By Brian Martin

The peace movement in Australia has undergone a rapid resurgence since 1981. It is time to reflect on the goals and methods of peace activists in Australia. I have the greatest respect for all those who work in their own way to challenge the war system, and especially for those who struggled during the many years when public interest in peace issues was minimal. My comments are to help widen debate on goals and methods.

To begin, there do not seem to be any clearly articulated long-term goals which are widely shared within the Australian peace movement. Ideally goals and strategies should be developed through informed debate among peace activists. At the moment such debate is the exception rather than the rule. Goals and strategies do exist, but are for the most part implicit rather than explicit, and are multiple and conflicting.

Possibly the most widely shared goal among peace activists is removal of USA strategic military bases from Australian territory. This is reasonable, since the Pine Gap, Nurrungar, and North West Cape bases in particular represent Australia's most immediate link with the continuing confrontation between the two nuclear superpowers, the USA and the USSR.

How can removal of the bases be achieved? In spite of the large amount of concern expressed about the bases, I have not come across a single analysis presenting a convincing series of steps by which their removal might be achieved. The basic approach seems to be to convince the ALP to adopt a policy against the bases, for the ALP to be elected to federal government, and for the policy to be implemented, with widespread community opposition to the bases providing much of the pressure forcing implementation of the policy.

There are several difficulties in this picture. First, achieving an anti-base ALP policy will be a sizeable effort in itself. Second, the ALP must be elected to government. Third, and most important, the ALP must enact its policy. Since the ALP did nothing to implement its anti-bases policy when in office 1972–75, and has since rescinded the policy, the obstacles are considerable, to put it mildly. So long as the bases remain strategically important for the USA, Australia's national decision-makers are more likely to be swayed by USA government and military interests – and their Australian allies in government bureaucracies – than by popular opinion, at least in any situation short of a potential social revolution. A fourth difficulty is that even if the bases were forced out of Australia, they could readily, though perhaps not cheaply, be relocated elsewhere in the region.

In light of these difficulties there is room for a lot of thinking about strategies for opposing USA bases, and even for questioning whether the goal of removal is sufficient.

'Disarmament' is a key catch-cry of the Australian peace movement, yet its meaning in practice is far from clear. Most of the concern expressed is about world military spending, with an emphasis on USA technological innovations in the arms race, such as the Trident submarine and the neutron bomb. The implications for Australia of the call for disarmament are seldom elaborated.

Is the goal a fully disarmed Australia? Or a conventionally armed, socialist Australia? Or simply a minimal level of armaments, sufficient for deterrence? Or, indeed, *more* conventional armaments to defend a neutralist Australia? Would the military forces (if any) be professionals? Or would there be a citizens' militia as in Switzerland, or perhaps guerilla forces? The lack of clear goals regarding disarmament reflects in part divided feelings about violence and non-violence as a basis for social struggle, as well as ambivalence about Australian nationalism.

The standard generalised appeal for disarmament is unconvincing to many people who see no alternative being offered to defend against potential aggressors, whether the threat is real or imaginary. The problem is a serious one, and arises in part from the lack of a positive alternative to military defence.

One such alternative is social defence (also called non-violent defence, non-military defence, and civilian defence). Social defence is non-violent community resistance to aggression using means such as strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, non-cooperation with orders, and setting up parallel institutions. It is based on the insight that no regime, however ruthless, can survive without passive support or acquiescence from most of its subjects. The potential of non-violent resistance has been demonstrated in quite a number of instances, such as the collapse of the Kapp military government in Germany in 1920,

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resistance to the Nazi occupation in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands, and the resistance by the Czechoslovak people to the Soviet invasion in 1968. Since in most cases such non-violent resistance has been almost entirely spontaneous, preparation and training for social defence would increase its likely effectiveness, just as preparation and training improves military defence. The methods of non-violent action training are admirably suited for such preparation and training.

Social defence requires widespread participation by members of the community rather than a professional defence force. As a campaign goal, social defence requires extensive grass-roots organising; provides a positive alternative to military forces; is based on participation rather than following leaders; and can be used by any group opposing authoritarian forces, including those in communist countries. Because the methods used in social defence are valuable for social action campaigns of all kinds, from feminism to workers' control, social defence provides a basis for linking campaigns for peace with other campaigns for social change in the direction of equality and self-management.

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