

Research Questions on Nonviolence

If you had a researcher available to do your bidding, what topics would you like to have researched? This is the question that several of us asked participants at the annual gathering of the Australian Non-violence Network in April 1995 over one of the evening meals. The aim of the exercise was to see if we could link together theory and practice a bit better. Activists at the gathering were asked, in essence, to think how research and researchers could help them. The next stage was to give these questions to nonviolence researchers so they could see what topics activists were interested in.

Conveniently for this purpose, last year Robert Burrowes took the excellent initiative of setting up the Nonviolence Scholars' Forum. He made contact with some fifteen people in Australia doing research relating to nonviolence, obtained their electronic mail (email) addresses and encouraged each individual to send email to the list of all the others. This electronic exchange was called the Nonviolence Scholars' Forum.

I slightly edited the questions collected at the gathering to provide clarity and continuity of style, and attached the name of the person who suggested each question. At the end of June I sent the questions to everyone in the Nonviolence Scholars' Forum, inviting responses. Rebecca Spence and Robert Burrowes were the only respondents, Robert providing a comprehensive commentary. I have added a few comments of my own.

In my view, there is still quite a way to go towards getting activists thinking of research that researchers can relate to and towards getting researchers thinking in terms of the needs of activists. The following questions and answers provide one more stage in this ongoing process.

Brian Martin



Is there a book for beginners on the global economy and how it operates, including the arms trade? (Michael)

Rebecca Spence: Two excellent books are Robin Arnold and Dale Hess, *The Paradox of Economic Growth and Inequity* (Victorian Association for Peace Studies, 1994) and Michael Cranna (ed.), *The True Cost of Conflict* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1994).

What are sources of funding on nonviolence issues, and how can they be accessed? (Marina)

Robert Burrowes (RJB): Very few that I have discovered. One is the A. J. Muste Memorial Institute's International Non-violence Training Fund which makes grants of up to \$US3,000 to sponsor projects that promote the principles and practice of nonviolent social change. The Institute's address is 339 Lafayette St, New York, New York 10012, USA. Tel: +1-212-5334335.

Historically and geographically speaking, which countries/communities have had family structures supportive of nonviolence internally and externally? (Trudi)

RJB: Many indigenous societies all over the world, particularly those that are no-

madic. And many societies based on spiritual or religious traditions that have maintained the practice (and not just paid lipservice to the philosophy) of nonviolence in their way of life. One useful reference on this subject is Bruce D. Bonta, *Peaceful Peoples: An Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1993).

Brian Martin (BM): According to a number of theorists, there is a close link between the rise of the state, patriarchy and the military. This may explain why family structures supportive of nonviolence are more common in societies without a state. See Harold Barclay, *People without Government* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1982). How it might be possible to build a nonviolent society incorporating forms of agriculture, industry, telecommunications and the like seems to be an unanswered question.

Which communities (in history and different parts of the world) have been closest to the principles of the Australian Nonviolence Network? What did they have and what did they lack? (Anita)

RJB: Apart from the societies identified above, the Western communities that have most closely resembled the ANN are

probably the Movement for a New Society (MNS) in the United States (now defunct) and some of the intentional communities throughout Europe, such as La Communaute de l'Arche (The Community of the Ark) in France. MNS and the Community of the Ark both embrace(d) a reasonably similar set of (Gandhian) nonviolence principles (with MNS more committed to feminist principles as well), live(d) in communities, teach (taught) nonviolent action, and participate(d) in nonviolent action campaigns.

There is no quick response to what MNS and the Community of the Ark lack(ed) but I have an article which gives one account of why MNS disintegrated: George Lakey, 'The Life and Death of the Movement for a New Society,' *Friends Journal*, September 1989, pp. 22-25.

What successful strategies have nonviolent movements used in the past? (Karen) RJB: Nonviolent activists have used a variety of successful strategies in the past, although not all of these have been systematically documented. Mohandas K. Gandhi, for example, had a superb intuitive grasp of strategic principles (which he did not record in any organised way) and, as a result, his nonviolent campaigns in India were very successful. In contrast, the strategies of nonviolent activists have often failed. For example, without an intuitive strategic thinker of Gandhi's calibre—and without a clearly developed strategic framework to guide the formulation of their strategy—the South African anti-apartheid struggle took much longer than it might have.

The earliest attempt to offer a systematic explanation of the dynamics of nonviolent action was the book by Clarence Marsh Case published in 1923 (Clarence Marsh Case, *Non-violent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure* (1923; Reprint, Jerome S. Ozer, 1972)), but he made no attempt to develop a strategic framework. It was in 1939, based on an analysis of Gandhi's campaigns in India, that Krishnalal Shridharani introduced the first strategic framework for nonviolent struggle (Krishnalal Shridharani, *War without Violence* (1939; Reprint, Bombay, India: Bharatiya Vidya

Bhavan, 1962), pp. 15-57). In 1958, Joan Bondurant presented a modified version of this framework and illustrated the dynamics of nonviolent action by analysing five satyagraha (Gandhian nonviolence) campaigns conducted in India (Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Rev. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 36-104). And at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) in the United States developed a set of four principles and six 'strategic steps' to guide the civil rights struggles in that country (Angie O'Gorman (ed.), *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: A Reader on Christian Nonviolence in the U.S.* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1990), pp. 185-188). These 'strategic steps' were, intentionally or otherwise, a simplified and modified version of the strategic framework introduced by Shridharani.

Parallel with the research of Bondurant, Gene Sharp was developing a strategic framework that drew inspiration from Gandhi, the nonviolence literature generally, and the strategic thinking of the British military historian Basil Liddell Hart. This framework was eventually published in 1973 (Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), pp. 451-520). In the same year, George Lakey presented another strategic framework: this one drew on a variety of published sources and Lakey's own experience as a nonviolent activist (George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1973); George Lakey, *Powerful Peacemaking: A Strategy for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1987)). In 1981 Virginia Coover and her co-authors presented a strategic framework that drew on Sharp and Lakey, but which also offered a wide variety of new tools to assist activists in the development of their campaign strategy (Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore, *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1981)). And in 1986, based on an analysis of U.S. social movements, Bill Moyer presented 'The Movement Action Plan' (Bill Moyer, 'The Movement Action Plan,' *The Dandelion*, Fall 1986. pp. 1-8).

The last four strategic frameworks, and the numerous unpublished variations derived from them, have been used by many peace, social justice and environment activists working on campaigns in the West. And these or similar strategic frameworks have been taught to nonviolent activists in Africa, Asia and Central/South America. Jean Goss and Hildegard Goss-Mayr are undoubtedly the best known Western activists to have performed this role: they conducted non-violence workshops in several countries on each of these continents for more than three decades (Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, *The Gospel and the Struggle for Peace*, Trans. Dave Parry (Alkmaar, Netherlands: International Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1990)).

In many cases, nonviolent struggles have been conducted with a sound appreciation of *tactical* principles (the needs for planning, organisation and discipline in a particular nonviolent action, for example) but without the benefit of any systematic *strategic* guidance. This was the case during the Iranian revolution and the Chinese pro-democracy movement. In other cases, as in Poland, the long duration of the struggle gave Solidarity activists the chance to learn from their experience and to acquire assistance and resource materials on nonviolence from outside Poland.

BM: Robert's answer is comprehensive. It is worth remembering that the strategies of both nonviolent activists and their opponents change over time. Situations change due to new social relationships and new technologies, among other factors. Our interpretations of what was successful in the past may change. What worked for Gandhi may not be entirely appropriate for a campaign against government surveillance or a transnational corporation. It is important both to learn from the past but not to follow it unquestioningly.

How can activists be helped to locate their particular actions as part of an ongoing campaign? (Col)

RJB: By learning how to campaign *strategically*; that is, by learning how to plan and implement nonviolent strategy so that the strategic considerations that

should guide the selection and application of tactics (actions) are understood.

How do/can egalitarian social change organisations retain their radicalism over time? (Ed)

RJB: By developing the social cosmology (the organisational philosophy, social structures, group processes, matter-energy environment and conflict resolution mechanisms that mutually reinforce each other) *in the direction of the radicalism*. For example, if a social change organisation is committed to nonviolence, it is insufficient, in my view, to state that philosophically. It is necessary to develop and practice using all of the (non-hierarchical) structures, (consensual) processes, (renewable) energy resources and (nonviolent) conflict mechanisms that are consistent with that philosophy. If an organisation fails to address even one of these (and perhaps other) facets of its cosmology, it tends to reinforce dominant patterns of behaviour and to undermine its own efforts to forge lasting change in a radical direction. This has happened in many alternative communities as people have committed themselves, for example, to ecological sustainability, but failed to alter the existing patterns of (patriarchal, capitalist, racist) social relations or the (win-lose) conflict mechanisms that were ingrained in them by mainstream socialisation.

BM: To be realistic, very few egalitarian social change organisations manage to survive for decades, not to mention retaining their radicalism. Massive changes in society have continued to occur in lifestyles, economics, media, families, skills and other areas. The persistence of organisations may not be the key to social change. Promoting egalitarian social change is essential. The question is how best to do this.

How can radical organisations sustain themselves economically over time? (Ed)

RJB: By some combination of simplification of personal lifestyles and consumption patterns, living in communities which allow more sharing of resources, increased personal and community self-reliance in food and other essential production, involvement in local economies based on bartering (such as

LETS systems), and by offering ethical knowledge, skills and/or products for which there is a demand in the mainstream economy.

How can researchers be linked to campaigns in order to provide information about the content of issues to activists? (Phil)

RJB: By asking activist scholars to identify sympathetic researchers, by contacting relevant university departments, and by contacting researchers who write articles in 'activist' or other journals (who might also provide leads to other researchers).

BM: When approaching researchers, your query is likely to fall into one of three categories. Firstly, it might be one for which the answer is readily available, for example in a book; to get a quick response, you need to find the right person. Secondly, your query might be too hard or totally unresearched, in which case you'll not find much help from anyone. Thirdly, it might be a case where a modest amount of research could lead to insights. These sorts of cases are the ones where activist-researcher collaboration is most likely to be fruitful. For example, can a researcher help by studying your campaign, possibly as a participant observer?

Don't forget students. Ask academics whether they have undergraduate or postgraduate students who can do a project to help you. You'll probably end up helping the students as much as they help you, so make sure it's a fair exchange.

What is the history of grassroots networking? (Jack)

RJB: I do not know of a single reference that deals systematically with this massive topic but there is a good case study of grassroots networking in Matthew Nemiroff Lyons, *The 'Grassroots' Net-*

work: Radical Nonviolence in the Federal Republic of Germany 1972-1985 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Center for International Studies, 1988).

What is the history of nonviolent struggle in Australia (including Aboriginal struggles)? (Anthony)

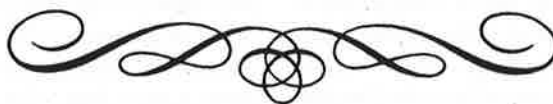
RJB: There is no comprehensive history of this subject of which I am aware. Perhaps the best summary is contained in Ralph Summy's contribution to the Encyclopaedia of Nonviolence that is being edited by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions at Harvard University. It is due for publication in 1996.

How does nonviolent economics work (including cooperatives)? (Jason)

RJB: Gandhi provided a great deal of guidance about nonviolent economics, emphasising the importance of decentralised, small-scale, mainly human-powered activity that is designed to enhance local self-reliance. Perhaps the most readily accessible references for this topic are those that deal with bioregional economies. See, for example, Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1991). Another useful book is Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century* (Boston: South End Press, 1991).

BM: 'Nonviolent economics' has a number of possible meanings. It can mean an economic system avoiding military production and geared instead towards nonviolent struggle. It can mean an economic system minimising environmental impacts. It can mean an economic system fostering equality, self-reliance and satisfaction in work. Of course, these aren't mutually exclusive.

There are various relevant bodies of writings. Gandhian economics is one area,



for example Amritananda Das, *Foundations of Gandhian Economics* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1979); Romesh Diwan and Mark Lutz (eds.), *Essays in Gandhian Economics* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985). Some works on anarchist economics are relevant, such as Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, *Action and Existence: Anarchism for Business Administration* (Chichester: Wiley, 1983) and the magazine *Libertarian Labor Review*.

Are there experiences of the relevance of nonviolence to living with the poor? (Jason)

RJB: Yes; many in fact. Perhaps the most obvious examples are the experiences of nonviolent activists (such as Swati, who visited Australia in 1992) who live and work with the poor (some as part of the Sarvodaya movement) in India. Other examples include Danilo Dolci in Italy and the Church people who live with poor people in the Christian base communities in Central and South America. See, for example, Dominique Barbe, *Grace and Power: Base Communities and Nonviolence in Brazil*, Trans. John Pairman Brown (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987); Danilo Dolci, *Poverty in Sicily: A Study of the Province of Palermo by Danilo Dolci*, Trans. P. D. Cummins (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1966).

What are examples of nonviolent action making nonviolent principles real? (Steve)

RJB: Gandhi's campaigns are the most inspirational examples of this. There are many books on this subject. Try the following: Horace Alexander, *Gandhi Through Western Eyes* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1984); M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 2d ed. Trans. Valji Govindji Desai (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan, 1950). Another good book is yet to be published: Thomas Weber's *On the Salt March* which describes the 1930 Salt March in detail.

How can social structures be undermined? (Jason) *How can alternatives to these structures be created?* (Manon)

RJB: Among other strategies (including violent ones), social structures can be undermined by strategically focused cam-

paigns of nonviolent struggle. This is what many nonviolent struggles (such as the Indian independence struggle, the Gandhian campaign against untouchability, the U.S. civil rights movement, and the Palestinian Intifada) have been about. An important part of any complete nonviolent strategy is its constructive program: that part of the strategy that focuses on creating social structures that satisfy human needs. At the simplest level, this means creating non-hierarchical groups in which decisions are made by consensus. As practice is obtained at this level, insight into how larger and more complex human-centred structures may be created will be acquired.

BM: In many cases social structures are undermined but no one had any strategy to achieve this. The undermining occurs as various groups seek their own goals. For example, the rise of capitalism and the state helped to undermine feudalism. Currently the market is undermining various social structures, including indigenous cultures and family structures. Traditional religion has been undermined through various long-term processes, not just by campaigns. Nonviolent activists cannot control these processes, but they can make a difference through campaigns and influencing attitudes. The development of the capitalist labour market may have helped to undermine slavery, but campaigns certainly made a difference. Is it more effective to pose a complete challenge to historical trends or to adapt to them and try to move them in a better direction?

What is the history of soldier resistance (not just contemporary)? (Anthony)

RJB: There is a growing literature on this subject, but still very little (particularly of its history) compared to the frequency of the phenomenon's occurrence. See, for example, Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981); David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975); David Cortright and Max Watts, *Left Face: Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies* (New York: Greenwood Press,

1991); Andrew Rothstein, *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

BM: Katherine Chorley's classic book, *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943) is not specifically about soldier resistance but is well worth consulting by anyone developing strategies concerning the military.

How about producing an Australian version of the book Resource Manual for a Living Revolution (Virginia Coover et al., New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1981)?

RJB: I think that this is a good idea, but not a priority given the people and resources we have in the Australian Nonviolence Network at the moment.

BM: Unless you are an experienced writer, I think it would be better to begin with a small writing project, for example producing a leaflet dealing with an area covered by the *Resource Manual*. If enough short writings were produced, they could become the basis for a book - but worry about that later.

How do nonviolent actions change participants, police, community, etc.? (Dani)

RJB: The best studies explaining how nonviolence works at the psychological level are probably Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969); Leroy H. Pelton, *The Psychology of Nonviolence* (New York: Pergamon, 1974). And there are many studies that illustrate how nonviolent action works politically. The standard reference is Gene Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

What are people's experiences of living in intentional communities? Why does it work for some and not for others?

RJB: I haven't read much about this subject but a new book has just been published on communities in Australia. Glen Ochre wrote a chapter about Commonground in this book. See Bill Metcalf (ed.), *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995).

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