

The Nazis and nonviolence (II)

Brian Martin

Michael C. Stratford had an article in the April 1987 issue of **Social Alternatives** arguing that "the advantages of ruthless regimes generally are likely to prove decisive" against nonviolent resistance. He used the example of Nazi Germany during World War II, examining the limits to effectiveness of nonviolent resistance in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands.¹

In a following issue, Ralph Summy and I each questioned assumptions underlying Stratford's argument.² Stratford has since replied, clarifying and confirming his position.³

Rather than continuing the argument as it has proceeded, I attempt here to spell out several key differences and agreements between Stratford and myself.

Difference 1: the prime cause of the problems of war and genocide. Stratford emphasises the role of individuals. For example, he says "in both the Nazi and Cambodian cases unscrupulous men were bent on implementing destructive ideologies" and that "these evils may go back to certain types of people, who employ or even create institutions for their purposes".

By contrast I emphasise the role of social structures, such as the state and its monopoly over the use of 'legitimate' violence. I said "Ruthless regimes such as Nazi Germany . . . are able to be genocidal precisely because there is available a state apparatus" with its capacity for repression and military aggression.

No doubt we would each agree that both individuals and structures are implicated. But the difference in emphasis leads to different conclusions. Stratford concludes that ruthless regimes must be met, at least sometimes, by military force. I conclude that the regular reliance on military force is a major factor in the rise of repressive regimes. Needless to say, this difference leads us in different directions and to different conclusions.

Difference 2: the solidarity of an apparatus of repression. Stratford assumes that a repressive government can be used, without difficulties, against opponents: "a determined German government able to mobilise 80 million people behind it". This seems to be behind Stratford's dismissal of the effectiveness of nonviolent action against repressive regimes: through bribes and threats, "tyrants and conquerors have generally been able to get the obedience they need".

My assumption is that popular support for a government, and for its apparatus of repression, is a key weak point, and precisely the point for nonviolent intervention. Violent resistance unifies the regime; nonviolent resistance has a better chance of undermining it. The largely nonviolent revolutions in Russia and Iran this century illustrate the potential internal weaknesses of an apparatus of repression.

Difference 3: the implementation of nonviolent defence. Stratford usually writes of a government deciding

to introduce nonviolent defence, typically at a time when it is under military threat, such as Britain in 1936.

My position is that nonviolent defence is a process, not a policy. To imagine any government suddenly switching from military to nonviolent defence, without the prior historical conditions, is to set up a false image.

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Related to this difference is a difference in the way we draw lessons from history. Stratford uses the study of the limited effect of nonviolent resistance against the Nazis to conclude that nonviolent defence can't succeed against some repressive regimes.

My view is that there has never been a fully prepared nonviolent defence and so it is impossible to say whether it can succeed against a Nazi-like regime. My conclusion from examining the historical record is that the Nazi case doesn't refute the potential of nonviolent defence against repressive regimes. I also argue that the commonplace idea that violence is the only way to topple a ruthless regime has many flaws.

In 1989 there were dramatic events in China and Eastern Europe. No doubt Stratford and I each interpret these events in our own way. For my part, I am encouraged that nonviolent action has shown such potential against repressive regimes. But since, as yet, no fully organised social defence system has been organised, no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

I am disappointed that Stratford has misinterpreted my views on a number of points (which would be tedious to recount here), perhaps because he has not consulted my more extensive writings. Be that as it may, I hope it is more useful to focus here on our differences and, more pleasantly, agreements.

Agreement 1: nonviolent defence is preferable in at least some situations. Stratford says, for example, that "Germany, Austria, and Russia would certainly have been better off in 1914 had they ceased reliance on their armaments and turned to a policy of civilian-based defence".

Agreement 2: studying repressive regimes such as the Nazis is worthwhile. There are insights to be gained from studying history, though we may disagree over them!

Agreement 3: A careful and honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of nonviolent methods is worthwhile. Whatever the prospects for nonviolent defence, it does not help to give false promises or dismissals.

For those who would like to pursue the issue of the Nazis and nonviolence further, there are some items that deserve mention in addition to those cited earlier in this exchange. Tom

Bower has documented how the Allies systematically returned Nazis and ruling class collaborators to positions of power in post-war Western Germany.⁴ Hans Rothfels documents the internal German opposition to Hitler, and comments on the failure of Western governments and postwar opinion to give credit to the existence of this opposition.⁵ Bradford Lyttle has given a strong pacifist response to the argument that war was necessary to stop the Nazi exterminations.⁶

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nent is ruthless?: the Nazi case', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 6, no. 2, April 1987, pp. 49-57.

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3. Michael C. Stratford, 'The Nazis and nonviolent defence', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1989, pp. 58-61.

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5. Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1961).

6. Bradford Lyttle, 'The Holocaust and World War II', *Midwest Pacifist Commentator* (5729 S. Dorchester, Chicago IL 60637, USA), vol. 3, no. 2, 10 November 1988, and responses in following issues.

Subverting the Dominant Paradigm

Doug Ogilvie

As long as politics (including management and training) entails violence (ie. the violation, rather than the unconditioned defence, of the principle of personal autarchy) then it remains part of the problem, rather than part of the solution to our global crisis. In fact, contrary to the propaganda of the technocrats, nothing of much importance has improved since the bad old days of Hammurabi, Moses and the sophists.

Institutionalised violence is achieved by the legalisation of abstract ideas such as Jehovah, Allah, nation, profession, university, corporation, caste, family, capital and culture, by means of arbitrary mores, norms and statutory laws.

This make-believe world (in contrast to the corporeal world) is the work of religious and secular scholars who still have an obsession for locating problems out there in "the system", on scapegoats, rather than inside their own hypocritical heads.

There is still a general reluctance to see that the "real world" for most people is socially constructed, ie. man-made, by paternalistic persons (generally male, but occasionally butch females) in positions of institutionalised dominance, and that its malfunctions are a logical consequence of the unprincipled reasoning used in its construction.

The radical alternative is education for anarchy, whereby each person helps each and every other person who is so inclined, to learn to live the autobiography that the other wants to live, without passing judgement on mundane matters such as their diet, dress, language, parentage or sensual pleasures, but only on questions of hypocrisy.

In brief, this is the liberating code of brotherly love, as advocated by Jesus the Jewish gnostic, who recognised God to be the living, part-tangible All, within whom we live,

and to whom we all belong, as parts of the one, transcending whole, governed by the law of consistent logic. Such a God is accommodating, organic and feminine, rather than dominating, linear and masculine, and Her queendom is one of consensual diversity.

For gnostic anarchists, mutual aid and personal autarchy and single-principled reasoning are all equally essential for the good life.

As like-principled lovers, their interactions are those of classless communism, as distinct from those of the normal meritocracies of the anti-gnostics, who may be either atheists, agnostics or institutionalised theists. As holistic thinkers, these cooperative anarchists "think universal, act personal" which is a subtly but significantly better idea than "think global, act local".

Among persons who accept this code of interpersonal service, on the basis of its perceived reasonableness, there is no need for artificial institutions (ie. reified and deified abstractions, including associated roles, rules and rituals) nor for corporation-made capital, while their interactions with other classes of person (who reason mechanistically, like faulty computers, rather than holistically) merely require that the principle of personal autarchy is agreed to be inviolable for everybody.

Yet this radical alternative to the normal paradigm is virtually censored from debate in the capitalist university, the capitalist church and the capitalist media, even in trendy journals labelled as "alternative".

Maybe there really is a great, ongoing conspiracy, comrades. If so, the global crisis may indicate that it is high time it, and its perpetrators, whether intentional or unintentional, went kaput!

Jesus' Female Disciples

John F. Noack

A recent daily newspaper, THE AUSTRALIAN, published an amusing reader's letter on 24th January 1990 which provided a tongue-in-cheek list of female disciples of Jesus: Peta, Andrea, Jill, Jan, Philippa, Barbara, Theresa, Michelle, Jill, Louise, Simone and Judy.

If the contributor, Ross Mead, had read Mark 15:40-41, Luke 8:1-3 and Matthew 27:55-56, he would in fact have known that "many women . . . followed Jesus from Galilee" and that there were probably more than twelve women who supported him and served him.

In addition, he would have been able to submit some actual names of Jesus' female 'discipleses', including

Salome, Joanna, Susanna, Mary the Mother of James and Mary Magdalene.

These two Marys according to Matthew 28:9 hugged Jesus' feet and Mary Magdalene according to the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Gospel of Phillip was on friendly terms with Jesus and was kissed on the mouth by Jesus.

Not surprisingly, it was his women followers who were most loyal to Jesus at his crucifixion in Mark 15:40-41 and at his empty tomb in Mark 16:1-3.

It is obviously an appropriate time for the existence and role of these mostly forgotten 'discipleses' of Jesus to be more widely known and acknowledged.