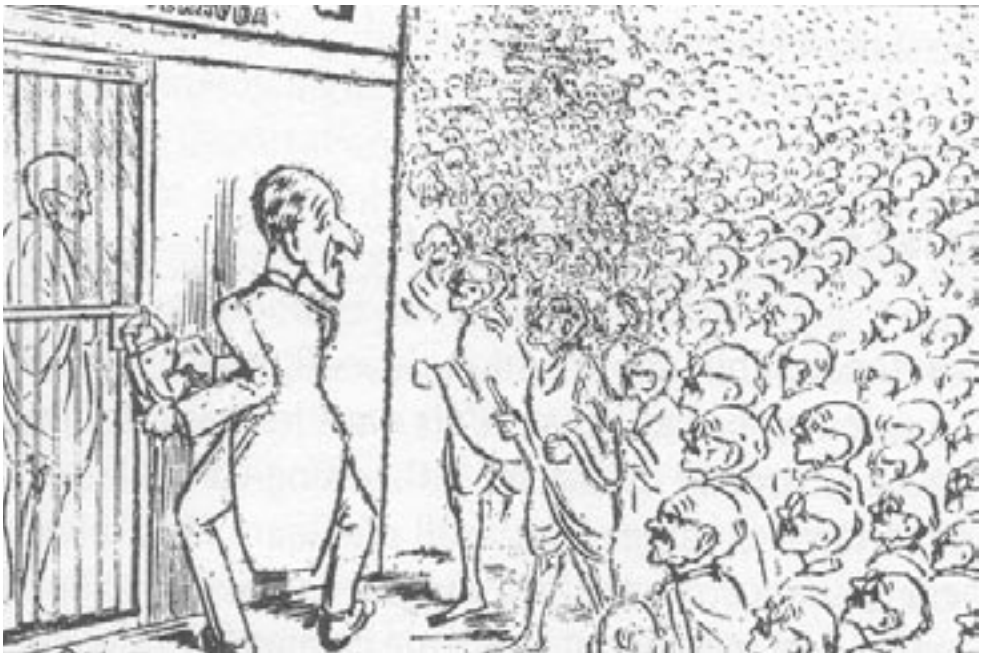
Jean-Marie MULLER

NON-VIOLENCE IN ACTION



Les Éditions du man

Cover photo: In 1933, the viceroy, Lord Wellington, imprisons Gandhi who has just started a campaign of individual civil disobediene. He realizes that for one Ghandi in Jail, there are thousands who are free.

Translated by Marc MORGAN
Composed by Nirrep - F69190 ST FONS
Printed on recycled paper by IML - F69850 ST MARTIN EN HAUT

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FRANCE - October 2007

Jean-Marie MULLER

NON-VIOLENCE IN ACTION

The stages of a non-violent action campaign

Les Éditions du Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente

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The logic of non-violence in action is evident in premeditated steps that gradually become clear according to the chosen aim. It is this manifestation, this increase in power that forms the concrete basis of this text.

1
Situation analysis

The momentum behind an action springs from the awareness of an injustice. This injustice – which is not necessarily new, but may be long-standing – appears to us in all its harshness and the feeling is impressed upon us that it is literally "insufferable" and that, in consequence, we cannot put up with it any longer, "it can no longer continue". We therefore make the decision to stop it and to act accordingly. We decide to enter into resistance.

It is essential that the action should be rooted in a detailed knowledge of the situation involving the injustice we condemn and are fighting against. Should it arise that we our knowledge of this situation could be faulted, this would seriously discredit our initiative and decrease its chances of success. In the first instance, the temptation is to exaggerate the facts and their seriousness whenever we present them, to make a caricature of the position of our adversaries. But it is an illusion to think that such a strategy could be at all effective. On the contrary, it will actually be easy for our opponents to emphasize, with conviction, the outrageous nature of the accusations made against them and, thereby, to appear to be able to justify themselves entirely. On the other hand, a precise knowledge of the facts and their presentation in the most rational and objective manner possible constitute

major assets in our favour, which will reinforce our position. The possibility of justifying our assertions at every step, with supporting evidence, will give true weight to those assertions in the power struggle set up between the adversaries.

"The first condition that a non-violence doctrine must satisfy is to have lived through the world of violence in all its depth."

Paul RICŒUR, *History and Truth* (Histoire et Vérité), Seuil, 1955, p. 224



Gandhi during the salt march in 1930

We must therefore make as complete a file as possible of the facts. it is not enough simply to ascertain the facts, it is important to also understand them in order to know why and how the injustice came about and continued. It is necessary to know what social, political and economic forces are at work in the situation, what the attitudes of the parties are in practice and, what their theoretical justifications are. It is important to analyse the power structures characterising the situation to determine where the

decision-making centres are located. Furthermore, it is necessary to know what the law says about the disputes that are opposing the parties in order to clearly define the rights that it gives and the rights that it denies. This analysis should allow us to identify our allies and our adversaries in the conflict with certainty. To fight effectively against our enemies, we must start by getting to know them.

2
Choice of aim

At the same time as analysing the situation, we must also choose an aim to achieve. The choice of aim is an essential element of an action campaign; success or failure may depend on it alone. It is a strategic necessity to ensure the aim is clear, precise, limited and attainable. It is necessary therefore to distinguish the desirable from the possible. Our enterprise is doomed to failure if we choose an aim the scale of which is disproportionate to the forces that can reasonably be mobilised for its achievement. It is important, therefore, that the aim should be within reach of the popular support which can be mobilised behind the action. It is essential that the chosen aim should be such as to make victory attainable. The action campaign must not find itself reduced to a simple protest and public awareness campaign. Success must be achieved. We must win. This victory, necessarily partial and limited, will serve to give confidence to activists and will therefore make it possible to prescribe more ambitious aims to future campaigns.

> *"Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man, and silence is necessary in order to surmount it."*
>
> GANDHI, *All Men are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections* (Tous les hommes sont frères), Gallimard, 1969, p. 194.

Although it is important to maintain a global perspective, and awareness of the whole political system dominating society, it is a strategic necessity to choose a precise point of the system on which one can take hold, to act upon this point by working it like a lever. This precise point will be our grip on the system. We need to ensure that the grip selected is the best one possible. We must not let go of it and it must not let go of us.

In each non-violent resistance campaign, an aim must be set that is the equivalent to the law on salt, whose abolition was chosen by Gandhi in 1930 as the aim of a civil disobedience campaign with a view to obtaining independence of India. The long-term strategic objective was the independence of India, the short-term tactical objective was the abolition of the law on salt. In the global situation in which the resistance movement exists, the relevant question to ask is: "Where is the salt?" We therefore need to look for and find the salt...

3
Choosing non-violence

Choosing non-violence is a strategic option which implies that all actions taken will be non-violent. The strategy of non-violent action has its own dynamics, its own effectiveness and every violent action can only counteract it and, in the final instance, make it fail. When violence and non-violence co-exist within the same struggle, violence wins out. A battle with 90% non-violent actions and 10% violent actions would not be a non-violent battle with 10% violent actions, but a violent battle with 90% non-violent actions. If 300 people took part in a sit-in when confronted by a police demonstration and kept a perfectly non-violent attitude, it would be enough if three individuals threw stones at the police to make the entire action fall under the label of violence. In all probability, the opening images on the television news and on the front of newspapers will not be of the non-violent de-

monstration, but of the stone throwers. And the authorities, just like public opinion, cannot help but think that 300 demonstrators resorted to unacceptable violence towards the police. In the same way, if a few thousand people peacefully march through the streets of a town, it is enough if a few dozen individuals smash shop windows for all the demonstrators to be considered as rioting demonstrators. And that will justify the police crackdown legitimised by the public authorities under the pretext that it is necessary to "re-establish order".



The Israeli Wall in Bethlehem - Photo MAN

This is why, from the start of an action, it is necessary to clearly display the strategic choice of non-violence in such a way as to make it impossible for all those who come into contact with the non-violent protesters– be they partners, adversaries or public opinion – not to know it. This «public display» of non-violence paves the way for the creation of a climate, an atmosphere that encourages the optimum development of the potential non-violent action and allows it to express its efficiency fully. Therefore, the choice of non-violence can only rule out the principle of "tactical diversity", according to which it would be necessary to re-

concile non-violent and violent actions in the same battle.

Thus, concerning the possible combinations of violence and non-violence, there is no reciprocity: non-violent actions reinforce the efficiency of a violent battle, whereas violent actions thwart the efficiency of a non-violent battle.

4
The choice of a form of organisation

Non-violent action relies on the personal responsibility of each and every person involved. But, to become efficient, it needs to be collective and organised. The organisation itself needs to be non-violent, i.e. allowing everyone to actually participate in the responsibilities and decisions. It must not kill spontaneity, on the contrary, it must support itself and be channelled in such a way that it is not a factor of dispersion and incoherence, but becomes a mainspring guiding the action and giving it its strength. One of the functions of organisation is to divide up the tasks and to coordinate the activities for those who have agreed to take them on.

The urgency and importance of the decisions which will need to be taken during the action make it hard to envisage that responsibility for organisation should be diluted and delegated to everyone involved in the action. The organisation must equip itself with a decision-making body. While it is very clear that authority is not what is needed to forge ties between those responsible for a non-violent movement and all the participants, but rather confidence; at the same time it is in the nature of things that certain people take on more and wider responsibilities than others. Leaders rise up in every collective action, sometimes even a single leader who will therefore be the spokesperson for the commu-

nity under battle. This will not proceed without posing problems and can provoke rivalry and sometimes personal conflict. It is essential that the role played by the leader does not take an undue place in the organisation of the action. It needs to be ensured that the unity, cohesion and power of the movement do not rest just on the personality of the charismatic leader; if that was the case, then when the leader is imprisoned or killed, the organisation will be an orphan and will risk falling into disarray. From this perspective, the emotional ties which link the leader to the other activists– which is legitimate and even necessary – must be as small as possible, while the rational ties need to be as great as possible. The best way of ensuring that the leader does not carry too heavy a burden is to reinforce democracy within the organisation.

Very often, the action will be taken on by an organisation already in existence (trade union, party, movement, association...) or by a group of organisations. The action could therefore immediately benefit from the activist potential of this or these organisations. Sometimes, however, a specific organisation must be created to tackle and lead the action.

One of the tasks that the organisation must undertake is the education and training of the militants of the non-violent action. In order that the action is well-lead, the initiative must be taken and kept by people who are determined to abide by non-violent methods. This is essential so that the movement does not founder, when difficulties spring up, into disorder, fear and finally, violence, in particular when provocations arise.

Furthermore, the movement may only be strong to the extent that it could benefit from local relays distributed across the country, which could transmit information and action instructions to the population. The organisation must be as decentralised as possible.

"I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence... (...). This is why I recommend

military training to those who only believe in violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour. But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence"

GANDHI, *All Men are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections* (Tous les hommes sont frères), Gallimard, 1969, pp. 182-183.

5
First negotiations

It is wise to enter into direct contact with the adversary as soon as possible before even bringing the dispute to public attention, in order to propose a negotiated solution to the conflict rather than a show of strength. Non-violent action always favours dialogue. It aims to create the conditions for dialogue. During these initial negotiations, the aim is to make the adversary aware of the conclusions on which the analysis of the situation has been conducted and to evaluate our demands in setting out the chosen objective. It could happen – is even likely – that the adversary refuses all negotiation immediately. If he agrees on a meeting, it is unlikely that an agreement is reached immediately. These first negotiations nevertheless allow us to test the intentions of our interlocutors.

If it is important to avoid all attitudes that could only unnecessarily make the conflict more difficult and reinforce existing barriers, which would make any solution even more difficult; it is equally important to stay completely and utterly firm and determined.

Under no circumstances are we to be satisfied with promises. We must insist on decisions. When negotiations reach a standstill, they must be suspended and not broken since the aim of direct

action is the revival of negotiations. As far as possible, it could be useful to maintain some contact with the adversary throughout the whole conflict.

According to a fundamental principal of any strategy, this period of initial negotiations must also be the period of preparing the show of strength

6
Calling on public opinion

In the face of the failure of these first negotiations, we must strive to make injustice appear forcibly in the public domain by every achievable method of communication, information, sensitisation, awareness raising and popularisation. The aim is to seek maximum "publicity" in the technical sense of the word, i.e. to reach the widest possible public in order to make the public aware of the reasons behind the action and its objectives.

The strategy of non-violent action is structured in a "triangularisation of the conflict". There are not two principal protagonists in a conflict, but three: there are the resistance fighters and the adversaries which I will call the decision-makers, those that have the power to make decisions to meet the demands of the resistance fighters. But there is a third principal protagonist: public opinion (according to the nature of the conflict, it could be local public opinion, national public opinion and/or international public opinion). Vis-à-vis our adversaries, we need to convince them if we can and to restrain them if we must. The place of public opinion is as a third party in a conflict, a third party that is called to play the role of arbitrator.

In this triangularisation of conflict, the resistance fighters must convince public opinion of the legitimacy of their cause and

of the justice of their demands. The aim is therefore to inform members of the public, to engage them, to make them aware and to encourage them to take sides with the resistance fighters. The desired aim is to apply pressure on the decision-makers so that they recognise the rights of the resistance fighters. For their part, the decision-makers will equally endeavour to get public opinion on their side. Those who win "the battle for public opinion" will have every chance to create a balance of power in their favour.



Martin Luther King in Detroit, 23 June 1964

1) Methods of information

The aim must be to create a "press event" that informs the public. To achieve that, we need to start directly informing informants by sending journalists from different media as complete a file as possible on the current conflict. A press conference could also be organised, but, in the first instance, personal contact with the journalists could prove to be more effective. Parties,

trade unions, movements, organisations, associations and personalities likely to give their support and maybe their aid to the intended action campaign all need to be informed. But direct information must also be supplied directly to the public. Different methods can be applied: distributing propaganda brochures to appropriate places at appropriate times, circulating petitions, «making the walls talk» by affixing posters and painting inscriptions. We must ensure that we do not dirty walls and buildings, but rather hide their dirt... The pavements also need to be made to talk by painting pictures and slogans on them.

To inform is to express oneself, and in so doing already to take control. It is important that one's expression should be and remain non-violent throughout the course of the action. It is always an illusion to believe you are more convincing by making a violent speech against your adversary. The risk in doing so that the speech is misrepresented in caricatures, insults, outrageousness and verbal abuse is high. And that can only discredit the action. The "force" of words comes from their justice and not from violence. The educational power of a non-violent speech is much greater than that of shouting. In order to be efficient, every word against injustice, oppression, violence and war must be a word of peace. Violent words contribute to war.

Reasonable expression and non-violent action reinforce each other, expression emphasises the significance of the action and vice versa. In this way at the height of the struggle, expression becomes the action and the action becomes expression.

Furthermore, it will be important to rely on humour. This has an unsurpassed force of conviction. Public opinion is extremely responsive to humour. Furthermore, humour is one of the best protections against hatred and violence. If we were to make more use of humour, we would be less likely to go to war... And humour will allow us to put ourselves in a strong position vis-à-vis our adversaries in the sense where they will generally be incapable of humour especially if they are on the side of power.
In itself, humour is a force of resistance, a challenge made to the adversary who risks finding itself unable to cope with it. Hu-

mour wrong-foots the adversary even as he deploys his best arguments. Humour is disarming. Humour is formidable in that it radically calls into question the authority of the powerful.
In addition, humour can become a major asset in the struggle for public opinion. Humour is capable of eliciting a reaction of amusement among the public, of sympathy and an attitude of benevolence with regard to the action and the participants in the action. It is always good to «get the laughers over to one's side». And in the very process of provoking laughter, we increase the chances of winning people over to our side. A word that evokes a smile can be more convincing than a long argument that provokes thought. But, at the same time, it is necessary to avoid resorting to farce, which could be taken as contempt for the adversary.

2) Direct Interventions

It is always important to be in direct contact with the general public, in order to inform it, and to help it be aware of the topics at hand; this does not just mean using speech, it involves also the ability to express oneself with one's whole body. In the course of these public interventions, body language is an essential means of communication. He who chooses non-violence also chooses to use his body to build a line of resistance against violence. Using his body as a barricade against violence, he signifies the limits that violence has to respect. Indeed the body, while refusing the protection weapons can provide, finds itself on the frontline, is exposed in its vulnerability to dangers, and threats, and defies violence, pain and death. The speaker, with his whole body, stands up against injustice, and affirms his opinions on the public place, so he can speak in front of all in favour of justice. As he is vulnerable, the one who is unarmed doesn't offer any justification for his adversaries to kill him. However, risk is always present and murder is always possible.
Reason is not alone in being called upon when we choose to opt for non-violence, but the body as a whole has to be involved in this decision too. Humans are physical beings, who feel fear when

confronted with the dangers implied by action. Fear is a physical reaction, so to be able to control it, one has to be able to control one's body. Methods and techniques that can help control one's body are very useful to be able to progress on the road to non-violence. If the body is too much in a state of refusal, if it is paralyzed by fear and reacts negatively to it, reason will be unable to exert its power on it. It is important to prepare, educate and train one's body to be able to control one's emotions and fears.

The first public demonstrations have to be, above all, means of persuasion that make manifest the reasons why the cause we are defending is right, but they also are means of pressure and pave the way for the deployment of forceful means.

Amongst the public intervention methods, let us mention:

- **The demonstration**

It is about assembling, forming a procession, and walking through town from one symbolic place to another. The call to demonstrate is aimed not only at militants but also at sympathizers. Again it is about speaking in public. The demonstration, even if it is silent, must be a form of expression, which "speaks" to the spectators. In this case, its expression takes the form of streamers and placards, and leaflets distributed to passers by. Slogans and chants can also be chosen to be aimed at the public.

- **The march**

In this case, demonstrators travel long distances from town to town through one or several countries. The aim is to heighten the awareness of the populations of the regions they travel through of the injustice they want to expose. Here again, the march must be 'expressive' through the use of posters, leaflets, placards and streamers. Each time it stops in a town, public meetings can be organized so as to inform the town's inhabitants and provoke a public debate about the particular issue involved. A delegation may ask to be hosted by the local authorities so as to put forward

the demonstrators' point of view. The full success of such an initiative implies that support committees prepare the route for marchers and welcome them along the way.
Such a demonstration can take place with the use of any means of transport ranging from a bicycle to a lorry, as well as a moped, a tractor and a car.

Other actions to raise awareness may be envisaged to mobilize only a small group of people amongst the most determined. Let us mention in particular :

- **Theatre handout**

A drama scene lasting a few minutes can be performed in the street and be able to convey a message as condensed and simple and clear as the message contained in a well written leaflet.

- **The sit-in**

This is a sitting demonstration which takes place in a symbolic place. It is appropriate to decide, through precise instructions set out in advance, what should be the appropriate attitude of demonstrators if, as is probable, they are "visited" by the police. The thing to be avoided is that the sit-in ends up in a generalised chaos.
There is also the « **die-in** », in which the protestors lie on the ground, as if struck by death.

- **The silent procession**

Made up of women and 'sandwich men' the demonstrators, positioned according to a precise pattern and wearing robes with slogans written on them, march through streets at peak time. Leaflets can also be distributed on this occasion.

- **Silence hours**

Several people gather in a symbolic place and stand in silence, and express themselves with placards and streamers. Other demonstrators can distribute leaflets and talk to those who call out to the demonstrators.

• Chaining up

A few activists who wear robes chain themselves to the railings of a building. They are generally unchained by the police. It is the photo usually published in the press which gives the most impact to such a demonstration.

• A limited hunger strike

This involves abstaining from food during several days, let's say between 3 and 20 days, so as to alert both those responsible for injustice and public opinion. A hunger strike cannot be a 'thirst strike'. On the contrary, it is important to drink water. But if the strikers drink fruit juice or sweet tea, it is not a hunger strike in



Spanish objectors 1971 - Photo CANVA

the true sense of the word. It is essential not to 'cheat'. It is a protest action and an action calling people's consciousness but, because it is in itself a limited action, it is not aiming at suppressing injustice. The personality of the hunger striker or strikers plays an important role in the impact it can have on public opinion.

7
Sending an ultimatum

If you come up against a refusal of any negotiated solution to the conflict, it then becomes necessary to set the adversary a deadline beyond which instructions will be given by the people responsible for going into direct action. Faced with the failure of means of persuasion that have not succeeded in convincing the



Larzac - Photo NVA

adversary that he should accept demands that were presented to him , it is important to set means of pressure into motion which will aim to compel him. The ultimatum is the last attempt to obtain a negotiated agreement and the beginning of the trial of strength. It is likely that the adversary will refuse to give up in front of what should be called 'a threat' and that he will consider this as an 'unacceptable blackmail'. He will then reject the ultimatum by affirming that he does not fear the trial of strength. It

is a question of taking advantage of the time limit given by the ultimatum to hasten the preparations for the action. The ultimatum is also the signal sent to public opinion indicating the imminence of the start of the action.

> *"It would be fallacious to imagine that recourse to ethics and persuasion alone is going to make justice prevail. Not that it is pointless to appeal to ethics but it is necessary at the same time to rely on a real constraining force."*
>
> Martin Luther King, *Where are we going?* (Où allons-nous ?), Payot 1968, p 153

8
Direct actions

1) Direct actions of non cooperation

The essential principle of the non violent action strategy is that of non collaboration. It is based on the following analysis: in a society, what makes the strength of the established disorder, is the complicity, that is to say the passive cooperation, voluntary or forced, of the silent majority of citizens. Non violent resistance aims to break up this complicity through the organization of collective actions of non cooperation with social, economical or political structures which cause and maintain these injustices.

The mainspring of the power detained by the powerful, who want to impose their will on a social or politcal group, is the power which those who cooperate with them willy-nilly grant them. Resistance must hence be organised by calling each member of this group to withdraw his/her support from those who hold power, thus depriving them of the aid they need to ensure their domination. The constraint becomes effective from the

moment when actions of non cooperation manage to dry up sources of power for the established authorities which do not have the means to be respected and to be obeyed. Thus a new balance of power may be established and allow the resisting forces to exercise their power and to have their rights recognised.

From this perspective, the strategy of non violent action aims to organise actions of non collaboration with institutions, laws, ideologies, regimes, states which infringe liberties and human rights. The aim is to paralyse the main machinery of the diverse mechanisms of exploitation or oppression so as to re-establish the rule of the law and of justice.

It is important that the gestures of non cooperation proposed by the movement be comprehensible by as many people as possible. To ask for gestures of rupture which have very serious consequences, is to reserve the action to an elite and to force the others to stay aside like simple spectators. Therefore, it is essential that as many people as possible should be able to participate.

> *"Non violence pre supposes that we must be able to fight."*
>
> GANDHI, *All men are brothers*, Gallimard, 1969, p. 178

Here, more than in any other area, we cannot presume to make an exhaustive list of the different actions of non cooperation possible. Particular situations call for particular actions of non cooperation. It is a matter of using one's imagination. Amongst methods which been have used most often, let us cite in particular :

- **The sending back of titles and decorations**

This gesture is essentially symbolic and is only open to a minority, but its impact on public opinion may be considerable.

- **Operation "dead city"**

The whole population is asked to cease all activities during a day, half a day or a few hours. Streets must be deserted, and shops

closed. Everyone stays at home or at his workplace but suspends his activities. The success of such an operation presupposes that the population is strongly aware of the issue of the current conflict and that it has already given concrete signs of its determination.

• The strike

The strike illustrates directly the principle of non cooperation. A company or an administration can function solely thanks to the collaboration of its workers or employees. From the moment when these stop work so as to bring one claim or another to a successful conclusion, they exercise a real constraining force on their leaders or directors. These latter cannot ignore the demands that are addressed to them for too long. Time is against them for they cannot adapt to companies or civil service's paralysis. As far as workers are able to last, they are in a position of strength to negotiate a solution to the conflict. A strike cannot thus enable us to achieve an objective only if it is limited. Some of these strikes can no longer be organised for economic reasons bur for political motives, for example to protest against such or such violation of human rights or to affirm its solidarity with such or such fight.

• The boycott

It is not a question of organising the non cooperation of workers any longer but that of consumers. Their buying power is a real economic power which can be used to bring improvements in the quality of a company's products or force it to recognize its workers rights . A boycott aims to lower sales so as to make the company experience a significant loss of earnings and to force it to satisfy the demands which form the aim of the action.

It is not necessary for the boycott to be total for a decrease in sales to be decisive. Therefore it is not sufficient to send out a rallying call for a boycott though a press release and a few posters. It must be organised by distributing leaflets and by installing boycott pickets close to sales points. There again, it is essential that the action should be a long one if necessary.

"I do not ask that you clash with the tyrant, nor for you to shake him up, but only that you cease to support him, and you will see him, like a huge giant statue whose pedestal is taken away, crash beneath his own weight and be shattered."

Etienne de la BOETIE, *Discourse on voluntary servitude*, Payot, 1985 p 183

• Civil disobedience

This or that action of non cooperation may be legal or illegal according to the law in force at the time and place at which it is



The fall of the Berlin wall, 1989

carried out. In the same action, some participants will remain within the law whereas others will step out of legality. Thus, in a boycott, it is perfectly legal not to buy such or such product, but it is generally illegal to send a public call to make people stop buying it.

The law has a legitimate function in society. The function of the

law is to organise society so that justice be respected by all and for all. As long as law fulfils its function, it deserves our 'obedience'. But when the law comes to support the injustice of the established disorder, then it is not only a right to disobey the law but it may also be a duty to do so. What makes injustice is not the unjust law in itself, but obedience to the unjust law, and the best way to fight against this injustice is to disobey the law.

The disobeying individual is a dissident, he is not a delinquent. He doesn't break with the political collectivity of which he is a part, he doesn't refuse to be interdependent, he refuses to be an accomplice. The behaviour of the citizen should not be determined by what is legal, but by what is legitimate.

An action of civil disobedience must not only be justified, it must be efficient. As a political action, civil disobedience is a collective and organized initiative aiming to put pressure on the authorities so as to force them to change the law. This is not just a case of defining the right of conscientious objection, based on an individual obligation to refuse to obey the unjust law, but also, beyond this recognition, a case of defining the right of the citizens to disobey the law in order to affirm their power and obtain recognition of their demands. Thus, civil disobedience represents not only a moral demand on the part of individuals in the face of an unjust law or decision, but also the political will of a community of citizens who want to exercise their power. The main motivation of those who disobey for reasons of conscience is to overcome injustice.

Most often, it will not be enough to demand the removal of the unjust law, it will be necessary to demand a just law which gives positive expression to the rights of the oppressed of today and which guarantees those rights.

> *"We have an obligation not only legal but moral to obey just laws, but at the same time we have the moral obligation to disobey unjust laws."*
>
> Martin Luther KING, cited by S.B. OATES, *Martin Luther King,* Centurion, 1965, p. 255.

It would be pointless to enumerate all the possible forms of disobedient civil actions. They are multiple and different in each situation. Let us mention a few of them which are particularly distinctive :

- **Rent strike**

The expression is sufficiently self explicit. The action will be all the more efficient for the fact that it can be lead in a collective way.

- **Autoreduction**

Either because we think that certain rates are quite excessive, or either because the politics adopted by the state or by the leaders of a private company are considered extremely harmful, you can decide to reduce yourself the price requested for one service or another. According to the nature of the case, you will be able to reduce directly on your own your bills (electricity, TV licence, telephone) or draw up false tickets (transports). To succeed, such an action requires an organisation which rallies a large number of users.

- **Refusal of tax**

This does not mean being opposed to the principle of tax itself. The payment of tax is a practical expression of the solidarity that must unite all the members of a same community. But when tax comes to feed injustices, the duty of solidarity towards those who are the victims of these injustices may then imply that you refuse that the money you earn from your daily work serves to finance these injustices. Citizens are responsible for the use the state makes of their taxes. The payment of tax is not a simple administrative formality but a political act. It is in some way approving and voting for the state budget. So that the action can take on a wide popular dimension, it will be best to organise a partial refusal which does not necessarily corresponds to the reality of the sums involved in a state budget. But to demand and to exercise your power as a tax payer, does not consist only of refusing to pay tax, it is also about redistributing it by awarding it to projects that contribute to the construction of justice.

• Unlimited hunger strike

Unlike a limited hunger strike, this does not aim to fight against an injustice or to raise public opinion. Those who undertake it intend to remove injustice. Deciding to undertake such an action is particularly serious. It is absolutely essential that the chosen objective be such that it appears to be reasonable and reachable within the permitted time allowed for a hunger strike. If it were undertaken for an impossible goal to achieve, it would



Voluntary opponents of Genetically Modified Plants - Photo CANVA

only be a gesture of desperate protest itself inducing despair, it would not be a non violent action. Two outcomes only would be possible : either the strikers put an end to their undertaking before the irreversible happens and they must then recognise their failure, or they become the victims of their rashness. Even for a reasonable objective, the hunger striker risks his own life. Several conditions must be met in order to carry an unlimited hunger strike to its conclusion : a number of non violent actions must already have been taken, a certain mobilisation of public opinion must already be achieved, a number of support relays can be organised in different places across the country. Moreo-

ver the strikers must be able to rely on one or several negotiators who can act as intermediaries between themselves and their decision-maker opponents. It is not so much the moral pressure exerted by the hunger strike itself that will make those responsible for the injustice yield, but the social pressure exerted by public opinion mobilised by the hunger strike.

> *"We do not hesitate to call our organisations by the word 'army'. But it is a special army, without any other support than its sincerity, without any uniform than its determination, without any arsenal than its faith, without any money than its conscience, it is an army that advances, but which does not mutilate itself. It is an army that likes singing but not killing. It is an army capable of taking by storm all the bastions of hatred."*
>
> Martin Luther KING, cited by S.B. OATES, *Martin Luther King*, Centurion, 1985, p. 247.

2) Actions of direct intervention

If a non-cooperation action aims to run dry the adversary's sources of power and to remove from him the means by which he maintains his position, non violent intervention is a direct confrontation with the adversary through which you yourself strive to provoke change. You intervene directly in his affairs and you direct your action against his interests. The conflict is carried over to the camp of the adversary, who is put in front of the fait accompli.

• Occupation

We come to occupy the adversary's territory and we behave as if we were at home. This means first of all that we take care not to damage anything and we abstain from any violence be it verbal or physical towards those whose home it is also. But this also means that we can consult all the documents which relate to the current conflict and if need be, we can take them away to study them quietly. If the occupation takes place in the presence of the owner of the place or at least, of his regular tenant, it is not

a breach of the rules of non violent action to organize a tight sit-in on his door step so as to prevent him from being tempted to evade engaging in dialogue.

- **Obstruction**

This consists in holding up the traffic on a public highway or in preventing access to a building by using one's body as an unavoidable obstacle for whoever wants to go in. It is preferable that the obstruction should be created by a large number of people rather than by a few people only. The risks incurred will be lesser and the action will be better understood by public opinion.

- **Civil usurpation**

Rather than abandoning one's position and withdrawing from all activity, it may be more effective to stay in your position and take advantage of any opportunity it may confer to act in the interest of those who suffer injustice and to help them in their struggle. Thus rather than going on strike, a civil servant may act more effectively against the system in place by placing 'his weapons and his baggage' in the service of social struggles. Civil usurpation works from within established structures, but does so in such a way as to divert them from the goal which is assigned to them by the dominant political power and to direct their effectiveness against that dominant power itself. 'Workers' control' as it has been defined in the class struggle context is a form of civil usurpation. Thus, rather than going on strike to request new working rhythms in their company, workers decide themselves to work according to the new rhythms and thus establish a de facto situation.

9
The constructive program

The constructive program consists in organizing, in parallel to institutions and to structures that are being contested and with which we refuse to collaborate, institutions and structures that enable a constructive solution to the problems posed. The implementation of a constructive program must allow those who up to now have been maintained in a situation preventing them from taking up their responsibilities within economic and political structures to take their own destiny in hand and to participate directly in the management of affairs that concern them. The



Parallel-schooling Class - Kosovo 1993

issue is no longer one of asking for the state or the boss to bring a just solution to the current conflict, but instead one of starting to implement the steps that can make such a solution become a reality. The constructive program is the necessary complement to actions of non cooperation. Without it, non violent action

remains the prisoner of its protests and refusals. Thus tax redistribution is a constructive program which gives the refusal to pay tax its true significance. Thus, through the realisation of the constructive program, non violent action derives its substance not only from the very thing it is opposed to, but also from what it proposes and what it achieves.

10
Repression

Non-violent Action challenges the powers that be; it is therefore logical that the powers that be should defend themselves with their own specific means, namely: repression. Contrary to what we may think, though, non-violent movements are better placed than violent movements to confront repression. If I use violence, instead of creating a debate in the public opinion about the injustice I am fighting against, I create it around the violence I perpetrate. The media will not talk about the political motivations behind my action, but about the methods I have used.

In the public eye, I will be the one wreaking destruction, and not only will public opinion accept that I should be the one paying for this destruction, but it will demand that I pay for it. Hence, the established powers will have every opportunity to use repression against me. By using violence, I give the established powers all the justification they needs to use violence. If I keep to non-violence, I inverse the roles: if I use violence, I am in a defensive position, as I need to justify myself to the general public who is accusing me; if I use non-violence, I force the established powers into a defensive position because they needs, in turn, to justify their own violence. In fact, the use of repression against non-violent protesters defending a rightful objective can not be justified. It makes its full brutality manifest. Repression will discredit the ones who take responsibility for it, and will amplify the appeal made to the public by the non-violent movement. This is rein-

forced by the fact that non-violent action creates a public debate around the issue at stake, and that the issue is then presented as being rightful.

Repression is an integral part of a non-violent campaign; it belongs to its natural development. Not only does one have to take repression into account, but one has to count on repression. Within the limits of what is possible, one has to 'play with repression', turning its consequences against the ones who perpetrate it. It is important to evaluate as exactly as possible what degree of repression is to be expected as a reaction to such or such action against the power in place. It is essential to consider the level of repression one can endure, and not to take inconsiderate risks. It



Israeli soldiers opposing non-violent protests against the wall at Bil'in

is then possible to use repression to reinforce the audience of the action one is leading. One has to be able to use the courtroom as a place from which the accused can prosecute the ones accusing them. Repression can then help unveil the reality of the conflict and the real issues. The "normal" path of a non-violent activist goes through prison. This may be the place where he is most effective; so effective that the power in place might choose not

to put him in prison, or not to keep him there. This will be frustrating for the activist. And for his humility...

The greater the number of people who break the law, the more the movement will be able to endure repression. Again, number is a decisive factor in power. There is a level of saturation of political prisons, at which the government can not govern in all confidence. The more democratic the country, the lower this level is. The non-violent quality of the prisoners' action also lowers this level. If a significant proportion of citizens are ready to go to prison; acting with rightful means for a rightful cause, the people becomes stronger than the government.

"The only course open to you, Mr Judge, is (...) either to resign your post or inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. "

GANDHI, *All men are brothers*, Gallimard, 1969, pp. 373-374.

Activists who will endure financial sanctions, who will lose their job, or who will find themselves in prison have to be able to count on the active solidarity of the whole of the movement. It is also necessary that these militants and their families should be able to enjoy a support adapted to their needs.

A non-violent struggle movement can not only fight against the oppression of the law, it has to fight also against unlawful repression. Opponents of the resistance movement will not always be satisfied by the measures taken by the authorities, and will organize themselves to fight it directly. In fact the government itself or people close to it can also help these forms of retaliation or even organize them. One of the advantages of repression is that it does not hide itself, it operates in broad daylight; but the disadvantage of retaliation is that it operates under masks, and in the shadows. This is why this can be very dangerous for the movement and can severely test its determination and capacity to resist.

The moment where repression is at its toughest is the decisive

moment for the future of the struggle. The movement cannot overcome repression, if it wavers and cannot come to life again, then it is as good as dead. On the other hand, if the movement can resist the forces of repression, then it is very close to victory. Hence, if repression cannot break the movement, the power in place will have no other choice than to negotiate a solution to the conflict.

11
Final negotiations

Negotiations, even at a time when one could hope they will lead to an agreement, are still a power struggle, and should not be construed as a dialogue built on mutual trust. It is important to 'keep one's guard up', and not to stop acting. One should not say or do anything that would demobilize activists and public opinion. It would be then extremely difficult to mobilize them again. Nothing would be more hurtful then to consider victory as gained too soon. An offer of negotiation could be a trap set in order to undermine activists' determination. Therefore it is extremely important to stay on guard. Maybe it will be necessary to accept a compromise that would allow the adversary to save face. But one should not give away anything essential in order to obtain such a compromise. One can not put on an equal footing, those who have suffered injustice and those who are responsible for it. It is important that the victory of the movement should be tangible. Then, the celebrations can begin...

"Non-violence is the most inoffensive and efficient way to put forward the political and economical rights of those who are oppressed and exploited."

GANDHI, *All men are brothers*, Gallimard, 1969, p. 161.

12
Taking power from the base

Once the objective is reached, victory is likely to give hope to those who, across the country, find themselves in unjust situations similar to the situation which caused the conflict which just ended. This conflict can then become an example and give momentum to other popular struggles for citizens who could de-



Lech Walesa, leader of Solidarnosc in Poland

cide to denounce the top-down power structure, and start exercising their own power. Through these struggles, they will learn and experience the management of their own affairs; they will learn about self-management.

> *"True democracy will not come through the taking of power by a few, but from the power that all will be able to oppose to the abuses of power."*
>
> GANDHI, *All men are brothers*, Gallimard, 1969, p. 239.

13
Political organisation

This increase in struggles creates the conditions for the people to gather their forces within a political organisation whose aim is no longer just to fight against the power in place, but to use this power to satisfy the interest of the majority, instead of the ruling class. A well organised revolution starts from within, but should also end with the taking and the exercise of political power ! It is true to say that non-violence leads us to denounce the State as the institution which has the monopoly of legitimate violence, but non-violent struggle should not be understood as a never-ending struggle against state abuses. When the state itself becomes an abuse, it is important to end its life. It is essential for non-violence to overcome the stage of protest and to enter the stage of management.

Again, non-violence should create a vision of an alternative to state-run society, and make that vision a reality. At this juncture, the non-violent project meets the self-management project. The organisation behind this project should itself be self-managed, and therefore it should not reproduce the traditional structures of political parties which sustain state-like projects and are themselves organised according to a state-like structure.

14
Taking political power

Two cases are possible in order to win political power. One is through election, the other through insurrection. In a society democratic enough to allow a true expression of the universal right to vote, elections are the normal way to come to power, for an organization that has conquered the political majority. In this

case, change of power would pave the way for a true alternative.

In a country where the democratic path is blocked, a political movement that embodies the people's hope and determination will be forced to take another way to attain the power which is its by right. It will then have to organize a country-wide and systematic civil disobedience campaign, and launch an appeal to pacific insurrection. Even before they gain power, the leaders of the resistance movement can be considered as the rightful owners of the legitimate power in the country, and have every right to constitute a parallel and provisional government. Caught in the web of a country-wide resistance, the still legal government will soon have to admit that it can not exert any control. It will then have, whether it likes it or not, to give up its place.

The change brought about by the mere fact of the accession to power of women and men inspired by non-violence would, evidently, be quite an event. The political landscape of the country would be transformed. However, these reforms could not be achieved from one day to the next. When one talks about the non-violent management of a society, it is important not to imagine forthwith a society where violence would not be present and where all citizens would live in perfect harmony together. It is important instead to consider reality with all its constituent elements, and to attempt to envisage their resolution. One shouldn't start with the ideal of non-violence and then imagine its application in reality, one should instead go from reality towards the ideal of non-violence.

15
Permanent revolution

Revolution does not end when political power is won. This moment is only one of the moments in a never–ending revolution. Indeed, revolution is permanent. Instead of a representative de-

mocracy, in which elected representatives exercise all decision-making powers, its aim is to establish, a participative democracy in which all citizens can participate to the decision making process, via a widespread devolution of power. This implies that the citizens have to organize themselves, in order to put in place a real system of checks and balances, which can put the elected personnel under public scrutiny.

The Movement for a Non-violent Alternative

The MAN is a federation of local groups which aims to promote non-violence and its specific contribution in the everyday life, education and social and political actions.

MAN is engaged in promoting Civilian Peace intervention (CPI). Through the coordination of the French Committee CPI, it supports nonviolent third party intervention, as a mean to lessen violence and create the conditions for a political solution to conflict. MAN is working closely with organisations that send volunteers on international civilian peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Kosovo, Indonesia and Philippines.

MAN launched, with other partners, a European campaign for an international civilian intervention force in Israel and Palestine. In 2003 a mission went in Israeli and Palestine to reinforce the partnership with local associations. In 2006, a training on nonviolence, dialogue and conflict resolution was organized in Lyon with 2 Palestinian organisations and 2 Israeli organisation.

At a local level, MAN groups are connected with the social and solidarity movements (alterglobalization, antinuclear, peace movements, undocumented immigrant ...).

Since 2001, several Training Institutes (IFMAN) were created. They proposes trainings on conflict management both to specific institutions and a wider public. The IFMANs work with teachers, social workers, associations, and with individuals interested in everyday life conflict management (support to parentality, initiation to nonviolent communication). Thanks to its experience in training, MAN started to work on the issue of insecurity and urban violences, by producing research and making proposals. In front of the current economical violences, MAN also started to analyse and question the issue of sustainable decrease (negative growth).

Partnership
MAN is member of Non-violence XXI and the French coordination for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (UN 2001-2010).
It is also member of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) and actively participating in the European Network for Civil Peace Services (EN.CPS).

The momentum of non-violence in action finds expression in premeditated stages taking their place progressively in time, according to the chosen objective. This text describes this gradual unfolding of actions, this progressive crescendo, orchestrated according to this objective.

The author



French writer and philosopher, founder of the Movement for a Non-violent Alternative (MAN) in France. He was also Director of Studies at the Research Institute on Conflict Resolutionl (IRNC, http://www.irnc.org).

Jean-Marie Muller has facilitated many non-violent training sessions in several countries at the invitation of movements for human and people rights. He has published several books that are recognized as standard reference works on non-violence. Several were translated in English and other language.
Last publication : *Dictionnaire de la non-violence* (Les Éditions du Relié Poche).

This text was first made as in the context of a presentation to training sessions in non-violence organised by Nova in Amman (Oct.-Nov. 2006) which brought together more than 30 non-violent leaders from Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. This text has been translated into Arabic, English, Italian, Spanish and Catalan.

Published in partnership with NOVA - No Violència Activa
Catalonia - www.nova.cat

Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente
114 rue de Vaugirard
F75006 PARIS
+33 (0)1 45 44 48 25
man@nonviolence.fr
http://www.nonviolence.fr

Les Éditions du MAN
Octobre 2007 - 6 €