Direct Action and the New Pacifism

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Non-violent direct action against war is a new idea, because any sort of non-violent action and any sort of action against war are both new ideas. Of course there have been instances of non-violent action throughout history— as Gandhi once said, "all society is held together by non-violence"— but the detailed theory of non-violence as an organised method of political action is recent. Similarly, there have always been objections to this or that war— because it was a waste of money or a bad risk or against the wrong people—and there have always been people who object to all war, but the detailed theory of war-resistance as an organised method of political action is also recent.

Anti-militarism

There are two obvious ways of taking direct action against war— a mutiny by those who fight, and a strike by those whose work supports those who fight. In fact a mutiny against war is scarcely feasible. Mutineers have usually been protesting against their standard of living rather than their way of life, against those who give them orders to kill rather than the orders themselves. Mutiny is after all a rebellion of armed men, and armed men don't lay down their arms (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 become a man again— if he does, he immediately ceases to be a soldier, and his protest is no longer mutiny. Exsoldiers are often the most resolute 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 very carefully taught not to think. And even if they did, mutiny would scarcely be the way out— how can violence be destroyed by violence?

A strike against war is more feasible, since the working classes aren't already committed to war and they have a long tradition of strike action. But the hard fact is that the Left— socialist, communist and anarchist— has a pretty shocking war record. People who are quite prepared to lead workers into strike after strike for wages are not willing to strike against their rulers for peace, and most wartime strikes have been intended not to prevent war but to prevent rulers and employers from using war as an excuse to increase discipline or decrease wages. When a strike is clearly against war, it is almost always against that particular war, not against all war; and even when it is against all war, it is almost always against national war and not against civil war as well. But they are both war— a vertical war between social classes is just as much a war as a horizontal war between separate communities within a single society. War is only a name for organised mass violence. But left-wing disapproval of horizontal war is usually in direct proportion to approval of vertical war, and vice versa: while a diagonal war is easily disguised as a patriotic or class war, whichever is approved. The man who won't fight the enemy abroad will fight the enemy at home, and the man who won't fight the enemy at home will fight the enemy abroad In the event the Left will fight just as willingly as the Right, and as often as not they end by fighting on the same side. Most people oppose the use of violence in theory, but most people use violence ia practice, and no one who deliberately uses violence really opposes war. As Thomas k Kempis said, "All men desire peace, but very few desire those things which make for peace."

The strongest left-wing opponents of war used to be the antimilitarists, who before 1914 were very close to (and often the same as) the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists as well as the

more libertarian socialists. Their proclaimed weapon was the general strike against war, but this turned out to be as much of a myth as the general strike described in George SoreFs Reflections on Violence (1906) — except that Sorel meant his to be mythical, while not only moderate leaders like Bebel, Jaures 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 Great War begin and then actually joined it. Only a few hard-headed realists like Gustav Landauer knew the true weakness of left-wing anti-militarism, and no one imagined that passionate anti-militarists like Herve" and Mussolini would themselves lead the Labour Movement into the war effort.

In fact anti-militarists have had very little anti-militarist influence on the official or unofficial Labour Movement, whatever other influence they had, and even that little influence melts away to nothing when the political temperature rises (consider Keir Hardie, George Lansbury and Aneurin Bevan in this country alone). For all their fine talk at international conferences in peacetime, most social democrats become social patriots when the blast of war blows in their ears, and even the brave 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 Great War began, "must not be disheartened by any discordant note at home." Among socialists, only the Marxists stood firm in 1870, and even Marx thought Bismarck was fighting a "defensive" war; only the extreme Marxists and some other extreme socialists stood firm again in 1914, and of course the Marxists began fighting ferociously four years later.

In 1939 only a few very extreme socialists still stood firm, while the Marxists made themselves thoroughly ridiculous.

The anarchist record is better, but many sincere comrades followed Kropotkin in 1914 and Rudolf Rocker in 1939. And even if all the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists and anti-militarists had stood firm, war would still have come in 1914 and again in 1939. For militarism is stronger than anti-militarism, nationalism is stronger than internationalism, conformism is stronger than non-conformism— and never more so than in the middle of a war crisis. A general strike against war before the State has caught the war fever demands a revolutionary intention that seldom exists; a general strike against war after the State has succumbed demands a degree of revolutionary courage and determination that almost never exists. The Left is reluctant enough to challenge the State when all the circumstances are favourable— how much more so when the circumstances are completely unfavourable! Once the State is down with the fever, it is already too late to protest or demonstrate or threaten strike action, because the fever is so infectious that the people catch it before anyone quite realises what is happening; and by the time war actually breaks out it comes as a relief, like a rash following a high temperature. Then there is no chance of doing anything except in the case of defeat.

The problem is partly one of simple timing. Randolph Bourne, the American liberal pragmatist whose observation of the Great War drove him to anarchist pacifism, pointed out in his unfinished essay on the state[1] 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

[1] The State (1918), posthumously published in Untimely Essays (1919V reprinted separately by the American "Resistance Press" (1946–47)- never published in this country.

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 writer). Although Bourne didn't belong to the Labour Movement, he had far more insight into the nature of war and its relationship with society and the State than most 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 only 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 … A people at war have become in the most literal sense obedient, respectful, trustful children again." Nor, alas, are the working classes immune to "this regression to infantile attitudes," so "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 be expected to destroy it.

Pacifism

Thou shalt not kill was a religious command, and pacifism began as a religious or quasi-religious doctrine. The condemnation of individual retaliation appears in most "higher" religions and philosophies — so that the submissive non-resistance of Christianity is closely analogous to the non-violence of Indian religion, the non-assertion of Chinese Taoism, and the defiant non-resistance of Socrates and many of his successors. The power of non-violence over violence, of apparent weakness over apparent strength, of right over might, is illustrated in every mythology — Jack the Giant-Killer, David and Goliath and Daniel in the Lions' Den, Rama and Ravan and Gautama and Mara, the Battle of Marathon or the Battle of Britain, Horatius on the Bridge or the schoolboy's voice saying Play up, play up, mid play the game, or Thurber's Termite. The difference is that Jesus and Gautama and Mahavira and Lao-tse and Socrates have ordered non-retaliation as a moral imperative rather than merely pointing it as a 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 several personal inconsistencies — Jesus told us not to resist evil, but he drove the money-changers from the Temple by force; Socrates would not resist the Athenian state, but he fought bravely enough in the Athenian army; Marcus Aurelius as a philosopher was a convinced Stoic, but as a Roman Emperor he persecuted Christians and fought barbarians vigorously; Asoka was converted to Buddhism and renounced war, but he kept his conquests and ruled as firmly as ever.

The contradiction between the known wrongness and the continued use of violence has usually been 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 theoretically non-violent systems have in practice tended to make life tolerable by treating the more difficult doctrines as counsels of perfection or to withdraw from it into

asceticism or quietism or both. This tendency is of course greatly reinforced when a religion or philosophy becomes established by the State. "Every Church," said Tolstoy, "excludes the doctrine of Christ." The story of pacifism is ini fact the story of the way monks and heretics preserved the doctrine of Christ despite its rejection by the Churches.

The early Christians, who were heretics themselves, often took non-resistance seriously. It is well known that many of them refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods and were martyred; it is less well known that many of them similarly refused to bear arms in the Roman legions and were also martyred. Many writers, such as Origen and Lactantius, made uncomplimentary remarks about war; Tertullian's De Corona condemned it out of hand. The change came at the beginning of the 4th century, naturally enough, when Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire— when, according to the Spanish humanist, Luis Vives, "Constantine entered the house of Christ with the Devil by his side." This was when the revolting doctrine of the "just war" was invented, 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 (1521), which described how the net had been strong enough to hold little fish like the early Christians but was broken by big fish like Constantine, so that they nearly all got away. But not quite all. The doctrine of non-resistance was held by early heretical sects like the Montanists and Marcionists, and later ones like the Albigenses and Waldenses always tended to condemn war (and, as often as not, the Warfare State as well). The same was true of 16th century humanists like Erasmus and Vives. But modern pacifism began with the followers of Wyclif, the Lollards, and of Hus. When the extreme Hussites—Taborites— were routed in 1434 by their moderate enemies— Calixtines— after twenty years of bitter war, the survivors became non-resistants under their new name of Bohemian Brethren; the Moravians were a later branch who emigrated to America. Many "anabaptist" (i.e. extreme Protestant) sects followed the same pattern of pacifism following disaster after the fall of Minister in 1535. The Dutch Mennonites and Collegiants, the German Schwenkfelders and Dunkers, and the English Brownists and Baptists, were only a few of the unknown number of anabaptist sects who turned towards anarchist pacifism in the 16th and 17th centuries, when it became clear that the Kingdom of Heaven was not of this world.

But the best known of all the peace sects is the Society of Friends* which has been chiefly responsible for keeping Christian pacifism alive during the last three hundred years. There have been many later sects —the French Camisards, the Russian Molokans and Dukhobors, the AngloAmerican Shakers, Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses— but the Quakers have had the greatest influence, because they have taken the maximum part in conventional life with the minimum compromise of their principles, and because they have been so much more tolerant than most other religious groups. The Quaker "peace testimony" appeared as early as George Fox's reply to Cromwell's Army Commissioners in 1651 and James Naylor's last words in 1660, and it was formally stated in the ofl&cial 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 doctrine of non-resistance (and is exactly what Winstanley had been saying ten years earlier — how many disappointed Diggers became Quakers?). The re-

markable thing is that the Quakers have never wavered from their first position.[2] Penn's "Holy Experiment" of Pennsylvania was from its foundation in 1682 to the fall of the Quaker regime in 1756 the nearest to a non-violent state in history. Robert Barclay said in his Apologia (1676): "It is not lawful for Christians to resist evil or to war or fight in any cause." Johnathan 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, and Quakers have always taken the lead in both the official peace movement and the unofficial pacifist movement. When A. C. F. Beales set out to write 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 world-wide ramifications of the presentday 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." Thus 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 Quakers have always been active in warrelief work (which has twice won them the Nobel Peace Prize). More important, it was Quakers who bore the brunt of resistance to the demands of the Militia Acts between 1757 and 1860, both by public protest and by individual conscientious objection. So they tried to prevent war happening and resisted when it did.

The point is that Quakers don't actually follow the doctrine of non-resistance at all. Fox told Cromwell in 1654, "My weapons are not carnal but spiritual," but they were highly 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 never been reluctant to protest against social injustice. Elizabeth Fry's prison work is hardly "non-resistance". It was Quakers who led the campaign against slavery, 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 right on to the end. In fact one of the most interesting things in the history of modern dissent is the close connection between professed nonresistance to evil and sustained resistance to racial oppression. William Lloyd Garrison, the American Abolitionist leader, wasn't a Quaker because he wasn't a Christian, but he was a total non-resistant, and so were many of his colleagues — such as Whittier, Ballou and Musser. Indeed he symbolises in his own career this curious connection, for he was not only the founder of the New England and American AntiSlavery Societies and editor of the Liberator but also the founder of the New England Non-Resistance Society and editor of the NonResistor,

One day it might be worth making a detailed examination of the Boston Peace Convention of 1838, where the Non-Resistance Societywas formed. 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 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] … We repudiate all human politics, worldly honours and stations of authority … We cordially adopt the nonresistance principle." Here is pure Christian anarchism, derived from 17th century Puritanism— no wonder it excited Tolstoy so much. But these gentle unworldly pacifists were right in the front of the campaign against slavery, and Garrison was notorious for his language about the American slave-owners, which was no less violent than Bertrand Russell's about the present rulers of the world. Non-resistance indeed!

[2] See Margaret Hirst: The Quakers in Peace & War (1923).

The fact is that theoretical non-resistance 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 involves nonco-operation with the State's key functions of oppression and war. The State can tolerate the abolition of slavery, but not the abolition of war as well. When Jesus abrogated the traditional talion law he was unwittingly 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 similarly threatening his State and ours. As Bourne said in 1918, "We cannot crusade against war without crusading implicitly against the State." It is because most pacifists never realise this that they are constantly surprised by the hostility their behavour provokes. Most pacifists are really sentimentalists— hoping to get rid of war without changing anything else, so you can bully 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 after 1878 as well as a pacifist. He never called himself one, since he used the word to describe those who relied on violence, but his eloquent and unequivocal 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 authority, he had to proclaim the duty of total resistance to the State's totalitarian 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 that," 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 non-resistance, but the implication is obstinate 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 own hands." Here we see how religious pacifism and political anti-militarism came to the same conclusion before the Great War, for what Tolstoy was advocating was in fact a non-violent general strike, individual civil disobedience on such a scale that it became direct action, a revolutionary technique similar to those proposed by William Godwin, Pierre Proudhon and Benjamin Tucker, an anarcho-syndicalist insurrection without the insistence on violence that disfigured the thought of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta. But how can such a strike be organised? In the event the pacifists were shown to suffer from the same false optimism as the anti-militarists, for when the Great War came their non- violent general strike turned out to be just as much of a myth as the industrial; general strike; and they were reduced to individual conscientious objection when they were called up.

It is often thought that military conscription was unknown in this country until the Great War, but as well as the old Militia Acts there were the press-gangs and the most efficient recruiting sergeant of all, hunger; Professor Coulton's reference to "hunger-conscripts under the name of volunteers" was no exaggeration, and it was hunger that kept the British Army going until war became too professional and too efficient in killing people. Conscription in its modern form appeared on the horizon only when the weakness of British military preparations was revealed by the Boer War (the first serious war for half a century), and the foundation of the National Service League in 1902 began a long campaign for compulsory military service. Even when the Great War came the Government delayed as long as possible, hoping that Alfred Leete's picture of

Kitchener saying Your Country needs You would be enough. But within the first year the failure of voluntary recruiting led to National Registration (of all men and women between 15 and 75!), and this 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 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.[3]

Nothing is more instructive than the way the leaders of the Labour Movement rejected every stage in this process before it happened and then accepted it afterwards, condemning the principle of conscription all the time they were collaborating with it. In the same way they managed between the Wars to oppose pacifism and unilateral disarmament on one side 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 Government that extended conscription in 1947 and also decided to manufacture and test the British Bomb. All with the best intentions. In much the same way the Official peace movement — the conference and arbitration people — which had been trying to build igloos in the Sahara 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 unwaveringly against all war were the extreme pacifists and the extreme socialists (including many anarchists). Here we come up against the really crucial problem, which consists of two questions — Who are the real war-resisters? and How can the warresisters really resist war?

The answer to the first question was given in the Great War, when the Labour and peace movements utterly failed to resist, when the "conscientious objectors" were found to have political as well as religious principles, when the people who formed the No Conscription Fellowship in November 1914 and began going to jail just over a year later turned out to be mostly Quakers and members of the ILP. Real pacifism and real anti-militarism were the same thing, though some people followed one rather than the other, since they persuaded 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 how unpleasant it was to be a "conchie" in the Great War.

It is estimated that 6,000 men went to prison, and the common sentence was two years; worse, you could be arrested immediately after release ,if they wanted to play cat-and-mouse with you. More than 650 people were imprisoned twice, and three were actually put inside six times. Arthur Creech Jones, later a Labour Colonial Secretary, was sentenced in succession to 6 months, 12 months, 2 years and 2 years again; Fenner Brockway, founder of the NCF and later of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, got 6 months, 12 months and 2 years. (Notice how both of them were 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 brutal treatment they received in custody, which was quite normal. It is a valid criticism of individual passive resistance to war to point out that it is ineffective, but critics must admit that it demanded considerable courage and determination. The obvious corollary is that this determination should somehow be employed

[3] See Denis Hayes: Conscription Conflict (1949), which goes up to 1939 and its sequel Conscription & Conscience (1949).

more effectively, and the obvious hope between the Wars was that it would be properly organised.

But that hope was false. The NCF was dissolved in November 1919, though it was revived in February 1921 as the No More Wat 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 1934–35 and the unimportant Oxford Union resolution of February 1933). The result was in effect to dissolve the alliance between the religious and the political war-resisters, and this couldn't be restored by the War Resisters' International (which was formed in Holland in 1921) because its British section was the predominantly religious PPU. It is true that the PPU kept the faith alive and got well over 100,000 members by 1939, but it was passivist as well as pacifist, and when the war against Fascism came and thousands of men broke their pledges, it was reduced to publishing literature and counting up the numbers of COs in the registrations (seldom more than 2% and usually less than 1%). So after 1945 the situation was far more hopeless than it had been before 1914, because the war-resisters had failed miserably twice-over, and far more urgent too, because the Bomb meant that 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 stili no answer to the second one — How can war-resisters really resist war? Perhaps it was just because everything had become so hopeless and so urgent that the answer came at last

Non-violent Direct Action

A few months before he died, William James gave a lecture[4] in which he put himself "in the anti-militarist party'* but declared that "a permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasureeconomy," and insisted that "'we must make new energies and hardihoods 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 the Great War, he felt sure that "the martial type of character can be bred without war," and he called for an "army against nature" to replace armies against fellowmen. (This idea/ of a peace-army is an old one, and is the basis of Pierre Ceresole's Service Civile Internationale, whose British section is the International Voluntary Service.) But ten years after the Great War, Walter Lippmann pointed out[5] 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 "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 had often assumed that these issues could be decided by another form of war, violent revolution, and religious pacifists had often assumed that they could be eliminated altogether by mutual conciliation. Lippmann would have none of this : "Any real programme of peace must rest on the

[4] The Moral Equivalent of War, leaflet 27 of the American "Association for Internationa Conciliation" (1910); posthumously published in Memories & Studies (1911); reprinted separately by the PPU (1943).

[5] The Political Equivalent of War, in the Atlantic Monthly (August 1928).

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."

So the problem is the positive one of replacing war as well as the negative one of resisting it; in fact we have to replace war before we resist it, since our resistance must by nature be both a moral and a political equivalent to war. The irony is that the solution has been there all the time; for the insoluble Kantian antinomy between violent resistance and non-resistance is only superficially insoluble and submits quite easily to Hegelian dialectic. The thesis is violent resistance, the antithesis is non-resistance, its opposite : and the synthesis is non-violent resistance, or passive resistance. We have already seen how this ideological change occurred historically, and the only problem now is to look a bit deeper. Lassalle said "passive resistance is the resistance that doesn't resist." Is this necessarily true?

The trouble is that passive resistance is usually thought of as an inner-directed and ineffective technique, bearing witness rather than doing something (as it tends to be, for instance, in the hands of individual' conscientious objectors), and both the idea and the history of other-directed and effective passive resistance have been buried by the human obsession with violence. The suggestion that passive resistance is the solution to tyranny runs underground in political thought until the 16th century French humanist, Etienne de La Boetie, wrote an essay[6] advocating it as a way out of the "willing slavery" on which tyrants based their power: "If nothing be given them, if they be not obeyed, without fighting, without striking a blow, they remain naked, disarmed, and are nothing." And he meant it politically as well as psychologically when he said, "Resolve not to obey, and you are free." The same suggestion appears again in Shelley's Mask of Anarchy[7]:

> 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 old syndicalist song :

> Ce n'est pas a coup de mitrcdlle
>
> Que le capital tu vaincras; Non, car pour gagner la bataille
>
> Tu n'auras qua croiser les bras,

"You have only to fold your arms." The 19th century Belgian socialist, Anselm Bellegarrigue, developed a "theory of calm" in which revolution could be achieved by nothing more than "abstention and inertia". And the industrial or pacifist general strike is only a special form of passive resistance; while the plan for "mobilisation against all war" which the Dutch pacifist, Bart de Ligt, put to the conference of the War Resisters' International in 1934 s is simply the old pacifist and industrial general strikes combined and described in detail.

[6] Le Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, ou Le Contr'un, written by La Boetie when he was 16 (1546–47) according to his close friend Montaigne; several pirated editions were posthumously published in France in the 1570s; there is a good English translation called The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude (1735) and a bad American one called Anti-Dictator (1942).

[7] Written immediately after the Massacre of Peterloo in August 1819 but first published posthumously in 1832.

But collective passive resistance isn't just another clever idea which has never 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 plebians from the city of Rome in 494 BC (according to Livy), that of the barbarians who roamed over Europe during the Dark Ages trying to find somewhere to live, that of the Puritans who left England and France in the 17th century, that of the Jews who left Russia around 1900 and Germany in the 1930s, that of all the refugees from Communist countries since the last War. Or there is the boycott, used by the American colonies 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 1955–56 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 Great War, the German strike against the Kapp putsch in 1920, and dozens of minor examples every year — in fact all non-violent strikes are simply a familiar form of passive resistance. There is also the technique of non-co-operation, as used by the Greek women in Lysistrata, by the Dutch against Alva in 1567–72 (see the film La Kermesse Herdique), by the Hungarians under Ferenc Deak against the Austrian regime in 1861–67 (consider how Lajos Kossuth is much more famous than Deak because he was much more romantic — and much less successful), by the Irish against the British regime in 1879–82 (until Parnell ratted by making the Kiimainham Treaty with Gladstone), by the German sailors against their belligerent admirals in 1918, and by the Germans against the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923–25; when this technique is used against an individual it is called "sending to Coventry" — the people mentioned above sent their oppressors to Coventry.

A more familiar technique is that of general resistance to oppression without the use of violence, because violence would be useless or unnecessary — as used by the Jews against Roman governors who brought images into Jerusalem in the 1st century AD, by the English against James II in 1686–87, by the German Catholics and Socialists against Bismarck in 1873–83, by the English Non-conformists against the Education Act in 1902 and the English trade-unionists against the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, by the Finns against the Russian regime's introduction of conscription in 1902, by the Koreans against the Japanese regime in 1919 and the Egyptians against the British puppet regime in the same year, by the Samoans against the New Zealand regime in 1920–36, by the Norwegians and Danes against the Nazi regime in 1940–43, and by the Poles and Hungarians against the Russian regime in 1956 (with a disastrous climax in Hungary). All these techniques represent ways of resisting without using violence, but in most cases violence would have been used by the resisters if they had thought it would work. The change comes when non-violence is adopted because it is expected to work better than violence, and in particular when the non-violent action is directly against the source of dispute. When Thoreau refused to pay his poll-tax he was using civil disobedience; when he put a negro slave on the Canada train he was using direct action. And when non-violent direct action is used collectively it becomes an entirely new technique.

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 individual protests which never have any effect, that it must become concrete instead of abstract — when in fact we decide that what is needed is not so much a

negative doctrine of non-resistance or non-violent passive resistance as a positive doctrine of non-violent active resistance, not so much a static peace as a dynamic war without violence — then our only possible conclusion is that the way out of the morass is through mass non-violent direct action. What sort of mass non-violent direct action? The answer was given more than half a century ago not by a war-resister at all but by a man who was leading resistance to racial oppression in South Africa, by an obscure Gujarati lawyer called Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhi came to South Africa when he was only 23, with a brief from a Muslim firm in his home-town of Porbandar for a complicated commercial case involving its Pretoria branch. He got the case settled out of court within a few months, but in 1894 he decided to stay in South Africa to organise Indian resistance to the colour- bar. After ten years he had become the trusted leader of the Indian community, but there was nothing remarkable about his career. What happened then (and what made him so important in the history of non-violent resistance) was that he became a "charismatic" leader — Max Weber's word for one who seems to have superhuman qualities and exerts inexplicable influence over his followers and opponents.

The significant date for the beginning of this change and 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 1907–09 and 1913–14 which followed made him and his technique famous, and soon after his return 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 (1924–25), Nagpur (1927), Bardoli (1927–28), and in the Native States (1938–39), and there were three pairs of national operations, in 1919 and 1920–22, in 1930–31 and 1931–32, and in 1940–41 and 1942 — all directed by Gandhi himself or by his lieutenants. In the end, as everyone knows, the British Labour Government granted (granted!) independence to India after partition; and then, as everyone also knows, only a few months later, in January 1948, Gandhi was shot by a Hindu fanatic called Vinayak Godse — killed by his own like Socrates and Jesus. He had said, "Let no one say he is a follower of Gandhi," but his charisma, his strange influence, lives on. The Indian Government and the ruling Congress party claim to follow him; but his real successor is not Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of a new raj, but Vinoba Bhave, the leader since 1951 of the agrarian Bhudan movement — not so much Congress as the Praja Socialists. Like Albert Schweitzer (and,. of all people, Emma Goldman), Gandhi has become a useful saint whose name is invoked by people for whom his message means nothing. But he has genuine followers outside India as well, Albert Luthuli in South Africa, Kenneth Kaunda in Rhodesia, Martin Luther King in the USA, Danilo Dolci in Sicily, and Michael Scott — people who have learnt to use satyagraha from his example, finding it the only form of valid political action in the shadow of the concentration camp and the Bomb.

But what is satyagraha? It is a Gujarati word coined by Gandhi to replace the term "passive resistance", which he disliked because k was in a foreign language and didn't mean exactly what he meant. It is usually translated as "soul-force", but the literal translation is "holding on to truth" (we should imagine a French or German leader in his place coining a word like veritenitude or wahrhaltung). For Gandhi, the goal was truth and the way was non-violence, the old Indian idea of ahimsa, which includes non-injury and non-hatred and is not unlike agape (or love) in the New Testament. But in the Indian dharma, as in the analogous Chinese too, the way and the goal are one — so nonviolence is truth, and the practice of ahimsa is satyagraha. This sort of reasoning

can lead to meaningless metaphysical statements (such as the one that since non-violence is truth, violence is untruth and therefore doesn't really 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[8] takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." This is a refreshing change from traditional political thought in which means, as Joan Bondurant says, "have been eclipsed by ends" — most European philosophers have tended to believe that if one takes care of the ends, the means will take care of themselves, with the results that we all know.

There has been much rather fruitless discussion of the exact meaning of satyagraha.[9] We are told 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 rather than as resistance which is positively non-violent by nature, as satyagraha is. Duragraha is obviously just a subtle method of coercion, but satyagraha, according to Gandhi, "is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion," because "the idea underlying satyagraha is to convert the wrong-doer, to awaken the sense of injustice in him." The way of doing this is to draw the opponent's violence onto oneself by some form of non- violent direct action, causing deliberate suffering in oneself rather than in the opponent. "Without suffering it is impossible to attain freedom," said Gandhi, because only suffering "opens the inner understanding in man." The object of satyagraha is to make a partial sacrifice of oneself as a symbol of the wrong in question. "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, it means pitting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant." Here is the dynamic war without violence that we needed, the moral and political equivalents of war — and at the same time a way of resisting war itself.

Richard Gregg has ingeniously explained the psychological effect of satyagraha as follows :

"Non-violent resistance acts as a sort of moral ju-jutsu. The nonviolence and good will of the victim act like the lack of physical opposition by the user of physical ju-jutsu, to cause the attacker to lose his moral balance. He suddenly and unexpectedly loses the moral support which the usual violent resistance of most victims would render him. He plunges forward, as it were,, into a new world of values. He feels insecure because of the novelty of the situation and his ignorance of how to handle it. He loses his poise and self-confidence. The victim not only lets the attacker come, but, as it were, pulls him forward by kindness, generosity and voluntary suffering, so that the attacker quite loses his moral balance. The user of non-violent resistance, knowing what he is doing and having a more creative purpose and perhaps a clearer sense of ultimate values than the other, retains his moral balance. He uses the leverage of superior wisdom to subdue the rough direct force or physical strength of his opponent."

Everyone who has taken part in non-violent direct action knows how true this is, and knows the strange sense of elation and catharsis that results; ha can't lose, since if he is attacked he wins by demonstrating the wrong he came to protest against, and if he is not attacked he wins by demonstrating his moral superiority over his opponent. But this means that he must choose non-violence because he is strong, not because he is weak. Gandhi always reserved particular scorn for what he called the "non-violence of the weak" (such as that of the pre-war and postwar

[8] Published asan Appendix to de Ligt's The Conquest of Violence"; reprinted separately by the PPU (1939).

[9] The best books on Gandhi's political ideas and activities are Clarence Case's Non-VioIent Coercion (1923); the first edition of Richard Gregg: The Power of Non-Violence (1934); and Joan Bondurant: Conquest of Violence (1958), which should not be confused with Bart de Ligt's book of a similar name.

appeasers of aggression), and insisted that non-violence should be used as a deliberate choice, not as a second-best. "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." Gandhi was no weakling, in any sense. "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence," he said, "I would advise violence … But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence." This is significantly like what Garrison said a hundred years ago between John Brown's putsch at Harper's Ferry and the outbreak 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, although his first principle was non-violence, he raised Indian ambulance units to serve in the British Army for the Boer War, the Zulu "rebellion" of 1906 and the Great War, and in 1918 he even began a recruiting campaign in India. After independence, he said, he "would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for their country." He also seems to have thought that violent self-defence against hopeless odds and a ruthless enemy (such as the Warsaw Ghetto rising in the spring of 1943) almost qualified as a form of non-violence. But his usual advice was of course to resist oppression without any violence at all. He had no hesitation in advising the Chinese, the Abyssinians, the Spanish Republicans, the Czechs, the Jews, the British, and anyone else who was attacked to offer satyagraha. For even the physically weak or outnumbered can use the non-violence of strength, and when they use it together they are no longer physically weak — "Ye are many, they are few." 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 hurt and even kill me, but I shall resist you to the end and accept my suffering and never accept your authority. For a time you will prevail, but I shall win in the end. This is not mere passive resistance, for satyagraha, as Gandhi said, "is much more active than violent resistance."

And yet Gandhi still denied any coercive intention and often treated his opponents to chivalrous gestures (calling off the 1914 operation when there was a strike by white railwaymen, not using the Vaikam temple-road in 1924 when the police cordon was removed) and to overchivalrous compromises (with Smuts in 1908 and with Lord Irwin in 1931). Richard Gregg is quite sure that "non- violent resistance is a pressure different in kind from that of coercion," and this is the view of most Gandhians; but Joan Bondurant has decided that "throughout Gandhi's experiments with satyagraha there appears to be an element of coercion," albeit "coercion whose sting is drawn." Reinhold Niebuhr pointed out Gandhi's mental confusion in denying any coercive intention when he was obviously coercing his opponents, and attributes it to political necessity. Clarence Case defined satyagraha without reservation as "non-violent coercion." The truth is surely that there are two sides to coercion, and while a satyagrahi may be quite sincerely innocent of the slightest wish to coerce, the person at the receiving end of his satyagraha may feel very dceidedly coerced. Some people have even called the technique "moral blackmail". Whatever Gandhi felt about what he was doing during his campaigns, 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 in the spring of 1930 (and who, as Lord Halifax, was later the Foreign Secretary at the time of Munich). In the end the precise amount of coercion in satyagraha and even the precise definition of satyagraha are rather academic points. The only important point is whether satyagraha works, and how it works; if it can't convert an opponent it is clearly better that it should coerce him gently rather than violently. For as Gandhi

said, “You can wake a man only if he is really asleep; no effort that you may make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending sleep.” And so many men are doing just that.

Satyagraha should be studied in practice rather than in theory. It “is not a subject for research,” Gandhi told Joan Bondurant (who happened to be carrying out research into satyagrahaX “You must experience it.” No doubt, but first you must observe it in action; and one very interesting thing about Gandhi’s campaigns is that they failed in direct proportion to the size of their objectives. The Viramgam tariff-barrier and the Champaran indigo racket and the Kaira forced-labour custom and the Vaikam road-ban on untouchables were all broken, but were the Indians in South Africa freed—or even those in India? Gandhi called himself “a determined opponent of modern civilisation” and insisted that independence meant more than “a transference of power from white bureaucrats to brown bureaucrats”. But swaraj, which meant self-rule before it meant Home Rule, and which was to change so much, has come to mean little more than government by Indians instead of Englishmen, and it has hastened the irresistible advance of modern civilisation throughout the sub-continent. Who wears home-spun hhadi now? Gandhi won the little battles and lost the big ones. No doubt the little battles might have been lost too if he hadn’t been there, and the big defeats might have been much bigger (though Subhas Bose said he made things worse himself); but his own 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 his campaign, and he himself admitted a “Himalayan miscalculation”; and he wasn’t able to do much to stop the frightful communal riots after Partition, though he tried. He always succeeded most when he attempted least. His ideal was reconciliation, but the only opponents he reconciled were the ones who accepted his terms. The Boers simply stepped back to gain time before making a bigger jump, and the English simply lost their patience with the inscrutable orientals who kept outwitting them. Gandhi didn’t win them over like some gentle modern Christ-~he threw them neatly over his shoulder like some modern Jack the Giant-Killer. The important thing about him isn’t what he tried to do but what he did.

We should bear this in mind when we use his ideas. He linked many things to satyagraha which aren’t actually essential to it. His religious ideas (non-possession, non-acquisition, chastity, fasting, vegetarianism, teetotalism) and his economic ideas (self-sufficiency, handlabour, back to the land) don’t necessarily have anything to do with the satyagraha that is practised by people after Gandhi. If it is objected that he wouldn’t have liked it, remember what he said to similar complaints 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 personality. Gandhi came from the puritanical Vaishnava sect and the respectable pe>$t-bourgeoi$ Modh Bania sub-cast, and he had a profound sense of sin (or obsessive guilt complex). We don’t have to share this background and personality to qualify for non-violent direct action. We shouldn’t worry because he said satyaghara “is impossible without a living faith in God,” especially when 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), which is exactly what we want Nor should we worry because he said “it takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain to a mental state of non-violence,” when it has been found that inexperience and untrained people can be completely non-violent. When Gandhi rejected bhakti and jnana for karma, he was only saying that love and knowledge aren’t enough, that direct action is necessary too. When we feel rather horrified by his plan for a sort of revised seventh age of man — sans meat, sans drink, sans sex, sans every-

thing — we should remember that his personal ideal was moksha (release from existence, the same as nirvana) and his denial of self was intended to lead to a denial of life. But we can feel reverence for life according to our own traditions without sharing his eschatological opinions. We can make use of what he did without agreeing with what he thought.

What we should do — what indeed he would have wanted us to do — is to take from him what we can without being false to ourselves; so long as we follow the essential ideas of non-violence, self-sacrifice, openness and truth. "A tiny grain of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way," he said, "and leavens the whole society." So we should sow it. This is what the new post-war pacifists have done, and this is how they have at last discovered how war-resisters can really resist war.

The New Pacifism

The new pacifism is not really all that new. It is little more than an eclectic mixture of ideas and techniques borrowed from its various predecessors. From the old pacifism comes the flat refusal to fight; from the old anti-militarism comes the determination to resist war; and from Gandhi comes the use of mass non- violent direct action. There are other borrowings. From socialism comes the optimistic view of the future; from liberalism comes the idealistic view of the present; from anarchism comes the disrespect for authority. But the new pacifism is selective. It rejects the sentimentality of the old pacifists, the vagueness of the anti-militarists, the religiosity of Gandhi, the authoritarianism 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. "Someone has to arise in England with the living faith to say that England, whatever happens, shall not use arms," said Gandhi before the last war; but "that will be a miracle." Miracle or not, that is what has happened. The new opposition to war derives from opposition to nuclear war, to the Bomb rather than to bombs, and not from opposition to all violence. At first this looks like a retreat, but on second thoughts it is possible to see that it can actually be an advance. The progression used to be from the lesser violence to the greater; now it is the other way round, and instead of justifying war because violence is sometimes necessary we are now learning to condemn violence because its use in war is always useless. Few people start by accepting total non-violence; quite a lot can start by rejecting nuclear war. Thus many new pacifists refuse to take the name of "pacifist", partly because pacifism has a bad image (see George Orwell) and partly because they aren't like the old pacifists. The old pacifism tended to be simpleminded and tender-minded; the new pacifism tends to be tough-minded and bloody-minded.

And yet the new pacifism grew straight from the old. The British unilateralist movement sprang not from the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in January 1958 nor even from that of its parent, the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests, in February 1957. It was really brought to fife by Harold Steele's proposal to enter the Christmas Island test-area early in 1957, which led to the formation of an Emergency Committee for Direct Action against Nuclear War, and which followed years of grinding work by dedicated pacifists. The CND leaders like to take a lot of credit for their success during the last four years, but it was made possible only because the ground had been prepared for so long. The beginning of paci-

fist unilateralism was right back in 1949, when some people in the PPU formed a Non- Violent Commission; two years later some members of this group formed "Operation Gandhi", and on 11 January, 1952, eleven pacifists in "Operation Gandhi" sat down outside the War Office and were fined 30s. apiece. So the first London sit-down wasn't the one led by Bertrand Russell and Michael Scott on 18 February, 1961, or even the spontaneous one in Downing Street after the launching meeting of CND on 17 February, 1958, but was one carried out more than ten years ago by seven women and four men and probably forgotten by nearly everyone except themselves. The same is true of the later activities of "Operation Gandhi"— or the Non-violent Resistance Group, as it became. Who now remembers the demonstrations at Aldermaston (yes, Aldcrmaston) in April 1952, at Porton in March 1953, at Harwell in April 1953, and at Woolwich in July 1954? Who remembers the sit-down by two women at Msldenhall US base in July 1952? Who remembers any unilateralist demonstration before the march to Aldermaston at Easter 1958? Ask anyone when the unilateralist movement began and who began it, ask for the dates of the first examples of illegal action against the Bomb, and you wiH find that the answers are connected to some big name or other, to the adherence of a reputable person or body to an otherwise disreputable movement.

What happened to British unilateralism to make it seem respectable, non-pacifist, so that for four years there has been a sort of conspiracy to avoid admitting just how unrespectable and pacifist it really is? The turning-point was the announcement of British nuclear tests at the beginning of 1957, just after Suez, which caused not only the emergence of Harold Steele, an old member of the No Conscription Fellowship, but to the feeling by many thoroughly respective and orthodox people that things had gone too far. So we had Stephen King-Hall's conversion to non-violent resistance ("breaking through the thoughtbarrier", as he put it) and the growing feeling by the Labour Left that a unilateralist campaign was necessary. So we also had the National

Council in February 1957 and CND a year later. Understand that CND has never been a pacifist body; it has indeed tended to fall into a sentimentalism as dangerous as the old pacifist sentimentalism — hoping to get rid of the British Bomb without changing anything else, so it is all right to kill people as long as you don't kill too many at once. Nevertheless CND has served a most useful service— for pacifism, despite itself, because it has built up mass support for protest action against not only the Bomb but all bombs; and for anarchism too, even more despite itself, because it has also built up mass support for protest action against the State that makes the Bomb and the whole social system that maintains the State, what Landauer called the topia. Thus the rank and file of CND have been consistently and increasingly more militant than the leadership; CND began as a pressure-group to make the Labour Party unilateralist, but it became an unwilling vanguard of Utopia, the nucleus of Alex Comfort's maquis of the peace.

A more important unilateralist body was the successor of the NonViolent Resistance Group and the Emergency Committee for Direct Action— the Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War, which was formed in November 1957, and whose great contribution to the new pacifism is that it put illegal non-violent direct action on the British political map. The first Aldermaston march was planned by a D AC sub-committee as a direct action operation, but it was more or less taken over by CND— along with Gerald Holtom's "nuclear disarmament" symbol, which was designed for the march and later became the universal unilateralist badge. (It is significant that CND turned the Aldermaston march back to front after 1958, so that it became a march from instead of to the research establishment— as if to symbolise the retreat of conventional unilateralists from unorthodox direct action back into orthodox demonstration and publicity—

and took on the appearance of some kind of annual spring festival always ending with a bump at the dull meeting in Trafalgar Square.) This was something of a setback, but DAC was not deflected from its chosen course. First there was the almost forgotten sit-down at Aldermaston in September 1958, and then the famous sit-downs at North Pickenham in December 1958, at Harrington in January 1960, at Finningley in July 1960, and at the Holy Loch in May 1961, which— together with the two at Foulness in April and May 1960 (which were organised by Southend CND)— have rightly become a vital part of the unilateralist mythology. We should also remember the attempts to enter the Sahara test-area 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, and the guerrilla activity of the Polaris Action jranc-tireurs last spring and summer. There was never non-violent action like this before in Britain. The Chartists, Suffragettes and Hunger Marchers organised all kinds of spectacular demonstrations, and the Aldermaston marches were getting bigger and bigger every year, but DAC was doing something quite unique — they were getting people used to the idea of not only thinking for themselves and demonstrating 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 have said forty years later to Michael Scott (who had taken part in satyagraha in South Africa ten years earlier) and to Michael Randle and Pat Arrowsmith and April Carter, and they did their best to show us how — they were the real maquis.

Not that their methods were strictly Gandhian. There were many traditional Indian techniques of non-violent resistance for him to use, as well as the universal ones of the strike and non-co-operation— the exodus (deshatyaga\ the trade-strike (hartal), the fast unto death iprayopave-shanaX the sit-down (dharna), and civil disobedience (ajnabhanga), Gandhi himself preferred civil disobedience and the tradestrike, and he preferred not to break the law until it became necessary. He always thought the sit-down was a barbaric technique, as bad as sabotage, and condemned it even though many of his followers used it (notably in Bombay in 1930). But it has of course become the chief technique of unilateralists who favour illegal action, whether it is used for direct action (against military sites) or for civil disobedience (at significant places in large towns). There are other points of difference —Gandhi used to insist on absolute obedience to his orders during a satyagraha operation (though he never tried to impose himself: it was more like the old Roman dictatorships than anything else), and on a very high degree of training and discipline; arrested satyagrahis used to co-operate with the police as soon as they were arrested (but we should remember that thousands of them were beaten unconcious before they were arrested in the 1930 salt-pan raids, for example); and there seems to have been much more shouting and scuffling than we are used to. Above all, Gandhi proclaimed that he loved his opponents— few unilateralists could claim as much, and Russell is clearly no satyagrahi by Gandhian standards! But in the important things the unilateralists have followed Gandhi pretty closely, especially in the insistance on non-violence, self-sacrifice, openness and truth, though they could do with rather more of his self-criticism and self-discipline.

The direct action sit-down was naturally the technique favoured by DAC, and its members were a little self-righteous about the superiority of their methods over anything else. Their self-sacrifice extended even to matters like choosing the most unfavourable possible time of the year or place in the countryside for their demonstrations, and this was something of a defect, since their impact was inevitably softened by the very small numbers they attracted. They were more

important than CND in the long run, but instead of sneering at the CND leaders' obsession with numbers they might have tried to see just why thousands of people would march from Aldermaston while barely a hundred would sit-down at any missile site. It would be disastrous for the unilateralist movement to calculate its success entirely in terms of the numbers of people who take part in or get arrested at illegal demonstrations, but numbers are significant all the same. It isn't irrelevant to point out that there were less than fifty arrests at North Pickenham, less than ninety at Harrington, less than forty at Foulness, and less than thirty at Finningley— that the DAC demonstrations were very small, and the Committee of 100 demonstrations which came after them were relatively very large.

The Committee of 100 was formed in October 1960 as an act of dissatisfaction with both CND (which was too moderate) and DAC (which was too puritanical), and as a gesture of no-confidence in orthodox political action — this was the very month of the Scarborough vote! It was headed by Bertrand Russell and Michael Scott, the cleverest and the best man in the country, one representing the anti-militarist tradition, the other representing the pacifist tradition, one representing humanist thought, the other representing religious thought. But its inspiration was anarchist, both conscious and unconscious, and the effect of its activities since it was formed has been to give British anarchism a bigger push forward than anything else that has happened since the last War. The Committee has tried to use the sit-down technique both for civil disobedience and for direct action; so far it has only succeeded with the former, since people are still shy of direct action, and Very Important People (who make up a good proportion of the Committee's official membership) are shyer than most. The idea is that either civil disobedience or direct action on a large enough scale come to the same thing, a sort of non-violent insurrection* though there have been powerful forces in the Committee from the start trying to pull it one way or the other. But last year's three big sit-downs in central London (February 18th, April 29th, September 17th), the provincial sit-downs (December 9th), the Embassy sit-downs (American, April 3rd and September 6th; Russian, August 31st and October 21st), the Holy Loch sit-down on September 16th and the Ruislip and Wethersfield sit-downs on December 9th, are all part of the same campaign and differ from each other, in intention at least, only in tactical details. In practice it has become clear that the most successful ones, in terms of efficiency and discipline, are the sudden small ones which are organised without much notice, while the most successful ones, in terms of propaganda and effect, are the big ones which are organised weeks ahead, and which take place in central London.

Now it is regrettable, of course, that many people who are prepared to break the law in the middle of the metropolis are not yet prepared to do so at military sites in suburbs or out in the countryside, but there it is — it is very human, and we are dealing with human beings, not saints. It is one of our first principles that we are all free individuals and can make up our own minds and follow our own consciences. So it is nothing more than common sense to get people used to breaking the law where they are most willing to do so before moving them on into direct action when they feel more sure of themselves. (This is what Gandhi would have done in our place, for he was nothing if not shrewd. And just as people are being trained to take action in the right way, they are also being trained to take action at the right time.

We have already seen how the root fallacy of the old pacifists and antimilitarists alike was that they spent all their effort in making plans for a general strike and were then reduced to individual protest — they played with models of direct action in their heads. The new pacifists and antimilitarists began with the individual protest and use their effort to work up by stages to the general strike — they are playing with models of direct action in the city streets and the

country lanes. We are learning a new language, as it were, by the direct method, which is far more effective than studying books of grammar; we can't speak perfectly yet, but at least we have begun to speak.

Not that our direct action is real direct action yet. Even DAC never managed to achieve a genuine direct action demonstration; the nearest they came was in the first attack on North Pickenham, and the result was that they were attacked not only by the servicemen and police but by the civilian labourers working on the site. After all, real direct action can only be taken by people in their own homes and places of work; the only people who can take real direct action at military sites, until we can raise 100,000 people to surround one, are the people who work at military sites. Direct action is in fact almost unknown in British politics, and it is desperately difficult to open most people's minds to it at all. But, as Gandhi said, "never has anything been done on this earth without direct action." Somehow the Committee of 100 has to increase its numbers and eventually get them out to the sites, and this is punishing work.

This applies in other areas of political life too. Gandhi's successors in South Africa and North America are fighting racial oppression as he did — indeed he once suggested that "it may be through the negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world"— and there is room for direct action against the small amount of racial oppression we already have in this country. It is also possible to see a valid extension of the same technique into areas like housing, poverty, bureaucracy, subtopia, and so on. But above all the use of non-violent direct action can become an instrument of the unofficial Labour Movement, or at least that part of it which is still immune to Marx's "incurable disease of parliamentary cretinism" (recently renamed "Labourism" by Ralph Miliband). The Committee of 100 formed an industrial sub-committee last October and maintains a loose alliance with the syndicalist movement in general. As Michael Randle said to a hostile journalist, "It is quite legitimate for people who come from a background of industrial struggle to see there is a relation between what we have been saying about nuclear disarmament and what they are saying about society in general." So far the purpose of the alliance has been to mobilise the Labour Movement against the Bomb. Energy should also be flowing in the other direction, to mobilise the unilateralists against the State and against all the imperfections in our society — but not to pour the wine of the new pacifism into some old bottle or other, such as parliamentary by-elections or the Labour Party or the New Left. The unilateralists have stimulated the Left; let's hope there is some feed-back so that the unilateralists are stimulated by the Left as well. Gandhi always insisted that every satyagraha operation should be accompanied by a "constructive programme". At first it is difficult to see how unilateralists can have one (though I suspect that Gandhi would have told us to join Civil Defence en masse!), but a little thought shows that since our satyagraha or duragraha is directed against the Warfare State our constructive programme should be to replace it.

This isn't such a new idea. All left-wing anti-militarists wanted the social revolution to follow the general strike against war, and though most pacifists wanted nothing of the kind there were always some, like Tolstoy, who wanted nothing better. Bart de Ligt said at the end of his mobilisation plan that "the collective opposition to war should be converted into the social revolution", and elsewhere [10] he stated the law The more violence, the less revolution, and called for a non-violent "revolutionary anti-militarism". Wilhelm Liebknecht had already said that "violence has been a reactionary force for thousands of years," and Gustav Landauer had already said that "socialists are romantics who invariably and inevitably use their enemies* methods." When Marx said that "violence is the midwife of a new order" and Bakunin said, that "every step forward in

history has been achieved only when it has been baptised in blood," they were being irresponsive and irresponsible; when Emma Goldman said that "the most pernicious idea is that the end justifies the means" and Simone Weil said that "the revolutionary war is the revolutionary grave", they were being responsive and responsible. Violence in human history has brought us to the concentration camp and the Bomb; perhaps we can now learn to take Aldous Huxley's simple and superficially rather sentimental statement that "violence makes men worse: non-violence makes them better" quite seriously at last. And when Richard Gregg says "although it is not a panacea non-violent resistance is an effective social instrument whereby we may remound the world," and when Joan Bondurant says it is "the solution to the problem of method which anarchism has consistently failed to solve," we will begin to listen with attention. How much better is "propaganda by deed" when it is against bombs instead of with them.

What is our task? It is to increase and extend our resistance to the Bomb and all bombs, to war and to the Warfare State, to our State and to all States, by direct action and by civil disobedience and by education and by mutual aid. Cobbett used to call what he hated "the Thing", but the State isn't all —Landauer said : "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." Nor is revolution a thing either — Gandhi said : "A non- violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'; it is a programme of transformation of relationships." The Committee of 100 has perpetrated its Pennine miscalculations and often made a fool of itself; but at the moment it is the most active agent in the destruction of the State, in the improvement of public relationships, in Trotsky's "permanent revolution", Zamyatin's "infinite revolution" Landauer's plain "revolution" [11] — "the period between the end of one topia and the beginning of the next", in the present modern British Utopia. The Left, which sucks its life from Utopia, should be helping the Committee in its work; every section and sect should be forgetting its sectarian King Karl's Head and giving all it can to the unilateralist movement— instead of sniping at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Committee of 100 from all sides (even from the anarchist side which should know better). The unilateralist movement is an existentialist movement, drawing its being from its action, and in the last few years it has done more good than all the left-wing periodicals have done since the War. There is plenty to discuss without being rude to one another.[10]

We may not succeed— but at last we have started something, you and me and all of them. At last we are learning how to take direct action, even if at the moment it only involves "sitting in puddles as a symbolic gesture— of our own impotence." At last the intelligentsia has found a cause that doesn't involve being somewhere else when the trigger is pulled, as George Orwell put it. And at last we are beginning to see the possibility of the situation envisaged years ago by Alex Comfort, "when enough people respond to the invitation to die, not with a salute but a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war empties the factories and fills the streets." We are far from this situation, but I still hope, remembering Gandhi's observation that "A society organised and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be the purest anarchy." I don't know what our chances are. I only know what I myself am going to do.

[10]

[10] The Conquest of Violence (1937), a translation of Pour Vaincre sans U Violence. No English translation seems to have been published of the same author's monumental La Paix Creatrice (1934). Die Revolution (1907) has never been published in this country. There is a very useful list of relevant ideas, books and articles in Anthony Weaver: Schools for Non-Violence (1961)— a pamphlet published by the Committee of 100.

[11]

Nicolas Walter
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