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This article is the Introduction to Geoffrey OSTERGAARD, *Nonviolent Revolution in India* New Delhi: J. P. Amrit/Sevagram & Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985; pp. ix-xxiii. Although the last paragraphs are descriptions of the chapters that follow in the book, we felt it useful to retain them in the hopes of sparking further interest in Ostergaard and this important work. Courtesy of The Gandhi Peace Foundation, and Gandhi Book House.

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Nonviolent Revolution

Origins of the Concept

Geoffrey Ostergaard

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"Nonviolent revolution" is a relatively novel and, at first glance, paradoxical concept. In classifying principled nonviolence, Gene Sharp describes it as "the most recent type", dating from about 1945, and as "still very much a direction of developing thought and action rather than a fixed ideology and program."[1] As the term itself suggests, it is an ideological hybrid, the product of two hitherto distinct, though not unrelated traditions of thought. The first of these traditions is "pacifism", the defining feature of which is the rejection, on principle and as a guiding rule of individual conduct, of violence, especially but not only the institutionalised violence manifested in war. The "peace testimony" of the Quakers made in 1661 typifies the pacifist stance: "All bloody principles and practices we (as to our own particular) do utterly deny,

[1] Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979), p. 221. His other types are: nonresistance, active reconciliation, moral resistance, selective nonviolence, and satyagraha.

with all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretext whatsoever . . ."[2]

The defining feature of the second tradition, which we may label "social revolution", is the belief that the major problems of the existing society are deep-seated or structural in origin and, therefore, can be solved only by basic or revolutionary changes in the structure of society. So defined, "social revolution" leaves open what structural changes are required and whether such changes can be effected peacefully, without the use of "illegitimate" violence. Historically, this tradition has been socialist in the broad sense of that term, i.e., the major problems have been seen as originating in the capitalist organization of the economy, which must therefore be replaced by a socialist one. While "social revolution" implies that the required structural changes can be effected quite rapidly, it is compatible with the belief that they may be carried out peacefully. The first generation of British socialists—the followers of Robert Owen—thought so; their strategy involved voluntary action by the people themselves to set up "villages of cooperation"—small-scale, basically self-sufficient communist communities, loosely linked together for purposes of mutual aid and the exchange of surpluses. Even Marx, in his later years, believed that in certain countries, "like America and England (and, if I knew their institutions better, I would add Holland) the workers can achieve their aims by peaceful means."[3] But, again historically, "social revolution" has been associated with the belief, also expressed by Marx on the same occasion, that "force must be the

[2] Quoted in G. Hubbard, *Quaker by Convincement* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 128.

[3] Speech in Amsterdam, 1872. See D. McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 594-95. Marx's admission of the possibility of a peaceful revolution in certain countries represented a modification of the position he and Engels had expressed in *The Communist Manifesto,* the concluding paragraph of which states that the ends of the Communists "can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible."[40]

[40] H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber* (London, 1947), p. 128. For the dictum, see p. 121.

lever of our revolutions." It is, of course, the common association between 'revolution' and 'force,' which accounts for the apparently paradoxical character of the concept of "nonviolent revolution".

Only certain elements within pacifism and social revolution have converged to produce "nonviolent revolution" as the central concept of their developing ideology. From the pacifist side, these elements are those whose pacifism can be classified, in Sharp's typology, as "active reconciliation", "moral resistance," or "satyagraha" (or a mix of these three). The "active reconciliation" pacifists, exemplified by Tolstoy and many Quakers, emphasize the use of goodwill in achieving change, seek to avoid using coercion, even nonviolent coercion, and stress the worth of every individual and his or her capacity to change and live in harmony with others. The "moral resistance" pacifists (unlike those of the "nonresistance" type) emphasize that evil should be resisted, but only by moral and nonviolent means. They stress the responsibility of every individual both to refuse personally to participate in evil and also to do something active to combat evil. William Lloyd Garrison, a leader of the movement to abolish slavery in the USA, exemplified this type. "*Satyagraha*" pacifists are those who have adopted Mahatma Gandhi's approach in which nonviolence is both a technique of social action and a principled way of life. As we shall see, pacifists of this type have contributed most to the development of the concept of nonviolent revolution.

From the social revolution side, those who have been attracted to the concept may be described as "libertarian socialists". Libertarian socialism constitutes one of the three broad schools of socialist thought, distinguishable by their attitude towards the state. The other two schools, Marxian communism and democratic socialism (or social democracy), assign to the state a central role in their strategy for achieving socialism. The Marxists, holding the view that the state is the instrument of the ruling class, insist that the proletariat, through its own po-

litical party, must capture state power, by forceful means if necessary, establish a proletarian state, and then use it to carry out socialist measures which will lead to the abolition of social classes and, consequently, "the withering away of the state". The democratic socialists, holding the view that the state, actually or at least potentially, is the instrument of the people as a whole, argue that socialists should win political power by constitutional means and then, having done so, proceed step by step to replace capitalism by socialism. In both schools, control and the use of state power is seen as an indispensable condition for the achievement of socialism. The libertarian socialists, in contrast, believe that socialism can be achieved largely (in the view of some) or wholly (in the view of others) without the use of state power. Instead, reliance is placed (again largely or wholly) on direct voluntary action by the people themselves, which may be either violent or nonviolent—action such as forming cooperatives which will eventually replace capitalist organisations or building labour unions which, at an appropriate time, will seize control of the means of production owned by the capitalists. The thrust of libertarian socialism is thus either non-statist or anti-statist. "Anarchism" is the descriptive label of those whose thrust is consciously anti-statist, and, historically, anarchism in its several socialist variants — there is also a capitalist variant—has been at the centre of libertarian socialism. In terms of basic political values, libertarian socialism represents an attempt to combine liberalism with socialism, liberty—the prime liberal value—being placed on a par with equality, the prime socialist value. In the view of libertarian socialists, the two values are inter-connected, equality constituting a necessary condition for the liberty of all (as distinct from the liberty of only some). For such socialists, a social order that can be characterised as a "fraternity" (in modern parlance "community") is the resultant of the cherishing of liberty *with* equality and equality *in* liberty.

that has made a serious effort to develop it.[39] The concept may, finally, have to be judged as "absurd", "impossible," and as yet one more ideological construct of the Utopian mentality; but, if this be the judgement, it should be made after a proper examination of such evidence as is presented in this study. However, as I have already indicated, there are those—still very few in number but possibly a growing number— who are attracted by the concept. In countries outside India such people are not always as informed as they should be about the Indian experiment and experience. To them this study should be of particular value. All readers, however, should be advised that I do not adopt a "value neutral" position on the issue of nonviolent revolution. In telling my story, I have tried to exercise the detachment expected of a scholar and I have tried not to ignore or to disguise unpalatable facts. But it is only proper that I declare my interest: I myself am one of the tiny minority who find the concept attractive. How much this interest has biased my account is for each reader to judge. I would add, however, that, as a political scientist, I am not impressed by those who describe politics as "the art of the possible". I am much more impressed by those who have a quite contrary attitude towards politics and who are prepared to declare, as Gandhi once did, "Our task is to make the impossible possible." Prizing open the limits of the possible is, in my view, what politics —and much else in human life—should be about. In this connection, it may be worth noting that Max Weber, the celebrated author of *Politics as a Vocation* and coiner of that very un-Gandhian dictum: "The decisive means for politics is violence", made much the same point: "All historical experience confirms the truth that man would

[39] The best-informed critique of the movement in its earlier years remains the pamphlet by R. T. Ranadive, *Sarvodaya and Communism* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1958).

the subject of several recently published works,[36] but their focus has been on JP as a social and political thinker: his role as a leader of the Sarvodaya movement from 1953 until his death in 1979 has not been fully explored. The developments in JP's thought in his later years—his "last phase"—were not simply the product of his own search for truth but were also influenced by his Sarvodaya colleagues, some of whom, it will become evident, either anticipated or encouraged him to develop "the new line" with which his name is associated. Numerous other studies have focused on the Bihar agitation, "the JP movement", the Emergency, and the rise and fall of the Janata Party and Government.[37] But, in my view, none of these studies has explored adequately the role of the Sarvodaya movement in these historic events.[38] The study that follows attempts to do just this.

The other principal justification of my study is that nonviolent revolution is a novel and challenging concept. It is frequently dismissed as an absurd or impossible concept, especially by Marxists, but also by many others. Such dismissals are only rarely made on the basis of informed knowledge and understanding of the one movement in the contemporary world

[36] See the introductions by the editors to the selections of JP's writings: Bimal Prasad, *A Revolutionary's Quest* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980) and Brahmanand, *Towards Total Revolution* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, Vols. I-IV, 1978). See also R.C. Gupta, *JP: From Marxism to Total Revolution* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1981).

[37] These include: Ghanshyam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two Indian States* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1977), R. K. Barik, *The Politics of the JP Movement* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1977), S. K. Ghose, *The Crusade and End of Indira Raj* (New Delhi: Intellectual Book Corner, 1978), J. A. Naik, *The Great Janata Revolution* (New Delhi: Chand, 1977), J. A. Naik, *From Total Revolution to Total Failure* (New Delhi: National, 1979).

[38] Exceptions might be made of the books by the Sarvodaya activist, Vasant Nargolkar, *JP's Crusade for Revolution* (New Delhi, 1975) and *JP Vindicated!* (New Delhi, 1977), although, as the titles suggest, the focus is on JP rather than on the Sarvodaya movement.

The routes leading to the convergence of certain types of pacifism with a certain type of socialism may be briefly indicated. The convergence may be seen in part as a process of mutual education in which pacifists learned from libertarian socialists and vice versa. In the process pacifists acquired from socialists the latter's understanding of the structural origins of many social problems, particularly the problem of violence in the form of war, whether it be war between states or "war" between social classes. The insight that violence was not simply a problem at the level of individual behaviour, which could be solved by the adoption of new norms regulating the conduct of individuals and states, but was also a structural problem had to be recognised by pacifists if they were to become social revolutionaries, rather than remain the liberals most of them were in the nineteenth century. The socialist idea that capitalism was one of the prime causes of war and violent class conflict, and the anarchist idea that war was endemic in the organization of mankind into states—in Randolph Bourne's words, war was "the health of the state"—were two fundamental ideas that pacifists, faced as they were with the evident unwillingness of the vast majority of mankind to adopt pacifist norms, came to see as increasingly plausible.

Pacifists who were also socialists had already begun to emerge before 1914: Keir Hardie, the first leader of the British Labour Party, was one of them. But the synthesising, as distinct from the simple combination, of pacifism and socialism was a process that took some fifty years to complete. The beginnings of the synthesis date from World War I when pacifist conscientious objectors were thrown in jail together with anti-militarist (but not strictly pacifist) socialists.[4] Undoubtedly, the most important single factor promoting the

[4] See C. M. Case, *Nonviolent Coercion* (New York: Century, 1923), pp. 227-80. "Anti-militarism" is associated with the belief that all or most modern wars are fought in the interests of ruling classes and does not preclude the violent overthrow of such classes. Some anti-militarists advocated joining

synthesis was the publicity given in the inter-war years to Gandhi's campaigns in India.[5] Although some old-fashioned pacifists were highly critical of Gandhi's methods, the younger and more radical pacifists were impressed by his demonstration that the armory available to those who were prepared nonviolently to resist oppressive structures included a whole range of weapons. In addition to conscientious objection by individuals—the classical method favoured by pacifists—they included *collective* nonviolent resistance and non-cooperation and *mass* civil disobedience, weapons which, potentially at least, could be used to overthrow oppressive regimes.[6] A key work of synthesis in this period was *The Conquest of Violence* written by the Dutch anarchist and anti-militarist, Bart de Ligt.[7] Addressing specifically those who lust for revolution, he declared: "The more violence, the less revolution", and he urged that the movement against militarism, using mass nonviolent action, should proceed to make a social revolution. In the prisons and camps housing the conscientious objectors and anti-militarists of World War II, the synthesis was taken further. Referring to "one curious cultural synthesis" resulting from the wartime alliance between young religious pacifists and young socialists, an American pacifist journal drew attention to the emergence of a new kind of radical, one who would probably be "a source of confusion both to Peace Church

the army in order to spread disaffection and to persuade the troops to use their weapons against their class enemies.

[5] Two books, which helped to popularize Gandhi's technique in the West, are Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (London: Clarke, 1960, originally published in 1935) and K. Shridharani, *War Without Violence* (London: Gollancz, 1939).

[6] Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p. 222, suggests that satyagraha is the most important type of pacifism contributing to the development of nonviolent revolution largely because it combines a pacifist position with a technique of resistance and revolution, thus serving as a bridge or catalyst between pacifism and social revolution.

[7] The English edition was published in London by Routledge in 1937.

be emphasized, does not seek to provide a rounded history of the movement. The focus of the study, rather, is on what may loosely be called the movement's "strategy and tactics". The reason for choosing this focus will become apparent in Chapter Two, which deals with the period 1969-1973. In these years, the movement ran into severe difficulties, which, in view of many of its activists, threatened the achievement of its goals. A strategy debate then took place, the outcome of which was the adoption of a revised strategy. Jayaprakash Narayan (henceforth referred to as 'JP', the initials by which he was popularly known], second only to Vinoba Bhave in the movement's leadership, was the principal exponent of this new strategy. Its further development and application are related in Chapters Three and Four, which cover the period from JP's assumption of the leadership of the student-initiated agitation in Bihar in March 1974 down to the declaration by Indira Gandhi's Government of a general state of Emergency in June 1975. It was in these years that JP developed his concept of "Total Revolution," a concept which, it will be shown, is a version of the concept of nonviolent revolution but the promotion of which, since it was not supported by Vinoba, led to a split in the Sarvodaya movement. In Chapter Five, the experience of the movement in the years of the Emergency, 1975-77, is discussed. Chapter Six relates the subsequent experience in the years of the Janata Government, 1977-80, and Chapter Seven surveys developments during the first three years after Indira Gandhi's return to power in January 1980. In the "Conclusion", I make a final comment on the differences between Vinoba and JP and present some reflections on the movement's strategy.

In presenting my material chronologically, I have attempted to provide the reader with a narrative, rather than an analytical and theoretical, account of the development by its Indian exponents of their concept of nonviolent revolution. My justifications for making the attempt are two. The story of JP's intellectual odyssey from Marxism to Total Revolution has been

significantly, in a document written on the day preceding his assassination, he proposed that the Congress should disband as a political party and flower again in the form of a Lok Sevak Sangh or Association for the Service of the People. "Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine", he wrote, "has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinct from its cities and towns."[34]

The document in which Gandhi made this radical and, to most observers, astonishing proposal has come to be known as his "Last Will and Testament". For Gandhi's true followers it has remained a key document, a guide in helping them to chart the course of the nonviolent revolution in India which Gandhi had initiated but the completion of which, now that he was dead, it was their task to fulfill.

The vehicle for the development of the theory and practice of India's nonviolent revolution has been the Sarvodaya (Welfare of All) Movement, which is the direct descendant of Gandhi's Constructive Programme and of the institutions and persons involved in it. In this book, I attempt to trace the development of the movement from the time of Gandhi's death to the end of the year 1982. The book is concerned mainly with the years since 1969, partly because the story of the earlier years has been the subject of previous authors.[35] The purpose of Chapter One is to outline the main developments in the movement's first twenty-one years, knowledge of which is essential for understanding the more recent developments. The book, it should

[34] M. K. Gandhi, *My Non-Violence* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960), p. 359.

[35] See, for example. Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission* (Kashi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1954, 3rd ed. 1962), Suresh Ram, *Towards Total Revolution* (Thanjavur: Sarvodaya Prachuralayam, 1968), and Hallam Tennyson, *Saint on the March* (London: Gollancz, 1956). My own study (with M. Currel) *The Gentle Anarchists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) is primarily a sociological analysis of the movement.

pacifists and old line radicals". "Who is he, this New Minority Man?" it asked, and gave as its answer: "He is working for objectives which are both moral and practical . . . His ends will be easily identifiable as revolutionary but his reasons for working towards them will unite moral content with critical penetration."[8]

In 1946, the American new radicals of this kind formed the Committee for Nonviolent Revolution. Its policy statement included the following words:

"We favour decentralized, democratic socialism guaranteeing worker-consumer control of industries, utilities and other economic enterprises. We believe that the workers themselves should take steps to seize control of factories, mines and shops…. We believe in realistic action against war, against imperialism and against military or economic opposition by conquering nations, including the United States. We advocate such techniques of group resistance as demonstrations, strikes, organized civil disobedience, and underground organization where necessary. As individuals we refuse to join the armed forces, work in war industries, or buy government bonds and we believe in campaigns urging others to do similarly. We see nonviolence as a principle as well as a technique. In all action we renounce the methods of punishing, hating or killing any fellow human being. We believe that nonviolence includes such methods as sit-down strikes and seizure of plants. We believe that revolutionary changes can only occur through direct action by the rank and file, and not by deals or reformist proposals directed to the present political and labor leadership."[9]

In the years immediately following the formation of the Committee, A.J. Muste became the leading exponent of this approach, which, since his death, has been actively pursued

[8] Cited in Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* pp. 233-34, n. 67.

[9] Quoted in Sharp. *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p. 223.

by George Lakey and his associates in the Philadelphia Life Center.[10]

If the route leading to some pacifists becoming social revolutionaries was relatively straightforward, that leading some libertarian socialists to become pacifists was more tortuous. Certainly, one school of libertarian socialists—the Owenites—were social pacifists from the outset. But when the millennial hopes of a rapid transformation of competitive capitalist society faded, the successors of the Owenites, adopting the same cooperative approach to socialism but along 'segmental' rather than 'integral' lines, ceased being social revolutionaries. They retained their social pacifism but settled for reform rather than revolution. And when, about the turn of this century, they realized that the cooperative approach by itself was unlikely to achieve "the cooperative commonwealth", they allied themselves, not with other libertarian socialists but with democratic socialists, on the understanding that the latter's plans for state socialism would reserve a sector of the national economy for cooperatives. That cooperators allied themselves with democratic socialists rather than with those who were ideologically closer to them is partly explained by their aversion to the violent strategy adopted by most libertarian socialists. For mainstream anarchists, like Bakunin and Kropotkin, the strategy envisaged widespread popular insurrections in the course of which capitalism and the state would be abolished and replaced by a system of freely federated socialist communes.

The uprising of the Paris Commune of 1871 approximated to this anarchist model of revolution, but its crushing exposed the weakness of the strategy and led to a strengthening of

[10] For an account of Muste's ideas and actions, see Nat Hentoff, *Peace Agitator: The Story of A. J. Muste* (New York: Macmillan, 1964). Lakey's books include *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (San Francisco, 1973) and (with S. Gowan, W. Mover and R. Taylor) *Moving Toward a New Society* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1976).

pendence. The withdrawal of the British Raj, since it involved a basic change of regime, could be considered a nonviolent revolution—even if it had been accompanied by appalling and bloody communal conflicts which prompted Gandhi to reflect earnestly on the character of his countrymen and on the nature of the nonviolence they had displayed, in his view, that of "the weak" rather than of "the brave" or "the strong".[31] But it had been no more than a political revolution, and an incomplete one at that, since political power had still not been transferred to the masses. And, of course, it had in no sense been a *social* revolution. From this perspective, some constructive workers, soon after independence, expressed their concern at the way the Congress appeared to be ignoring the Constructive Programme. They suggested, therefore, that an organization should be formed which would seek to place constructive workers in the newly-formed Union and State governments, so that political power could be used to help establish a nonviolent social order. Gandhi opposed the suggestion on the ground that the moment nonviolence assumed political power it contradicted itself and became contaminated. "Politics have today," he said, "become corrupt. Anybody who goes into them is contaminated. Let us keep out of them altogether. Our influence will grow thereby."[32] The role of constructive workers, he added, was to guide political power and to mould the politics of the country without taking power themselves: "Banish power and keep it on the right path."[33] However, Gandhi did admit that it was necessary to reorganize the constructive work activities. In place of the various specific associations that had been set up to carry on particular items of the programme, he suggested their combination in a single umbrella-type association. More

[31] On Gandhi's evaluation of the kind of nonviolence used in the Indian struggle for independence, see Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* Chapter 6.

[32] Quoted in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase,* Vol. II, p. 664.

[33] Quoted in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase,* Vol. II, p. 666.

clear that he envisaged basic structural changes.[26] His ways of working might appear "reformist" and he might describe himself as a "social reformer" but his cast of mind was that of revolutionary. This is evident in his statement: "I would use the most deadly weapons if I believed they would destroy (the system). I refrain only because the use of such weapons would only perpetuate the system."[27] It is also clear that, looking beyond the attainment of political independence, he anticipated the need to use civil resistance: "I know that if I survive the struggle for freedom, I might have to give nonviolent battles to my own countrymen which may be as stubborn as that in which I am now engaged."[28] Further, Gandhi was convinced that, whatever might be true of other countries, a bloody revolution would not succeed in India.[29] He also believed that the Indian peasants, once the British prop to the status quo had been removed, would themselves take revolutionary action. In a free India, he told Louis Fischer in 1942, "the peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it."[30]

Additional insights into Gandhi's thinking about the nonviolent revolution in which he saw himself engaged may be gathered from various statements and proposals made in the brief period between the attainment of political independence and his assassination on 30 January 1948. From the perspective of Gandhi and his closest followers, political independence was merely 'the first step' towards the attainment of real inde-

[26] See, especially, the following of Gandhi's works: *Sarvodaya* and *Village Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1954 and 1963, respectively) and *Socialism of My Conception* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957).

[27] *Young India*, 17 March 1927. The quotation continues: " . . . though it may destroy the present administrators. Those who seek to destroy men rather than manners adopt the latter and become worse than those they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil."

[28] *Ibid,* 30 January 1930.

[29] *Young India,* 12 February 1925.

[30] Louis Fischer, *A Week with Gandhi* (New York, 1942), p. 54.

the tendency towards state socialism, whether of the Marxist or democratic variety. Some anarchists then developed an alternative syndicalist strategy.[11]The idea was to turn trade unions into revolutionary instruments of class struggle, the revolution taking the form of a general strike in which the unions would take over control of the instruments of production and dispense with the institutions of nation-states. The syndicalist strategy represented a significant move towards nonviolent revolution. Although the syndicalists were still far from being pacifists—as they envisaged armed workers defending the revolution—the theory of the revolutionary general strike was based on the same fundamental premise that underlies nonviolent action: that the power of rulers depends, in the last analysis, not on physical force but on the consent and cooperation, however reluctant, of those who are ruled. In essence, the syndicalist general strike represented the total non-cooperation of workers in the continuance of rule by the capitalists. However, before the syndicalist strategy had been put to the test, World War I intervened, the Tsarist regime in Russia collapsed, and the Bolsheviks led by Lenin seized power and established the first allegedly proletarian state. To most social revolutionaries, the Bolshevik revolution appeared to vindicate the Marxist-Leninist strategy. Except in Spain, where anarchists remained a significant force until their defeat during the Civil War (1936-39), libertarian socialism suffered an eclipse. In the four decades following the Bolshevik revolution, the strategy debates in the socialist movements throughout the world were conducted largely in terms of the rival theories of Bolshevik Communism and Social Democracy: libertarian ideas were more or less ignored.

[11] This strategy had been prefigured by certain Owenite trade unionists who, in 1834, formed the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. Its object was to take over the control of industry following what they called a Grand National Holiday.

It was not until the emergence of the New Left in Europe and the USA, in 1956, that libertarian socialist ideas began to be widely rediscovered and reasserted. The most striking feature of New Left thinking was its disillusionment with both Communism and Social Democracy: in the major forms then extant—Stalinism and Welfare Statism—neither appeared capable of achieving real socialism. In the ensuing decade, various themes, theories and actions, all distinctly libertarian even when couched in Marxist language, began to come to the fore: anti-militarism, the rediscovery of community, community action, radical decentralism, participatory democracy, the organization of the poor and the oppressed inter-racially and the building of counter-culture and counter-institutions (such as new "co-ops", collectives and communes). The New Left was "a movement of movements" rather than a single movement. But among these movements three were of particular significance for the development of the concept of nonviolent revolution: the Civil Rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements in the USA and the movement for nuclear disarmament in Britain and elsewhere. In all three, methods of nonviolent action, ranging from peaceful protests and marches through to mass civil disobedience, were widely used. The popularization in the West of this unconventional political technique, at the level of action and not merely of ideas, encouraged the belief among the more radical pacifists and anarchists that nonviolent revolution was a possible scenario.[12] In Britain, for example, under the aegis of the Committee of 100, radical pacifists and anarchists came together and, as a result of their mutual education, a new anarchist hybrid clearly emerged: anarcho-pacifism. In ideological terms, this hybrid fused an anarchist critique of the state with a pacifist critique of violence; and "for nonvi-

[12] The scenario is discussed by Martin Oppenheimer in Chapter Six of his *Urban Guerrilla* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970). His conclusions are negative.

To Gandhi, the latter was the *more* important. This assertion is supported by various statements that he made. In 1931 he wrote: "My work of social reform was in no way less than or subordinate to political work. The fact is that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former."[23] A few years later, he is reported as telling his followers: "If you can make a success of the constructive programme you will win *swaraj* for India without civil disobedience."[24] And in 1940, in a significant confession that he had not achieved a correct balance between the two sides, he admitted: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was wrong. … I feared that I should estrange co-workers and so carried on with imperfect *ahimsa*."[25]

Gandhi's constructive programme was developed piecemeal and included items such as the promotion of *khadi* and other village industries, achieving Hindu-Muslim communal unity, prohibition, and the abolition of untouchability. In a pamphlet *The Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place,* published in 1941, eighteen such items were listed. At first glance, it is a curious list and one that suggests—as does the 1931 statement quoted above—that Gandhi was a social reformer rather than social revolutionist. However, it included one item of an intellectual order different from the rest and which he singled out as "the master key to nonviolent independence": the attainment of economic equality. From this, as also from the other writings in which he sketched his vision of a future India made up of largely self-sufficient but inter-linked "village republics", it is

Studies, University of Bradford. Following Overy, I use "civil resistance" as the best term to refer to one side of Gandhi's approach.

[23] *Young India*, 6 August 1931.

[24] Quoted in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1956), Vol. I, p. 44.

[25] *Harijan*, 21 July 1940.

In India, as might be expected, there has always been a more rounded understanding of Gandhi. As a broad generalization, it would be fair to say that for most Indians, including the bulk of those who accepted his leadership of the Indian National Congress, it was Gandhi's technique of struggle against the British Raj that attracted them to him. Other aspects of his thought and activities, when not openly challenged, were, so to speak, tolerated as the price to pay for his leadership or, as in the case of his "fad" for *khadi*, interpreted as having little more than symbolic value for the *political* struggle.[21] But over the course of the years in which he dominated Indian politics, Gandhi did succeed in attracting to himself a relatively small band of disciples—genuine votaries of his own developing philosophy of nonviolence. It was to these people that Gandhi assigned the main responsibility for developing what he came to call his Constructive Programme.

This Programme provides the essential clue to understanding Gandhi's approach to nonviolence, as well as confirmation that he was a social revolutionary. From the outset of his public career, including the period of apprenticeship in South Africa, Gandhi, as an acknowledged disciple of Tolstoy, was concerned to see that all social life should be governed, as far as possible, by "the law of love". This implied not merely conforming to this "law" in struggling against oppression but also constructing and reconstructing social institutions. The Gandhian approach, therefore, was dual or two-sided, one side being what may be termed "civil resistance," the other being "constructive work".[22]

the relevance of Gandhi today, see my article "A new society" in *Resurgence,* May-June 1975. It should be noted, however, that, earlier, others had pointed to their relevance. See Richard Gregg, *Which Way Lies Hope!* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1957) and Wilfred Wellock, *Gandhi as a Social Revolutionary* (Preston: Wellock, 1957).

[21] Thus the wearing of *khadi* and "the Gandhi cap" became, in Nehru's words, "the livery of freedom".

[22] Gandhi's development of his dual approach in the years 1915-22 is the subject of the (as yet unpublished) study by Bob Overy of the School of Peace

olent revolution" became the rallying cry.[13] But as, from 1967 onwards, the New Left disintegrated—the disintegration being marked by the bombings of the Weathermen and of the Angry Bridge and a widespread attraction to the cult of revolutionary violence—any hope or prospect that the various New Left strands could be woven into a grand strategy for nonviolent revolution rapidly faded.[14] Up until this writing (1984), nonviolent revolution in the West remains very much a concept—perhaps more a slogan than a concept— confined to miniscule groupings. With the development of nonviolent action against the extension of nuclear energy and with the resurgence, since 1977, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Europe and the more recent revitalization of the peace movement in the USA, it is possible that in the near future the concept may gain wider currency; but it is no more than a possibility.

However, there is one country in which nonviolent revolution has been elaborated at the conceptual level and also actively promoted by a coherent social movement at the practical level.[15] That country is, of course, India, the homeland of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhi, in fact, coined the term 'nonviolent revolution", although he did not use it often. Two of his references to it may be noted. In one, he declared: "Some

[13] In 1971, *Peace News,* the British peace movement journal and by then one which expressed the new viewpoint, adopted "For Nonviolent Revolution" as its subtitle. In the following year, the War Resisters' International (London) published its *Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution.* The concept was subsequently elaborated by Howard Clark, a former editor of *Peace News,* in a pamphlet entitled *Making Nonviolent Revolution* (London: Housmans, 1978). The emergence of anarcho-pacifism is discussed more fully in my "Resisting the nation-state; the pacifist and anarchist traditions" in L. Tivey (ed.) *The Nation State* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981).

[14] See Nigel Young, *An Infantile Disorder: The Crisis and Decline of the New Left* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

[15] Sri Lanka is a second country in which a significant movement for nonviolent revolution has developed. For a comparison between the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement and its Indian counterpart, see Detlef Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980).

have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary —a nonviolent revolutionary."[16] In the other, he wrote: "A nonviolent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'. It is a programme of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power."[17] Both statements require interpretation. In the first, there is no clear reference to *social* revolution: in declaring himself a "nonviolent revolutionary" Gandhi may have been claiming no more than that he had pioneered basic innovations in the *method* of struggling against oppression or, in other words, had revolutionized the *technique* of struggle. In the second, although the contrast between seizing power and transforming relationships is significant—pointing perhaps to a difference between Gandhi's approach and that of the Committee for Nonviolent Revolution cited above—the context makes it clear that the relationships he had in mind were *political,* not *social,* the transformation to be marked by the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. At most and in itself, this statement would suggest that Gandhi had developed the concept of nonviolent *political* revolution—a concept the application of which was perhaps limited to situations where, as in India at that time, the people did not enjoy full democratic rights.

In fact, as his other writings and his activities make clear, Gandhi was a social as well as a political revolutionary; he did seek radical changes in the structure of society, polity and economy and also in modes of thinking and individual behaviour. He was, indeed, in modern parlance, an advocate of total revolution. But to most observers in the West and also to many in India, Gandhi's revolution, involving as it did a critique of industrial civilization, was of the wrong kind: it was not progressive but reactionary, aiming at putting the clock back, not forward![18] Given this view of Gandhi as a "counter-revolutionary", it is not surprising that even many of those who admired his skill in leading the struggle for national liberation in India were highly selective in what they took to be Gandhi's "message". In the West, with rare exceptions, Gandhi's contribution was assessed as the development and popularisation of a *technique* of social action, a *method* of resolving conflicts nonviolently. By informed students, although often not by nonviolent activists who invoked his name, it has usually been recognized that Gandhi's "technique" is based on a "philosophy" which renders the technique distinguishable from "passive resistance". Thus, for example, *satyagraha* is principled as distinct from pragmatic or expediential nonviolence; and it aims at converting rather than coercing the opponent, whereas passive resistance is often overtly coercive in the sense of seeking to compel the opponent to do what he would not willingly do. Nevertheless, despite these differences, the picture of Gandhi presented in the West has largely been that of an exponent of the technique of nonviolent action.[19] In this context, it is significant that when "Gandhism" began to have a noticeable influence on politics in the West it manifested itself first at the level of action. It was only subsequently that some nonviolent activists proceeded to explore other aspects of Gandhi's thought and to discover their relevance to problems that confront Western societies.[20]

[16] The quotation was used as the epigraph to an article by Jayaprakash Narayan in *The Times* (London), 13 October 1969. In the article, JP argues that Gandhi's nonviolence "is indeed a philosophy of a total revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes."

[17] *Harijan*, 17 February 1946.

[18] The key work for understanding a Gandhian revolution is *Hind Swaraj,* 1909, a devastating critique of modern industrial civilization.

[19] See, especially, Joan Bondurant, *The Conquest of Violence (*Princeton University Press, 1958) and Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1971). It should be noted that both authors recognize, even if they do not emphasize, the importance of the "constructive work" side of Gandhi's approach.

[20] This reflects my own personal experience, an interest in his technique leading on to a deeper study of Gandhi's ideas. For a discussion of