had resisted both of these without fail. But conscription in its modern form didn't appear on the horizon until the weakness of the British Army was revealed by the Boer War (the first serious war for half a century). The formation of the National Service League in 1902 began a long campaign for compulsory military service, against strong opposition from pacifists and patriots alike. Even when the First World War came, the Government delayed as long as possible, in the hope that Alfred Leete's picture of Kitchener saying *Your Country Needs You* would be enough. But within the first year of the war the failure of voluntary recruiting led to National Registration (of all men and women between 15 and 75), which showed that two million men of military age had decided not to fight for their King and Country. After this, the process was fairly rapid, with "attestation" in October 1915, conscription for single men in January and for married men in May 1916, and further extensions in March and May 1917 and again in January and April 1918. Conscription didn't come to an end until August 1921.

Nothing is more instructive than the way the leaders of the official Labour Movement rejected every stage in this process before it happened and then accepted it, condemning the principle of conscription each time they collaborated with it. In exactly the same way they managed, between the Wars, to oppose pacifism and unilateral disarmament on one hand and

conscription and rearmament on the other, and once again they accepted the fact of conscription when it returned in April 1939. After the last War, of course, it was the Labour Party which extended conscription in peacetime in 1947 and also decided to make and test the British bomb.

In exactly the same way, the official peace movement (the conference and arbitration people), which had been trying to build igloos in the desert for a century, collapsed as ignominiously as the Second International in 1914, and offered even less resistance in 1939. On both occasions the only people who stood firmly and bravely against all war were the extreme pacifists and the extreme anti-militarists (both socialists and anarchists). Here we come to the crucial problem, which consists of two questions—*Who are the real war-resisters?* and *How can the war-resisters really resist war?*

The answer to the first question was given in the First World War, when both the Labour Movement and the peace movement failed to resist, and when the people who formed the *No Conscription Fellowship* in November 1914 and began going to jail in January 1916 turned out to be mostly members of the Society of Friends and the Independent Labour Party. Real pacifism and real anti-militarism were in fact the same thing, since they pursued the same end by the same means. Religious people had to have political feelings to make the public protest, and political people had to have religious feelings to take the punishment.

Remember what the punishment was, and how unpleasant it was to be a "conchie" in the First World War. It is estimated that 6,000 men went to prison, and the common sentence was two years; worse, you could be re-arrested immediately after release if they wanted to play cat-and-mouse with you (just like the suffragettes). More than 650 people were imprisoned twice, and three were actually put inside six times in succession. Arthur Creech Jones, later a Labour Colonial Secretary, got six months, twelve months, two years, and two years again; Fenner Brockway, founder of the N.C.F. and later of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, got six months, twelve months, and two years. (Note how they are both strong anti-racialists as well as anti-militarists.) At least 34 men were taken over to France in May 1916 and sentenced to be shot, though Asquith stopped any of the sentences being carried out; and more than twice that number died as a direct result of the brutal treatment they received in custody.

It is a valid criticism of individual war-resistance to point out that it is ineffective, but no one can deny that it demanded great courage and determination. The obvious corollary is that this courage and determination should somehow be organised effectively, and the obvious hope after the First World War was that this would happen. But that hope was false.

The N.C.F. was dissolved in November 1919, though it was revived in February 1921 as the *No More War Movement*. In February 1937 this was absorbed by the *Peace Pledge Union*, which had been formed after Dick Sheppard's famous letter of October 1934. (It is odd how Arthur Ponsonby's similar declaration of December 1927 has been forgotten, while the Peace Pledge has become part of the national memory, along with the irrelevant Peace Ballot of 1934-1935 and the unimportant Oxford Union resolution of February 1933.) The unfortunate result of the formation of the P.P.U. was to drive the religious pacifists and the political anti-militarists apart; and the alliance between them couldn't be restored by the *War Resisters' International* (formed in Holland in 1921), because its British section was the predominantly religious P.P.U.

It is true that the P.P.U. kept the faith alive and gathered well over 100,000 pledges by 1939; but it was passivist as well as pacifist, and when the war against Fascism began and thousands of men broke their pledges, it was reduced to publishing vague propaganda and totting up the numbers of C.O.s in the registrations (seldom more than two per cent and often less than one per cent). So after 1945 the situation was far more hopeless than it had been before 1914, because the war-resisters had failed miserably twice; and far more urgent too, because the Bomb meant the next war really would be the war to end war, and everything else with it. The first question had been answered, but there was still no answer to the second question—*How can war-resisters really resist war?* Perhaps it was just because everything looked so hopeless and so urgent that an answer came at last.

## Nonviolent Resistance

The point was that you must not only *renounce* war, and not only *resist* war, you must also *replace* war. William James gave a lecture a few months before he died on *The Moral Equivalent of War* (1910). He put himself "in the anti-militarist party", but he declared that "a permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasure-economy", and insisted that "we must make new energies and hardships continue the manliness to which the military mind so faithfully clings". For "martial virtues must be the enduring element" in a peaceful society, and anti-militarism must develop its own form of militancy. Like many other people before and since, he was sure that "the martial type of character can be bred without war", and he called for an "army against nature" to replace the armies against fellow-men. (This idea of a peace-army is the basis of Pierre Ceresole's *Service Civile Internationale*, whose British section is the International Voluntary Service.)

Ten years after the First World War, Walter Lippmann wrote an article on *The Political Equivalent of War* (1928), in which he pointed out that "it is not sufficient to propose an equivalent for the military virtues. It is even more important to work out an equivalent for the military methods and objectives". War is after all "one of the ways by which great human decisions are made", so "the abolition of war depends primarily upon inventing and organising other ways of deciding those issues which hitherto have been decided by war". Political anti-militarists have often assumed that these issues could be decided by another form of war—violent revolution—and religious pacifists have often assumed that they could be eliminated altogether by non-war—mutual reconciliation. Lippmann would have none of this: "Any real programme of peace must rest on the premise that there will be causes of dispute so long as we can foresee, and that those disputes have to be decided, and that a way of deciding them must be found which is not war".

The problem is that we must replace war *before* we resist it, and resist it *before* we renounce it. If we put our priorities the other way round, we end as sentimental pacifists again. Our war-resistance must itself be both a moral and a political equivalent to war. The irony is that a solution has been there all the time. The Kantian antinomy between violent resistance and non-resistance is only superficially insoluble, and submits quite readily to Hegelian dialectic. The thesis is violent resistance; the antithesis is its opposite, non-resistance (properly, non-violent non-resistance): and the

synthesis is non-violent resistance (or passive resistance). But what sort of synthesis is this in practice? Lassalle said "passive resistance is the resistance that doesn't resist". Is this true?

The trouble is that passive, or non-violent, resistance is usually thought of as an inner-directed and ineffective technique, a way of bearing witness rather than of resisting evil or producing good; and both the idea and the history of other-directed and effective non-violent resistance have been forced underground by the human obsession with violence. A clear and unprejudiced study of non-violence in theory and practice is long overdue. In fact the idea that non-violent resistance might work runs under the surface of western political thought without ever quite disappearing. Etienne de La Boétie, the French humanist, wrote an *Essay on Willing Slavery* (1546) against tyrants and the subjects who maintain them, in which he suggested that "if nothing be given them, if they be not obeyed, without fighting, without striking a blow, they remain naked, disarmed, and are nothing." And his advice to those who groan under a despot follows logically enough: "Resolve not to obey, and you are free. I do not advise you to shake or overturn him. Forbear only to support him, and you will see him, like a great colossus from which the base is taken away, fall with his own weight and be broken in pieces."

Godwin's theory of resistance was similar to La Boétie's: "When such a crisis has arrived, not a sword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up in purposes of violence." And Shelley put Godwin's theory into verse, in his *Masque of Anarchy* (1819):

*Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms and looks which are  
Weapons in unvanquished war,*

And this is closely echoed in the French syndicalist song:

*Ce n'est pas à coup de mitraille  
Que la capital tu vaincras;  
Non, car pour gagner la bataille  
Tu n'auras qu'à croiser les bras.*

"You have only to fold your arms." Before the rise of syndicalism, the Belgian anarchist Anselme Bellegarrigue developed a "theory of calm", which he propounded during the turbulent days of the French Second Republic. "You thought until today that there were tyrants?" he asked. "Well, you were mistaken—there are only slaves. Where no one obeys, no one commands." He called for a non-violent revolution, to be brought about "by the sole strength of right, the force of inertia, the refusal to co-operate." Bellegarrigue had visited the United States. Had he met Thoreau?

At least it is clear that the syndicalist theory of resistance by mass non-violent direct action had already been fully elaborated a hundred years ago. But mass resistance of this kind isn't just another clever idea which hadn't been tried—history is full of examples.

The most obvious method is the mass exodus, such as that of the Israelites from Egypt in the Book of Exodus, that of the Roman plebeians from the city of Rome in 494 B.C. (according to Livy), that of the Barbarians who roamed over Europe during the Dark Ages looking for somewhere to live, that of the Puritans who left England and the Huguenots who left France in the Seventeenth Century, that of the Jews who left the Russian Empire in the Nineteenth Century and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, that of all the refugees from Fascist and Communist countries since the 1920s.

Or there is the boycott, used by the American colonics against British goods before 1776, by the Persians against a government tobacco tax in 1891, by the Chinese against British, American and Japanese goods in the early years of this century, by several countries against South African goods today, and—in a different sense—by the negroes who organised the bus-boycotts in Montgomery in 1955 and Johannesburg in 1957.

Then there is the political strike, such as the first Petersburg strike in 1905, the Swedish and Norwegian strikes against war between the two countries in the same year, the Spanish and Argentine strikes against their countries' entry into the First World War, the German strike against the Kapp *putsch* in 1920, and dozens of minor examples every year—in fact most strikes are examples of a familiar form of non-violent resistance. The syndicalist general strike and the pacifist general strike are both ideas derived from the ordinary industrial strike, which is after all the basis of the strength of the Labour Movement.

There is also the technique of non-cooperation, as used by the Greek women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, by the Dutch against Alva in 1567–1572 (see the film *La Kermesse Héroïque*), by the Hungarians against the Austrians in 1861–1867 (consider how their leader Ferenc Deák is much less famous than Lajos Kossuth, because he was much less romantic—and much more successful), by the Irish against the English in 1879–1882 (until Parnell made the Kilmainham Treaty with Gladstone), by the German sailors against their own admirals in 1918, and by the Germans in the Ruhr against the French in 1923–1925. When this technique is used against an individual it is called “sending to Coventry”; the people mentioned above sent their oppressors to Coventry.

General resistance to oppression is often non-violent, not because of principle but because violence is for some reason unnecessary or useless. This sort of resistance without violence was used by the Jews against Roman governors in the First Century A.D., by the English against James II in 1686–1688, by the German Catholics and Socialists against Bismarck in 1873–1883, by the English Nonconformists against the Education Act of 1902 and the English trade-unionists against the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, by the Finns against the Russian introduction of conscription in 1902, by the Koreans against the Japanese and the Egyptians against the British in 1919, by the Samoans against the New Zealanders in 1920–1936, by the Norwegians and Danes against the Nazis in 1940–1943, and by the Poles and Hungarians against the Russians in 1956.

All these examples of resistance were non-violent, at least for a time, but mass non-violence is usually just as much of a second-best as individual non-violence. But a double change is possible. The non-violent action can be chosen deliberately because it is expected to work better than violent action, and it can be turned into direct action. Whenever we feel that pacifism must stop being passivism and become activism, that it must somehow take the initiative and find a way between grandiose plans for general strikes which never have any reality and private protests which never have any effect, that it must become concrete instead of abstract—when in fact we decide that what we want is not so much a negative programme of non-resistance or non-violent passive resistance as a positive programme of non-violent active resistance, not so much a static peace without life as a dynamic war without death—then our only possible way out of the dark wood is by mass non-violent direct action.

The point about mass non-violent direct action is that it absorbs all kinds of non-violent resistance. The distinction between civil disobedience

and direct action becomes meaningless. Thoreau's refusal to pay his poll-tax was civil disobedience, less important in itself than as a gesture; his help for a negro slave on the run to Canada was direct action, equally important both in itself and as a gesture. But if thousands of people refuse taxes or help slaves, there is no difference. Mass non-violent direct action is clearly the only way the war-resisters can really resist war, as Alex Comfort saw so clearly at the end of the last war, in his lecture on *Peace and Disobedience* (1946):

Objection is not enough. The objector, particularly the religious objector, is politically irrelevant because he is chiefly interested in safeguarding his own conscientious objection to one aspect of state irresponsibility. You do not want objection, you want resistance, ready to adopt every means short of violence to destroy and render useless the whole mechanism of conscription. It is not enough to secure the immunity and support of religious believers and a politically conscious minority. The opposition of the ordinary man to military service must be canalised.

But *how* is this canalisation to be organised? An answer was given more than half a century ago, not by a war-resister at all, but by the man who was leading resistance to racial oppression in South Africa, an obscure Gujarati lawyer called Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

## “SATYAGRAHA”

Gandhi came to South Africa at the age of 23 with a brief from a Muslim firm in his home-town of Porbandar. He got the case settled within a few months, but he decided to stay in South Africa to organise Indian resistance to the colour-bar. That was in 1894. He became the trusted leader of the Indian community, but there was nothing remarkable about his career. What happened—and what made Gandhi so important in the history of non-violence—was that he became a “charismatic leader” (the phrase used by Max Weber for a person who seems to have superhuman qualities and exerts inexplicable influence over both followers and opponents) and invented “*satyagraha*”.

The significant date for the birth of *satyagraha* is 11 September 1906, when Gandhi administered an oath of passive resistance against Transvaal's “Black Bill” to 3,000 Indians in the Imperial Theatre at Johannesburg. The two great operations of 1907–1909 and 1913–1914 which followed this made both Gandhi and his technique of *satyagraha* famous. Soon after he returned to India in 1915, he began using *satyagraha* against the British *raj* and against local injustices of all kinds. There were local operations at Viramgam (1915), Champaran (1917), Ahmedabad (1918), Kheda (1918), Kaira (1918), Kotgarh (1921), Borsad (1923), Vaikam (1924–1925), Nagpur (1927), Bardoli (1927–1928), and in the Native States (1938–1939); and there were three pairs of national operations, in 1919 and 1920–1922, in 1930–1931 and 1931–1932, and in 1940–1941 and 1942. In the end, as everyone knows, the British Labour Party granted (granted!) independence to India after partition (1947); and then, as everyone also knows, Gandhi was shot a few months later by a Hindu fanatic called Vinayak Godse (1948)—killed by his own like Socrates and Jesus.

Gandhi said, “Let no one say he is a follower of Gandhi,” but thousands do. His mysterious *charisma* lives on. Like Albert Schweitzer, he has become what Colin MacInnes calls a “liberal saint”, and his name is constantly invoked by people for whom his work means nothing. The

Indian Government and the Congress Party claim him; but if he has a successor, it is not Jawaharlal Nehru, the *kaisar* of a new *raj*, but Vinoba Bhave, the leader of the agrarian *Bhoodan* movement since 1951. But there are true Gandhians outside India—Albert Luthuli in South Africa, Kenneth Kaunda in Rhodesia, Martin Luther King in the United States, Danilo Dolci in Sicily, and Michael Scott in this country—people who are more interested in Gandhi's message than his name, who have adopted *satyagraha* because they find it the only valid form of political resistance in the shadow of the concentration camp and the firing squad and the Bomb.

But what is *satyagraha*? It is a Gujarati word coined by Gandhi to replace the traditional term "passive resistance", which he disliked because it was in a foreign language and didn't mean exactly what he meant. *Satyagraha* is usually translated as "soul-force", but the more literal translation is "holding on to truth" (we should imagine a French or German Gandhi coining a word like *vériténitude* or *wahrhaltung*). For Gandhi, the goal was truth, the old Indian idea of *satya*; and the way was non-violence, the old Indian idea of *ahimsa*. But in the Indian *dharma*, as in the analogous Chinese *tao*, the way and the goal are one—so non-violence *is* truth, and the practice of *ahimsa* is *satyagraha*.

This sort of reasoning can of course lead to meaningless and even dangerous metaphysical statements (such as the one that since non-violence is truth, violence is untruth and so doesn't exist); but it also leads to a healthy refusal to make any convenient distinction between ends and means. "We do not know our goal," said Gandhi. "It will be determined not by our definitions but by our acts." Or again, "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." Compare St. Paul: "Faith without works is dead." All this is a refreshing change from traditional political thought, for most western philosophers have tended to believe that if one takes care of the ends, the means will take care of themselves. This line of reasoning leads to Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Gandhi was sometimes guilty of humbug, but it was verbal rather than murderous.

There has been rather a lot of fruitless discussion of the exact meaning of *satyagraha*. We are told that it isn't the same as passive resistance, which has been given another new name—*duragraha*—and is thought of as stubborn resistance which negatively avoids violence for tactical reasons, rather than as resistance which is positively non-violent for ethical reasons, as *satyagraha* is. *Duragraha* is just a subtle method of coercion, but *satyagraha*, according to Gandhi, "is never a method of coercion, is is one of conversion." because "the idea underlying *satyagraha* is to convert the wrong-doer, to awaken the sense of injustice in him." This is done by drawing the opponent's violence onto oneself by some form of non-violent direct action, causing suffering in oneself rather than in the opponent. "Without suffering it is impossible to obtain freedom," said Gandhi, for only suffering "opens the inner understanding in man." The object of *satyagraha* is in fact to make a partial (or, if necessary, a total) sacrifice of oneself, to become a martyr in the literal sense of a witness to the truth.

But Gandhi saw more in this than individual conscientious objection. "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It means pitting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant." Here perhaps is the dynamic war without violence that we needed, a moral and political equivalent of war, and at the same time a real way of resisting war itself.

It is important to remember that *satyagraha* was not meant to be a second-best. Gandhi always reserved particular scorn for what he called the

"non-violence of the weak" (such as that of the pre-war and post-war appeasers of aggression and oppression), and called for the "non-violence of the strong". He was above all an Indian patriot. "I am not pleading for India to practise non-violence because she is weak," he said. "I want her to practise non-violence conscious of her strength and power." He was no weakling, in any sense. "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence," he said, "I would advise violence." But this wasn't the choice. "I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence." This is significantly close to what Garrison the non-resistor said just before the beginning of the American Civil War: "Rather than see men wearing their chains in a cowardly and servile spirit, I would as an advocate of peace much rather see them breaking the head of the tyrant with their chains."

It is typical of Gandhi that, though his first principle was non-violence, he raised Indian ambulance units to serve in the British Army for the Boer War, the Zulu rising of 1906, and the First World War; and in 1918 he even began a recruiting campaign in India. He said that after independence he "would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for their country." What would he have said about Kashmir, Hyderabad, Goa, Ladakh? Who knows? He also seems to have thought that violent resistance against hopeless odds and a ruthless enemy (such as the Warsaw Ghetto rising in 1943) almost qualified as a form of *satyagraha*.

But of course Gandhi's usual advice was to resist evil without any violence at all. He did not hesitate to advise the Chinese, the Abyssinians, the Spanish Republicans, the Czechs, the Austrians, the Poles, the Jews, the British, and anyone else who was attacked, to offer *satyagraha*. For even unarmed men have the strength of right and of numbers. ("Ye are many, they are few.") Even a few weak men can use the non-violence of the strong if they rely on their own consciences. ("The strongest man is the one who is most alone.") This is the reverse of "peace at any price"—it is peace at *my* price. It is saying to the aggressor: You can come and take my country and my home and my possessions, and you can hurt and even kill me and my friends, but I shall resist you to the end and accept my suffering, and I shall never accept your authority. You may prevail for a time, but I or my successors shall win in the end. This is not mere passive resistance, for *satyagraha*, as Gandhi said, "is much more active than violent resistance." This is not "willing slavery", but willing suffering.

And yet, in the face of all the evidence, Gandhi denied any coercive intentions. In fact he was much given to chivalrous gestures (calling off the 1914 operation when a white rail strike began, not taking advantage of the removal of a police cordon at Vaikam in 1924) and to over-chivalrous compromises (with Smuts in 1908, and with Lord Irwin in 1931). Richard Gregg, in *The Power of Non-Violence* (1934), is sure that "non-violent resistance is a pressure different in kind from that of coercion," and this is the orthodox view of most Gandhians. But Joan Bondurant, in her *Conquest of Violence* (1958), admitted that "throughout Gandhi's experiments with *satyagraha* there appears to be an element of coercion," albeit "coercion whose sting is drawn." And Clarence Case unhesitatingly defined *satyagraha* in the title of his *Non-Violent Coercion* (1923).

The truth is surely that there are two sides to coercion, and while a *satyagrahi* may be sincerely innocent of any wish to coerce, the person at the receiving end of his *satyagraha* may feel very decidedly coerced. Some people have even called *satyagraha* "moral blackmail", and I think there is something in this. Whatever Gandhi felt about what he was doing during

his half-century career of resistance, there was no doubt in the minds of his South African, British and Indian opponents about what was happening to them. Satyagraha was "nothing but the application of force under another form," complained Lord Irwin, the Viceroy who had to deal with the great Salt March of 1930 (and who, as Lord Halifax, became Foreign Secretary in time for Munich). In the end, the precise amount of coercion in *satyagraha*, and even the precise definition of *satyagraha* itself, are rather academic points. The important point is whether *satyagraha* works, how it works, and what we can learn from it. If we can't convert an opponent, it is clearly better to coerce him gently rather than roughly. For, as Gandhi said, "You can wake a man only if he is really asleep; no effort that you make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending sleep."

*Satyagraha* is "not a subject for research," Gandhi told Joan Boudurant (when she was carrying out research into *satyagraha*). "You must experience it." No doubt, but first you must observe it in action; and an interesting thing about Gandhi's action is that it failed in direct proportion to the size of his objectives. The Viramgam tariff-barrier and the Champaran indigo racket and the Kaira forced-labour custom and the Vaikam road-ban were all broken, but were the Indians in South Africa freed? Were even the Indians in India freed? Gandhi acknowledged that he was "a determined opponent of modern civilisation," and he insisted that independence meant more than "a transference of power from white bureaucrats to brown bureaucrats." But *swaraj*, which meant personal self-rule before it came to mean Indian Home Rule, has in fact brought little more than government by Indians instead of Englishmen, and has hastened the irresistible advance of modern civilisation throughout the sub-continent. Who uses a hand spinning-wheel if he can use a spinning-machine? Who wears home-spun *khadi*? Would Gandhi be found among the Gandhians any more?

The fact is that Gandhi won the little battles and lost the big ones. No doubt the little battles might have been lost as well if he hadn't been there, and the big defeats might have been much bigger (though Subhas Bose wasn't the only one who said Gandhi made things worse, not better); but his victories were still minor ones. Nor were they bloodless. The Amritsar Massacre at the Jallianwalla Bagh on 13 April 1919 was a direct result of Gandhi's campaign, and he himself admitted a "Himalayan miscalculation"; and he wasn't able to do very much to stop the frightful communal riots after partition, though he did what he could. Gandhi always succeeded most when he attempted least. His ideal was reconciliation, but the only people he reconciled were those who accepted his terms in the first place. The Boers just stepped back to gain time and strength for a bigger jump, and the English just lost their tempers with the inscrutable orientals who kept outwitting them. Gandhi didn't win his enemies over like a modern Christ (did Christ, for that matter?); he threw them neatly over his shoulder like a modern Jack the Giant-Killer using judo. The important thing about Gandhi isn't so much what he tried to do as what he did.

We should remember this when we use his ideas. He linked many things to *satyagraha* which aren't essential to it. His religious ideas (non-possession, non-acquisition, chastity, fasting, vegetarianism, teetotalism) and his economic ideas (self-sufficiency, "bread-labour", agrarianism) don't necessarily have anything to do with post-Gandhian non-violence. Remember what Gandhi said about himself: "It is profitless to speculate whether Tolstoy in my place would have acted differently from me." He wasn't Tolstoy; we aren't Gandhi. Everyone has a unique background and per-

sonality. Gandhi came from the puritanical Vaishnava sect and the respectable Modh Bania sub-caste, and he had a profound sense of sin (or obsessive guilt complex, as the case may be). We don't have to share his background and personality to qualify for non-violent action. Don't worry that he said *satyagraha* is "impossible without a living faith in God;" he also said that "God is conscience, he is even the atheism of the atheist." When he talked about the *ramaraj* (the kingdom of God), he meant not a Hindu theocracy but a society based on *sarvodaya* (the good of all). It doesn't matter that he said "it takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain to a mental state of non-violence," when we now know that untrained people can be completely non-violent, and that the best course of training for non-violent action is in fact experience of non-violent action. When Gandhi rejected *bhakti* and *jñana* for *karma*, he was only saying that love and knowledge aren't enough, that action is necessary too. When we are horrified by his plan for a sort of revised seventh age of man—sans meat, sans drink, sans sex, sans everything—we should remember that he followed the traditional yearning for *moksha* (release from existence, the same as *nirvana*). We can just as reasonably base our non-violence on a love for life as on a wish for death. We can profit from what he did without agreeing with what he thought.

What we should do—what he would have wanted us to do—is to take from him what we can, without being false to ourselves. "A tiny grain of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way," he said, "and leavens the whole society." Our task is to sow it, and this is what the new pacifists have tried to do.

## The New Pacifism

The new pacifism isn't really all that new. From the old pacifists comes the refusal to fight; from the old anti-militarists comes the determination to resist war; and from Gandhi comes the idea of mass non-violent action. There are other borrowings. From the socialists comes the optimistic view of the future; from the liberals comes the idealistic view of the present; from the anarchists comes the disrespect for authority. But the new pacifists are selective. They reject the sentimentality of the old pacifists, the vagueness of the old anti-militarists, the priggishness of Gandhi, the rigidity of the socialists, the respectability of the liberals, the intolerance of the anarchists.

The basis of the new pacifism is unilateralism, the demand that this country should offer a sort of national *satyagraha* to the world, that whoever presses the button it isn't us. "Someone has to arise in England with the living faith to say that England, whatever happens, shall not use arms," said Gandhi just before the last war. But "that will be a miracle." Miracle or not, that is what we are trying to say. Unilateral disarmament—that is our utopia. Mass non-violent action—that is our myth. Every active ideology depends on a utopia and a myth, a vision of the world to come and a way to get there. "Man is a teleological animal," said Adler, and our *telos* or goal isn't so much the ultimate utopia as the immediate myth. The utopia is static, the myth is dynamic. It's having a myth that keeps us going.

It is important to remember what Sorel said about myths in his *Reflections on Violence* (1906):

Men who are participating in a great social movement always picture their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph.

These constructions, whose knowledge is so important, I propose to call myths . . . Myths are not descriptions of things but expressions of a determination to act . . . A myth cannot be refuted, since it is at bottom identical with the convictions of a group . . . The myth must be judged as a method of acting on the present; any attempt to discuss how far it can be taken literally as future history is senseless . . . for there is no process by which the future can be predicted scientifically.

The unilateralist utopia and myth can be compared to others. The Christian utopia is the Kingdom of Heaven, and the myth is the Last Judgement. The Liberal utopia is parliamentary democracy, and the myth is the general election. The socialist (that is, communist) utopia is the classless society, and the myth is the authoritarian revolution based on the proletarian rising. The anarchist utopia is the free society, and the myth is the libertarian revolution based on mass non-co-operation. The syndicalist utopia is anarcho-socialist, and the syndicalist myth is the general strike (the myth Sorel was interested in).

Now the pacifist utopia is world peace—but the pacifist myth? Paradoxically, the fatal defect of the old pacifists was that they had no myth. But they borrowed a myth from Tolstoy and the political anti-militarists and the anarcho-syndicalists and the anarcho-pacifists—the myth of the general strike, minus its violence. This myth was elaborated between the wars by politically conscious pacifists, such as the Dutch anarcho-pacifist Bart de Ligt, who wrote *The Conquest of Violence* (1937), one of the few texts of non-violence by a non-Gandhian. (Bart de Ligt also wrote a much longer book called *Creative Peace*, which for some reason has never been translated into English.) There is an interesting appendix to *The Conquest of Violence*, which consists of the plan for *Mobilisation against all War* put by de Ligt to the 1934 conference of the War Resisters' International. This plan was an ambitious and detailed version of the non-violent general strike, but the point is that it had nothing to do with reality.

The task of the new pacifists has been to make the myth real. And yet the new pacifism grew straight from the old. The British unilateralist movement was begun not by the British Peace Committee or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but by orthodox pacifists. Unilateralism came to life in this country when Harold Steele, an old member of the No Conscription Fellowship, proposed to enter the British nuclear test area at Christmas Island early in 1957. The CND leaders like to take a lot of credit for their success during the last five years, but this was made possible only because the ground had been prepared for so long.

The beginning of post-war pacifist unilateralism was right back in 1949, when some members of the PPU formed a *Non-Violent Commission*; and in 1951 some members of the NVC formed "*Operation Gandhi*", following a walk-in on the German Iron Curtain and a pair of sit-downs at the Trawsfynydd camp in Wales earlier in the year. It was "*Operation Gandhi*" that carried out the first London sit-down, which was not the one led by Bertrand Russell and Michael Scott on 18 February 1961, or the spontaneous one after the launching meeting of CND on 17 February 1958, but was the one by seven men and four women outside the War Office on 11 January 1952. "*Operation Gandhi*"—which became the *Non-Violent Resistance Group*—was responsible for many more pioneering demonstrations which have passed into undeserved oblivion. Who now remembers the actions at Aldermaston (yes, Aldermaston) in April 1952, at Mildenhall in July 1952, at South Africa House in September 1952, at Porton in March 1953, at Harwell in April 1953, and at Woolwich in July

1954? Who, for that matter, remembers any unilateralist action before the march to Aldermaston at Easter 1958?

The turning-point in the public attitude to unilateralist demonstrations came at the time of Suez (when the Labour Party discouraged "unconstitutional" obstruction of the attack on Egypt), Hungary (when hundreds of Communist activists found themselves in the political wilderness), and the first British nuclear tests (when the Labour Left began to consider a unilateralist campaign)—that is, at the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957. The Japanese non-violent demonstration at the Tachinawa base near Sunigawa in October 1956 may have had some impact too. Anyway, the British unilateralist movement was properly organised during 1957. The *National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests* was formed in February; the *Emergency Committee for Direct Action against Nuclear War* was formed to support Harold Steele in April; the *H-Bomb Campaign Committee* was formed by the Victory for Socialism and Movement for Colonial Freedom groups in August; and the *Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War* was formed to take over from the Non-Violent Resistance Group in November.

At the same time, Albert Schweitzer condemned nuclear tests, Bertrand Russell organised the first Pugwash Conference, and Stephen King-Hall broke through his "thought-barrier" and became converted to the idea of non-violent resistance. Since 1957 unilateralism has never been absent from British thought and British politics. But right from the start it took two forms, orthodox and unorthodox, conventional and unconventional, constitutional and unconstitutional, and was advanced by two kinds of organisation—the pressure-group, planning demonstrations and marches and meetings, and the revolutionary cell, planning "direct action". The chief unilateralist pressure-group for five years has been the *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, which was developed from the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests in January 1958; the chief unilateralist "direct action" groups have been the Direct Action Committee, and the *Committee of 100* (which was invented in May 1960 and formed in October 1960, and which absorbed the DAC in July 1961).

It is not yet possible to write the history of CND. It has never been a pacifist or anarchist body, at least in intention. It has always been a body bringing pressure to bear on the British Government and the Labour Party, at least in intention. It has often seemed to fall into a sentimentalism as dangerous as the old pacifist sentimentalism—so that by getting rid of the British Bomb without changing anything else, we can kill people as long as we don't kill too many at once, and we can let other countries kill as many as they like as long as we don't. This rather opportunist impression was reinforced by the new policy statement, *Steps towards Peace*, which was issued last November.

But CND has nevertheless served a most useful purpose—for pacifism, despite itself, because it has built up mass opposition not only to the Bomb but to all bombs and all war; and for anarchism too, even more despite itself, because it has built up mass opposition not only to the Warfare State that makes and might use the Bomb but to the whole social system that maintains the Warfare State. The rank and file of CND, especially among the young, has always been more radical and militant than the leadership; so what began as a campaign to make the Labour Party (and/or the British Government) promise to ban the Bomb, became an unwilling apprenticeship for non-violent revolution. The part played by the New Left in the early part of this process was decisive.



But the real vanguard of the British unilateralist movement was the Direct Action Committee, whose important contribution to the new pacifism was that it put illegal non-violent action on the political map in this country. The Aldermaston march was invented by DAC as a direct action operation, and the first Aldermaston march was planned by a DAC sub-committee. After 1958 the Aldermarch was taken over by CND, along with Gerald Holtom's "nuclear disarmament" symbol (which was designed for the 1958 march and later became the universal unilateralist badge). CND significantly turned the Aldermarch back to front, so that it became a pilgrimage *from* instead of *to* the research establishment—as if to symbolise the retreat of the conventional unilateralists from unorthodox direct action back to orthodox action (or inaction)—and assumed the trappings of an annual spring festival, ending with a bump at a dull meeting in central London.

Not that DAC was deflected from its chosen course. There was the almost forgotten sit-in at Aldermaston in September 1958, and then the famous sit-downs at North Pickenham in December 1958 and at Harrington in January 1960; these were followed by actions at Foulness in April and May 1960 (organised by an *ad hoc* committee with DAC and CND members), at Finningley in July 1960 (organised by the Northern DAC), and at the Holy Loch in May 1961, and have rightly become a vital part of the unilateralist mythology. We should also remember the attempts to enter the French nuclear test area in the Sahara at the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960, the CND demonstration at Selby in July 1959, the invasion of the lost village of Imber in January 1961, the guerrilla activities of Polaris action in the spring and summer of 1961, and the Voice of Nuclear Disarmament.

There was never non-violent action like this before in Britain. The Chartists, Suffragettes and Hunger Marchers organised all sorts of spectacular demonstrations, and the Aldermaston march was getting bigger every year, but the DAC was doing something quite different—getting ordinary people used to the idea of not only thinking for themselves and speaking for themselves, but taking action for themselves and inviting punishment for themselves as well. In 1917 the leaders of the Champaran indigo-workers said to Gandhi: "The idea of accommodating oneself to imprisonment is a novel thing for us. We will try to assimilate it." This is what we might well have said forty years later to Michael Scott (who had taken part in *satyagraha* in South Africa during the 1940s) and to Michael Randle and Pat Arrowsmith and April Carter; and they did their best for three years to show us how.

Their methods weren't strictly Gandhian. Gandhi's favourite techniques were the boycott and strike (*hartal*), the fast unto death (*prayopaveshana*), and civil disobedience (*ajnahanga*), all traditional Indian forms of non-violent resistance. But he rejected the equally traditional technique of the sit-down (*dharna*), calling it barbaric and comparing it with violent sabotage—though his followers often used the sit-down technique, notably in Calcutta in 1922 and in Bombay in 1930. It is ironical that, under the influence of industrial techniques in the West, the sit-down has in fact become the favourite method of the new pacifists, whether it is used for "direct action" (against military sites or other centres of power) or for "civil disobedience" (at significant places in large towns). There are other points of difference with Gandhi. The new pacifists have little training or discipline, and in most cases little love for their opponents. More important, they have had little chance for direct action, or for mass action.

A demonstration doesn't become direct action just because someone says it does. "Wishful thinking," as Peter Cadogan remarks, "has nothing to do with the case." The idea of direct action comes of course from syndicalist doctrine, where it involves a general stay-in strike and a decentralised do-it-yourself revolution, as opposed to the more familiar *coup d'état* carried out by an elitist party at the head of a mass rising. In theory, unilateralist direct action involves an analogous pre-emptive strike against war and decentralised do-it-yourself disarmament, as opposed in this instance to disarmament carried out by a Labour Party converted by the CND pressure-group. In practice, unilateralist direct action involves nothing of the kind, and should be interpreted metaphorically rather than literally. It is a myth, an expression of a determination to act, not a description of a thing.

The truth is that the so-called "direct action" demonstrations by the radical unilateralists were really what April Carter in her *Direct Action* (1962) calls "symbolic action"—that is, they went further than "constitutional action" but they didn't go as far as genuine "direct action". Despite all their preparatory work, the DAC was never able to involve the people who make the weapons and build the sites; and when it came nearest to direct action—at North Pickenham—the demonstrators were attacked not only by the servicemen and the police but also by the civilian labourers working on the site. The DAC demonstrations were really propaganda by deed; but they weren't very effective deeds, nor were they very effective propaganda either.

For in just the same way, the demonstrations by the radical unilateralists were "group action"—that is, they went further than individual action, but they didn't go as far as genuine mass action. It is sad but true that there were less than 50 arrests at North Pickenham, less than 90 at Harrington, less than 40 at Foulness, and less than 30 at Finningley. Thousands of people would march from Aldermaston to London, but barely a hundred would sit down at a missile base. Part of the trouble may have been that DAC was forced to choose unfavourable times of year and inaccessible corners of the countryside, and part may have been that its members seemed to be rather self-righteous about their message and their methods. Whatever it was that stopped them breaking through the deed-barrier, the fact remains that their courageous work was no real threat to the Warfare State—though it was certainly conduct prejudicial to good order and cold-war discipline. Each of their demonstrations illustrated Colin Ward's remark that "the middle-class sits in puddles as a symbolic gesture—of its own impotence," and his conclusion that the unilateralist task is "part of a larger task: that of turning the mass society into a mass of societies."

But the first task was to lay the foundations of a movement for mass non-violent resistance. It would be disastrous for the radical unilateralists to calculate their success entirely in terms of the names or the numbers of people who come to or get arrested at illegal demonstrations—we must indeed get beyond counting arses—but names and numbers are significant all the same. It was Ralph Schoenman's recognition of this point which created the Committee of 100. It is not yet possible to write the history of the Committee of 100 either, but it is possible to give an outline of its first two years. It was formed in October 1960 as an act of dissatisfaction with both the moderate compromising CND and the puritanical DAC, and as a gesture of no-confidence in orthodox political action—this was after all the month of the unilateralist vote by the Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Scarborough.

The Committee began as a group of well-known people (with enough unknown people to make up the magic number) which would give authority to demonstrations of increasingly massive civil disobedience. In 1961 the Committee rose. The two formal sit-downs in central London (February 18th and April 29th), the four Embassy sit-downs (American, April 3rd and September 6th; Russian, August 31st and October 21st), and the dramatic weekend of mass resistance (Holy Loch on September 16th, Trafalgar Square on September 17th)—this seemed to be the beginning of a real threat to the Warfare State. But the next weekend of mass resistance (December 9th, at Wethersfield, Ruislip, Oxford, Bristol, Cardiff, Manchester and York) proved to be not the end of the beginning but the beginning of the end. In 1962 the Committee fell.

It would be premature to say what went wrong with the Committee of 100. There have been invisible public factors and invidious private factors at work. There has been a tragic waste of energy, trust, and cash. The Committee has not failed—it has disappeared, and been replaced by something else with the same name. All that can be usefully done is to say what has happened. The Wethersfield demonstration in December 1961 was the greatest blow by the Committee at the State; and the Wethersfield trial in February 1962 was the greatest blow by the State at the Committee. In September they arrested the wrong people, but in December they arrested the right people. Before Wethersfield the initiative was in our hands; after Wethersfield it was in theirs. The Committee of 100 never recovered from the Trial of the Six. I still think we were right to go to Wethersfield in December, and I still think we were wrong not to go back to Wethersfield in February. This was our greatest test, and we failed.

In the spring of 1962 the Regional Committees became autonomous, a London Committee was formed, and the National Committee became a co-ordinating body. But this decentralisation turned out to be the beginning of a ritualised disintegration, not only of the original Committee into the Regional Committees, but of each Committee into its natural parts. The National Office became a tomb, and the National Meetings became factious and factitious debates. The same fate later overtook the London Office and the London Meetings. In the meantime the well-known people who had been members and supporters of the Committee one by one withdrew their membership and sometimes even their support.

The same story was told by the demonstrations in 1962. The two "public assemblies" in central London (March 24th and September 23rd), the two American Embassy sit-downs (April 26th and July 9th), the two "national demonstrations" (Holy Loch on June 9th, Greenham Common on June 23rd)—this seemed to be the end of any real threat to the Warfare State. At the same time the ambitious and enthusiastic Industrial and International Sub-Committees of the Committee of 100 only achieved one real success, the brilliant joint operation at Moscow in July. The terrible weakness of the Committee of 100—and the whole British unilateralist movement—was cruelly revealed last October. On October 20th there was a direct action demonstration at Honington (organised by the East Anglia Committee of 100), which was interesting and imaginative, but still involved only about 200 people. Then on October 23rd the Cuban crisis broke, and there was virtually no resistance to the Warfare State at all—no real strikes and no real sit-downs, no barricades and no sabotage, whether violent or non-violent. We lay down and waited to die; the two who went to Ireland were the sensible ones. Since Cuba we have had no doubt about our strength—it is nil. We have been forced to retire to the hills, to fight not as soldiers in the open but as guerrillas in hiding.

But we aren't dead yet, and while there is life there is hope. Gandhi said: "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'; it is a programme of transformation of relationships." Landauer said: "The State is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution. The State is a condition, a certain relationship between people, a way of human behaviour; and we destroy it when we contract different relationships and behave in a different way." Whatever our own doubts about the effects of our resistance, our rulers seem to have none. They drag us about, and throw us into puddles and fountains, and fine us and imprison us, and fear us. They beat up Adam Roberts in a police station; they try to deport Ralph Schoenman; they give George Clark 9 months; they give the Six 12 or 18 months; they give Des Lock 15 (or 9) months; they silence our witnesses and open our letters and tap our telephones. They will hammer us if we undermine them, just as they hammered three anarchists in 1945, and hammered pacifists and anti-militarists in 1939 and 1915, and are hammering the servicemen who have withdrawn their allegiance from the Warfare State. And let us remember these men: Jon Tremain and Brian MaGee and Michael McKenna and Edward Parker and Kevin Baxter and Keith Manning and Francis Smith are the vanguard today.

"Freedom—is it a crime?" demanded Herbert Read at the time of the Anarchist Trial. If, like him, you define freedom as "the will to be responsible for one's self," then *of course freedom is a crime*, because it replaces the law of man with the law of God, conscience, principle, decency, inner light, truth, responsibility, humanity, or what you will. The freedom to take direct action, to do it yourself, is both a political and a criminal offence. Even the most pitiful protest against war is resistance to the Warfare State. Any man's death diminishes me, and any man's rebellion strengthens me. We shall go on making our point until it is taken. We are a few, but a happy few. We are in debt, but not in despair. We make mistakes, but people who don't make mistakes don't make anything. We are not grown up, but we never stop growing. We are one-eyed, but we are living in the Country of the Blind. We are neurotics who defy our political parents; but they are psychotics building worlds of fantasy which will collapse around themselves—and us. We are amateur incendiaries, but they are professional pyromaniacs. We are living in a world where faith is always misplaced and hope is always betrayed, and somehow we contrive to keep faith and hope alive; we try to keep charity alive too, though it is difficult. Instead of playing Greeks and Trojans or Montagues and Capulets, we play Troilus and Cressida or Romeo and Juliet. We are radioactive atoms trying to build up a critical mass and start off a chain reaction. The story isn't over yet. The Committee of 100 is dead: long live the Committee of 100. There is something there, created yesterday and creating tomorrow—but today the struggle. And the struggle is Alex Comfort's struggle: "Man against Obedience, Man against Death. If we cannot win the second battle, we can at least win the first." We refuse to be the men of war, we are the men against war. *Non serviamus*—we shall not be slaves.

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