



3 - satyagraha to people power

Chapter 3: *Satyagraha to People Power*

from Michael Randle, *Civil Resistance* (Fontana), 1994

The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary overview of the development of civil resistance in the present century and to deal with several campaigns in various political contexts in sufficient depth to bring out some of the key issues and controversies raised by this kind of action.

The figure whose actions and ideas have most crucially influenced the development of civil resistance in the 20th century is Mohandas K. Gandhi - 'Mahatma' Gandhi. In the early years of the century in South Africa, and in subsequent campaigns in India up to his death in 1948, Gandhi combined an ethical commitment to non-violence with an uncanny political acumen and outstanding qualities of organisation and leadership. His most crucial contribution to the liberation struggle in India was to awaken the Indian masses to a realisation of their own power, and to forge a link between them and the educated political élite of the Congress party. Non-cooperation and civil disobedience were the weapons of India's millions, and provided the nationalist movement with a disruptive and potentially coercive sanction short of armed rebellion to back up its demands.

But though the Gandhian influence has been predominant for much of the century, other traditions played their part. The 1905 general strike across the length and breadth of the Russian Empire demonstrated the revolutionary potential of mass non-cooperation, but was not linked to any doctrine of non-violence; neither were the strikes, demonstrations, and mass desertions which finally brought revolution to Russia in March 1917 (the 'February Revolution'). The suffragette campaign in Britain, too, in the period leading up to the first World War, was not Gandhian in origin or ethos, though it employed many of the same methods, including notably civil disobedience and hunger strikes. It was Gandhi who was influenced by some of these events rather than exerting an influence upon them.

Some of the subsequent instances of civil resistance, especially in Europe in the inter-war years, also harked back to an older European heritage. In 1920 an attempted pro-monarchist putsch in Berlin led by a right-wing landowner was defeated within days by a general strike in the city, and a policy of total non-cooperation at every level of society. In 1923 when French and Belgian forces occupied the Ruhr to enforce war reparations by the seizure of coal supplies they were met with a campaign of passive resistance which included strikes by miners and railwaymen, non-cooperation by civil servants, even the refusal of shopkeepers to serve the occupying forces. The resistance eventually crumbled in face of hunger, rising unemployment and hyper-inflation, and was officially called off by a newly appointed German government led by Stresemann in September. It nevertheless achieved some positive results. A US commission set up to mediate adjusted the war reparations claims in Germany's favour, and made the execution of its provisions dependent upon the restoration of the economic and political unity of the German Reich. The last provision was intended to forestall what many regarded as France's real objective in invading the Ruhr, namely to detach the whole of the Rhineland area from Germany and create a French client state.¹

During World War II, there was widespread civil resistance in occupied Europe especially in Western and North Western Europe, and this too owed little to the Gandhian tradition. It ranged from actions such as the wearing of symbols, to the publication of underground newspapers, go-slows and obstruction, and intermittent mass action in the form of strikes and demonstrations.²

In the Netherlands in 1940, students in Delft and Leiden struck in protest at the dismissal of Jewish professors. There were major industrial strikes in Amsterdam, Hilversum and other cities in February 1942, again in protest against the treatment of Jews and in April and May 1943 several hundred thousand took part in a strike against a German order that Dutch ex-servicemen should report for internment in Germany. In September 1944 railway workers struck in a move timed to coincide with Allied parachute landings at Arnhem and Nijmegen.

In Norway, 43 organisations with a total of 750,000 members formed a Co-ordinating Committee to resist the



Quisling government's attempt to bring any one of them under Nazi control. In 1942 teachers successfully defied an attempt to introduce the teaching of Nazi doctrines in the schools, and led to the abandonment by Quisling of the attempt to create a Nazi-style corporate state in Norway.

In Denmark - which was invaded ostensibly to preserve its neutrality and was therefore permitted to retain its own government - a 'people's strike' in Copenhagen in August 1943 led to the resignation of the government and the imposition of direct German rule. In October of the same year a massive clandestine rescue operation led to the smuggling of 95 per cent of the Jewish population to safety in Sweden. Strikes, demonstrations and sabotage continued thereafter, culminating in a general strike in Copenhagen in June 1944.

In France, in response to a broadcast appeal from General De Gaulle, there were mass demonstrations in both the occupied and unoccupied zones on May Day 1942 and again on 14 July. There were also extensive strikes in June 1942 in opposition to the attempts to coerce people to work in factories in Germany, and again in February 1943 when the Vichy government passed a decree introducing labour conscription to meet German demands for more workers in their factories. In France too, as in the Netherlands, Italy and elsewhere there were campaigns of strikes, sabotage and obstruction in the latter part of the war timed to coincide with allied offensives.

Gandhi, however, exerted a major influence upon many of the post-war liberation movements. Thus, some of the key figures in the generation of post-war African leaders - including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania - modelled their campaigns explicitly on Gandhian lines. In Ghana and Zambia especially, civil resistance, and the threat of it, played a significant role in the independence struggles. The campaigns that took place in South Africa in the post-World War II period - the 1946 campaign by the Indians in Natal, and the Defiance of Unjust Laws campaign jointly launched by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress in 1952 - were also Gandhian in conception.³ However, some of the liberation movements which were initially strongly influenced by Gandhian ideals gradually distanced themselves from the commitment to non-violence, and developed a more pragmatic strategy in which sabotage and even armed rebellion were combined with civil resistance. This was the case most notably with the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress in South Africa.

Gandhi's influence is unmistakable in the civil rights campaigns in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s (discussed in more detail later), and those of the radical wing of the nuclear disarmament movement in Britain, the United States and Western Europe. The Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War in Britain arose out of an attempt in 1957 by a Quaker, Harold Steele, to sail into the British nuclear testing zone at Christmas Island in the Pacific as a form of non-violent intervention. In the following year, a crew comprising members of the Committee for Non-violent Action (CNVA) in the US made two attempts to sail into the US testing zone at Eniwitok in the Golden Rule.⁴ Later that same year, Earle and Barbara Reynolds and their family, together with Nick Mikami from Hiroshima, attempted to sail their ketch, Phoenix into the prohibited zone. While these expeditions did not realise their immediate objective they were widely publicised and played an important role in mobilising opposition to nuclear weapons. The Direct Action Committee organised the first Aldermaston March in Britain in 1958, and adopted the now universal nuclear disarmament symbol. By the early 1960s the peace campaigns had reached the proportions of mass movement involving hundreds of thousands of people in many countries. In 1961 in Britain, thousands took part in sit-down demonstrations in city centres or bases organised by the Committee of 100 and the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War. Mass demonstrations and civil disobedience were features also of the anti-Vietnam war movements in the United States, Western Europe and elsewhere in the latter 1960s and early 1970s, and here too the Gandhian heritage is evident in many of the protests and demonstrations, even if they now tended to have a more militant and strident tone. Within Vietnam, guerrilla warfare was the main instrument of national struggle. Nevertheless, there too civil resistance played a significant role, particularly during the 1963 campaigns by Buddhists and students against the US-backed government of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam.

The peace movement of the 1950s and 1960s had a strongly internationalist emphasis. Not only was there international representation on marches and demonstrations within particular countries, but increasingly campaigning groups within different countries worked together on specifically transnational actions, such as the Sahara Protest Team in 1959-60 against French atomic weapons tests, and the San-Francisco-Moscow March of 1960-61. In January 1962, the World Peace Brigade was set up at a conference in Beirut with the aim of providing a more permanent organisational base for projects of this kind. (See the section below on Transnational Non-violent Action).

From the 1960s onwards, stimulated no doubt by the examples of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and the anti-nuclear and anti-war movements, civil resistance techniques were used with increasing frequency for a whole range of



issues and at a variety of levels - from small local campaigns to those involving thousands or tens of thousands of people. In France, starting in the late 1950s, there was mounting opposition to the war in Algeria, with demonstrations sometimes taking the form of sit downs in front of trains taking soldiers to the war. In 1961 an attempted military coup by French generals in Algeria against the policies of General De Gaulle was defeated by non-cooperation, and a display of national unity called for by De Gaulle and by the trade unions and major political parties. In Northern Ireland in from the mid to late 1960s, civil rights campaigners challenged the endemic discrimination in the Province. The subsequent, and continuing, tragedy in the area should not be allowed to obscure the important achievements of the civil rights movement in mobilising large numbers of people for a time across the old nationalist/unionist divide and forcing the authorities to introduce reforms in local government elections, and to end many discriminatory practices.⁵ 1968 also saw student and left-wing unrest, amounting at times to quasi-insurrections, in the United States, Britain, West Germany, Italy, and - most spectacularly - France. Vietnam, at this point, had become the catalyst for a thoroughgoing critique of Western capitalist society, and a younger generation re-discovered marxist and anarchist ideas.

A rejection of capitalism, however, did not imply an endorsement of the 'actual existing socialism' in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and for the young rebels the alienation from the Soviet model was deepened when Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks rolled into Prague in August 1968 to put an end to the reforms of the Prague Spring. In Czechoslovakia itself, thousands of people poured out onto the streets to confront the oncoming tanks, and they maintained a remarkable civil resistance to the occupiers until Dubcek and the other leaders had been released and reinstalled in office. However the Czechoslovak leadership had been pressurised in Moscow into making concessions, including the re-introduction of censorship, and this enabled the Soviet leaders to apply salami tactics over the following months to secure their removal and institute a wholesale purge of the party. In the still longer perspective, however, the invasion, and the heroic non-violent resistance it encountered, undermined still further the credibility and authority of communist party rule in Eastern Europe.

From the mid to late 1960s, and into the early 1970s, there was a distinct shift among anti-Vietnam campaigners and radical youth and leftist movements in the West towards a romantic notion of revolutionary violence, epitomised in the cult of Che Guevera. Some of the demonstrations took on a more aggressive, macho style in which punch-ups and fist-fights with the police were sometimes seen as evidence of determination rather than as a breakdown of discipline. A minority, like the Weathermen in the States, the Angry Brigade in Britain, the Red Army Faction in West Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy put their commitment to 'urban guerrilla warfare' into practice with the sabotage of buildings and in some cases kidnappings and bomb outrages. The male macho style of leadership and demonstrations came under attack from the resurgent women's movement in the 1970s many of whose groups developed alternative non-hierarchical approaches to organising and brought new vigour and imagination to non-violent protest.

During the 1970s, too, environmental issues became a major focus of public concern and here again various forms of non-violent action were commonly employed from large scale occupations and sit-downs at nuclear power plants, or at the sites scheduled for building such plants, to daring and imaginative non-violent intervention by teams of Greenpeace volunteers. In some of the major civil disobedience demonstrations, such as those at Seabrook in the United States and Torness in Scotland, non-violent discipline was strengthened through on-site role play and other forms of training.

The 1980s saw the rise of a new mass peace movement. By now the notion of using non-violent direct action on a variety of issues, had become more common and more widely accepted in many countries than had been the case in the 1950s and early 1960s. This facilitated the use of civil disobedience on a far larger scale, including by the mainstream organisations like CND in Britain which had firmly rejected it in the earlier period. Women this time round played a major part, organising national and transnational campaigns. In 1981, some 40,000 women surrounded the Greenham Common base in Berkshire, and women took the initiative in organising some of the international marches and setting up peace camps at the proposed missile sites, such as that at Comiso in Italy. Demonstrations were on a truly massive scale, bringing millions of people onto the streets of Europe and exerting tangible pressure on the governments of the countries concerned.

Although the movement failed to prevent the deployment of the new generation of Euromissiles, it can claim some credit for bringing the superpowers to the conference table and eventually signing an agreement to remove them. There was also an important exchange of ideas and information between a section of the Western peace movement and the human rights and peace groups in Eastern Europe, extending to the organisation of several joint projects. Moreover, the mass demonstrations of the early 1980s, often highly innovative and imaginative in form, were widely reported in Eastern Europe and had the unintended consequence of encouraging imitation.



Outside Europe, there were particularly vigorous campaigns in the US (spearheaded by the Freeze Movement), Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific area. In New Zealand the campaign won an outstanding political success with the election of David Lange as prime minister of a Labour government pledged to keep New Zealand as a nuclear-free-zone and to prohibit visits by British and American warships. There was also strong opposition too in New Zealand, Australia, the island chains of Micronesia and Polynesia, Vanuatu, Fiji and other territories in the Pacific to continued French nuclear testing. In 1985 the members of the South Pacific Forum signed the Treaty of Rarotonga, and expression of their opposition to nuclear tests and their desire for a nuclear-free Pacific.⁶

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the world, from 1979, and through the 1980s, civil resistance achieved strategic successes to the point of transforming the international scene. In 1979 in Iran, despite massacres by the Shah's military forces, followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and others took the streets literally in their millions and forced the resignation and flight of the ruler. The spirit of this unarmed insurrection was the very opposite of non-violent, and the regime which took over was authoritarian and fanatical, yet the power of total non-cooperation to undermine an armed and determined autocracy had again been demonstrated. During the 1980s mass action overturned the Marcos regime in the Philippines and the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti, and brought democratic reform in Korea, Chile and elsewhere in Latin America. In the West Bank and the Gaza strip, too, Israeli rule was seriously challenged by the *Intifada* after twenty years of occupation. By the early 1990s the apartheid system in South Africa was visibly crumbling under the combined assault of riots and disorders in the black townships, guerrilla attacks, campaigns of non-cooperation, and international sanctions and boycotts at both official and unofficial levels.

Some of the successes to be sure were short lived. In Haiti the success of people power in 1986 in forcing 'Baby' Doc Duvalier to flee into exile was followed by a further period of military rule and political repression. In December 1990 a left-wing priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was elected president but he too was overthrown in another army coup. A general strike and civil disobedience, coupled with the imposition of sanctions by the United States, failed to restore the legitimate government though in July 1993, in face of continuing international pressure and sanctions, the military rulers in Haiti gave an undertaking that they would allow Aristide to return to the country and resume his role as its president.⁷ In other cases civil resistance failed to achieve success at least in the short to medium term. In Fiji a coup in May 1987 removed the elected government of Dr Bavadra which drew much of its support from the Indian population, and a further coup in September of that year consolidated military rule at a time when a compromise political settlement seemed within reach. While there was some civil resistance to the coups, the racial divisions between Indians and indigenous Fijians, stirred up by the pro-coup parties and factions, prevented a united resistance.⁸ In China, the massacres in Tiananmen Square and elsewhere in Beijing in June 1989 dashed any immediate hope of democratic reform in that country and again underlined the fact that civil resistance provides no easy solutions.

Yet it was in the communist countries of the Soviet bloc that people power achieved its most telling and strategically important victories. Civil resistance was an important element in the revolts in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, in the recurrent crises in Poland, and of course in the opposition to the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia. There was also a continuing, low-level cultural resistance to the imposed regimes which progressively undermined its authority and legitimacy. The establishment of Solidarity in August 1980, and its rapid growth to become by far the most powerful political force in Poland can be seen in retrospect to have been the turning point in the fortunes of communist-party rule - and Soviet hegemony - in Eastern Europe. In the mid to late 1980s, the Gorbachev reforms in the Soviet Union on the one hand and the clear signal that the Soviet Union was no longer prepared to intervene militarily to save embattled communist party governments in Eastern Europe eased the way for the 1989 revolutions. Gorbachev's reform programme was itself a response to an economic and political crisis within the Soviet bloc to which the recurrent revolts and challenges - and especially the emergence of Solidarity in Poland - had made a fundamental contribution.

Gorbachev was not prepared to use force to maintain communist party rule in Eastern Europe but he did use it spasmodically in several of the Soviet republics in a vain attempt to maintain the integrity of the Soviet Union. In April 1989, demonstrators in Tbilisi, Georgia, were attacked by Soviet (chiefly Russian) troops, and a number of people killed or seriously injured. There was a further bloody repression in Baku, Azerbaijan, in January of the following year leading to demonstrations of an estimated 750,000 people at the funerals of those who had been killed. But there was also a crucial display of people power in Moscow in February 1990 in support of Gorbachev's proposal to end the communist party's monopoly of power. 150,000 people attended a demonstration in Moscow, constituting the largest demonstration since shortly after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In October 1990, the parliament of the Russian Federation declared that Soviet laws would apply to its territory only after it had ratified



them. Then in January 1991, while the rest of the world was preoccupied with the Gulf War, Soviet special forces, presumably acting under orders from Moscow, occupied the television and radio stations in Vilnius, Lithuania, and the Interior Ministry in Riga, Latvia, in attempts to bring the republics to heel. In both cities, civilians formed physical and human barricades around the Parliament buildings in response to public radio appeals. Five people were killed and fourteen wounded when Soviet forces attacked the Parliament building in Riga.

Nevertheless, all-out confrontation between the centre and the republics was avoided, and the latter steadily increased their relative strength and independence. It was in fact the plan to sign a new Union Treaty that sparked off the attempted coup to oust Gorbachev and re-establish central control under hardline communist leadership. This was defeated in a new and extraordinary demonstration of people power, discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

How much direct influence Gandhian ideas of non-violent action exercised in these events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is difficult to judge. In a very broad sense, of course, the experience of Gandhi's campaigns in South Africa and India have become part of a world wide pool of knowledge. In Poland in the 1970s, the Catholic monthly *Wież* published in translation accounts of the campaigns of Gandhi, Luther King and Brazilian trade unionists, and in 1977 a group which embarked on a public hunger strike in protest against the arrest of nine KOR members (Committee for the Defence of Workers) made specific reference to the tradition of Gandhi and Luther King.⁹ Following the imposition of martial law, Walesa referred on a number of occasions to Gandhi and non-violence, and in 1984 underground publishing groups produced Polish editions of some of the writings of two leading Western exponents of non-violent action, Jean-Marie Muller (France), and Gene Sharp (USA).¹⁰ The Freedom and Peace group (*Wolnosc i Pokoj - WiP*) founded in 1985 had close links with the Western peace movement and identified itself unambiguously with the non-violent approach. In East Germany, Christian church groups actively promoted non-violence; so too did some of the Prague students in Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution. Overall, however, the restraint of the demonstrators probably owed more to an understanding of the fact that a bloody uprising could be disastrously counterproductive and might just be the development that would after all trigger Soviet intervention. In Romania, of course, there was serious bloodshed, though only after Ceausescu had fled from Bucharest and the Securitate attempted a violent counter-revolution.

In the case of the Baltic republics, there is clear evidence that the civil resistance to the attempted Soviet clampdown in January 1991, and again at the time of the August coup was influenced by Gene Sharp's writings on Civilian-Based Defence.¹¹ We consider the developments in the Baltics both prior to and following their independence later in this chapter. Meanwhile, in the rest of this chapter we examine in somewhat greater detail several representative civil resistance campaigns in various contexts.

Liberation Struggles

India

The simple version of Gandhi's achievement in India is that he won the nation's independence by his leadership and organisation of non-violent action against British rule. The campaigns did make, of course, a vital contribution to the independence struggle. But it is important to place them in an historical context and to see how they interacted with constitutional and other pressures for reform.

Gandhi's first campaigns in India following his return there from South Africa in 1915 focused on a number of local issues. At the same time he began putting into practice his ideas on a constructive programme aimed at self-reliance. The principal campaigns at a national level in which he was involved were those against the Rowlett Acts of 1919 (anti-terrorist laws which placed severe restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly), and in support of the Khalifat movement in the same year (a campaign for the sultan of defeated Turkey to be permitted to retain the guardianship of the Muslim holy places); the non-cooperation campaign of 1920-2; the civil disobedience campaigns of 1930-1, and 1932-3; the campaign of individual civil disobedience in 1940; and the Quit India campaign of 1942. He devoted equal, if not greater, energy to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, putting his life on the line on several occasions as a result of fasting or direct intervention in trouble spots, and on the constructive programme which he regarded as an integral part of the campaign for *swaraj* - a term denoting both self-government and self-reliance. Not all these campaigns were successful; some, in Gandhi's own estimation were disastrous failures. Overall, however, they made a vital contribution to the independence movement.



The setting in which Gandhi took on the role of a national leader was framed by the Lucknow Pact in 1916 in which Indian Congress and the Muslim League agreed to cooperate together in pursuit of an agreed programme of constitutional reform, and the 1917 Montagu Declaration. This promised 'increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire.'¹² The Government of India Act in 1919 - generally referred to as the 'Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms' - was presented as the first stage in the implementation of this policy. It reformed the franchise so that about one in ten of the Indian male population gained the vote, established separate communal electorates for Muslims and other religious minorities, and increased the powers of the Provincial Legislatures. However, certain key areas such as foreign affairs, the currency, and Criminal Law remained in the hands of the colonial government in Delhi.¹³

Despite his reservations about the Act, Gandhi initially favoured Congress's cooperation with it. In the same year, however, he led a campaign of defiance against the newly passed Rowlett Acts. This brought outbreaks of violence and culminated in the massacre by forces under the command of a British officer, Colonel Dyer, of nearly 400 unarmed demonstrators at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar. It was this massacre, and official British reaction to it, which finally made Gandhi disillusioned with the British Empire. At the same time his support for the Khalifat movement increased his influence among the leaders of India's Muslim community and gave him the stature of a national figure.

The 1920-2 campaign of non-cooperation was conducted against the British raj as such and was aimed at achieving *swaraj* within one year. It enjoyed the backing of both the Indian National Congress and the Khalifat movement, and was planned to take part in distinct phases of increasing assertiveness. The first phase (from August 1920 to October 1921), comprised a 'triple boycott' of the Provincial Councils, schools and law courts, a massive recruiting and fund-raising drive and the introduction of spinning wheels into the villages (the Bezwada programme), and finally a complete boycott of foreign cloth. Coupled with a reform of the Congress constitution, the Bezwada programme transformed Congress - as Gandhi intended that it should - from an élite pressure group into a mass movement.

The second phase comprised 'individual' civil disobedience, the withdrawal of civilians from government employment and a campaign for Indians to withdraw from the military and the police. The third phase was to comprise 'assertive' civil disobedience, starting in Bardoli, where Gandhi felt the people were most ready to undertake it, and followed by other areas provided that strict conditions had been fulfilled including the adoption of swadeshi (use of home produced articles, particularly clothing), a commitment to non-violence and communal unity. A particularly important feature of this campaign was the integration of the 'constructive programme' - production of home spun cloth and work at the village level - and non-cooperation.¹⁴

The campaign gained mass support, involving hundreds of thousands in acts of non-cooperation and defiance, which often linked national and local issues. But outbreaks of violence in some areas led Gandhi to postpone the phase of mass civil disobedience and finally to abandon it altogether. He first postponed the launch of mass civil disobedience in Bardoli when serious rioting accompanied the visit of the Prince of Wales to Bombay in November 1921. Nevertheless, 'defensive' civil disobedience - the defiance of bans by many of the Provincial government on political meetings and the outlawing of the Congress and Khalifat committees in November 1921 - resulted in the arrest of over 30,000 volunteers and the imprisonment of many prominent Congress leaders.

Alarmed by the extent of the protests, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, indicated that, provided Congress would call off the non-cooperation, the government was prepared to lift the ban on the two organisations, to release those imprisoned as a result of the campaign, and to convene a Round Table conference on the constitution. This offer marked a significant success for the campaign, but to the consternation of many of his colleagues in Congress, Gandhi refused the offer on the grounds that the amnesty did not cover some of the Khalifat volunteers who had called for resignations from the army. In February 1922 the postponed mass civil disobedience was due to be launched in Bardoli. Before this could take place, however, a massacre of 22 policemen in Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, finally decided Gandhi to cancel civil disobedience altogether for the time being. Gandhi himself was arrested in March, and Congress subsequently resumed cooperation with the new constitution.

Following a period of two years' imprisonment for incitement (1922-4), Gandhi was not pre-eminent in Congress politics until 1928. Instead his energies were concentrated on the constructive programme, his work for the Harijans (Untouchables), and on behalf of Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1924 he undertook a three week fast in an effort to stem communal violence after 150 Hindus had been killed in riots in Kohat.



Gandhi was attracted back into national politics by the growing disillusion of the Congress politicians with the working of the 1919 constitution, the high-handedness of the Simon Commission entrusted to review its workings, and his concern about the growing disunity of the Indian population. In 1929, Congress voted for the first time for complete independence, a boycott of the legislature and of a British sponsored Round Table Conference, and for civil disobedience at the discretion of the All India Congress Committee. Many both inside and outside Congress were ready at this juncture to support violence as is indicated by the narrow majority in Congress for a motion condemning a bomb attack on the Viceroy's train.¹⁵ Much therefore depended on whether or not Gandhi could produce a sufficiently imaginative and challenging form of civil resistance to meet the emotional as well as the political needs of the moment.

Gandhi's response was the famous Salt March. In March 1930, with 80 of his most trusted followers, the 61 year-old leader set off on the 240 mile walk from Ahmedabad to the sea at Dandi. There he openly defied the Salt-tax law by making salt from evaporated sea water. In one sense it was gesture politics, and was viewed with considerable scepticism by some of the sophisticated Congress politicians. The gesture, however, touched exactly the right chord among the mass of the Indian population - or at any rate the Hindu part of it - and marked the beginning of a nation-wide campaign of civil disobedience. This involved chiefly salt tax defiance and the boycott of foreign cloth, but encompassed also a social boycott of government servants, resignations from government posts, and refusal to pay land revenue. Jails were filled as a total of 60,000 resisters were imprisoned during the period of the campaign.¹⁶ Those imprisoned, however, represented only a fraction of the people who boycotted foreign cloth, contributed funds to the campaign or participated in other ways. Women too played an active part in the campaign, participating in the running of the Congress organisation, and in picketing and civil disobedience. In Gujarat, Gandhi's home base, the British administration virtually collapsed, and most provincial governments came under severe pressure. The main disappointment, however, from Gandhi's and Congress's standpoint, was the low level of Muslim participation outside the Frontier region. The hopes of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity in a common action had not been realised.

The 1930 London Conference, though boycotted by Congress, reiterated Britain's commitment to granting India Dominion status. Gandhi and the member of the Congress Working Committee were released from prison and early in 1931 Gandhi and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, reached an agreement - the Gandhi-Irwin Pact - under which Congress would suspend civil disobedience whilst the government would withdraw the special powers designed to deal with it and release all civil disobedience prisoners. In September Gandhi attended the Second Round Table conference in London as the sole representative of Congress - a move designed principally to conceal the rifts within the organisation. The conference itself ended in deadlock, mainly over the issue of Congress' claim to represent all Indians, including Muslims, and of separate electorates for untouchables and other minorities.¹⁷ However, Gandhi recognised the importance of enlisting support among the British electorate and lost no opportunity to visit universities, schools, religious groups and leaders, and ordinary working people, including notably some of the Lancashire cotton workers who had been adversely affected by the *swadeshi* campaign (use of home-produced goods) and the boycott of foreign cloth.

Soon after his return to India, Gandhi was re-arrested and, rather half-heartedly, Congress renewed the civil disobedience campaign. This time round it was less successful, and did not take root to the same extent among the rural population. Gandhi himself, however, was able to influence the British government's constitutional proposals when, in September 1932, he undertook a 'fast unto death' inside prison as an expression of his opposition to the plan to grant Untouchables separate constituencies. This led to a compromise arrangement for the Untouchables agreed in discussions with their leader, Dr Ambedkar.

Gandhi was released in May 1933 on the eve of a fast of self-purification. Realising that mass civil disobedience was a spent force and unpopular with Congress, he sought ways to bring it to an honourable conclusion. It was followed by a period of 'individual civil disobedience', but this was never popular. Gandhi retired from Congress altogether in 1934 and the organisation re-engaged in constitutional politics. The new Government of India Act of 1935 devolved the government of the provinces almost totally into the hands of elected Indians, and in the 1937 elections, Congress became the party of government in 7 of the 11 provinces.¹⁸ At the same time the election undercut Congress's claim to represent all Indians, Muslims as well as Hindus, though it revealed also the relative weakness at this stage of the Muslim League which won only 109 of the 482 seats reserved for Muslims, gaining just under 5% of the Muslim vote.¹⁹

Civil disobedience re-emerged on the political scene in India following the outbreak of the Second World War. In November 1939, Congress withdrew from Provincial government, and in 1940, under Gandhi's leadership it launched a campaign of individual civil disobedience based upon an unequivocally pacifist slogan - 'It is wrong to



help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance.' At the end of the first phase of the campaign many prominent Congress figures were in jail, including 32 former Ministers, seven of whom had been Provincial Premiers. By May 1941, 14,000 satyagrahis (non-violent resisters) were in jail and by the end about 26,000 had been convicted according to government estimates.²⁰ Nevertheless, there was not the enthusiasm which had marked the 1920-21 and 1930-31 campaigns, and by mid-1941 the government regarded it as no longer posing an administrative problem.²¹

In 1942, following the collapse of a mission to India by Stafford Cripps, Congress launched a new mass campaign - the Quit India campaign. This was severely, and on the whole effectively, suppressed by the British government whose hand was strengthened by the wartime presence of additional troops in India, and by the fact that it no longer had to worry, at a time of Britain's own national peril, about opposition at home or abroad. The members of the Congress Working Party were imprisoned until the end of the war, and this body, plus the All India Congress Committee, and the Provincial Congress Committees, were declared illegal. Gandhi himself was arrested before he and the Congress leadership could formulate a coherent strategy or communicate with the Provincial Congress Committees.²²

In the post-war period, Gandhi again played a central role in the negotiations on the constitution for an independent India. He resolutely opposed partition to the end. However, the various negotiations that had taken place between him and the leader of the Muslim League, M.A.Jinnah - in April and May 1938 and again in September 1944 - produced only deadlock. In the July 1945 elections to the legislatures, Congress won 90 per cent of the Non-Muslim vote, but the Muslim League had virtually a clean sweep of the special Muslim seats in the legislatures, and large majorities in Bengal and the Punjab. Partition at this point was almost inevitable.

Gandhi's last, most heroic, contribution to Indian politics occurred in the immediate aftermath of independence when he put his life on the line visiting areas stricken by the communal slaughter that marked the partition of the country. His personal intervention and 'penitential' fasts - in Calcutta in September 1947 and Delhi in January 1948 - had a dramatic impact and brought at least a temporary halt to rioting in the areas concerned. Lord Mountbatten, India's last viceroy and first Governor General, paid tribute to him following the Calcutta fast as 'My One Man Boundary Force'. Others, however, were less impressed. On 30 January Gandhi was assassinated by a fundamentalist Hindu angered by what he saw as Gandhi's undue deference and concessions to his Muslim fellow countrymen.

Even such a succinct exposition of Gandhi's career reveals the complex interaction in the Indian independence struggle between radical civil resistance and conventional politics. The mixed fortunes of the campaigns also demonstrate the importance of the broader context in which they are taking place, even when facing the same opponent. In the campaign of 1920-2, and again in 1930-1, the difficulty for the British authorities was that they could not act too violently or repressively against a non-violent movement without alienating the moderate Indian politicians whose cooperation they hoped to enlist, and without risking opposition at home and abroad. Thus, the campaigns, precisely because they were non-violent as well as radically disruptive of the administration, exercised genuine pressure in the tough world of *realpolitik*. However, as noted above, at the time of the Quit India campaign Britain was less constrained and could act more ruthlessly in putting down the resistance.

How different, we may ask, was Gandhi's satyagraha from earlier passive resistance? The term satyagraha was coined in 1907 in an effort to find an *equivalent* in Gujarati and other Indian languages to the English term 'passive resistance', as the contemporary issues of *Indian Opinion* show.²³ However, from the early period of the South African campaign, Gandhi had put a much greater emphasis than previous practitioners of passive resistance on the notion of converting the opponent through voluntary self-suffering,²⁴ and on the principled rejection of any resort to violence. Later, he was to write: 'Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.'²⁵

Despite his determination to distance satyagraha from passive resistance, Gandhi was well aware of historical and contemporary examples of the latter and, especially in the early days in South Africa, referred favourably to them in propagating his ideas. Thus, in various issues of *Indian Opinion* he cited the example of the 19th century Hungarian resistance to Austrian rule, to the contemporary Sinn Fein struggle in Ireland, to a Chinese boycott in 1905-6 of American goods in response to US anti-Chinese legislation, to the boycott of British goods in Bengal in 1905 in protest against a British proposal of partition, to the general strike in Russia in the same year - the 'Russian remedy' as he called it which could be adopted in the struggle against tyranny²⁶ - and to the campaign of the



suffragettes in England.²⁷ Moreover, in expounding the workings of satyagraha, Gandhi did not solely emphasise the moral and psychological impact of voluntary suffering on the opponent, but insisted also on the dependence of governments on the cooperation of the population and the vulnerability of authority in face of sustained non-cooperation.²⁸ He freely acknowledged, too, that in presenting his proposals for non-cooperation to Congress he had emphasised the pragmatic argument on the 12 grounds that otherwise it would not have been accepted.²⁹ It may also be the case, as Gene Sharp has suggested, that Gandhi himself was first led to adopt civil resistance in the South African campaign from the evidence of its practical effectiveness rather than reasoning 'from the ethical to the political'.³⁰

Gandhi's own views on violence and non-violence were complex, and indeed shifted down the years. He drew a careful distinction between the moral obligations imposed on those who fully accepted the doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and those who did not. The former ought never to resort to violence, but must be prepared to lay their lives on the line if necessary in opposing injustice. The latter were not only entitled to use violence in extreme circumstances but had a positive duty to do so unless they too were prepared to adopt non-violent methods. Gandhi spoke admiringly too of the Polish resistance to Hitler's aggression in 1939. 'If Poland has that measure of uttermost bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted almost as non-violence.'³¹

Because many of Gandhi's colleagues and followers did not share his views on non-violence, his satyagraha campaigns were not in practice as far removed from previous passive resistance as he himself wished them to be. Nevertheless, they bore the stamp of his intense moral commitment and were frequently conducted with a remarkable and indeed unprecedented non-violent discipline. In this respect they were different and established a new pattern. Moreover, Gandhi's organising ability and strategic judgement, honed the technique for future practitioners, including those who did not share completely, or share at all, his belief in non-violence.

South Africa 1946-92

Outside India itself, Gandhi's influence was particularly strong in Africa. The fifth Pan-African Congress which met in Manchester in October 1945 - organised by one of its founding fathers, the black American leader, W.E.B. DuBois - brought together some of the new generation of African leaders, including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.³² For the first time since 1919, the African National Congress (ANC) sent representatives to the meeting which demanded autonomy and independence for Africa and endorsed Gandhi's passive resistance as the only effective way of persuading alien rulers to respect the rights of unarmed subject races.³³

In 1946 the Indian community in Natal engaged in a passive resistance campaign against the introduction of laws that restricted their right to own landed property and thus segregated them from the White community. Within a short period of the launching of the campaign, 600 resisters had been arrested, and by its close, 2,000 had suffered imprisonment, among them an Anglican clergyman, Rev Michael Scott who was to become a major campaigner against apartheid and for the rights of Africans, and a prominent figure in the anti-nuclear war campaign in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s.³⁴

In 1949 the ANC, strengthened by a vigorous new executive which included Walter Sisulu as Secretary-General, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, voted for a Programme of Action which would include 'strikes, civil disobedience, non-cooperation' to secure African demands.³⁵ Three years later, in 1952, the ANC and the South African Indian Congress jointly launched the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign in which over 7,000 people in total defied Apartheid laws. In October and November, however, there were serious riots in Port Elizabeth, Denver, Kimberley and East London, and although not connected with the defiance campaign, and condemned by its organisers, they had an adverse effect on the movement and gave the authorities ammunition to use against it.

The government also armed itself with new powers to control meetings, both public and private, and to restrict the activities of particular individuals. Most of the leaders, both African and Indian, were arrested in August 1952 and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act.³⁶ They were found guilty, and given prison sentences of a number of years suspended on condition that during the period of suspension they did not commit any further offences under the Act. A Criminal Law Amendment Act increased the penalties for inciting or participating in civil disobedience, including lashes. In November the Governor General issued a proclamation dealing with the incitement of 'natives' which also placed severe restrictions on the holding of meetings of more than ten blacks in a 'Native area'. This had the effect of preempting the ANC's plans to spread the campaign amongst rural Africans. By the end of the year, as a result of banning orders, arrests of leaders and internal dissensions within the black



population, the campaign had lost momentum.

The longer term resistance did of course continue. An important landmark here was the 1955 Congress of the People, an initiative launched by the ANC but supported by the major non-white and inter-racial political organisations. The Congress adopted a Freedom Charter setting out the terms for a future democratic South Africa. In the same year, African women took the lead in defying the pass laws,³⁷ and 20,000 of them converged on the Union Buildings in Pretoria. In December 1956 police made mass dawn arrests of active opponents of apartheid of all races and 156 were charged in a Treason Trial which dragged on for over four years resulting, however, in the acquittal of all defendants in March 1961. Meantime, in 1960, the newly formed Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) - a breakaway organisation from the ANC - launched a civil disobedience campaign against the pass laws. 50,000 resisters presented themselves without passes at police stations in various locations in March 1960. This was the occasion of the Sharpeville massacre in which 69 unarmed protesters were shot by South African police and 180 injured.

In face of the increasing repression, the ANC in 1962 established a military wing, 'Umkonto we Sizwe' (Spear of the Nation), which initially limited itself to acts of sabotage against government buildings and installations, but later extended its activities to include attacks on the security forces. Other organisations too, including the PAC, set up military wings during this period. Umkonto's armed struggle was eventually suspended in 1990 following the release of Nelson Mandela.³⁸ However guerrilla warfare inside South Africa itself (as opposed to South West Africa, Namibia) was not on a sufficient scale to pose a serious military threat to the White minority government. In general, strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, plus the formidable township insurrections on the one hand and moral pressure from leading South African churchmen such as Desmond Tutu and Alan Boesak on the other, have been the principal means inside South Africa of undermining the apartheid system. During the 1970s too the Black Peoples Convention, proponents of black consciousness adopted a non-violent approach in its resistance to apartheid. Steve Biko, its best known leader, died in police custody in September 1977 aged only 30.

In addition to the internal opposition, South Africa came under increasing pressure from the 1950s onwards from the UN and other international bodies in the shape of embargoes, sanctions, and sports boycotts. Its position was significantly weakened by the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique in the 1970s and the ultimate failure in 1979 of Ian Smith's attempt to maintain an independent white supremacist state in Southern Rhodesia. In 1990 it was forced by internal pressure from the SWAPO guerrilla movement, and external pressure from the UN, to cede independence to South West Africa - Namibia. Step by step too, the Nationalist government of President De Klerk, has, since 1989, been induced to scrap the apartheid laws and to accept the need to hold discussions with the ANC and others on a future democratic system for the country.

At the time of writing the question at issue is not whether White minority rule will end but how soon and in what manner. The clashes between the ANC supporters and the mainly Zulu followers of Chief Buthezi's Inkatha movement (with encouragement and financial support from the government) have added a further tragic dimension to South Africa's problems. It is significant, however, that when the talks between Nelson Mandela and President De Klerk broke down after the Boibatong massacre in June 1992, the ANC resisted demands to renew the armed struggle and embarked instead on a campaign of 'mass action'. It is clearly in its ability to bring the South African economy to a standstill and cause serious disruption through strikes and other forms of civil resistance that the strength of the ANC lies.

Elsewhere in Africa, civil resistance and constitutional agitation often went hand in hand in the campaigns for independence. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah launched a 'Positive Action' campaign in 1949 which put pressure on the British authorities to speed up the moves towards independence. Civil resistance too played a significant role in the break-up of the Central African Federation in 1962 and the consequent achievement of independence by Zambia. In April 1962, all the main opposition parties boycotted the elections and in August of the same year, Kenneth Kaunda of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) announced a plan to call upon all Northern Rhodesia's 11,000 civil servants employed by the Federal government to resign.³⁹ UNIP also made preparations for a general strike, and for a large international march which would go from Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika to the Northern Rhodesian border. These steps, however, proved unnecessary because Britain announced its intention to allow individual countries to cede from the Federation.

Overall the pattern has been that in the majority of African colonies that did not have a large settler population, conventional political agitation - sometimes interspersed with more militant action such as boycotts, strikes and demonstrations - was sufficient to ensure a more or less peaceful transition to independence. However, in the



Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, and in other countries where there was a large and well-entrenched settler population - Algeria, Kenya, and Southern Rhodesia - guerrilla warfare rather than civil resistance provided the coercive force behind the independence movements.

Civil rights

The cross-fertilisation between the black American struggle against discrimination, and the liberation movements in Africa are long standing, epitomised in the key role played by W.E.B. DuBois in the development of the Pan African Congress. It is not surprising then that in the United States, as in South Africa and elsewhere on the African continent, civil resistance should have been regarded as a crucial weapon in the struggle for civil rights. The difference in the political and legal context, however, between campaigns in the US and those either in South Africa or the colonies seeking independence, was that in principle the US constitution already guaranteed the basic rights of every citizen to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Thus, direct action and civil disobedience in the streets and at the grassroots went hand in hand in the US with action through the courts, leading at times to the use of the military and police to enforce court decisions. The most dramatic example of this was in 1957 when President Eisenhower ordered Federal forces to Little Rock, Arkansas, where the local mayor had called out the National Guard to prevent school integration.

DuBois himself was one of the organisers and leaders of a silent march by 8,000 blacks down Fifth Avenue in Washington staged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in June 1917, just after the first American troops had landed in Europe during World War I. Their ironic slogan: 'Make America Safe for Democracy'.⁴⁰ In the 1920s and the 1930s, A Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, one of the most powerful black organisations in the US, and a Baptist minister and later Congressman Rev Adam Clayton Powell, ran successful campaigns against discrimination in public and private institutions. In 1941 the mere threat by Randolph that he would call for a mass march to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington to demand an end to discrimination in the defence industries, was enough to prompt President Roosevelt to issue an executive order to meet this demand.

In 1942, under the direct inspiration of Gandhi's campaigns, a small inter-racial group, the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), was set up in Chicago and employed tactics of non-violent direct action to enforce the desegregation of selected lunch counters, restaurants, swimming baths and municipal buildings in a number of US cities. One of its organisers, Bayard Rustin, was to become a close associate of Martin Luther King and to play a prominent part in both the Civil Rights and peace movement. In 1947 Rustin was one of a small inter-racial team who undertook a 'Journey of Reconciliation' following a Supreme Court decision outlawing discrimination on interstate travel. They journeyed together on Greyhound and Trailways buses to test whether the law was being implemented. In North Carolina, Rustin and several others were sentenced to thirty days working on chain gangs for sitting together in the front of a bus.

However, the first civil rights campaign to have an impact nationally and gain world-wide attention was the Montgomery Bus Boycott, sparked off in December 1955 by the refusal of a seamstress, Rosa Parks, to vacate her seat at the front of a bus. Black community leaders, including the then 26-year-old Baptist Minister, Martin Luther King, formed the Montgomery Improvement Association, to organise the boycott. After a year of campaigning, the protesters won their case when the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on intra-state buses was illegal. Subsequently King, Rustin and other black leaders formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to apply the lessons of Montgomery throughout the South. In 1957, SCLC organised a 'Prayer Pilgrimage' to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington attended by 25,000 people.

January 1960 saw the first student sit-in at a lunch counter in Greensborough, North Carolina, which had refused to serve a black agricultural student. The movement spread with extraordinary rapidity, aided by radio and television coverage. By March the sit-ins had spread to more than 50 cities. In April 1960 the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was established to support the sit-ins, and the scale and militancy of the demonstrations grew. Within two years virtually all public facilities had been integrated.⁴¹ 'Freedom Rides' by CORE volunteers in May 1961 to test another Supreme Court decision, this time banning discrimination in interstate bus stations, also won a signal victory. Following repeated assaults and arrests, and the bombing of one bus, and the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, ordered the Interstate Commerce Commission to force bus companies and railways to comply with the Supreme Court ruling.



The dramatic high point of the civil rights movement was the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington for jobs and freedom, supported by the main civil rights organisations. A. Philip Randolph, who had threatened to hold such a march back in 1942 was one of the organisers; it was co-ordinated by Bayard Rustin. Over 200,000 gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington to hear speeches by civil rights leaders and organisers, including Martin Luther King who delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech. It was the largest demonstration in US history up to that date, attended by 150 members of Congress, and well-known singers, writers and other public figures.

Voter registration was another major issue taken up by the civil rights movement. This was aimed at overcoming the legal and technical obstacles placed in the way of black people exercising their voting rights. In 1964 a coalition of civil rights organisations sponsored the Mississippi Summer Project bringing black and white students to Mississippi to assist in voter registration. Several volunteers lost their lives in racist attacks and murders. In 1965 a march from Selma, Alabama, to the State capital, Montgomery, was halted and then attacked by state troopers. After legal battles, the protesters won a judgement in a US district court and were able to continue the march. In the meantime, however, three white Baptist Ministers had been attacked by members of the Ku Klux Klan and one had died from his injuries. Then several hours after the conclusion of the march, a 39-year-old woman from Detroit, Viola Liuzzo, driving demonstrators back to Selma was shot and killed. President Johnson went on national television to denounce the murders. Later that year, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act which opened the way to increased black participation in the elections and a significant increase in the number of black candidates elected to Congress.

But while there were significant gains, discrimination in education, jobs, housing and pay continued, leading to rising frustration. In 1965 the black ghetto of Watts in Los Angeles erupted in seven days of looting and violence in which 34 people died. Over the next several years there were uprisings in more than a dozen US cities including Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta and San Francisco. The non-violent philosophy of the SCLC came increasingly under challenge, notably from the dynamic Black Muslim leader, Malcolm X. King moved to Chicago, concentrating now on the issues of poverty and deprivation, and making plans for a Poor People's March on Washington to establish a 'tent city' near the Lincoln Memorial. He never lived to see it. In April 1968 he was struck down by an assassin's bullet in Memphis, Tennessee where he had gone to lead demonstrations in support of a strike by garbage workers. The Poor People's March went ahead, but the tent city lasted less than two months and failed to secure the radical action needed to deal with the problems it was seeking to address.

The achievements of the black civil rights movement in the US provided an enormous fillip to the use of non-violent action by other peoples or sections of society facing prejudice or discrimination in one form or another. Increasingly since the late 1960s, for example, women in many countries have engaged in demonstrations and protests, like the suffragettes before them, in the early years of the century, often combining this with action through the courts. So too have Gay and Lesbian movements, the 'Grey Panthers' in the US, indigenous peoples in Northern Europe, the United States, Canada, and many Asian and Latin American countries.

Transnational Non-violent Action

The strongly internationalist emphasis of the peace and non-violent action movements has been noted earlier. This both encouraged, and was reinforced by, the overlap in ideas and personalities between the peace, civil rights and anti-colonialist/anti-apartheid movements. Rev Michael Scott who had been arrested for civil disobedience in South Africa in 1946 and become a major figure in the anti-apartheid movement and movement for colonial freedom, was an active member of both the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War in Britain and co-founder, with Bertrand Russell of the Committee of 100 which launched a major civil disobedience campaign in the early 1960s, involving tens of thousands of people, against the British government's nuclear strategy.

Bayard Rustin is another representative figure. In 1938 he had been an organizer with the Communist Youth League in the US, but he resigned when it changed its position on the war, and joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He was imprisoned for 28 months during the war as a conscientious objector, and on his release in 1945 led the Free India Committee, being arrested several times for sit-ins inside the British Embassy in Washington. As noted earlier, he took part in CORE's 'Journey of Reconciliation' in the US in 1947 which was jointly sponsored with the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, and in 1948, at the invitation of the Congress party, spent six months in India studying the Gandhian movement.



Rustin's role in the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s has already been mentioned. He was active also with the US War Resisters League and War Resisters' International and, from the late 1950s, with the Committee for Non-violent Action which organised direct action demonstrations against war preparations and cooperated closely with the kindred Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War in Britain. During visits to Britain in the 1950s he gave encouragement and support to younger peace activists wanting to introduce Gandhian-style demonstrations and civil disobedience into the anti-war - and subsequently anti-nuclear weapons - campaigns. He was one of the main speakers in Trafalgar Square at the start of the first Aldermaston March in 1958 and was involved in a number of transnational projects including the Sahara Protest Action in Ghana in 1959-60 and the San Francisco-Moscow March in 1960-1. (See below). In his personal history, one can see how the traditions and experience of Gandhian, civil rights, and peace movements contributed to the flowering of civil resistance in the post-World War I period.

The transnational direct action projects initiated by the peace movement were particularly productive in bringing together the various strands of a wider emancipatory movement. The Sahara Protest Project illustrates the point. As noted earlier, this was an attempt to send an international team assembled in Ghana, West Africa, to the French atom testing site at Reggan in the Algerian Sahara. The initiative was that of the Direct Action Committee in Britain, but the project was co-sponsored by the Committee for Non-violent Action in the US, and the Ghana Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It brought together peace movement, black American and African campaigners. Among its organisers and participants were Bayard Rustin and another black American peace activist, Bill Sutherland (at that time adviser to the Ghana Finance Minister, K.A.Gbedemah), Ntsu Mokhekle, President of the Basutoland Congress Party⁴², and the Rev Michael Scott whose work in and on behalf of South Africa was noted earlier. In fact by the late 1950s, Michael Scott was such a well known campaigner for African freedom that on his arrival at Accra airport in November 1959 he was greeted as a national hero by the vast crowd who turned out to meet him and carried shoulder high to the reception lounge.⁴³

The team was halted on its first attempt by French authorities just inside Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and had its vehicles seized by French Customs officials. It made two subsequent forays into Upper Volta, on the second of which the team members were arrested and dumped back across the border at a remote crossing point. But speakers from the team addressed large open-air rallies on its journey through Ghana, and the project helped to consolidate African opinion against nuclear weapons. In April of the following year, at the suggestion of Michael Scott, the Ghanaian President, Kwame Nkrumah, called a pan-African conference in Accra against nuclear imperialism and colonialism which was attended by representatives of most of the independent African countries at the time, a delegation from the Algerian Provisional government (including Franz Fanon), and representatives of a large number of resistance movements from other parts of Africa. Among the international advisers with a particular interest in non-violent action who attended were Ralph Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Council in the US, A.J.Muste, Michael Scott, April Carter, and Gene Sharp. The conference approved, amongst other things, plans to establish a 'Positive Action Centre' in Ghana to train people for further direct action against French tests and for anti-colonial struggles. But the training centre never materialised in its intended form, becoming instead a centre for the political training of members of the governing Convention Peoples Party.⁴⁴

The Sahara Protest Expedition was only one of a number of transnational projects organised by the peace and allied movements in this period. The 1960-61 San Francisco-Moscow March involved a multi-national team travelling 6,000 miles, mostly on foot, across America and mainland Europe to Moscow.⁴⁵ The impact such projects were having led A.J.Muste, Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland, Jayaprakash Narayan (a leading Indian Gandhian) and the Rev Michael Scott, amongst others, to convene a conference in January 1962 in Beirut to establish the World Peace Brigade (WPB). Muste, Narayan, and Scott were its three co-chairmen and its first project was one in support of the campaign for the break-up of the Central African Federation - widely regarded as a device for prolonging White domination in the area - and the granting of independence to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Rustin, Sutherland and another Indian Gandhian, Siddharaj Dhadha, attended a meeting of the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) in Addis Abbaba in February 1962 and won support for a plan for a march from Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika to the border with Northern Rhodesia. This was to coincide with a general strike in the latter country which Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) were already planning. UNIP, the Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU - the party led by Julius Nyerere), PAFMECA, and the WPB were represented on Africa Freedom Action, the body set up to organise the march. Rustin, Sutherland, and others took up residence in Dar es Salaam to devote themselves to the work and to take responsibility for the international representation on the march. Africa Freedom Action did important campaigning work, but in the end the march itself, and the projected general strike did not take place because the British authorities backed away from support of the Central African Federation and eventually accepted the right of individual countries to secede.



The WPB undertook several other projects including notably a Delhi-Peking Friendship March in 1963 aimed at promoting understanding between India and China during and after the brief border war between the two countries.⁴⁶ But the WPB never developed a solid organisational structure and after a few years faded away.

Its demise did not mark the end of such transnational interventions. There is space here to mention just a few of these. In December 1966, an ad-hoc group based in Britain, Volunteers for Peace in Vietnam, sent four well-known clergymen from Britain, West Germany, the US and Canada to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV - North Vietnam) to witness and report back on the US bombing campaign.⁴⁷ Some two years later a larger team of 73 British Peace Activists travelled to Cambodia with the aim of sharing the hazards of the bombing with the people of those countries and trying to deter the US from continuing its raids.⁴⁸

'Support Czechoslovakia' in 1968 was a protest action in 1968 organised by War Resisters' International and involved international teams demonstrating simultaneously in Moscow, Warsaw, Budapest, and Sophia against the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia.⁴⁹ Another international project organised by an ad-hoc pacifist group was 'Operation Omega' (1971) which combined protest against repression in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) by the Pakistani army, and the delivery of high-protein food to refugees.⁵⁰

In June 1972, in the spirit of Harold Steele's efforts in 1957, and those of the crews of the *Golden Rule* and the *Phoenix* in 1958, a Canadian owned sailing vessel, the *Vega/Greenpeace III* sailed into the French nuclear testing zone at Mururoa Atoll and was rammed and boarded by a French navy patrol ship.⁵¹ In a subsequent protest voyage in 1981, the French Ecology Party's candidate in the Presidential election sailed with the *Vega*, and won an undertaking from the French authorities that the level of radiation would be independently assessed provided he desisted from going through with his plan. These initiatives galvanised opposition to the tests in the South Pacific, and their effectiveness was in a sense underlined when French secret service agents blew up another Greenpeace protest ship, *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour in 1985, killing the Portuguese photographer who was on board at the time.⁵²

The ambition to create a permanent organisation for transnational non-violent intervention persisted. In 1981 a less grandiose but more realistic version of the World Peace Brigade was set up, mainly as a result of an initiative on the part of some of the Indian Gandhians who had been involved in the earlier project. This was the Peace Brigades International (PBI) which initially focused its activities on Central America, establishing a core group in Costa Rica in 1982 for training in non-violence. In 1983 it sent a team of nine Americans to the border between Nicaragua and Honduras to monitor violence by the Contras and carry out practical work, and to prepare the way for a permanent presence by a US Christian group, Witness for Peace. In the same year PBI sent volunteers to Guatemala to assist the Group for Mutual Support which was campaigning on behalf of families of people who had 'disappeared'. PBI volunteers remained in Guatemala until 1990, despite the fact that they received death threats during 1989 had their house in Guatemala city blown up, and three members badly injured in knife attacks. Volunteers carrying out similar escort work in El Salvador from 1987 to 1989 encountered arrest and harassment by the military police, and the team was expelled in 1989 on the grounds that it represented a threat to the state.⁵³ PBI also began sending volunteers to Sri Lanka in 1989 to act as unarmed escorts to lawyers working on behalf of people detained without trial.⁵⁴

Civil Resistance against Dictatorship: Latin America, Iran, the Philippines

The question which remained unanswered by Gandhi's successes in South Africa and India, and by those of most of the other occasions of mass civil resistance discussed above, was whether this method could succeed against a dictatorship, or indeed any well-armed and ruthless opponent. The achievement of the Norwegian teachers and of other groups which proffered non-violent resistance to the Nazis in occupied Europe, showed that limited victories were possible, but there was no expectation in these cases of being able to overthrow Nazi power or force it to end the occupation. The short answer seems to be that it can, though not necessarily at any given moment in time. Sometimes a lengthy period of low-profile campaigning is required, coupled preferably with international pressure. However, sometimes a determined and apparently unassailable opponent is toppled because the armed forces desert the regime in face of the unity and persistence of the population.

Chile and South Africa represent examples of the process of erosion. General Pinochet's seizure of power in a military coup in Chile in 1973, and his wholesale imprisonment, torture and execution of opponents or suspected leftists, suggested that nothing short of military force would remove him. Instead his authority and his power base in



the middle class were undermined by the economic and political incompetence of his regime, by the persistent non-violent resistance of the mothers of the disappeared, by trade unions, numerous 'base groups' in the towns and villages, and, by international pressure. In 1983, in the face of a deteriorating situation, Pinochet felt obliged to open a dialogue with the opposition. But protests continued, coupled with several bomb outrages, and in the following year he declared a state of siege. In 1986, 15,000 people were arrested in anti-government demonstrations, and there were widespread strikes even though these were illegal. A plebiscite in 1988, which Pinochet had called in an effort to bolster his position, backfired and set the stage for a return to democratic government. While Pinochet remained Commander in Chief (and therefore a potential threat to the new democracy), he agreed not to stand for the presidency⁵⁵.

There have been similar successes for non-violent action, sometimes limited, sometimes far-reaching, elsewhere in Latin America at various times. In El Salvador in April-May 1944, the military dictator General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez was overthrown in three weeks of non-violent insurrection.⁵⁶ In Guatemala in June of the same year, the dictator General Jorge Ubico, who had ruled the country since 1931, was unseated by eleven days of strikes and protests, culminating in a complete shutdown of Guatemala city.⁵⁷ In Bolivia in 1977-78 a mass hunger strike, starting with four women and eventually involving 1,200 people, opened up the latent divisions within the ruling clique and its supporters, and led to the release of the majority of the country's political prisoners, the lifting of a ban on trade unions, and other concessions. For various deep-seated political and economic reasons, it did not, however lead to the establishment of a stable democracy.⁵⁸

Uruguay's struggle for democracy has elements in common with that of Chile. The military seized power in 1973 and established one of the most brutal regimes in Latin America, banning all political and trade union activity, imprisoning 7,000 people on political grounds (out of a total population of only 3 million) and making extensive use of torture. However, in 1980, faced with economic decline and political unrest, it sought a mandate for an authoritarian constitution based on the doctrine of national security. Like the Pinochet regime in Chile some years later, it received a resounding rebuff, with 87% of the electorate voting no. Military rule continued but there was sufficient opening up of the situation to allow some political and human rights organisations to establish themselves, among them the Uruguayan branch of Service for Peace and Justice (SERPAJ), founded by a Jesuit priest, Luis Perez Aguirre. In August 1983, following the arrest and torture of a number of students, three members of SERPAJ embarked on a public fast - in the presence of the international press. This acted as a catalyst for mass action. A day of protest on August 25 called by SERPAJ was a major success, taking the form of virtually the entire population of Montevideo entering their homes at a agreed time, turning off all lights and rattling pots and pans in concert. In November 500,000 people - a sixth of the entire population of the country - took part in a mass demonstration against the government, followed in January 1984 by a general strike. Elections finally took place in November marking the first step in the restoration of democratic government.⁵⁹

The most dramatic examples of civil resistance bringing about the revolutionary overthrow of authoritarian regimes were in Iran in 1979 and the Philippines in 1986. In Iran, millions went on strike and took the streets. Despite massacres of unarmed demonstrators, the protests continued. But unrest began to grow among the armed forces, and on 12 February, following violent clashes between the Imperial Guard and airmen at two airbases in Teheran, the army command declared its neutrality and ordered its forces back to barracks, thereby sealing the fate of the Shah's regime.⁶⁰

In the Philippines, the US backed regime of Ferdinand Marcos had by the early 1980s lost much of its support in its traditional power base in the middle class due to its corruption and inefficiency. Its credibility and moral standing suffered a further blow in 1983 when the opposition leader, Benigno Aquino was shot down in full view of television cameras by Marcos' security forces as he stepped down from a plane bringing him back from exile in the US. The murdered man's widow, Corazon Aquino, won a dramatic victory in the presidential elections of 1986, but Marcos refused to accept the result and was confirmed as President by the National Assembly. The move was denounced by the Catholic Bishops, and the Defence Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile called upon the army and the people to recognize Aquino as president.⁶¹ When Marcos sent units of the armed forces to attack Enrile's headquarters, tens of thousands of civilians, including nuns and priests who had worked with the people in grassroots movements, blocked the army's advance. The army refused to open fire, and Marcos and his wife Imelda fled the country. The term 'people power' was coined to describe this extraordinary victory of an unarmed revolt. That victory was possible because the Marcos regime had lost all claim to legitimacy by his repudiation of the election result, had lost his power base in the civilian population, and finally lacked the authority to command the obedience even of the armed forces.



Civil Resistance Against Military Coups: the Anti-Gorbachev Coup August 1991

All the cases discussed so far in this section of the chapter involved civil resistance from below against an established authority. Civil resistance has also been used however on occasions by or on behalf of an existing legitimate government. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapters on defence by civil resistance, but conclude this chapter with a brief exposition of two instances: the resistance to the attempted anti-Gorbachev coup in the Soviet Union in August 1991, and the resistance to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

The resistance to the anti-Gorbachev coup has parallels with two other frequently cited cases where civil resistance thwarted attempted coups: the Kapp Putsch in Berlin in 1920, and the overthrow of the Generals' Revolt in Algiers in 1961.⁵² The anti-Gorbachev coup collapsed even more swiftly and dramatically than did these other failed attempts. The preliminary move occurred at 4.50pm on the evening of Sunday 17 August when the plotters arrived at the Crimean Dacha where Gorbachev was on holiday with his family, cut off the telephones and demanded that he transfer his powers to Vice-President Gennadi Yanayev. According to his own account, Gorbachev told them to 'go to hell'. He was due back in Moscow the next day to sign a new Union Treaty giving Soviet Republics a much greater say in running their own affairs. The forestalling of that event was one of the immediate aims of the coup. Ironically its effect was to precipitate the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Early on Monday morning tanks and other military vehicles moved onto the streets of Moscow, and Yanayev broadcast an announcement that Gorbachev was indisposed and that he, Yanayev, was therefore taking over power as head of an eight-man Committee. Other members of the committee included the heads of the three armed services, the Ministers of Defence and the Interior, and the head of the KGB. The speaker of the Soviet Parliament announced that it would meet in emergency session the following Monday to endorse the State of Emergency, a move clearly aimed at giving the coup a facade of legitimacy,

The committee made it clear at once that it intended to brook no opposition. It declared an immediate six month state of emergency in Moscow, Leningrad and other areas of the Soviet Union, and issued a decree banning protest strikes and demonstrations. It threatened to introduce curfews where it met resistance, and to dissolve local authorities which resisted its control. It also took over all television and radio stations in Moscow, and announced that only nine - pro communist - newspapers would be allowed to continue publication. Thus, the subsequent suggestion by some political commentators that the coup attempt was totally mismanaged does not stand up to examination. The coup failed not because the plotters failed to take all the obvious steps in its planning and execution, but because the opposition of the people was too powerful. The mistake was not in how the coup was conducted, but in the decision to attempt it in the first place.

The most spectacular early setback was the failure to arrest the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. According to some sources, however, this was not due to any oversight or carelessness on the part of the plotters, but to the refusal of KGB officers sent to arrest or kill him to carry out the orders they had received. Similarly, troops flown in from Odessa to put down the street demonstrations, staged a sit-down at Moscow airport and refused to proceed to the city.⁵³ No less ominously, from the plotters' point of view was the positive response to Yeltsin's call for a general strike from the coal miners of the economically vital Kuzbass area and the Vorkuta region in the Arctic Circle.⁵⁴

Having escaped arrest, Yeltsin at once repaired to the Russian Parliament building - as did hundreds of other deputies. In his finest hour, he strode down the steps of the building, climbed onto one of a few tanks lined up by their commanders to defend it against possible attack, and addressed the growing crowd of Muscovites assembled there, denouncing the coup as unconstitutional and its authors as a 'gang of criminals', and calling for an immediate general strike. In a direct appeal to the soldiers he said: 'I believe, at this tragic hour, you will take the right decision. The honour of Russian arms will not be covered with the blood of the people.'⁵⁵ More tanks joined those already lined up to defend the Russian Parliament. The crowd swelled to 5,000.

Protests continued to mount on Monday and Tuesday despite the ban on demonstrations. The plotters, meanwhile, held back from taking the Russian Parliament building by storm, perhaps because it symbolised so concretely the progress towards democratic government over the previous five years. By Tuesday, there were scenes reminiscent of those that had occurred in Prague in 1968, as demonstrators stood in the path of tanks, or clambered onto them to argue with their crews. Newspapers that had been shut down produced samizdat editions. A radio transmitter began broadcasting, albeit weakly, from inside the Russian Parliament building. Short-wave transmissions from the BBC and other foreign stations remained unjammed, and were eagerly listened to by people wanting a more independent view about what was going on.



On Tuesday, the presidents of the two largest republics, the Ukraine and Kazakstan, denounced the coup; so too did the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexi. In Leningrad the newly elected liberal mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, told 200,000 demonstrators that he had been promised by the military that no tanks would enter the city. Police both in that city and Moscow remained loyal to the local authorities. In the Baltic Republics of Estonia and Latvia, general strikes were called, and the deputies inside the barricaded Estonian Parliament unanimously declared complete independence. Many mines too in the Arctic Vorkuta region, and in the west Siberian Kuzbass coalfield, observed Yeltsin's call for a general strike.

Pressure also came from outside. President Bush declared his support for Yeltsin and was able to speak to him directly by phone inside the Russian Parliament Building. Both the US and the European Community announced the suspension of food and technical aid until legitimate government was restored. UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cúellar urged all Soviet leaders to show restraint.

The crunch came on Tuesday night/Wednesday morning. A curfew declared by the Emergency Committee was simply ignored, and several thousand demonstrators set up barricades of buses and concrete blocks around the Russian Parliament building in Moscow. At midnight columns of tanks started moving towards the Parliament building and demolishing the barricades. The first shots were fired in clashes with demonstrators, four of whom were killed. Several tanks were set ablaze by Molotov Cocktails. At 12.45, the former Foreign Minister, Shevardnadze, joined Yeltsin inside the Parliament building in a public gesture of support. The expected all-out assault on the building did not materialise, and early on Wednesday morning rumours began to circulate that the Defence Minister Yazov and the KGB chief Kryuchkov had quit. By Wednesday afternoon the coup attempt had collapsed, with several of its leaders flying to the Crimea to try to make their peace with Gorbachev. At 5pm the Soviet news agency Tass announced that the emergency restrictions on the media had been lifted. That evening Gorbachev flew back to Moscow and was formally reinstated by the Soviet Parliament.

The struggle between the pro and anti-coup parties can be seen as a complex battle of manoeuvre for legitimacy. The coup leaders lost a preliminary round when they failed to coerce Gorbachev into resigning on the eve of the coup. They suffered an even heavier defeat by failing to arrest Yeltsin and thereby to prevent him from establishing a base within the Russian Parliament building. At that point they faced a critical dilemma. The longer Yeltsin remained there and continued to denounce them as a gang of criminals and to call for strikes and passive resistance, the more the coup lost credibility in the eyes of the people and the outside world. Yet to have ordered an all-out attack on the building, with the heavy loss of life this was bound to entail among the elected representatives of the Russian people, and amongst the ordinary citizens manning the barricades around it, would have been to surrender all claims to political legitimacy and advertise a return to the politics of naked violence. There must indeed have been a question in the minds of the coup leaders as to whether the troops would carry out such an order, given the sit-down strike of the units from Odessa. Finally, the widespread strikes, particularly by the coal miners, the denunciation of the coup at an early stage by the Presidents of the two largest republics, the Ukraine and Kazakstan, and the giant demonstrations in Leningrad and cities in the non-Russian republics showed the coup leaders the extent of the problem they now faced. They had planned a palace coup. They now faced the prospect of defeat in a bloody civil war.

Civil Resistance to Invasion: Czechoslovakia 1968

Czechoslovakia in 1968 represents the most dramatic instance in recent history of popular non-violent resistance against foreign invasion and in support of a government that had earned the support of the population through its programme of reforms. For seven days Czechs and Slovaks came out into the streets in their tens of thousands to confront the tanks and their crews and give the lie to the Soviet propaganda that Czechoslovakia was in the throes of a counter-revolution. It was a display of unity rare in the history of any country, and particularly impressive in the case of a state where there were historic tensions and divisions between Czechs and Slovaks. Soviet plans to install a client government which would retrospectively legitimise the invasion were also, in the short term, frustrated.

The facts can be briefly summarised. Following the election of Alexander Dubcek as Communist Party secretary in January 1968, the country embarked on a programme of economic and political reform aimed at building 'socialism with a human face'. The reforms were encapsulated in the Action Programme adopted in April 1968. The two aspects of it that Soviet and some other Warsaw Pact leaders found most threatening were the reorientation of trade towards the West, and towards West Germany in particular, as part of the package of economic reforms, and



the virtual lifting of censorship as part of the political reforms. Alarms and tensions over the summer months, were punctuated on the one hand by talks between Dubcek and the Soviet leaders, and on the other by menacing Warsaw Pact manoeuvres on Czechoslovakia's borders. Then on the night of Tuesday, 20 August, 400,000 troops from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany invaded the country.⁶⁶

The Soviet hope and expectation was that it could quickly install a client government. Indeed, a group within the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPC) leadership had promised the Kremlin that they would engineer a domestic political justification for the intervention.⁶⁷ However their attempts to do so at a meeting of the Presidium on the afternoon of 20 August were unsuccessful.⁶⁸ Instead, as news of the invasion began to come in, the Presidium issued a statement roundly condemning it. The population were urged to maintain calm and not to offer resistance to the troops on the march, but all leading functionaries of the state, the CPC and the National Front were to 'remain in their functions as representatives of the people and organs to which they had been properly elected'.⁶⁹ In addition the Presidium brought forward the date of the 14th Congress of the CPCz from the 14 September to 22 August to give it the opportunity to express its opposition to the invasion and forestall any attempt to create a puppet government. The battle for legitimacy had been joined, and the Soviet leaders and the Czechoslovak collaborators had lost the first round.

The latter now tried to mitigate their defeat by preventing the dissemination of the Presidium's resolution. Thus, no sooner were the first words of the resolution read out on the national broadcasting system than the transmitters went dead. This was a result of the efforts of the Minister of Post and Communications, Karel Hoffman, a Soviet agent, in cooperation with the Soviet network in the Security forces and the Czechoslovak Press Agency. It was, in fact, part of a wider plan to close down the radio and television networks. Thanks, however, to the decisive intervention of the President of the National Assembly, Smrkovsky, and action by alert radio station operators, the appeal was broadcast, after some delay, on an auxiliary transmitter. The editor of the party newspaper, *Rude Pravo*, another pro-Moscow man, tried to substitute a text of his own for the resolution - but this attempt too was thwarted.⁷⁰

Popular protests began as soon as the people of Czechoslovakia woke to find Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks in the streets next morning. In addition to standing in the path of tanks, many students and young people who had learned Russian at school and university engaged confused Russian soldiers in debate and argument, challenging them to find any evidence of a counter-revolution. In the afternoon, there was a brief protest strike.⁷¹ The following day, 22 August, the 14th Congress of the CPCz met in secret session in a works canteen in a Prague suburb, and, as anticipated, added its voice to the condemnation of the invasion, calling concretely for the withdrawal of the troops, the return of all public functionaries to their proper, constitutional positions, and the observance of all international legal norms. In the judgement of Zdenek Mylnar, one of Dubcek's closest associates on the Presidium, this had exceptionally important and positive influences on the course of events.⁷² Mylnar also describes the scene in the streets on that day:

Everywhere, building walls were covered with slogans and hand-painted posters. People were reading the newspapers and leaflets that were being turned out by printing presses everywhere, despite the efforts of the occupying forces to stop it. It was the picture of a city whose inhabitants were absolutely united in unarmed passive resistance against alien interlopers. Flags and the Czechoslovak coat-of-arms in various forms decorated the streets and shop-windows, and people were wearing them in their lapels as well. Wherever anyone had fallen a victim to Soviet bullets, there were improvised memorials with masses of flowers and state flags. Street signs had either been pulled down or altered (most often being renamed 'Dubcek Street'), and sometimes the signs were simply switched with others.⁷³

As the 14th Party Congress went into session, the Soviet authorities made a further attempt to regain the political initiative. Eleven members of the Presidium were invited to meet the Soviet Ambassador whose purpose was to get them to establish a 'revolutionary government of workers and peasants'. This also failed because of stalling tactics by a pro-Dubcek faction of the group (led by Mylnar), and the subsequent point-blank refusal of the President, Ludvik Svoboda, to endorse any such move.⁷⁴ Instead he announced his intention of departing next day for Moscow to negotiate with Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders.

This decision proved to be a tragic mistake, and the turning point in the political battle of wits. The delegation accompanying Svoboda to Moscow, or who subsequently flew out, included the pro-Moscow conspirators inside the party leadership. At Svoboda's insistence, Dubcek and the other imprisoned leaders (who had been moved first to Poland and then to the Carpathians) were released to join the Czechoslovak side. While this represented a



significant climb-down by the Soviet leaders, the latter were now in a position of strength. They knew the Czechoslovak delegation were divided and they hinted strongly that if they refused to comply with Russian demands not only would they be putting their own lives and liberties in jeopardy but risking large scale bloodshed in Czechoslovakia. The Czechs and Slovaks who had just been released from prison were badly shaken, having been shown - literally - instruments of torture, and having mentally accepted that they would be tortured and killed.⁷⁵ Dubcek himself was weak and ill, under heavy sedation, and unable to take part in most of the discussions. What finally convinced him, and the pro-Dubcek group, to sign the Moscow Protocols on 26 August was the fear that the resistance on the streets of Prague, Bratislava and elsewhere would take a tragic turn and result in massacres, and the hope that by agreeing to sign, they could rescue something from the wreckage, prevent the minority of pro-Moscow hacks within the party from taking over, and gradually reintroduce reforms, as Kadar had succeeded in doing in Hungary after 1956. In the end only one man, Frantisek Kriegel, refused to sign it. He escaped being held prisoner in Moscow only at the insistence of his colleagues that he should accompany them back to Prague.

The Protocols represented some concessions on the Soviet side, most notably the agreement to allow Dubcek, Prime Minister Cernik, and President of the National Assembly, Smrkovsky, to resume their previous offices. But these were temporary concessions which the Soviet side had every intention of circumventing at the earliest possible moment, whilst those on the Czechoslovak side were substantial and damaging. They were forced to repudiate the decisions of the 14th Congress, to agree to the re-imposition of censorship, to accept the 'temporary' presence of Soviet forces in the country during a period of 'normalisation', and to withdraw the Czechoslovak issue from the agenda of the Security Council. Worst of all, the terms of the Protocols enjoined that it should remain secret. So instead of the Czechoslovak people and the world as a whole hearing the details of the Protocols, they had to make do with a bland communiqué stating that an accord had been reached between the two sides.

While the 'negotiations' had been going on, resistance continued and indeed escalated inside Czechoslovakia itself. On 25 August the Slovak Party Congress followed the lead of the Czech Party in holding a special Party Congress, and it too condemned the invasion. (This decision was subsequently reversed.) On 26 August, the day the Protocols were signed in Moscow, there was a country-wide protest strike of 25 minutes, and the government, parliament and Central Trade Union Council issued a joint proclamation on the need for discipline under conditions of unarmed resistance. The confidence and élan of the resistance is captured in an editorial in the journal Reporter on 26 August:

We are morally victors. The staging of the aggression has, in the short term, been blocked. The aggressors have been checked by a united resistance of our two nations, unknown up to now in history...The army of occupation is completely isolated, powerless and totally rejected...The occupiers have occupied the printing works, but the newspapers have nonetheless been published several times a day; they have occupied the radio, but the radio transmits freely; they have occupied the television without succeeding in silencing it.' ⁷⁶

With the return of the Czechoslovak delegation the unity of the resistance was broken. The people were asked to desist from their protests, unaware even of the deal that had been struck. The élan of the previous days was replaced by confusion and bitterness. Yet having placed so much faith in the political leadership, and made Dubcek and Svoboda symbols of national unity, the people could not now go against their decisions. In the succeeding months, further concessions were wrung from the Czechoslovak authorities, particularly on the matter of the Soviet troops which remained there in force. One by one the reformist leaders were squeezed out, and seven months later Dubcek himself was ousted and replaced by Husak. Finally, there was a massive purge of pro-Dubcek, or suspected pro-Dubcek, supporters within the Party, the army and all official bodies. A third of all Party members were expelled.

It is clear then that the resistance was not defeated in the streets but in the Kremlin 'negotiations' which indeed hardly merit that term. (Mlynar, who was present in Moscow, states that the position of the Czechoslovak delegation was more like that of hostages held by gangsters than of representatives of an independent state parleying on equal terms with those of another state). Could it have continued and even succeeded had Dubcek and the others refused to sign the Moscow protocols? Several of them seriously considered refusing to sign, and wondered if this was the moment when Czechoslovakia should redeem her honour by an heroic stance to the bitter end against the invaders. However, reluctance to take a position which could well lead to massacre, deterred them. There is, of course, no way of knowing for sure if continued civil resistance could have forced a Soviet withdrawal. Presumably if the Soviet leaders were determined and ruthless enough they could have ended the public resistance in the streets, in the manner of the Chinese authorities in Tiananmen Square in 1989. The probability is that the Czechoslovak resistance would have then have had to settle down for a longer-term campaign. One thing,



however, that might have changed this would have been if the example of Czechoslovakia at this point had provoked unarmed insurrections across Eastern Europe - such as those that did occur in 1989.

As it was resistance did continue, much of it in low-key ways. Jan Palach's self-immolation in Wenceslas Square in January 1969 had a dramatic impact, both inside and outside the country. Originally a number of other students and young people had planned to act in the same way, but he expressed the wish from his hospital bed as he lay dying that they should give up this plan, and work in other ways for Czechoslovakia's liberation.²⁷ Small groups of courageous individuals did continue to do so during the years of repression, some spending lengthy periods in prison, others operating from outside the country acting as channels of communication to the outside world, and providing the opposition within the country with books, periodicals and equipment.

The formation of Charter 77, and the public stance of leading writers and intellectuals against the regime, played a major part in keeping hope, and a form of cultural and intellectual resistance alive. And although it was, in the main, a new generation who took to the streets again in their hundreds of thousands in 1989 and finally succeeded in overthrowing a corrupt and demoralised Party, the continuities in terms of ideas, methods and personalities with the resistance of 1968 are transparent. On the night after Party Secretary Jakes (one of the anti-Dubcek conspirators in 1968) and the whole politburo resigned in November 1989, Dubcek stood with Vaclav Havel on a balcony overlooking Wenceslas Square and opened his arms in a gesture of embrace to the 250,000 unarmed, cheering people below.

Notes to Chapter 3:

1. See Wolfgang Sternstein, 'The Ruhrkampf of 1923: Economic Problems of Civilian Defence', in Adam Roberts (ed), *The Strategy of Civilian Defence*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, pp. 106-35
2. A good general account of the non-violent resistance in occupied Europe is to be found in Jorgen Haestrup's *Europe Ablaze: An Analysis of the History of the European Resistance Movements 1939-45*, Odense University Press, Odense, 1978. See especially chapter 3, 'Forms of Civil Disobedience'. For readers of French I would strongly recommend Jacques Semelin, *Sans Armes face à Hitler: La Résistance Civile en Europe 1939-1943*, Éditions Payot, Paris, 1989. (Now available in an English translation: *Unarmed Against Hitler: Civil Resistance in Europe, 1939-1945*, Praeger, CT, 1993.) There are also chapters on the resistance in Norway by Magne Skodvin and in Denmark by Jeremy Bennett in Adam Roberts (ed) *The Strategy of Civilian Defence*, op. cit., pp. 136-53, and pp. 154-72.
3. Gandhi's son, Manilal Gandhi, was among those arrested during the 1952 campaign.
4. See Albert Bigelow, *The Voyage of the Golden Rule*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1959.
5. The development and achievements of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland are succinctly described in F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, Fontana, 1990 edition, the chapter headed 'The Continuing Crisis', especially pp. 762-5. For a fuller account by one of its leading initiators and organisers see Conn McCluskey, *Up off their Knees*, Conn McCluskey and Associates, Republic of Ireland, 1989.
6. See April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics since 1945*, Longman, London and New York, 1992, especially pp. 158-82.
7. There have been further developments since *Civil Resistance* went to press in 1993. In August 1994, faced with continuing defiance by the military regime, the UN Security Council authorised 'all necessary means' to remove them. On 19 September, US forces invaded Haiti, and on 15 October, President Aristide returned to the country.
8. See Vanessa Griffen, 'Social Defence Against Coups: the Case of Fiji' in Shelley Anderson and Janet Larmore, *Nonviolent Struggle and Social Defence*, War Resisters' International, 1991, pp. 59-66.
9. Jan Zielonka, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Nonviolent Defence', in *Orbis*, Spring 1986, p. 93.
10. *Ibid*, p. 93
11. In the summer of 1992 the then Lithuanian Defence Minister stated that Gene Sharp's book *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1990, had served as a basis for much of his planning for non-violent resistance over the previous year and a half, and that he had had an early draft of the book translated into Lithuanian for use by government officials. The book was also translated into Latvian and had an influence on the civil resistance plans of both Latvia and Estonia. See Bruce Jenkins, 'Civilian-Based Defense Discussed in Moscow and the Baltics' in *Civilian-Based Defense: News and Opinion*, August 1992, pp. 2-3 and 18
12. Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1989, pp. 103-4
13. *Ibid*, p. 104
14. On this point see Robert Overy, *Gandhi as an Organiser: An Analysis of Local and National Campaigns in India, 1915-1922*, PhD Thesis, School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, 1982, who argues that the programme of constructive work constitutes 'the underlying bedrock of preparation for civil resistance' in Gandhi's campaigns (p. 357). See especially Chapter 4: 'The Place of the Constructive Programme in Local and National Satyagraha Campaigns', pp.109-129. His thesis includes also a descriptive analysis of the 1920-2 campaign of non-cooperation. See also the Chapter entitled 'Non-co-operation: the road to swaraj?' in Judith Brown, op. cit., pp.139-175
15. Brown, op. cit., p. 233
16. *Ibid*, p. 242
17. *Ibid*, pp. 256-60
18. *Ibid*, p. 282
19. *Ibid*, p. 295
20. *Ibid*, p. 331
21. *Ibid*, p. 331
22. *Ibid*, pp. 338-9
23. See *The Collected Works of M.K. Gandhi (CWMK)*, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-70, Vol 7, p. 455. In *Satyagraha in South Africa*, first published in 1928, more than twenty years after the commencement of the campaign, Gandhi claimed that the new term was coined 'to prevent [the movement] being confused with passive resistance generally so called'. (Italics added) See Navajivan Publishing House 1972 edition, p. 107. Whilst Gandhi is evidently mistaken on this point, it is also clear that he was never happy about the term passive resistance because of the confusions to which it gave rise. On this question see also Steven Duncan Huxley, *Constitutionalist Insurgency in Finland*, op. cit., p. 43. and also pp. 42-7 in which he makes a critical assessment of what he terms 'Gandhian folklore'.
24. See for instance his letter to the *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 July 1907, in which he described the campaign as 'not resistance but a policy of communal suffering', *CWMK*, Vol 7, p. 67
25. M.K.Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, Navajivan Publishing House, 1958 edition, p. 6.
26. *Indian Opinion*, 11 November 1905. See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol V, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961, pp. 131-2. See also the important essay by Gene Sharp 'Origins of Gandhi's use of Nonviolent Struggle' in Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, Porter Sargent, Boston, pp. 23-41.
27. Judith Brown, op. cit., p. 55
28. Gandhi spoke enthusiastically about Thoreau's essay though it did not influence him in launching civil resistance in South Africa as he first read it during a spell in prison. See Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 7.
29. See Gandhi's response to a question on this point published in *Harijan*, 12 April 1942: 'Yes, I adhere to my opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise if I was to introduce it into politics. In South Africa, too, I introduced it as an expedient.' The article in which this quote appears is reprinted in M.K.Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol 1, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948 edition pp. 394-6. The quotation in question



appears on p. 396.

[30.](#) See Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, op. cit., p. 26.

[31.](#) *Harijan*, 23 August 1939. Reprinted, M.K.Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol 1, op. cit., p.226.

[32.](#) Strictly speaking, this was the sixth Congress, the first having taken place in London in 1900 under the leadership of a West Indian barrister, Sylvester Williams. But it has become traditional to date the Congresses from that convened by DuBois in Paris in 1919 which brought together African and Afro-American leaders to lobby the delegates to the Versailles conference. Du Bois convened subsequent congresses in London (1921), London and Lisbon (1923), New York (1927). He was also present at the founding Congress in 1900. The Pan-African Congress is not to be confused with the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), founded in South Africa in 1959 by Robert Sobukwe, a breakaway movement from the African National Congress (ANC)

[33.](#) Mary Benson, *South Africa: the Struggle for a Birthright*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1966 edition, p. 90

[34.](#) In November 1949 Michael Scott addressed the UN Fourth Committee on the situation of the Herero tribe in South West Africa, Namibia, to the fury of the South African government. See Michael Scott, *A Time to Speak*, Faber and Faber, 1958, Chapter 14, 'The General Assembly Decides', pp.242-268. In 1951, he was declared a prohibited immigrant and had to continue his work from outside the country. Amongst other Anglican clergymen who played an active role in the opposition to apartheid were Father Trevor Huddleston of the Community of the Resurrection, now (1992) Chair of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, and the late Rt Rev Ambrose Reeves, Archbishop of Johannesburg.

[35.](#) Mary Benson, op. cit. p. 90

[36.](#) The Suppression of Communism Act (1950), prohibited not only any doctrine or scheme which aims at the dictatorship of the proletariat but also any 'which aims to bring about any political, industrial, social, or economic change within the Union by the promotion of disturbance or disorder, by unlawful acts or omissions or by the threat of such acts or omissions or by means which include the promotion of disturbance or disorder, or such acts or omissions or threats'. See Leo Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa*, Yale edition, 1960, p. 61.

[37.](#) The pass laws obliged 'non-Europeans' to carry one or more of up to twelve passes (permits) to reside in or visit given areas and were a central weapon in the Nationalist government's attempt to enforce racial segregation - 'apartheid'.

[38.](#) The military wing of the PAC, Poqo, did not officially halt its military activities at that point, though its activities by 1991 were sporadic.

[39.](#) See Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, op. cit., p. 293

[40.](#) Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski (eds), *The Power of the People*, peace Press, California, 1977, p. 150

[41.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 160-3

[42.](#) Ntsu Mokhehle became Prime Minister of Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) in April 1993 following the landslide victory of the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in the first free elections since 1970. The 1970 election was suspended, and a state of emergency declared by Lesotho's strongman, Chief Leabua Jonathan of the Basutoland National Party when early returns indicated that the BCP would be victorious.

[43.](#) The author was one of the British participants of the Sahara Protest Team (the other being the artist Francis Hoyland) and witnessed the scene.

[44.](#) See April Carter, 'The Sahara Protest Team', in A. Paul Hare and Herbert H. Blumberg, *Liberation without Violence*, Rex Collings, London, 1977, pp. 126-56. See also A.J. Muste's account of the project, 'Africa Against the Bomb' om Nat Hentoff (ed), *The Essays of A.J. Muste*, Simon and Schuster, 1967, pp. 394-409.

[45.](#) For an account by one of the participant organisers, see Brad Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, Greenleaf Books, New Hampshire, 1966.

[46.](#) For a brief account of the Delhi-Peking Friendship march and an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, see April Carter, *Peace Movements*, op. cit., pp. 245-7. This is part of a consideration of 'Transnational Intervention', pp.245-9.

[47.](#) The four clergymen were the Rev Martin Niemöller, the Lutheran clergyman who had spent many years in Nazi concentration camps for his opposition to Nazism, the Rt Rev Ambrose Reeves, former bishop of Johannesburg and anti-apartheid campaigner, the Rev A.J. Muste, and Rabbi Abraham Feinberg (Canada). Rabbi Feinberg's diary of the trip, *Hanoi Diary*, was published by Longmans, Ontario, Canada, 1968.

[48.](#) See Pat Arrowsmith, *To Asia in Peace*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1972.

[49.](#) See Michael Randle and April Carter, *Support Czechoslovakia*, Peace News, 1968.

[50.](#) See 'Operation Omega' (from accounts in *Peace News*) in Hare and Blumberg, *Liberation Without Violence*, op. cit., pp. 196-206. See also April Carter, op. cit. p. 247.

[51.](#) See David McTaggart, *Greenpeace III: Journey into the Bomb*, Collins, London, 1978.

[52.](#) See April Carter, op. cit., p. 171.

[53.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 247-9

[54.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 245-9. The information she provides was corrected and updated by Tim Wallis-Milne of PBI in conversation with the author in 1993.

[55.](#) The figures cited are taken from the entry on Chile in Peter Teed, *Dictionary of 20th Century History: 1914-1990*, Oxford Paperbacks, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 89-90. For an account by one of the non-violent activists involved, see Fernando Aliaga Rojas, 'How we won democracy in Chile' in Shelley Anderson and Janet Larmore (eds), *Nonviolent Struggle and Social Defence*, War Resisters' International and the Myrtle Solomon Memorial Fund Subcommittee, London, 1991, pp. 51-4.

[56.](#) See Sharp, *Civilian-Based Defence*, op. cit., p. 39.

[57.](#) See Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, op. cit., pp. 90-3.

[58.](#) See Pierre Croissant, 'Bolivie 1978: la grève de la faim contre la dictature', *Alternatives Non violentes*, No 39, December 1980, pp.34-59.

[59.](#) See Jean-Pierre Mille, 'La non-violence ramène la démocratie', *Alternatives Non Violentes*, No 62, December 1986, pp. 26-31.

[60.](#) *New York Times*, 12 February 1979, p. 1. The account of the revolts in the air force bases at Farahabad and Doshan Tapeh is taken from David Cortright and Max Watts, *Left Face: Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies*, Greenwood Press, New York, Westport, Connecticut, and London, 1991, pp. 220-1.

[61.](#) Enrile was the leader of a reform movement within the armed forces, RAM, and there is evidence that he had been planning to make use of this organisation to seize power himself in a coup against Marcos. His plans were forestalled by Marcos's unexpected announcement of elections, and the victory of Aquino. See Cortright and Watts, op. cit. pp.225-228

[62.](#) See Adam Roberts, 'Civil Resistance to Military Coups', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. XII, No.1, 1975, pp. 19-36.

[63.](#) See Gene Sharp, 'The Relevance of Civilian-Based Defence for the 1990s', *Civilian-Based Defence*, Vol.8, No.1, October 1992, p. 3. (This journal was previously entitled *Civilian-Based Defence: News and Opinion*, but in October 1992 adopted the shorter title.)

[64.](#) See *Guardian*, 21 August 1991, p. 3

[65.](#) 'The Collapse of a coup: 56 hours that shook the Soviet Union', *Guardian*, 22 August 1991, p.4

[66.](#) The majority - about two thirds of them - were Soviet forces

[67.](#) Zdenek Mylnar, *Night Frost in Prague*, (translated by Paul Wilson), C. Hurst, London, 1980, p. 201

[68.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 201-4

[69.](#) Alex P Schmid (in collaboration with Ellen Berends and Luuk Zonneveld), *Social Defence and Soviet Military Power: An Enquiry into the Relevance of an Alternative Defence Concept*, Centre for the Study of Conflict (COMT, State University of Leiden, p. 343

[70.](#) Zdenek Mylnar, op. cit., p. 176

[71.](#) The strike weapon was used in a symbolic fashion during the seven days of open resistance to the invasion, but there was no attempt to call a prolonged general strike since it was considered this would hurt the Czechoslovak people, and their ability to continue the resistance, rather than the occupiers. The primary goals of the invasion were, after all, political not economic.

[72.](#) Mylnar, op. cit., p. 200

[73.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 198-9

[74.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 196

[75.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 227

[76.](#) Cited Jean-Marie Muller, op. cit., p. 20

[77.](#) See the interview with Jan Kavan in Michael Randle, *People Power: the Building of a New European Home*, Hawthorn Press, 1991, p. 153

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