Chapter 2: Nonviolent Intervention

On 17 June 1994 Andrew Rigby presented a paper on Nonviolent Intervention at the Department of Peace Studies, 5-30pm - 8.30pm. Present on this occasion were: Christina Arber, John Brierley, Howard Clark, Bob Overy, Lindis Percy, Michael Randle, Carol Rank, Andrew Rigby. .

Text of paper by Andrew Rigby

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Nonviolent Third Party Action: Towards a New Realism

Introduction

The post cold war world has proved a difficult place for pacifists and advocates of nonviolence, particularly those in Western Europe. For years we campaigned against the nuclear threat and the old superpower rivalries that fed the arms race. As part of a strategy of 'citizen diplomacy' and grass- roots peace-making, links were established with peace and justice/human rights groups in Eastern and Central Europe. Then, in 1989, the old authoritarian systems of actually existing socialism began to crumble - in part due to mass civilian based nonviolent resistance. 'People power' - nonviolent action for change - was in the ascendant. The mood of pacifists and nonviolent activists in the West was ebullient. There was a glimpse of a new order emerging in Europe, one based on vibrant civil societies constituted by citizens experienced in organising in defence of their rights and in pursuit of change in the domestic and international arena.

Now, as we approach the mid-1990s those days of hope seem to belong to a different age, dimly perceived through the lens of ethnic conflicts and rival nationalisms that besmirch so much of the world today. As those of us who are committed to nonviolence cast our gaze around the world, we can begin to understand some of the despair and frustration expressed by the British pacifist Sybil Morrison during the Second World War.[1]

> There was nothing pacifists could do in 1939 but stand still and say, if they were allowed to say anything at all, that Hitler might be a worse evil than war, but that to try to overcome one evil with another evil was not only morally intolerable but could lead to even greater evil.

Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Georgia, Kashmir, Liberia, Nagorno-Karabakh, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan -in all these places the conflict and the killing continues. What can we do? We dream of transformative action, the kind of intervention that can create the environment for peace and reconciliation in these conflict zones. But whilst we proclaim the efficacy of nonviolence as a mode of action and philosophy of life, we find it difficult to come up with realistic and workable nonviolent responses to the bloody conflicts burgeoning in so many regions of the world. For many advocates of nonviolence. particularly those in Europe, the most difficult situation has been the ongoing

nightmare of Former Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Hercegovenia. On the day I started writing this essay my monthly copy of the pacifist publication *Peace News* arrived. Amongst the contents was a letter from a life-long pacifist who confessed 'right now I feel pacifism has nothing to offer to the people of Bosnia-Hercegovenia. I have lost faith in pacifism.[2]   In the same issue Howard Clark of War Resisters International acknowledged:[3]

> Many pacifists have questioned their own long-held beliefs in considering how the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina can be stopped. This situation confronts even the most knowledgeable of us with dilemmas and uncertainty. It is one of those times when there is no clear-cut strategy which would quickly and decisively end the violence and aggression … Yet all the while we are witnesses to a suffering which cries out 'something must be done'.

What can be done by concerned activists, peace groups and non-governmental organisations to intervene as unofficial third party peace-makers in conflict situations beyond the boundaries of their own countries? This is one of the most pressing issues that confront advocates of nonviolence as we move towards the end of the century. In this article I want to develop some thoughts on this question, and in particular attempt to widen our understanding of nonviolent intervention beyond the limitations of what has been termed unarmed interpositionary peace forces.

'Unarmed interpositionary peace forces'

This type of intervention involves concerned individuals trying to interpose their bodies between the direct parties to a conflict in the hope that they might thereby prevent or bring a halt to the conflict. Thomas Weber has traced the history of such efforts, starting with the attempt by the British pacifist Maude Royden in the early 1930s to organise a 'peace army' which would be prepared to intervene as a human barrier between combatants in armed conflicts and war situations.[4] Weber's historical overview concluded with the Gulf Peace Team, which succeeded in establishing a multinational peace camp near the Iraq border with Saudi Arabia for a few weeks during December 1990 and January 1991 in a vain attempt to prevent the outbreak of the most recent Gulf War.

Whilst acknowledging the bravery and commitment of the participants in such efforts at nonviolent intervention, Weber concluded that their effectiveness was extremely limited. In his view:

> It is doubtful whether independent interpositionary peace-keeping ventures would ever be able to command the economic and logistical resources required and, more importantly, raise enough volunteers to achieve a critical mass that would make a difference in terms of preventing or stopping hostilities ... The attempts at interpositionary peace-keeping were well intentioned but naive in their optimism as to resources and likelihood of outcome. The analysis of their experience suggests that perhaps the approach should be modified and that other variations on the theme, such as small-scale tactical intervention, should be explored more thoroughly.

Whilst such a cautious evaluation of past efforts to interpose an unarmed presence between combatants in conflict around the world confirms what many peace activists have long felt, the point needs to be made that such instances of physical intervention constitute only one type of third-party action to bring about a change in a conflict situation. Indeed, by its very nature

such an extreme form of what might be called 'sacrificial nonviolent action' can only be enacted by a minority of committed 'missionaries'. It requires a degree of commitment and courage possessed by only a few 'true believers'. To the extent that activists confine their efforts to such forms of physical intervention, they unintentionally contribute to the sense of helplessness felt by the bulk of concerned people who feel the need to 'do something' but who cannot - for one reason or another - bring themselves to 'lay their bodies on the line' in such a fashion.

In fact there are a whole range of ways in which concerned individuals and groups can intervene, directly and indirectly, in conflict situations beyond their borders. In what follows I want to try and indicate the nature of these different forms of intervention. I shall then present some tentative observations about the relative effectiveness of the different forms of intervention based on my own research into unofficial nonviolent intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Towards a typology of unofficial nonviolent interventionary actions

The typology of forms of nonviolent third party intervention outlined below is based on three criteria: the geographical location where the action takes place, the style of the action, and the goals which inform the action.

a) Direct and indirect intervention

Third parties can be said to intervene directly whenever the action entails the physical presence of the activists in the zone of conflict. By Contrast, indirect intervention takes place when third parties try to influence the process and outcome of a conflict through action taken within their own national boundaries by means of actions which do not involve their physical presence in the immediate zone of conflict.

b) Nonviolent direct action and conventional political action

Whilst types of intervention can be distinguished according to their location, they can also be categorised according to the style of the action. Here it seems appropriate to distinguish in ideal-typical fashion between nonviolent direct action and more conventional forms of action for change. Within the tradition of nonviolent direct action as it has been practised in the West, it is possible to identify two schools of thought and practice. On the one hand there has been the 'civil disobedience school', where the defining characteristic of direct action was deemed to be its unconventionality and the risk of sanctions incurred by the activists - whether this be the sanction of ridicule, public censure, arrest or physical injury. According to this perspective the key feature of direct action is that it involves some kind of challenge to established methods of exercising pressure and working for change. It follows, therefore, that whether an action can be said to be direct or conventional depends on the political context within which it takes place. Thus, street marches are commonplace in liberal democracies and are recognised as legal and legitimate forms of articulating interest. As such they do not constitute direct styles of action. On the other hand, to participate in some form of street politics under a repressive and authoritarian political regime which operates a ban on demonstrations and marches would be a direct style of action.

Another approach to direct action emphasises a somewhat different aspect. This is what we might call the 'Do-it- yourself' school.[5] Within this perspective direct action can be

distinguished from more conventional modes of articulating interest and exercising pressure by its directness. That is, actions for change can be depicted as direct insofar as the change is sought through the direct and unmediated effect of the activists' own actions. By contrast, in conventional political action people typically seek change by asking or expecting others to bring about the desired change. People vote or write letters to the press hoping to pressurise politicians and opinion-leaders to act on their behalf. The ideal-typical direct style of action embodies in itself the potential to bring about the desired end as a direct consequence of the action itself - always assuming, of course, that sufficient numbers of people with appropriate levels of commitment are prepared to engage in the action. Thus, when activists engage in 'direct disarmament' by destroying the nosecones of missiles, they are engaging in nonviolent direct action insofar as the direct effect of their actions - if they succeeded in disabling all missiles - would be the disarmament that they seek. Similarly, to the extent that people try to live their lives in close accordance to their ideals, their actions can be characterised as a sustained form of direct action. For such people 'the personal is political', and if enough people were to follow their example then the changes embodied in their own lives would bring about the desired transformation at the macro level.

On the basis of the above criteria, a distinction can be made between direct and conventional styles of third party nonviolent intervention according to the degree to which the modes of action display the core features of unconventionality/risk-taking and/or indirectness.[6]

c) The objective of the action

Types of 'unofficial' intervention can be distinguished by a third criterion: the prime goal and purpose of the action. However, it needs to be emphasised that such distinctions can only be made with confidence at the analytical level. In the real world people and groups engage in peace actions for a range of reasons and with an amalgam of short and long-term objectives. Thus, short-term 'practical,' goals can be located within a longer-term utopian project of bringing about a demilitarised 'world without weapons'. As Bob Overy has remarked:[7]

> Many actions of peace movements are prophetic rather than immediately practical. Peace movements tend to be concerned with what is possible for the future, rather than what is possible now. ... The dilemma between doing what can be done and attempting to do what needs to be done is an acute one.

Despite such cautions, it would appear that with regards to the more immediate and tangible goals that underpin particular forms of interventionary action, there are four main ideal- type objectives.

i) Protest: action which aims to register concern about a particular conflict situation, including protest against the actions of one or more parties to the conflict, seeking by such intervention to help bring the conflict to an end and/or bring about a change in the prevailing situation in the direction of a less violent and more just condition. Protest actions can be targeted not just at core parties to the conflict but also at 'concerned parties' such as one's own government or inter-governmental organisations like the United Nations.

ii) Support and solidarity: action which aims to provide moral or material support to individuals, groups, communities and organisations indigenous to the zone of conflict and who are direct parties to the conflict. Such efforts can represent the obverse of protest and propaganda work, inasmuch as support for one party to a conflict invariably involves some

kind of negative stance vis-a-vis others. As with protest action, support and solidarity action can be targeted at one's own government or other concerned parties who are considered to have a potential role in extending support to one or more parties to a conflict.

iii) Humanitarian relief: action aimed at alleviating the suffering of those caught up in a conflict. In practice such types of intervention invariably embody a certain degree of symbolic protest against those parties to the conflict deemed responsible for the suffering, and similarly an element of solidarity with the victims. Within this category should be included efforts to persuade one's own government and other agencies to initiate and participate in relief work of one kind or another.

iv) Reconciliation: actions intended to promote or facilitate dialogue and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation between parties to a conflict. The role of 'outsiders' who seek to further reconciliation between parties to a conflict can range from that of 'go-betweens' seeking to facilitate dialogue between the parties to a conflict, through to a more active mediatory role in a structured encounter, focussed on practical obstacles to the peace-making process. Such efforts can be oriented towards the grass-roots level of everyday citizens from different communities, or targeted at more politically influential groups right up to decision-making elites drawn from the core parties to a conflict

Types of unofficial third party intervention in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict

In this section the aim is to use the framework presented above in order to illustrate the many different ways in which 'outsiders' can intervene in a conflict by brief reference to some of the relatively recent instances of third party nonviolent intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Before doing this, however, a general observation needs to be made. The most common forms of intervention in this conflict, and others, are conventional styles of indirect intervention. Within most democratic states, concerned people have available a whole range of legitimate and legal means of articulating their concern about events taking place beyond their borders - whether their concern be to i) voice their protest, ii) express their solidarity with one or more parties to the conflict, iii) seek support for humanitarian relief efforts directed towards the victims of the conflict, or iv) try to promote constructive dialogue and processes of reconciliation between the antagonists.

Amongst the standard means available are the following:

- symbolising one's stance vis-a-vis a conflict by all the conventional means such as lapel-badges, displaying bumper stickers and the like;

- talking about the issues with friends and acquaintances;

- raising the issues in different organisations such as peace groups, political parties, trade unions, community groups and other voluntary associations;

- seeking to raise issues in the media by all legitimate means, such as writing letters to the press, submitting news items,' participating in 'access,' programmes on the radio and television, and so forth;

- networking with contacts around the world, including those directly involved in the conflict by means of electronic mail and other more time-worn modes of communication;

- lobbying national politicians and 'opinion-leaders' in general;

- writing letters and communicating the nature of one's concern to representatives of the direct parties to the conflict

- organising meetings, debates, film-screenings, social evenings and other public events to raise public awareness about the conflict;

- participating in marches, pickets, petitions, and other conventional forms of 'street politics';

- boycotting certain products/preferential purchasing of others in an effort to exercise consumer pressure on parties to the conflict;

- fund-raising: whether this be by means of street- collections, 'bring-and-buy' sales, selling (and buying) 'movement' publications, or by means of that wonderful balm of the middle-class liberal's conscience - the regular bankers order or financial donation to the worthy cause;

- forming 'twinning' arrangements between communities, institutions and, groups in one's own country and those located in the conflict zone.

All these methods of trying to influence developments in a conflict are unremarkable extensions of the normal means of articulating interest and exercising pressure within one's own political community. Participants are unlikely to incur any unforeseen costs or sanctions. Furthermore, they are aimed invariably at affecting in one way or another the activities of governments, organisations and agencies more directly involved in the conflict. As such they constitute what can be termed conventional modes of indirect interventionary action.

Whatever the type of nonviolent interventionary protest action engaged in by concerned individuals and groups, they are invariably informed, either explicitly or implicitly, by the notion of what has been called 'the chain of nonviolence'. This is the idea that by nonviolent interventionary action one might touch the consciences of publics, 'bystanders', and more immediate parties to the conflict, thereby acting as a catalyst for their subsequent mobilisation to effect changes in the outlook and stance of other groupings with which they have contact, so that eventually the impact of the original action might reverberate along the links in a chain leading to political elites and key policy-makers.[8] As part of this process, groups throughout the world have engaged in the full range of conventional modes of indirect intervention referred to above - publishing newsletters, organising petitions, lobbying politicians, organising marches and demonstrations and so forth - in order to register their protest against different aspects of the conflict in the Middle East between Israel and the Palestinians. Often the immediate targets of such indirect interventionary actions are domestic public opinion and national governments. These constitute the first link in a chain of influence which, it is hoped, will eventually lead to the core parties to the conflict. In addition a number of more direct forms of nonviolent intervention have been initiated. Here I want to make reference to just two relatively recent examples for illustrative and comparative purposes.

'1990: Time For Peace'

The first took place in Jerusalem towards the end of December 1989. This was the '1990: Time For Peace' international rally. The idea behind the rally was to mobilise Palestinians and Israelis, with the support of a sizeable international presence, in a joint nonviolent demonstration in favour of a just peace to the conflict. The original initiative came from the Italian Peace Association and was taken up by other non-governmental organisations concerned with the question of Palestine.

In preparing for the rally, the Europeans were determined to involve Peace Now, the 'mainstream', Israeli peace movement. Although not a membership organisation as such, those who identify with Peace Now and participate in its activities are drawn from a broad band of the liberal zionist political spectrum. As such they were perceived as a vital link in the chain of nonviolence reaching into the heart of Israeli decision-making circles. After a lot of negotiation and dialogue between the Europeans and the Israelis, Peace Now agreed to participate. In part this was due to the credibility and prestige of the Italian Peace Association and the representatives of the European peace movement involved in the negotiations - many of them had been involved in promoting dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis for a number of years. In addition Peace Now had finally decided that the time had come to call for official Israeli recognition of the PLO, and as such was prepared to participate in a joint rally with Palestinians calling for 'Two states for two people'.

As the event unfolded at the end of 1989, it embraced a range of conventional and more direct styles of action in which several hundred overseas participants took part, alongside Israelis and Palestinians. Friday 29 December was devoted to women's actions. It started with a conference, then some 3000 women joined the weekly Friday vigil of Women in Black at one of the main intersections in West Jerusalem. There then followed a women's peace march of about 5000 participants who walked across the 'border' from Israeli West Jerusalem into the heart of Palestinian East Jerusalem. The following day some 30,000 engaged in a direct style of action when they formed a Human Peace Chain around the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. Surrounding the demonstrators was a ring of some 2000 Israeli police and paramilitaries, who could not resist practising their crowd-control techniques of tear-gas, water cannon, rubber bullets and clubs upon those who had the temerity to be chanting 'We want peace!' By the end of the day some 50 demonstrators had been arrested and a similar number seriously injured.

Following the two days of street demonstrations, the rally continued with a series of smaller scale events including a series of workshops and meetings where Israelis, Palestinians and participants from overseas joined together in discussion and debate about different aspects of the conflict and the necessary steps to be taken for peace.[9]

Walk for a Peaceful Future in the Middle East: June 1992

This instance of direct intervention was planned as an exercise in direct action, and all the participants knew beforehand that they risked sanctions of one kind or another. The initiative originated with a group of people who had participated in the Gulf Peace Team and the peace camp of December 1990. They had realised that a lasting peace in the region required a solution to the Palestinian question. To further this end they had attempted to organise a peace walk between Jerusalem and Amman, the capital of Jordan, in June 1991. Planned at short notice, the walk failed to attract the support of the mainstream Israeli peace groups and

received only token support from prominent Palestinians. It aroused little interest and was aborted after the Israeli authorities halted the march once it had left Jerusalem.

Undeterred, the organisers planned another march to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the June 1967 War and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Consultations were held with Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups, and support solicited from international peace organisations and pacifist networks such as War Resisters' International and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. Eventually somewhere in the region of 150 participated from overseas - predominantly drawn from western and northern Europe and North America. After a few days spent in nonviolent training and preparation, they set off on the first leg of what was planned to be a one week march from Israel into the occupied territories, ending with a demonstration in Jerusalem. En route it was planned to hold solidarity demonstrations outside Israeli prisons which held Israeli draft-resisters and Palestinian political prisoners. On the second day of the march they approached the green line which separates Israel from the occupied territories, where the police and border guards prevented them from proceeding. The marchers sat down in the road and refused to move, and 120 of them (including 16 Israelis) were arrested. After 48 hours in detention the overseas participants were required to leave the country after the Israeli authorities cancelled their tourist visas. One event that did take place, however, was an international vigil outside the jail in Ashkelon where Mordechai Vanunu remains imprisoned in solitary confinement.[10]

Comment   I have presented a brief description of these two examples of direct interventionary protest action with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because they represent two contrasting cases. They differed in two significant aspects:

The immediate targets of the action and the political context within which the actions took place. The 1990 Time For Peace rally was targeted primarily at the mainstream of liberal Israelis. It sought to touch these people through the involvement of Peace Now. The Walk for Peace, on the other hand, failed to obtain the support of Peace Now and consequently failed to connect with a vital link in the chain of nonviolence. With regard to the political context, the Time For Peace rally took place at a time when the Israeli peace movement was in the ascendant, with Peace Now having just declared its commitment to a twin-state solution to the conflict. The rally also coincided with a decision by the Palestinian leadership within the occupied territories, buoyed by the success of the Intifada, to prioritise the promotion of dialogue with mainstream Israelis. As such the rally complemented the projects of peace-seekers on both sides of the conflict and was thus able to attract considerable support from both constituencies. As a participant in the rally, I can say that there was about those days in Jerusalem a sense of community, of people from diverse backgrounds coming together for a common purpose. It was an experience that exercised a powerful impact on the many thousands who participated.

By contrast, the Walk for Peace took place, at a time when the priority of most Israeli 'doves,' was with the upcoming general election, which resulted in the defeat of the right-wing Likud bloc and the victory of a Labour-led bloc that professed its commitment to exchanging land for peace. In addition, few members of Peace Now could accept the legitimacy of the kind of civil disobedience that the Walk for Peace appeared to entail. Furthermore, the priority for most Palestinians within the occupied territories was survival in the unprecedented economic and material hardships that were visited upon them during the Gulf War and post-war period. Thus, the march took place within a political context that was not supportive of the initiative. Apart

from the publicity surrounding the arrests at the 'green line', the impact of the march on Israeli and Palestinian public opinion was minimal.

Support and Solidarity

As with interventionary protest action, actions aimed at extending support and solidarity to one or more parties to a conflict can be distinguished according to the location where they take place (home or away), and according to their style - direct or conventional. As was detailed above regarding protest actions, the most common forms of intervention in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been indirect and conventional in style. Types of direct intervention that have been undertaken include fact-finding educational/solidarity tours of the conflict zone by sympathetic third parties and the placement of volunteers to work with peace-oriented groups and projects within the occupied territories and Israel.

An idea of the range of support actions, involving direct and indirect forms of intervention, is indicated in the following list of suggestions of 'How to help" adapted from Educational Network, the newsletter of an international network of people concerned about the future of Palestinian education in the occupied territories.

1. Link your teachers' union with a teachers' union in the occupied territories.
2. Get your union to actively support the right of Palestinian teachers in the occupied territories to form unions.
3. Establish a scholarship fund for one or more Palestinian students to study either in Palestine or abroad.
4. Reproduce and publish information about Palestinian education.
5. Send delegations of teachers to visit the occupied territories.
6. Sponsor Palestinian teachers to visit your city for an educational tour.
7. Establish teacher-exchange programs.
8. Send an experienced educator to the occupied territories to give workshops on innovative teaching techniques.
9. Set up a pen-pal program with a Palestinian school in either English or French.
10. Set up a sister-school program with a Palestinian school.
11. Keep the Educational Network informed about important educational conferences so that we can send a Palestinian teacher to attend.
12. Send to the Educational Network articles about other writings or books dealing with innovative approaches and ideas in the field of education.
13. Support an educational development project in the occupied territories.[11]

Humanitarian relief

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, tens of thousands of individuals around the world have intervened indirectly with the express aim of relieving the suffering of its victims - through contributing in one way or another to charities and international humanitarian organisations.

Others have intervened in a more direct fashion by spending time working with the victims of the conflict in Israel and the occupied territories. This can be of a relatively short-term nature - such as groups of medical personnel spending their vacation time assisting with health-care and educational work in the occupied territories.

Frequently such short-term projects are part of a longer- term involvement by organisations and agencies. one example of such a sustained form of direct intervention for the purpose of relieving suffering has been that pioneered by organisations like Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). MAP was founded in 1984 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacres of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila in Beirut. Since the outbreak of the intifada in December 1987 it has concentrated on sending medical supplies and trained personnel to medical institutions and health care programmes within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Frequently such volunteers publicise the conditions they have experienced when they return to their home countries. In so doing they draw upon the legitimacy provided by their professional standing to add strength and credibility to their advocacy of Palestinian human rights and their criticism of Israeli occupation policies. In this way, third party intervention motivated primarily by humanitarian concern can embrace other dimensions of support/solidarity.

Reconciliation

The most common form of intervention to promote reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians has aimed at facilitating meetings for dialogue wherever Israeli Jews and Palestinians can be persuaded to meet together. A particularly significant role in this process of 'detente from below' has been played by peace groupings and non-governmental organisations who have created the context for such meetings by inviting representatives from both sides of the conflict to attend their conferences and gatherings. In the 'safe' and supportive surroundings of such occasions, nominal enemies have been able to relax together, exchange views and establish networks of communication and friendship.

Academic institutions and research centres have also carved out an interventionary role with regard to promoting reconciliation by inviting representatives from different sides of the conflict to participate in problem-solving workshops based on a belief in the efficacy of unofficial 'track two' diplomacy. As a general rule it would appear that the greater the status of the sponsoring institution, the greater the political influence of the representatives prepared to participate.

Observations on intervention the effectiveness of unofficial third party.
At times the distinction between unofficial track two diplomacy and the official process of peace negotiations can become blurred. Thus, in August 1993 it emerged that informal negotiations had been taking place in Norway which were of far greater significance than the official process being acted out in Washington and elsewhere. Although the Norwegian government played a vital role in facilitating the secret meetings of the Israeli and Palestinian officials, the initial break-through was brought about by the intervention of an unofficial third party - the director of a Norwegian research institute who had been involved in a survey of living conditions in the Gaza strip. This initial humanitarian involvement gave him access to representatives from all sides of the conflict, whilst they in turn had ample opportunity to judge his calibre and trustworthiness a mediator and go-between.

The mix of goals, both short and longer term, pursued by groups and others who seek to intervene unofficially in conflict situations beyond their borders makes it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. A protest action that attracts media attention might be gauged a success by the participants, even though it failed to make any observable impact on the conflict situation itself. In similar vein, actions that appear to exercise no immediate impact on a conflict can be deemed a success by participants because it resulted in a heightening of morale amongst the

participants and the establishment of new networks involving the forging of new links in the chain of nonviolence. Pacifists and others might deem their interventionary action a success insofar as they created an opportunity to bear witness to their values and beliefs, without any particular thought to the practical outcome of their actions. Most activists make sense of their actions in terms of a long-term scenario consisting of a sequence of actions which, cumulatively over time, might exercise an effect on the process and outcome of a conflict. Many of us who have engaged in different forms of interventionary action comfort ourselves with the analogy of the stone thrown into the lake: you can never tell how far the ripples of our action might reach in the long run.

Despite such problems a number of tentative observations do suggest themselves.[12]

i) The impact of any interventionary protest action depends upon the context within which it takes place.

Protest activity typically aims at arousing public opinion either at home or in the region of conflict, in the hope that public pressure might be mobilised to influence either the policies of one's own government or the political elites of the core parties to the conflict. Whether interventionary protest actions are direct or indirect, they invariably seek to address publics as links in a chain of influence leading to key decision-makers. However, whether or not publics respond to the promptings of peace and protest groups would seem to depend on factors beyond the control of the interventionists. Only rarely do peace groups initiate moral crusades, although they can certainly be on hand to guide and service them when public concern reaches a critical mass. By way of an illustration, reference can be made to the findings of Charles Chatfield on the impact of anti-war protest in the USA during the Vietnam War. He has argued that the US government only sought to disengage from the war when the public began to withdraw its support from the war effort in growing numbers after 1968. Rather controversially, he suggests that this swing in public opinion was due not so much to the efforts of the peace groups as such, but to the fact that the public began to see the war and the organized anti-war protest as threatening the established social order.[13] Whether or not one accepts such a conclusion, it would seem incontrovertible that without the backing of significant sections of the public, the activities of peace and protest groups have no immediately observable impact on governmental decision-making in the realm of foreign affairs, and have even less direct impact on the policies of the core parties to a conflict.

At the same time, the longer term (and therefore virtually unmeasurable) influence of peace and protest groups should not be dismissed - activists who insist on responding to the promptings of their beliefs play a vital role in refusing to allow us to ignore or forget the barbarism of violence and bloody conflict at home and abroad. Moreover, they can also exercise a kind of veto power - acting as watchdogs, ready to arouse public awareness whenever political elites attempt to initiate policies that contradict proclaimed commitments to furthering peace and justice.

ii) The more modest the goal of interventionary action, greater the likelihood of success.

Following on from the above, this seems an obvious point but it is still worth making. To the extent that a group restricts its aim to indirect intervention by influencing a specific aspect of their government's policy towards a particular conflict, the greater the chances of success. Almost by definition, when a group adopts the role of a conventional pressure grouping within the political domain, it chooses to operate within the parameters of what is 'realistic' and

possible. In the process the group might lose sight of its ultimate ideal, but such groupings do perform a vital function in widening the terms of political debate, maintaining issues on the political agenda - and they do stand a chance of achieving something tangible. As an activist with Peace Brigades International has observed: [14]

> I believe we best promote the cause of nonviolence world-wide by working harder than ever for change in our own countries and by offering what support we can to our sisters and brothers working in much more difficult circumstances, rather than by rushing around trying to prove nonviolence is just as good as violence when it comes to sorting out somebody else's conflict.

iii) The impact of any interventionary action is dependent to a significant degree upon the status of the intervenor.

In general, the greater the prestige and standing of the individual, group or organisation that intervenes in a conflict situation, the less easy it is for the targets of the action to ignore the intervention. As a corollary of this general observation, it would appear that the closer the sense of identity between an intervenor and the target of the intervention the greater the impact of the intervention. When concerned Jews from around the world express their collective concern about Israeli occupation policies, their voice can be heard right along the chain of influence leading to the Israeli political leadership.

iv)   To enhance its effectiveness, wherever possible interventionary action should be oriented towards supporting the work of indigenous peacemakers.

There is a real danger that third parties motivated by genuine concern will seek to intervene in conflict situations in ways that are inappropriate, insensitive, and counter-productive. One way to avoid such mistakes is for third parties to subordinate their interests to those of peacemakers and activists indigenous to the zone of conflict who are working for peace and reconciliation. A noteworthy example of such work is that of the volunteers of Peace Brigades International (PBI) who spend time in a conflict area, escorting local peace activists whose work incurs the risk of physical attack. In their role as an international presence/observer alongside such people, the volunteers act as a deterrent against potential attackers and thereby help to widen the political space within which indigenous peace workers can operate.

The real strength of such efforts lies in their 'modest' purpose and the acceptance of the essentially 'service role' to be played by third party activists. By restricting their aim to that of supporting and servicing the needs of peacemakers and activists living and working in the midst of the conflict, third party activists avoid the dangers of trying to impose their own priorities and schemas upon the people embroiled in the day-to-day violence and horror, taking their cue from the people who, at the end of the day, carry the responsibility for resolving the conflict. This point has been made very strongly by Tim Wallis:[15]

> However difficult it may be for us in the peace movement to accept, we may have to admit that we cannot stop the bloodshed in Bosnia, or in Somalia, or in Angola. The best we can do is to support those Bosnians, Somalis or Angolans who may be resisting or who would resist if they could, the war and violence around them. In that case the 'proof' of the efficacy of nonviolence is not to be found in our own acts of nonviolent intervention in conflicts, but in the nonviolent actions of the people who live and struggle in the midst of those conflicts.

v) The more constructive the interventionary action, the more observable its impact.

In his approach to nonviolent action Gandhi emphasised the twin dimensions of satyagraha: the 'negative' resistance to evil and the 'positive' response of undermining the basis of injustice by embodying truth in one's individual and collective life. This became known as the Constructive Programme and it was Gandhi's great strength as a political organiser that he was able to devise campaigns that combined political protest with constructive action to meet people's basic needs. Thus, he combined the campaign against foreign cloth with the constructive work of khadi - home produced cloth. He defied the British and their salt tax and urged people to make their own salt.

The most effective forms of interventionary action are those which share some of the characteristics of the Gandhian approach to satyagraha: intervening to assist those in the conflict zone who are engaged in the struggle to promote a just resolution to the conflict, intervening to help the victims of the conflict, offering one's services to facilitate dialogue between 'enemies'. Such constructive modes of intervention, whether they be direct or indirect, lack the drama and publicity-potential of some of the more protest- oriented forms of intervention, but their impact on the conflict situation is invariably more substantial.

Conclusion: Breaking the limits of nonviolence

This essay started off with a reference to the limited impact of interventionary actions carried out by unarmed interpositionary peace forces. The participants in such ventures have usually been 'true believers' in the efficacy of nonviolence as a functional alternative to violence. If we are to develop the potential of nonviolent intervention by third parties to affect the process and outcome of conflicts around the world, then we need to move beyond this narrow focus on interpositionary peace making. In the process we also need to face up to some harsh realities.

First, we need to recognise that some conflicts are not amenable to resolution or management through third party intervention - whether such intervention be by violent or nonviolent means. This does not mean that we should not try to intervene in the various ways outlined above. But it does mean that we should not get disheartened at out 'failures'. To modify the old adage of Gramsci, we need to infuse our hopes with a dash of scepticism that comes from an intellectual analysis of the degree to which conflicts are susceptible at any particular stage to resolution by the intervention of any kind of third party action.

Second, we need to move beyond the notion of nonviolence as a functional alternative to violence, the conviction that whatever claims are made by the advocates of violent and armed intervention can be matched by nonviolent means at much less human cost. So long as we hold on to this notion, we will continue to feel frustrated at our inability to come up with nonviolent alternatives to armed intervention in regional conflicts. To put it simply - nonviolence is not a functional alternative to violence, if by that we mean a straightforward substitute for violence. Certain ends can be achieved by violence which nonviolence by its very nature cannot achieve. It might be possible to impose a cessation of open hostilities on a region by threatening armed intervention. You can 'pacify' a people by shooting and bombing them into submission. There are no nonviolent alternatives to such forms of military intervention.

To acknowledge these limitations does not mean that nonviolent intervention can have no effect on a conflict. As I have tried to show in this article there are a whole range of ways in

which nonviolent intervention by third parties can contribute to a reduction in the level of conflict and the amelioration of suffering, and in the process lay the basis for a more cooperative future. A key task for peace researchers and nonviolent activists as we move towards the next century is to study and practice ways in which nonviolent intervention can be rendered more effective. The starting point for this must be to acknowledge some of the limitations of nonviolence as a means of intervention - and then strive in true utopian fashion to break beyond these limits! [End of article]

NARP Discussion

Implications for Peacekeeping

Andrew, said the issue was topical because of the situation in former Yugoslavia and the debates about alternatives to military intervention. However, the history of interpositionary unarmed intervention tended to increase one's sense of powerlessness. The pacifists of the Second World War period, whose faith was mainly grounded in religious belief, always seemed to have a nonviolent answer to every situation. He found more and more that he could not do this. It was important to recognize that some conflicts were not amenable to solution at various stages. You could intervene to relieve suffering, but you should not delude yourself that this would necessarily halt or resolve the conflict. Gene Sharp's contention that nonviolence was the functional equivalent of violence was, he thought, mistaken - at least in so far as that implied that whatever violence could achieve, nonviolence could also do but at less human cost. The threat or use of bombing in former Yugoslavia could in some instances have an immediate impact on the fighting, and there simply was no nonviolent equivalent to that.

Bob said to treat nonviolence as a functional equivalent of violence was to imagine it could fulfill a structural purpose for which it was not suited. You couldn't organise a nonviolent army that would have the same effect as a military one. Nonviolence worked differently from violence and had to start from a different point and with different objectives. Michael pointed out that Gene Sharp talked about a functional equivalent of *war*. There were situations, such as when a country was attempting to free itself from colonial rule, where nonviolent action could provide an alternative to military struggle and be regarded as a functional equivalent of it. He agreed, however, that there was no one-for-one relationship between nonviolent and military methods. There were some things you could do with nonviolence that you could not do by military means - and certainly *vice versa*.

This had implications for what to do about conflicts like the one in Bosnia. The level of action Andrew discussed in the paper couldn't change the situation there in the short term. And if there was no nonviolent action that could be effective in an immediate sense, didn't one have to support military action if it appeared that would be effective? Andrew said that this was the further debate that followed on from his paper. However, the fact that nonviolent intervention didn't provide an answer in particular circumstances didn't mean that violent intervention would necessarily do so either. Michael said that while that was true, there were also situations in which the use of violence could be effective in an immediate sense, but that nonviolence could not.

Lindis said that she would absolutely follow a philosophy of nonviolence though when it came to a situation like Bosnia it was certainly incredibly difficult. However if violence was used to

stop the killing then other people would be killed and the outcome in the longer term could be even greater bloodshed.

Howard said there was a role for nonviolent, unarmed peacekeepers, whether soldiers or civilians. In Rwanda, the UN withdrew it monitors the moment they were threatened. He did not support UN military intervention in Rwanda, but it was an absolute scandal to withdraw UN troops at that stage knowing that the situation was going to deteriorate. He would want to see some UN, or other international body that could operate in an unarmed way in those sorts of situations, even at the risk of those people's lives. This was not arguing for a functional equivalent of military intervention, it was arguing that there was a role for the Shanti Sena [Peace Army] idea. Andrew added that something like that would need to be organised on a sufficient scale by a world authority that had the necessary legitimacy, and was seen to represent the world community.

Evaluating nonviolent intervention

Howard argued for a different axis of evaluation for nonviolent intervention. The key issue, he thought, was relationships. For instance in 1968 WRI organised demonstrations in Moscow, Warsaw, Budapest and Sofia against the invasion of Czechoslovakia which Bob had regarded at the time it as a fairly fruitless gesture. But in fact it had opened up opportunities later on, including for Michael and others to smuggle literature and equipment into Czechoslovakia to the democratic opposition and for WRI to have good credentials for advancing the process of detente from below. Detente from below meant people forming relationships across political divides rather than being involved in any of the four things Andrew had listed - namely, protest, support, solidarity and reconciliation. Edward Thompson had propagated the notion of people being loyal to each other across boundaries and acting as if borders had ceased to exist.

When you became involved in a situation, your agenda about it changed. The most recent example was the Nevada test site. People who had gone over there to protest against nuclear testing had got caught up with the Western Shoshone who were protesting not only against nuclear testing but also against the expropriation of their land. This happened also with the Muroroa protests, and perhaps also with the Sahara Protest team against French tests in the Sahara in 1959-60.

Michael commented on Andrew's conclusion that the more constructive the intervention the more observable its impact. That might be drawing too sharp a distinction between protest and constructive action. One of the protest actions in Israel took the form of planting an olive grove, an action which was both confrontational and constructive. Howard gave a similar example from Operation Omega in the 1970s [related to the crisis in East Pakisatan/Bangladesh] where people had been trying to run a blockade by carrying aid across the border from India. It heightened the symbolism of their protest when their jeep was stopped by the Pakistani army and they were arrested.

Symbolic versus direct action – a false distinction?

Bob said there was a long tradition of analysis which placed 'direct action' at one pole and 'symbolic action' at the other. During the 1970s there was a particularly strong tendency to

dismiss symbolic action as pathetic - all the marches and so forth, it was implied, didn't mean anything whereas 'direct action' was real and effective; it was actually going to change things. But this was a false distinction because in fact all nonviolent direct action was symbolic. Thus in relation to nuclear weapons, there was no way we were going to dismantle the bases with our bare hands. The remarkable thing about direct action was its huge potential impact, even sometimes where only a few people engaged in it. The symbolism fired people's imagination. Andrew said that sociologists tended to draw a distinction between symbolic and instrumental action, as if the symbolic was simply expressive, a gesture unrelated in any rational way to the achievement of a goal. He was with Bob in rejecting this view.

Howard drew a distinction between 'registering a protest' without any real expectation that it would change anything in any immediate tangible way, and protesting with the expectation and intention of rousing others and bringing about change. There were times when all one could do was to register a protest in that first sense. Usually, however, protest movements were trying to mobilise opposition

Carol was concerned that by contrasting direct action with the more conventional types of action we might appear to imply that we were dismissing the latter as ineffectual. Had it not been effective to mobilise half a million people to go out into the streets to protest against the Vietnam war? Andrew said it was in fact numbers that threatened the interests of decision-makers. We operated with a kind of working assumption that our action would influence people, who in turn would influence others until eventually the government, or some other responsible body, would change its policy.

Michael said the process wasn't always one where the small protest triggered off the larger one. Sometimes an action sparked a debate and shifted the public view of what was acceptable and tolerable. Howard gave as an example of this the way the terms of the debate shifted over regional seats of government (RSGs) in the 1960s by the action of a small group, the Spies for Peace. They had revealed the existence of well equipped underground bunkers dotted across the country where key members of the political establishment would be housed in the event of a nuclear war. Prior to this action the government denied the very existence of RSGs; immediately afterwards they shifted to saying that any sensible government would have to take the precaution of having them.

The Meaning and function of direct action

Andrew said it was a mistake to equate direct action with breaking the law; it did not necessarily imply this. Risking making a fool of yourself by for instance dressing up in a coffin was a kind of direct action. Although we tended to set up binary distinctions, in practice these were a matter of degree. Actions were more or less 'direct' or 'conventional'. In a liberal democracy like Britain a street demonstration was no longer direct action - yet it took on something of that character when you protested against the Falklands war and faced a very different reaction and situation from when you were on a CND march.

Lindis said it was vital for activists to address the concerns of the public. It was not enough to say throw a bag of flour at a satellite dish; it was essential for the development of the campaign, and of that person, to address the wider issues. It was essential, too, to work through structures, not simply to take direct action.

Bob said there was often a kind of mystique attached to breaking the law - a sense that the people who did this were somehow special, and that their action would generate an incredible impact. The antithesis between direct action and conventional action was real for the individual and it could be empowering for them to face their fear, and then find they were all right. But from a sociological point of view, direct action was just one part of the chain of nonviolence that Andrew had spoken of. It was one part of a process that would only work if it generated conventional action.

John said that what sometimes sustained direct actionists was the excitement and the sense that they were doing the *real* thing. It was important, however, for people to take stock of their motives, to examine what they gained from an action and how far it contributed to the achievement of the campaigning objectives. Through that kind of awareness people could become more effective

Michael said one should not underestimate the potential impact of people being prepared to take direct action, risk imprisonment and so forth. There were times when that had a dramatic political impact. It was true, for instance, of the Swaffham direct action demonstrations against the Thor rocket base in 1958 where the actions and arrest of around eighty people made national headlines and generated enormous interest. The degree of effectiveness could depend on who was involved, the historical period when it occurred, and other factors. Direct action was not a magic formula, but at certain times it could work a kind of magic. It was like a piece of theatre or any creative act. It required imagination and insight if it was to succeed, and couldn't simply be repeated in the same form. Gandhi, in addition to his organising abilities, had that kind of intuitive understanding of what would touch the imagination of the Indian population and rouse them to action. Many of the experienced politicians regarded the Salt march before it actually took place as a futile gesture. But in the event it roused the population as perhaps nothing else could have done.

[1] S, Morrison, *I Renounce War*, London: Sheppard Press, 1962, p 45.

[2] H Gieschen, *Peace News*, March 1994, p 13

[3] *Ibid*, p 3.

[4] Thomas Weber, 'From Maude Royden's Peace Army to the Gulf Peace Team: An assessment of unarmed interpositionary peace forces', *Journal of Peace Research*, v 30, no 1, 1993, pp 45- 64. 5. ibid, p 62.

[5] I am grateful to Howard Clark for suggesting these distinctions.

[6] In this sense nonviolent direct action is being used as an open-textured concept. That is, whilst acknowledging that there cannot be an exhaustive specification of 'direct action' in all its manifestations, there remain certain core characteristics common to all forms of action to which the concept is applied. See M Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp 2-3.)

[7] Bob Overy, *How Effective Are Peace Movements?,* Housmans, London,1982.

[8] For a discussion of 'the great chain of nonviolence', see J. Galtung, *Non-violence and Israel/Palestine,* University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1989, p 19 and also A. Rigby, *Living the Intifada*, Zed Books, London, 1991, pp.167-8

[9] For a fuller account of the rally, see Howard Clark, *WRI Newsletter*, January 1990. See also A Rigby, op cit, pp 187-89.

[10] In 1988, Mordechai Vanunu was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment in a secret trial after being found guilty of disclosing Israeli nuclear secrets to the Sunday Times. Since that time he has been kept in solitary confinement in Ashkelon prison, south of Tel Aviv.

[11] Taken and amended from 'How to help Palestinian education', *Educational Network*, no 11, April 1993, p.11.

[12] I am very aware of the dangers of generalising from a single case study. As with any other conflict, there are aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which make it unique. Despite such reservations, I offer the following observations in the form of hypotheses to be tested against experiences in relation to other conflicts.

[13] See Charles Chatfield's concluding 'Reflections', in C. DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1990.

[14] Tim Wallis, 'Intervention from Within', *Peace News*, January 1994, p.10.

[15] *Idem.*