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IN THIS ISSUE

Civilian Based Defense: The Intellectual Antecedents ..... **Cover**

Letter to the Editor.......... 2

U.S. Catholic Church & Popular Defense............ 4

New Zealand Update 5

Book Review 6

News & Announcements 6

Occupied Territories of West Bank & Gaza.......... 7

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CO-EDITORS: Melvin G. Beckman
Philip D. Bogdonoff
Liane Ellison Norman

Address: P.O. Box 31616, Omaha, NE 68131, USA. Telephone (402) 558-2085

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CIVILIAN-BASED DEFENSE: THE INTELLECTUAL ANTECEDENTS

By Christopher Kruegler

Ed. Note: This article appeared originally as chapter three of *Liddell Hart and the Concept of Civilian-Based Defense* by Christopher Kruegler, Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, May 1984. Adaptation by Melvin G. Beckman.

Civilian-based defense did not emerge as a well articulated policy in its own right, clearly distinguishable from various strains of pacifism, until the late nineteen fifties. There are several works in the long tradition of pacifism and nonviolent action, however, that allude either to the need for an alternative defense policy, or to the defense potential of nonviolent behavior. These are considered here to be the antecedents of civilian-based defense, even though their principal thrust is normative rather than analytical or strategic.

The earliest, and in some ways the most satisfactory antecedent of civilian-based defense, can be found in the work of Elihu Burritt. Burritt, a Nineteenth Century blacksmith-turned-scholar, was a devout Christian pacifist. He took some trouble to explore the practical dimension of resisting aggression without arms, and used historical examples of passive resistance to support his argument.[1] He believed that a courageous population could not be overcome by military means as long as it maintained unity and morale, and refused to be goaded into acts of violence, thus losing the moral initiative. How, exactly, to ensure the unity of the resistance and nonviolent discipline are central concerns in civilian-based defense literature today, and were correctly anticipated by Burritt over one hundred years ago.

He was also convinced that members of the attacking forces could be expected to be shamed into inaction by the courage and rectitude of the passive resisters, and that, even if repressive slaughter occurred, it would be less costly to all concerned than a conventional battle with both sides using violence.[2] The first of these assertions has been commonly accepted in pacifist literature, and skepticism regarding it is one of the defining features of the civilian-based defense approach. The second assertion has been made with greater frequency over time, as the scale, and therefore the costs, of modern warfare have grown.

The next explicit treatment of the problems of defense by nonviolent resistance came in 1915, when Bertrand Russell invited the readers of Atlantic Monthly to imagine what it would be like if Germany were to succeed in occupying Great Britain, assuming the latter possessed no army or navy and had not mounted any violent resistance. He envisioned a situation in which every institution the occupiers tried to control or exploit became paralyzed by the noncooperation of its members. Acts of reprisal against the resisters would be so obviously unjustified that the aggressor would become isolated in the world community, a condition no modern industrial nation could tolerate, he reasoned. Like Burritt, he imagined that the predominant emotion among the invading forces would be self-disgust.

Russell allowed that there were at least two contingencies that such a policy couldn't meet. These were the forcible dissolution of the British Empire and the total blockade of Britain itself. At this point he probably alienated many readers by suggesting that either of these outcomes might, in fact, be a good thing. Imperialism was an outrage against humanity, and a blockade would only harm the rich, who benefitted the most from trade. If it took an invasion to make Britain egalitarian and self-sufficient, so be it![3]

In addition to identifying the policy with anti-imperialist sentiment, Russell made two additional points that were not calculated to encourage people to explore it further. The first was that, while "non-resistance," as he called it, was both reasonable and moral,

(Continued on page 2)

Omaha, Nebraska
January 23, 1988

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In the early summer of 1987 we sat round the table in Brussels asking the new Director of the Atlantic Assembly questions in response to the briefing he had just given us on the Assembly's issue agenda and the outcomes of recent conferences held in Europe under Assembly auspices. A member of our NATO Discussion Series delegation at one point asked, "What do you find to be West European governments' attitudes toward the utility of civilian-based defense?" The Director looked puzzled. He turned to his aide who is responsible for military affairs and who had briefed us about negotiation of reductions in intermediate nuclear forces. The aide leaned back to him and whispered, "Defensive defense."

We listened politely to the Director's description of the currently popular idea of turning military units on the Western front so that they face each other and form corridors— a gauntlet — through which any attacker from the East would have to go. Advocates of this posture say that it would reduce tension in Europe by removing any Warsaw Pact grounds to claim that NATO represents a threat. (Later in the week we heard a member of the Federal Republic of Germany's Social Democratic Party leadership propound several theses supporting this change of strategy as a way of compensating for the removal of theater nuclear weapons without increasing spending on conventional forces.)

Meanwhile, half of the two dozen of us in the NATO delegation sat in amused silence. The other half nodded in conceptual time with the speaker, as if he were effectively answering the question asked. When he finished, the poser of the original question indicated that "civilian-based defense is not defensive defense," expressed some surprise and exasperation that the Director did not know the difference, but chose not to use that moment to explain CBD. Those of us who knew brought our colleague up to speed later.

As we left the Atlantic Assembly quarters I was walking with Gene Wittkopf, coauthor with Charles Kegley, of a half dozen major textbooks in the areas of world politics and U.S. foreign policy. I said that though I used all of his texts in my classes — they are excellent — I always had to supplement them on

(Continued on page 3)

INTELLECTUAL ANTECEDENTS *(Continued from page 1)*

most human beings were neither. Thus, in his view, the policy could not be relevant until a great transformation of society had taken place. The second was that, given the foregoing assumption, a far more likely path to peace would be the enforcement of international law by a neutral power or world organization.

He put forward one idea, however, that continues to appear in contemporary thought on the problem. That is the idea that the possession or competitive acquisition of conventional arms themselves has often provoked or been a pretext for strife between nations, and that by refusing to arm, a nation may remove a major cause of war and thereby enhance its security without necessarily being put to the test.[4]

The year 1923 was significant in the development of nonviolent theory and practice, not only because it saw a major nonviolent struggle in the Ruhr region of Germany but also because of the publication of *Nonviolent Coercion,* by sociologist Clarence Marsh Case. Case was concerned that the term "passive resistance" did not do justice to the phenomena it was usually used to identify. His study was the first systematic attempt to portray such coercive acts as boycotts and strikes as belonging properly to the field of nonviolent action. Case collected statistical data on a variety of practitioners of nonviolent action, and demonstrated that in physical type and intelligence, they were no different than the populations from which they sprang, except perhaps that they tended to be slightly better educated. Many of his subjects were avowed pacifists and war resisters, and he hoped to dispel the notion that nonviolence was somehow unmanly, by definition.[5]

Gandhi's experiments with nonviolence throughout the first half of this century naturally stimulated much of the modern interest in the technique. Among the many books which attempt to evaluate or interpret Gandhi, a few go on to discuss the relevance of his work in the context of national defense. One of these was Richard Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence.*

Gregg, an American labor lawyer, went to India to study Gandhi's movement in the nineteen twenties. His book is guided by the belief that love of one's enemies is essential, in order to "lift the conflict onto a higher plane," where it can be resolved to the mutual benefit of both parties. While later editions of the book do consider cases of nonviolent resistance where such loving intent was absent, he views these as imperfect cases. The mechanism by which such resistance triumphs, he argued, is persuasion. The enemy's heart is bound to yield to love, reason and courage at some point in the contest.[6]

Gregg's book is open to a number of criticisms on grounds of logic. For example, in each case of successful nonviolent action, he is inclined to assume that it is the good intent of the resisters that caused the outcome, and fails to consider other factors that might enter into the opponents' calculations, such as the cost of continuing the fight or the relative importance of their objective. He also makes the apparently contradictory assertions that nonviolent resisters must necessarily be more courageous than armed warriors, and that their chances of survival are greater than those of a soldier in battle, since this form of combat is more "economical."[7]

Although it is flawed by a number of such facile assumptions, *The Power of Nonviolence* represents an important stage in the gradual disentanglement of civilian-based defense from pacifism. Gregg utilizes a number of historical examples, albeit more as a basis for speculation than analysis, and these seem to have impressed both Sir Basil Liddell Hart and Gene Sharp. Moreover, he became the first to use the notion of nonviolent resistance as a functional equivalent for war. Earlier writers had, of course, proposed nonviolent action as an alternative to violent action, but no one had explicitly acknowledged that war might actually perform positive functions for which this technique might also be suited. Whereas William James had proposed a "moral equivalent of war," which would be a substitute for the martial virtues, Gregg was proposing a substitute method for actual fighting in cases where negotiation and compromise had failed.[8]

While it might be argued that this was merely a change in language from the more primitive musings of Russell and Burritt, it was a change that suggested the importance of considering war's functions, rather than just its ghastly consequences, thus adding a new dimension of pragmatism to the discussion, despite Gregg's highly normative emphasis. A similar functional-substitute approach had been used by Walter Lippman in 1928, with slightly different results. In Lippmann's view, war was "one of the ways by which great human decisions are made."[9] He felt that disputes between peoples and nations were inevitable, and that "a way of deciding them must be found which is not war."[10] This sentiment led Lippmann, as it has so many others, directly to the view that the only cure for war was the formation of an international government, in which the sovereignty of nations would be submerged, and which would have the power to enforce

(Continued on page 3)

INTELLECTUAL ANTECEDENTS *(Continued from page 2)*

its judgements on its subjects. Lippmann's views place him squarely in the middle of the dispute settlement approach to the problem of war, while the "power" to be wielded by his world government would presumably be of the conventional military sort. Civilian-based defense theorists have frequently cited Lippmann on the need for a political equivalent of war, but have argued that the equivalent must include a popular means of combat to serve on occasions when dispute settlement techniques fail.

The next important contribution in this general direction was made a few years later by a Dutch socialist, Barthelemy de Ligt. In *Conquest of Violence*, he extended the traditional pacifist's ends-means critique of war[11] to the problem of revolution, citing the dictum "the more violence, the less revolution."[12] While fundamental changes in the structure of human relationships could not be produced violently, he argued, the power of oppressors could be dissolved through mass noncooperation. He traced this view of power back to the Sixteenth Century philosopher Etienne de la Boetie, whose essay "The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude," he claimed, had affected the thinking of Tolstoy, and through him, M. K. Gandhi.[13]

Boetie's basic insight into the nature of politics may well be the most fundamental one for the whole field of nonviolent action and policies based on it, and thus deserves to be quoted at length. Mystified by the fact that, in many societies, millions suffered at the whim of a single ruler, he wrote:

> Obviously there is no need of fighting to overcome this single tyrant, for he is automatically defeated if the country refuses consent to its own enslavement: it is not necessary to deprive him of anything, but simply to give him nothing; there is no need that the country make an effort to do anything for itself, provided it does nothing against itself. It is therefore the inhabitants themselves who permit, or rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude. ..I do not ask that you put hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great Colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break into pieces.[14]

De Ligt grasped Boetie's idea, that a ruler's power derives from the consent and cooperation of the governed, and sought to apply this principle to the problem of war. He stopped short of proposing nonviolence as an alternative defense for nations, suggesting instead that peace-loving people around the world should prepare nonviolent direct action to thwart their own governments' war preparations. He favored the general strike as a means of doing this, but offered long lists of other less drastic measures. His case was rather over-stated, in that he insisted that such a program would certainly not fail to abolish war. Boetie's conception of power, however, as presented by De Ligt, has since become one of the founding premises of civilian-based defense thinking.[15]

In 1939, a veteran of the Gandhian independence movement, Krishnalal Shridharani, published *War Without Violence* in the United States, in an effort to explain the significance of Gandhi's satyagraha[16] technique to westerners. While aware that Gandhi had grown out of a unique cultural context, he was none-the-less careful, in explaining the stages and methods of this technique, to point to analogous experiences, particularly from the history of labor, and to define the technique as being independent from eastern mysticism.

Like Gregg, whom he read, he cited James and discussed the value of nonviolence as a substitute for war. He wrote:

> We feel the need for an equivalent of war which is not so bloody in its sorties, so wild in its aim, so barren in its results. We want a substitute for war which might even enable us to stop an invading army, were we strong enough. In short, we want a new form of war which can be waged without inflicting violence in retaliation.[17]

One year later, Shridharani wrote to Gandhi, asking him to explain how India would defend herself if invaded. Gandhi's reply was published in *Liberty*, and is one of the few times he ever addressed the subject of national defense per se. Gandhi envisioned "endless rows of men and women" offering themselves unprotestingly as "fodder for the aggressor's cannons."[18] He continued:

> The underlying belief in this philosophy of defense is that even a modern Nero is not devoid of a heart. The spectacle – never seen before by him or his soldiers – of endless rows of men and women simply dying, without violent protest, must ultimately affect him...Men can slaughter one another for years in the heat of battle, for then it seems to be a case of kill or be killed. But if there is no danger of being

(Continued on page 4)

LETTER *(Continued from page 2)*

the subject of CBD. "Could you tell me about it?" he asked. "Sure, I'll even send you a paragraph or two for your next editions," I said.

I'm not sure how much more we academicians (who were flown by NATO Information Service and the Atlantic Council of the U.S. from the U.S. to Brussels for a week) know about NATO than before our junket. But at least a dozen more professors teaching international relations, and in the future, many of those who use works by Kegley and Wittkopf, will know nearly 100 percent more than they had before about civilian-based defense. So will the new Director of the Atlantic Assembly and, one would suspect, those legislators associating with the Assembly. Here members of the legislative bodies of states in NATO negotiate among themselves quietly on several significant subjects and, covertly, with representatives of Warsaw Pact countries, on the issue of continental integration, including the possibility of a mutual security plan.

Ken Wise
Director, Graduate Program in International Relations,
Creighton University

SPECIAL OFFER

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THE U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POPULAR DEFENSE

Ed. Note: In their 1983 Pastoral Letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, paragraph #227, the U.S. Catholic bishops urged that nonviolent popular defense be given serious consideration as an alternative course of action. Early this year we asked a number of Catholics how the Church could or should begin to give popular defense this serious consideration. The replies received appear below:

"Next to war, personal assault is one of the most destructive human experiences we encounter. Today, the frequency of assault is increasing as social and economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Like the threat of war, the possibility of personal assault confronts us with a choice of responses, violent or nonviolent.

For people who want peace, the challenge of an active nonviolent response to an international threat can begin as an active, nonviolent response to a personal threat. If we feel that we can deal creatively and nonviolently with someone who might do a lot of damage to us as individuals, then we will have greater confidence that an active, nonviolent approach to international adversaries will also work.

The Church, through its array of educational efforts, could help people develop a nonviolent response to personal assault — and also to the many lesser conflicts that dot our daily existence. School children could be taught nonviolent games. Parents could be encouraged to practice active nonviolence in family disputes. Teaching nonviolent conflict resolution could be an integral part of the Church's mission.

Nonviolent "popular defense" will not become national policy until it first becomes the personal policy of millions of people, until we know in our hearts that we can meet the challenge of daily conflict nonviolently, including the most fearsome threat of personal assault.

The Church, through its significant moral leadership, could help bring this about."

–GERARD A. VANDERHAAR
Pax Christi USA

"Because I believe that as individuals we are the Church, I think that every Catholic could begin a process of inner personal conversion which would lead to following the nonviolent Jesus. Jesus

(Continued on page 5)

INTELLECTUAL ANTECEDENTS *(Continued from page 3)*

> killed yourself by those you slay, you cannot go on killing defenseless and unprotesting people endlessly. You must put down your gun in self-disgust. Thus in the end the invader must be beaten—by new weapons, peaceful weapons, the weapons of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance.[19]

War Without Violence had anticipated this same view, and suggested that if the opponent tried to get around the resisters at India's borders with airplanes, the same tactic could be used at airports. One is tempted to remark that carnage by any other name would be as grim. Both Gandhi and Shridharani believed that the slaughter, if it ensued, would end quickly, because the spectacle would necessarily melt the hardest of hearts. The world was to learn over the next five years just how hard some hearts could be, given the right conditions. It is not surprising that the civilian-based defense proponents of the post-war period have been much more conscious of the reality and likelihood of harsh repression, and quick to dispel this image of defense by gratuitous self-sacrifice.

In the late nineteen thirties and early nineteen forties, a small handful of pacifists in Britain and the United States produced tracts which mainly condemned war, but which also alluded to the possibility of an alternative nonviolent defense. Kenneth Boulding, for example, argued that Britain should "transarm" to a system in which the citizenry would be highly trained in nonviolent resistance. He relied for exemplification on his own Quaker tradition, and did not elaborate on the details of either the training or the proposed defense policy.[20] A comparable effort, though from a different perspective, was made by the American socialist war resister, Dr. Jessie Wallace Hughan. Hughan proposed unilateral disarmament and preparations for "unarmed resistance" in the event that the United States should be attacked. Her piece was also very sketchy with respect to the details of such a plan.[21]

While the above antecedents do not examine in much detail the actual problems that a nonviolent defense policy might encounter, they do suggest the possibility of such a defense in very general terms. The most significant idea expressed by this group of writers, from the perspective of contemporary thought on civilian-based defense, is the conception of political power developed by Boetie and later employed by De Ligt, Gandhi and Shridharani.

See future issues of *Civilian-Based Defense: News & Opinion* for a discussion of later development of the concept of civilian-based defense.

FOOTNOTES

1. One of several examples that Burritt reported was that of the Sandwich Islanders' insistence on their right to impose an import tax on French alcohol, despite threats of armed reprisals. When the French landed an expeditionary force and were met with passive resistance, says Burritt, they were "forced" to withdraw. No date is given. Elihu Burritt, *Thoughts and Things at Home and Abroad* (Boston, New York: Phillips, Sampson & Co., J.C. Derby, 1854), pp. 269-273.
2. Ibid.
3. Bertrand Russell, "War and Non-resistance," *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1915, pp. 266-274.
4. Ibid., p. 268.
5. Clarence Marsh Case, *Nonviolent Coercion* (New York: The Century Co., 1923), chaps. 1, 11, & 21, especially.
6. Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (New York: Shocken, 1966, first published in 1935), pp. 16, 62.
7. Ibid., pp. 94-100.
8. Walter Lippmann, "The Political Equivalent of War," *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1928, p. 181. James's original essay is summarized along with Lippmann's extension of it.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. See for example, Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937).
12. Barthelemy de Ligt, *Conquest of Violence* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1938), p. 162.
13. Ibid. p. 104.
14. Etienne de la Boetie, *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), pp. 50-52.
15. The most recent exposition of this view of power can be found in Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3 vols. (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, Extending Horizons Books, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 7-48, hereafter cited as Sharp, *Politics*.
16. A form of mass social action based on an absolute commitment to the values of truth, nonviolence or *ahimsa*, and self-suffering. Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 4.
17. Ibid., p. XXV.
18. M.K. Gandhi, "Can India Be Defended?," *Liberty*, 17 August 1949).
19. Ibid.
20. Kenneth Boulding, "Paths of Glory," Friends Book Centre, London, 1937, p. 29.
21. Dr. Jessie Wallace Hughan, "Pacifism and Invasion," War Resisters' League, 1939.