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A Note on Contemporary Violence

What is Non-Violent Direct Action?

Mukai Kou

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1970

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cial residence of Prime Minister, relief activities for those who arrested in anti-war and/or reclaim the street sound demo, distributing an appeal for refusal to send troops at the residences of SDF personnel, and organizing sound demonstration in Nagoya.

Contents

To comrades abroad,	5
I. "VIOLENCE" AND "NON-VIOLENCE"	7
A. What is Non-Violence?	7
B. What is Violence?	9
II. PSEUDO-NON-VIOLENCE OF THE SYSTEM, NATURAL NON-VIOLENCE OF THE PEOPLE	10
A. Popular Non-Violence and the Popular View of Violence	10
B. The Pseudo-Non-Violent System(?)	11
III. CHANGING THE NATURE AND THE METH- ODS OF OUR STRUGGLE	12
A. The People, The Rulers	12
B. Armed Struggle and the People	14
IV. DIRECT ACTION AND PRODUCTIVE WORK	16
A. What is Direct Action?	16
B. Direct Action and Self-Management	17
V. WHAT IS NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION?	18
A. Opposing Everything Which is "Pseudo"	18
B. Non-Violent Direct Action in Practice: 6 Ways of Interpretation	19
VI. WHY NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION?	22
A. Armed Struggle? or Non-Violent Direct Ac- tion?	22
B. Throw Out the Old Struggle Concepts, Initi- ate a New Fighting Technique	24
Manifesto of WRI-JAPAN	25
Duties of Members	26
The History of WRI	28

Since last year the international office has moved from London to Brussels.

As for Japan, although the WRI council-member Ishiga Osamu's refusal to be conscripted was well known, not until 1953, thanks to the efforts of the late Yamaga Taiji, international secretary of the Japan Anarchist Federation, was WRI-JAPAN formally established. Activities were concentrated on the movement to ban nuclear weapons. When the 10th International Conference was convened in India in 1960, WRI-JAPAN sent a representative for the first time. After the death of Yamaga, the secretaryship of the movement was taken over first by Endo Sakan, then Mukai Kou, and a magazine 'Senso Teikosha' (War Resister) which ran for 15 issues was started. Re-invigorated by the start of the Vietnam War, the struggle over the renewal of the Japan-US Joint Security Treaty in 1970, and the arrival of the anti-nuclear sailing ship 'FRI' in 1974, our activities got under way again, and a new magazine, 'Non-Violent Direct Action' was published. After ten issues the name was changed to 'WRI NEWSLETTER' (a monthly), and in that name it continues to be published.

WRI News Letter changed its name to "Non-Violent Direct Action" and continued till issue 192, 1994. After the final issue, WRI-Japan members started "KURO : La Nigreco" whose final 10th issue was in memory of Kou Mukai. Although organized activities of WRI-Japan fade away, members of WRI-Japan in Tokyo and Nagoya still continue their anti-war activities in collaboration with non-sect groups. To note a few examples, supporting international solidarity movement for Palestine, participating in monthly protest action in front of the Israel Embassy, participating in anti-authoritarian non-sect bloc of anti-war mass demonstration in front of U.S. Embassy and offi-

others to the notice of as many people as possible, I will help create new members and supporters.

Finally, the special characteristics of WRI-JAPAN are as follows: first, “anti-war”, “anti-authority”, and “individual resolve and responsibility”; second, “federated activities” and “solidarity with and help for all other resisters”; third, “non-violent direct action”; and fourth, “internationalism”.

The modest activities of WRI-JAPAN, linked with and strengthened by mutual ties with WRI groups in other countries in an “invisible federation”, thus come to form one wing of a worldwide movement. This conviction spurs my vigilance to the activities and appeals of WRI comrades in other parts of the world, and increases my efforts to respond to them in whatever ways are available to me say, this does not imply any duties towards WRI other than your own personal activity. This is a fundamental principle of WRI-JAPAN.

The History of WRI

WRI(pronounced “uri” in Japanese) stands for War Resisters’ International. Soon after the World War 1, people from several European countries who had been persecuted during the war for their anti-military activities gathered in Holland. The delegations from Britain, France, Germany and Holland were the prime movers, and the result was the formation of a new international organization called “Paco” (Esperanto for “Peace”). One of the leading spirits, Ranham Brown was elected as representative.

In March 1923 the organization was revamped and given a new name: WRI. At the same time, the office moved to England, where, two years later, the first international conference was held in the town of Hoddesdon. 90 delegates came from all over the world to take part, and a council was elected. Meetings have been held regularly at three-year intervals ever since, and the most recent, held last year (1975) in Amsterdam, was the 15th.

To comrades abroad,

This is a digest of the first part of an article entitled ‘A Note on Contemporary Violence’. The original version was written in June 1970 and serialized in the paper ‘Jiyu Rengou’ (Free Federation), put out by the Free Federation Group in Osaka from June through September of 1970.

Kou Mukai, who edited and published the paper, is also a secretary of WRI-JAPAN, a poet, an esperantist, and active in the anarchist movement in Japan. He died on August 6th, 2003. The 83 years old man ended his life peacefully. His coffin was covered with the anarchist black flag and took off to the cremation with a revolutionary song singing by his younger comrades.

“A Note on Contemporary Violence” is the essence of Kou Mukai’s idea. Among the articles and books written by Japanese anarchists after the World War II, it has enjoyed a wide circulation among activists (not among scholars). Also this text has always been controversial. The factions oriented toward revolutionary warfare and/or direct confrontations have mocked this text and the non-violent moralists have condemned it as “deviant” because it does not exclude the counter-violence against authorities. However, the text has continuously attracted new readers, with WRI-Japan participating in the movement against Vietnam War in 70s and anti-nuclear movement, jail solidarity for eastern Asia anti-Japan armed front, and movement against emperor system in 80s.

Since the circumstances which demonstrated the inevitable confrontation between the state and us — that is, 9.11 suicide attack in 2001 and situations after air strikes in Afghanistan — Mukai published the new edition of this pamphlet early in 2003, which in consequence become his last message and have embraced by non-sect activists who have participated in the movement against Iraqi invasion. Although the factions of revolu-

tionary warfare and/or direct confrontationists have become fewer and fewer and factions of Marxists which cannot stop the inter-factional fighting have lost their power, still there is authoritarian tendency towards unification and spread a perversion of “unification to nonviolence without anti-authoritarian ideas” on the movement against Iraq invasion. “A Note on Contemporary Violence” has heartily read by those who have questioned such a tendency.

Unfortunately this translation is not of the new edition. Wat Tyler of the ‘Libero International’ Editorial Collective, which already ceased its activities, translated an edition of early 80s selectively. However, in terms of resonance with its essence, we do not think to modify the translation.

We are on the side of resistance, whether it is nonviolent or violent, against those who wage war, those who use power.

On the basis of that, we claim boldly non-violent direct action.

For us, the non-violent direct action is not only a mode of expression of resistance; it is also our watchword to recognize and visualize our own autonomous lives, with being up against the state and capital which ‘legally’ loot people’s lives, and pseudo non-violent system, that is representative democracy, which forms the state and capital.

Non-violent direct action is nothing special just as mutual aid. It is a self-generating wisdom for people being exposed in power to live and fight without hierarchy.

Non-Violent Direct Action — For reclaiming our confederated free society.

WRI-Japan
2005.3.30

long to WRI, but rather, in their actions, are WRI. Their responsibilities and duties towards WRI, therefore, consist solely in their voluntary fulfilment of their responsibilities and duties towards themselves. Needless to say, WRI places no obligations upon them whatsoever in the form of duties or activities. This assumption underlies the paragraphs which follow.

My duty as a WRI member consists, firstly, in supporting all war resistance activities; anti-Self Defence Force, anti-US military base activities; together with all anti-authoritarian activities that relate to or act in concert with the above — and to cooperate concretely with them in whatever ways are available to me.

Such activities, because of the authoritarian tendencies inherent in the state and its kindred organizations, often become split, and sometime find themselves in opposition to each other. In order to bridge the gaps between them, WRI takes upon itself the responsibility of maintaining positive contacts with activities of all kinds promoting exchange of information, joint actions, cooperation based upon an agreed division of tasks, and mutual support, thus becoming the medium for a free federation.

Secondly, it is my duty to work for the restoration of freedom to all those draft evaders, anti-war activists, and others who, by cause of their opposition to state power, have been arrested, detained, imprisoned, punished or exiled. To that end, either alone or by joining existing relief organizations, I will promote concrete and specific relief activities.

Thirdly, I will put into practice and develop non-violent direct action, incorporating it as a source of strength for my daily life. The first step in this process should be to deliberately set about grasping anew the almost-forgotten fact that non-violent direct action = strength, by forming research groups, holding meetings and training seminars, conducting propaganda activities and so on. Finally, by bringing WRI’s magazine “CHOKUSETSU KODO”(DIRECT ACTION) and

Wars are caused by: aggressive and competitive economic organizations; discrimination based upon social class, race, nation, religion or ideology; and, particularly, the generally-held mistaken conception of the state.

Therefore, at the same time as rejecting war itself, I shall do all in my power to eliminate the cause of war, towards the end of a self-managed society based on mutual aid.

1. The basis for all my practical activities shall be non-violent direct action.

War between states is both the ultimate manifestation of violence, and a means of oppressing the common people, adopted by authority as a last resort for maintaining itself in power, I believe that if, in the course of the struggle against authority, the cause of the people should happen to gain a victory, to the extent that victory has been brought about by violence, the result can only be the spawning of a new authoritarian apparatus. History teaches us that no genuine freedom or liberation for the people can be sought in that direction, I therefore reaffirm my belief that, in order to break the vicious circle of violence, there is no path but that of non-violent direct action.

If at any time, I, in any of my actions consciously or otherwise contravene any of the above three pledges, I shall automatically lose my qualifications for membership of WRI, and consent to having my name removed from its register. Yet, even at that time, I shall remain a supporter of WRI, and will devote my best efforts towards remedying things and thus becoming a full member once more.

Duties of Members

WRI-Japan's real strength lies in the self-awareness of each individual as acting independently in the fulfilment of his or her own responsibilities. Accordingly individuals do not be-

I. "VIOLENCE" AND "NON-VIOLENCE"

A. What is Non-Violence?

(1) When someone suddenly comes up and punches you, you get ready to defend yourself, "What is the game?!" And if the other person doesn't leave off, you hit them back.

A response on this level is a pretty fundamental one, not requiring any particular conscious choice. In other words, responding to violence with violence is a customary reaction.

(2) "Non-resistance", in a situation like this, would involve abandoning yourself to being beaten—you don't run away, nor do you try to defend yourself. You just stand there (or lie there), relying on inoffensiveness as a way to handle the violence.

In so doing, you are not offering any action in direct response to the other person, What action there is, is merely self-restraint; the effort to resist the urge to offer violence in return. It is a self-directed expression of your own conscious will; it is not a response.

(3) Is the Christian doctrine of "offering the other cheek" then really advocating "non-resistance"?

I certainly do not believe so, because, in the first place, the act of "offering" your other cheek constitutes a direct response to your assailant. You make yourself an easy target, designating your other cheek, for the benefit of the other person, as a "place to be hit". By "offering" that cheek, you are really giving him or her an incentive, saying "hit me please!" By successively offering the left, then the right, then the left, you end up going beyond your attacker's original intentions. This is not non-resistance.

If we then compare this with a violent response, we can make the following observations:

First, instead of repaying violence with violence, you repay it by allowing yourself to be hit. Instead of a one way flow from the assailant — the person who does the hitting — to the victim—

the person who gets hit, it is, rather, quite an equal relationship; just as much as that which exists when a blow is returned for a blow.

Second, when the assailant becomes aware that he is obliged to go on hitting indefinitely, he must inevitably ponder upon the meaning behind his blows in order to do so.

Third, the victim must offer his or her self up to be hit in direct proportion to the fierceness and the duration of the blows.

Fourth, the other person can't go on hitting you forever. The futility, the weight of such a burden would be so unbearable, so fearful, that they would have to give up in the end. It would amount to hitting one's self at the same time.

(4). Seen from this angle, non-violence is certainly not the same thing as non-resistance. It allows one to respond, but without any resort to violence. Non-violence, while different from physical coercion, is still a kind of coercion.

In other words, non-violence embodies, as a response to external, physical force, a force which originates in the internal, spiritual sphere therefore, non-violence goes beyond a mere ethical stand, or one based on faith.

Precisely because of its strength, for example, it is often described as "verbal violence", distinguishable only by the lack of physical force.

(5). "Life" is sustained by a mysterious source of energy impossible for us to comprehend clearly. Let us call it, for the moment, the "life force". This "force" is manifested as the energy which produces and governs our approaches to external phenomena.

"Force" is generally manifested on two levels: "physical force" and "spiritual force" or, "violence" and "non-violence". In so far as they constitute the "life force", there is no contradiction and no clash between these two, The "life force" embraces both and turns them into one.

Consequently, what the world generally refers to as "violence" is only truly so when one side of the "life force" has been

ins", "peaceful demonstrations" and so on. Such "pre-existing concepts of non-violence" represent the opposite side of the coin to those of "violence" and often prevent the emergence of new ideas concerning the nature of struggle. Non-violent direct action, then, presents today an opportunity for changing the nature and dimension of the struggle from one which is fought on the authorities' terms to one which is decided by the people. Even more crucial, by replacing the old concepts of struggle with a new fighting technique, closely linked with the lives of the people, non-violent direct action provides a rich vein of guerilla activity, capable of generating any number of new and varied forms of struggle.

In that event, I am sure, we will one day wake up and look around us, and find that that very struggle itself actually embodies the future society which we have envisaged, and that we have already taken the first step towards its creation.

Manifesto of WRI-JAPAN

1. I will not support war in any form.

Accordingly I resolve never to accept any form of military rank; nor to enter any employment concerning to the manufacture or handling of arms or other military materials.

Further, I refuse to assist or to play any direct role in the pursual of way by the state. To this end, I shall aid those who are struggling to be free from war and conscription, adding my efforts to theirs to hasten the attainment of that end.

1. I will act as far as I am able to eliminate the causes of war.

for non-violent response, it provides the basis for a new and extraordinarily creative, multi-faceted form of struggle.

B. Throw Out the Old Struggle Concepts, Initiate a New Fighting Technique

(34). However, whether resistance through non-violent direct action against the mighty edifice of state power would really be able to effectively marshal the power of the people behind it is a question which belongs to the future. In order that this may be so, the “new and extra-ordinarily creative form of struggle” mentioned above must be forged in the course of experiments quite free of the trammels of pre-existing concepts of “violence” and “non-violence”. Direct action, as already said, is not only “productive work”, but also “creative activity”, and in that function it has great significance here.

The first task must be to smash pre-existing concepts of struggle and replace them with entirely new ones. With this development, we will have gone beyond mere imitative response towards realising the “absolute power of the people”. By “going beyond mere imitative response”, I mean, for example, being able to draw the enemy into a battlefield of our own choosing, and there, presumably, to force him to fight. Once this view is appreciated, it may be understood that the outcome of a struggle will no longer be decided by the relative quality of the weapons or the numbers of soldiers, By reversing the usual process whereby we were drawn into the enemy’s chosen arena, the form of the struggle too can be converted into a non-violent one which we ourselves have brought into being. In other words, whoever is able to lure their opponent into their own arena decides the form of the struggle to be waged, and that is where “creative struggle” comes into play.

Generally speaking, we are often too meticulous about the expression “non-violence”, with the result that “direct action” accordingly comes to be construed as “non-resistance”, “sit-

over-emphasized at the expense of the other, which is therefore obviated. The same applies to non-violence, when used to imply force.

B. What is Violence?

(6). The characteristics which justify the appellation of “violence” can be defined as follows:

- The application of physical pressure;
- A deliberate intension to cause injury;
-

The enforcement of one’s own position, or, the denial of another’s existence, or, the rejection of dialogue.

Violence which entails all three of these prerequisites, it should be kept in mind, is manifested most clearly in “one-to-one” relationships, in other words, individual violence. The essential elements of violence, therefore, must be understood as rooted first of all in the individual.

(7). “Violence” is truly violence only when all three of the preceding characteristics are present. Should even one of them be missing, an action may be violent, but it does not constitute true violence. Or rather, “violent”, and what is generally considered to be its complete opposite, “non-violent” are purely relative. Representing a continuum on which their point of junction is indistinguishable, because both represent force.

(8). Hence, to put it in the way least likely to be misunderstood, the “problem” of violence, as long as it is seen in terms of one-to-one, individual violence, does not present any problems for us after all

Why? Because individual violence inflicted without legitimate reason is perverse and anti-social. The assailant would find himself one against many, without support or sympathy, consequently deprived of the very means of existence.

He, therefore, can only keep up his attack for a short time, whereas we, who are many, are strong and can hold out for much longer. In short, we can always overcome such violence.

Viewed in this way, individual violence, however powerfully brought to bear, may be seen to be no more than a temporary affair, doomed from the start to failure. Which means that individual violence, as such, may be readily handled within society, and need not pose any particular problem for us here.

II. PSEUDO-NON-VIOLENCE OF THE SYSTEM, NATURAL NON-VIOLENCE OF THE PEOPLE

A. Popular Non-Violence and the Popular View of Violence

(9) “Daily life”: making a home with the people you love, bringing up children, living and laughing together; producing and creating the things you need; and, working every day. Need I go on? Since people first walked the earth, this has been the stuff of history, repeated times beyond number. These things come to us so naturally that to refer to them as “history” seems extravagant. What we have each of us expressed in living that history is — peace; or, more succinctly, the natural non-violence of us, the people.

(10). But, precisely because we ourselves do not have any clear awareness of our own history, its living meaning has been always taken over and distorted by authority.

What we have been taught in the name of “history”, therefore, is an account crammed full with stories of conquest and subjugation, nation-states and wars, Whatever the period, the “heroes” who strut upon the stage of history are always the same handful of rulers accompanied by their acolytes. The people, meanwhile, however countless, are nowhere to be found.

As for the former, even supposing that its protagonists should make some headway, and win over a small number of recruits to its policy of arming the people, they would have great difficulty in overcoming the mass-consumption “anti-violence” campaigns which the authorities are constantly unleashing. The armed struggle method would also, as I have said before, come up against and eventually fall foul of the natural propensity toward non-violence that forms the unifying element in the lives of the ordinary people. Even should the armed fighters succeed in overthrowing the authorities, the effect would be no more than that of a coup d’etat; they would be caught up in the “vicious circle of violence”, and “liberation” for the people would be nothing beyond a catchy slogan.

(33). Non-violent direct action would have to take on the power of state violence just as would armed struggle, but from a quite different standpoint. In a last-ditch struggle, faced with the need to defend ourselves, we would frequently be drawn, like it or not, into a violent response. For example, should truncheon-wielding riot police get past our barricades and come amongst us with arms flying, we would have no choice but to defend ourselves.

While that may appear at first sight to be essentially no different from violent struggle, in fact it points the way towards the restoration of non-violence and the recovery of direct action as expressed in productive work. It is, to put it another way, “pseudo” violence pure and simple: whereas the former is affirmative, and can only end in escalation, the latter is conditional, limited to a specific situation, always carried out in the name of non-violence, and ultimately, negative.

In other words, this violent response, unlike the violent struggle *per se*, is not something immutable, but just one aspect of a guerilla-type movement that is capable of expressing itself in any number of ways. For guerilla warfare is not confined to violent methods; precisely because of its capacity

daily lives consist in securing by our own efforts, a place in which to engage in production, together with the necessary implements and raw materials, followed by the production and equal distribution of the products.

The fact that the march continued grimly on its way in the face of obstruction and intimidation, arrests and imprisonment indicated the independence and autonomy of every individual participant, each of whom approached it upon his or her own personal responsibility. Here, then, is convincing proof that social order, as far as the people are concerned, is not the outcome of rule from above, but is a spontaneous function of the people themselves.

From this we may conclude that direct action, when linked with the non-violence which is a natural attribute of the people, is simultaneously a very active and creative force.

VI. WHY NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION?

A. Armed Struggle? or Non-Violent Direct Action?

(32). Authority, beyond a shadow of a doubt, will never give way to our demands for self-management, the positive embodiment of the natural non-violence of the people. Since such a demand would obviously pull away the carpet from under their feet, our rulers would prefer to discard the mask of pseudo-non-violence which they have worn for so long, and roll out the engines of violence with which to crush us. We would then be forced to choose the method of the struggle upon which we must stake our lives:

Armed struggle aimed at overthrowing the power-holders and seizing power for ourselves ; or Non-violent direct action aimed at the pseudo-non-violent system,

And every page of that history is strained red with blood shed through violence, for no other reason than the fact that this history is the history of the rulers, the men in power.

A history of this kind is obviously at odds with the daily lives of us the people. And yet, for some reason, we have allowed ourselves to be made to think of this history — the history of violence brought to bear by those in power — as our own history, the real history of the people remaining elusive.

Consequently, the difficulty we have in shaking off the view of violence held by our rulers — “The ultimate solution to every problem is, of course, the application of violence” — is due largely to this concept of history.

B. The Pseudo-Non-Violent System(?)

(11). When authority chooses to brandish openly its capacity for violence — such as waging war — the upshot is always the disruption and depreciation of the people’s productive work. But it is not the daily life of the people alone that is thrown into crisis by war. The survival of the ruling elite itself, founded upon appropriation of the fruits of the people’s productive work, is also put into jeopardy. Here we can see quite clearly the truth of the political dictum that “however authoritarian a state may be, in order to maintain itself in power it must exercise its day-to-day control over the people through non-violent means”, However, we ourselves have not yet woken up to the fact that the ruling elite’s power is based upon our own everyday non-violence; to such an extent is that non-violence an instinctive, fundamental attribute of the people. And so, we are equally unaware of the significance as far as our rulers are concerned of this daily life which we have created. For this very reason, our rulers have been able to replace reality with the fiction that “thanks to their rule, social order is maintained, and the daily lives of the people guaranteed”.

(12). Authority, in the last analysis, depends upon the non-violence which is an everyday feature of the people's lives. On the contrary, however, it equates it with the "order" brought about as a result of its rule. Furthermore, it draws us into that rule, creating a political structure which we acknowledge, endorse, and participate in. At the same time, it retains monopoly control over the various agencies of violence — police, courts, the army, etc. — under the pretext of preserving social order.

In this way, ruling elites today have transformed their monopoly over the exercise of violence into "pseudo-non-violence". and made it the basis of a system to which they have applied the appellation of the "democratic state" In other words, the non-violence which is a natural attribute of our daily lives has been converted into a daily routine within the pseudo-non-violent structure of the modern state. Accordingly, the daily life of the people has come to depend utterly upon the whims of authority, while at the same time the pseudo-non-violent state perfects its methods of control.

III. CHANGING THE NATURE AND THE METHODS OF OUR STRUGGLE

A. The People, The Rulers

(13) The distinction between we the people and our rulers is essentially the fact that the weapons with which we might resist them have all been taken away from us, while, on the other hand, they invariably have at their disposal powerful weapons and troops, over which they jealously preserve their monopoly. Again, we ourselves in our daily lives have no essential cause to take up arms, our rulers perceive a constant need for armaments for the purpose of self-protection. For they can keep themselves in power only by the threat of, and ultimately the exercise of violence. And even when the people offer no resis-

(29). Fourthly, it disavowed all the indirect methods that go by the name of "politics", in favour of the simple act of walking to the sea-shore. Making salt from sea-water was the most natural way of fulfilling a need, quick and to the point. And, since the people could not appeal to the authorities to produce the salt for them, it was the only way, (There may well have been more roundabout methods, but these would have been less certain of success, and probably less satisfying too).

Even assuming that, by trusting in political methods, the people had managed to have the laws concerning assembly and the salt monopoly relaxed; nevertheless, the political system would still act as an intermediary between the producer and his/her product imposing expenses and demanding commissions, and after that nothing would be possible without going through some political agency or other; they would be like puppets on a string. Do we really need such circuitous methods, when all we want is to enjoy the products of our own labour?

Direct action, therefore, exposes both the irrelevance of politics as an intervening agency, and its fundamentally exploitative character.

(30). Fifthly, the Salt March was a form of struggle intimately linked with the peasants' way of life — it was their life, for it centered upon the act of producing the salt, thus demonstrating the power that lay within them. The participants in the march knew this intuitively.

The power of the people, therefore, lies not in the capacity to deprive others of what is theirs, but in production, and in the utilization of the fruits of their labours; and the exercise of that power consists in securing the freedom to produce, in the teeth of all impediments.

Direct action thus demonstrates how the exercise of force can serve the purpose of protecting your livelihood.

(31). Finally, the march showed the relationship between production and everyday life, and demonstrated the possibility of independent management of one's day to day affairs. Our

took to the streets as the most natural way of demanding what was rightfully theirs. They needed salt, so they, quite properly, produced it themselves from the abundant waters of the ocean. The fact that the action harmed no-one, offended no-one, threw the criminal violence of the authorities into even sharper relief, dealing a blow against their already unwanted presence. By a simple act of production, the relationship between the authorities and the people — the producers and the parasites that feed off them — was laid bare. At the same time, by demonstrating the connection between direct action and productive work, the real nature of pseudo-production was exposed.

(27). Secondly, the people acted on their own responsibility. Those who took part in the Salt March did so consciously on the basis of their own personal need. They showed their willingness to undergo whatever punishments were inflicted upon them for infringing the law or taking part in the demonstration. In other words, they had reached a point where to entrust the job to another person was no longer conceivable. Knowing they would most probably be arrested and thrown into gaol, they went anyway. This was direct action: rooted in the autonomy and clearly-acknowledged personal responsibility of every individual involved.

(28). Thirdly, it was an act that went beyond the questions of legality: they registered their protest by taking part in the march. Moreover, the act of producing the salt in response to personally-felt need made it a legitimate one, regardless of the legal position. The law, characteristically, treated the march as an offence. By exacting punishment for what was clearly a legitimate act, however, the evils of the law itself were exposed. To the extent that the rule of law is enforced, therefore, direct action attests to its illegitimacy, and helps it to dig its own grave. For the people, the question whether an action is legal or illegal is no more than a tactical consideration. Consequently, direct action transcends the laws and regulations imposed by authority.

tance, our rulers, terrified by the prospect of losing their sway, keep the people under perpetually hostile scrutiny.

(14). Nevertheless, history indicates clearly that the people, though always overwhelmingly inferior in force of arms, have, little by little, effected improvements in our relationship vis-à-vis our rulers.

The armed might of our rulers, thanks to advances in organizational techniques and the rapid progress of science, has multiplied phenomenally, a development which, from time to time, has been conclusively demonstrated both domestically and externally.

Be that as it may, the situation of the people, and our treatment at the hands of our rulers, have gradually improved. Authority has been forced to switch from the “politics of terror” to “democratic politics”, making skilful use of “appeasement” and “compromise” and tossing out “bait” for us to nibble at,

That is to say, by forming their own organizations and creating mutual ties between them, the people have been able to make manifest their determination through petitions, appeals, entreaties, flight, evacuation, sabotage, and on a higher level, demonstrations, uprisings (usually directed against government offices), burning of official records, strikes and so on — by the non-violent methods inherent in them; in other words, direct action. And though every enterprise might appear to end in failure, their position has in fact little by little improved.

(15). By the 19th century, the emergence of the socialist movement had given rise to a new technique of fighting which placed the people themselves in a more active role: guerilla warfare (or, as it is sometimes called, “partisan” or “resistance” warfare). This new technique took up the lessons and the heritage of the peasant uprisings and religious wars of the past, and combined them with the capacity for direct action inherent in the people. Refined over the years, it came to show its effectiveness as a technique which only the people could employ; hence a method of fighting which belonged to the people.

In other words, the formation of the working class, accelerated by the drift from the countryside to the cities, brought about a qualitative change in both the form and the subject of struggle, and gave birth to the guerilla, who now emerged as the mainstay of a new kind of people's liberation war. In response to the authorities' rapidly-increasing sophistication in weapons and techniques, both the shape and the dimension of warfare hitherto were transformed. The effect was to overturn all pre-existing concepts of warfare, according to which the people were forced to fight in an area specified by the authorities, and substitute for them "people's war", which drew the forces of authority themselves into the people's net. Moreover, the effectiveness of this new fighting method was demonstrated in the fact that it could not be imitated by the authorities, but was the exclusive possession of the people.

B. Armed Struggle and the People

(16). On the other hand, it is an inescapable fact that guerilla warfare, as a fighting technique, escalates the general level of violence, and after a certain point comes to focus exclusively upon military victory. In other words, violence exercised by an organized body of individuals always contains the germs of authoritarianism, so that a struggle which is aimed at overthrowing authority can actually create authority within the very apparatus set up to effect its overthrow. In short, authority is born out of the apparatus of violence; and that authority ensnares anew the people whose freedom was the original objective of the struggle. Guerilla warfare, through its resort to violence, after a certain point is transformed from "people's war" into its exact opposite: "war against the people".

(17). With the above summary of the experience of guerilla warfare in modern times in mind, the following questions may be posed:

the efforts of authority — is itself a fundamental blow at the power of the state and of capital.

B. Non-Violent Direct Action in Practice: 6 Ways of Interpretation

(25). The meaning of "non-violent direct action" can be made clearer by looking at a concrete example of it in practice: Gandhi's "Salt March" and the various implications which we can draw from it.

The Salt March, called by Gandhi in 1930 as a protest against the British colonial authorities' salt monopoly which forbade the Indian peasants from producing or possessing salt, was a perfect example of Gandhi's "satyagraha", or non-violent struggle. To draw attention to India's grievances, he led a huge procession of peasants through the Indian countryside to the seashore 241 miles away, where they collected salt, thus breaking the law. The British reacted with violence, arresting more than a hundred thousand people, yet peasants continued to flock to join the demonstration. Non-cooperation went into action across the country, until the British were forced to release arrested leaders of the Indian National Congress for negotiations, and to agree to Gandhi's request for an interview. It was unprecedented in the history of the British Empire.

The significance of the Salt March was that, through its defiance of the Salt Monopoly Law, it was able to draw the authorities into using violence, thus exposing them for what they were; moreover, in response to what could now be seen as the pseudo-non-violent state, it counterposed genuine non-violence expressed through direct action. In other words, it symbolized precisely the strength of non-violent direct action as a means of struggle. The characteristics of that struggle were as follows.

(26). The Indian peasants, by their own hands, secured that thing which their lives demanded. They needed salt, so they

V. WHAT IS NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION?

A. Opposing Everything Which is “Pseudo”

(24). A “non-violent” situation so called merely because violence is not wantonly applied and control not flagrantly exercised, is no more than “pseudo” non-violent.

Real non-violence, in social terms, exists only when the people have been able to build, in opposition to existing social institutions, their own spaces where they can practice it as a fundamental part of their everyday lives. In other words, a space where productive work is wholly self-managed; one, therefore, where non-violence as strength has some actual, positive meaning. That, however, will not come about until all productive and creative work, all transportation and property etc., have come to be directly self-managed, when, that is, non-violent direct action has been put into practice.

What is currently referred to as “productive work” and takes up much of our daily lives is in reality no more than wage labour carried out in the shadow of the pseudo-non-violent state. It is carried out indirectly, and is merely “pseudo” work. By means of that wage labour, we serve the state and the financiers, who in return throw us their crumbs.

Direct action, therefore, such as when we struggle against “pseudo” labour — wage labour — in order to restore genuine productive work to its proper place, is none other than the struggle against the “pseudo” itself in all its manifestations.

Consequently, the reason why we seek to replace violent struggle not with “non-violent struggle” but with “non-violent direct action” is that the two — “non-violent” and “direct action” — are indivisible: divorced from one another, they do not constitute strength at all. The very act of re-uniting these two concepts — hitherto divided and reduced to “pseudo” status by

a. How and where is it possible to break the vicious circle whereby in the course of armed struggle against the state, that struggle results in our enslavement by a new web of state violence?

For example, the experience of the Vietnam War, originally a guerilla war, show us a people’s liberation struggle which, sure enough, did no more than resurrect the same old “authorities vs the people” relationship; for all the talk of a “people’s victory”, the only possible outcome was the establishment of state power. While the bad master may have been exchanged for a slightly better one, as far as the people are concerned, they have not been able to free themselves from their status as slaves.

b. Is it possible to conceive of, as an alternative for violent guerilla war, say, a “non-violent guerilla”? And if so, what form would it take?

c. What are the core features of guerilla warfare, as revealed by its historical experience, that will allow us to select from its many constituent elements its popular nature and its effectiveness — things that will serve the future?

(18). Applying these ideas to our present situation, the first thing to be aware of is the fact that that which exercises control over our daily lives is not the visible structure of authority — the agencies of overt control, such as the police and the army. It is the “pseudo-non-violent system” itself, which we ourselves endorse and are enticed to participate in.

(19). However, we need to think a little more concretely. Faced by a popular uprising, the authorities would without question unleash a merciless barrage of violence. In response to this official violence, the popular resistance too would have to escalate, and then we would be exactly where they wanted us. In no time at all, through the mass media, we would find ourselves accused of “indiscriminate violence” and so on, a campaign which many people would find themselves in sympathy with. Because, in other words, violent struggle is fundamentally opposed to everyday non-violent nature of the great ma-

jority of people; at the very least, it contains the likelihood of finding itself isolated from them.

We are now slowly beginning to perceive the location of one of the most pressing questions of our times.

IV. DIRECT ACTION AND PRODUCTIVE WORK

A. What is Direct Action?

(20). When we hear the expression “direct action”, we immediately tend to think of physical activity involving the resort to violence. And in fact, the expression is generally used as synonymous with “forceful action”, or even “violence”. If you try to look it up in the dictionary, however, you will find under “direct” the following explanation: “When two objects touch with no intervening agency; in person, without going through another person.” To put it another way, “direct action” constitutes securing yourself that which is adequate to your needs, without employing the services of another, Or, “rejecting indirect methods to secure those things that are necessary for your life through your own strength directly, that is by working”.

(21). Putting it more concretely, the things which we need in our everyday lives are, first, subsistence commodities such as foodstuff, and second, the implements with which to produce them. Procuring such things by direct action amounts to making them; that is, engaging in “production”, or, “work”. In other words, the essential meaning of “direct action” is, above all, “productive work”, together with “creative activities”. And that, unquestionably, is where the strength of popular non-violence lies, it being impossible to carry out such activities through violent means; throughout history, the people have been charged with and have alone accomplished such activity.

(22). Needless to say, productive work is invariably rooted in our non-violent everyday lives. In other words, direct action, considered as productive work, is inseparable from a tranquil life,

For example, it is impossible to maintain productive work and creative activities when hustled by governments into war. Everyday life under conditions of violence amounts really to no more than animal responses; we live each day for itself alone. We produce, not as an everyday affair, but out of an instinctive urge to survive.

Consequently, direct action is irrevocably at odds with violence, because, in the last analysis, it is violence which threatens productive work, At the same time, it is always inseparably linked with the non-violent everyday life of the people.

B. Direct Action and Self-Management

(23). If direct action and non-violence are inseparably linked, then it follows that the power of non-violence can only be expressed through the medium of direct action. That fact can also throw light on the essential connection, as far as our social existence is concerned, between direct action and self-management To begin with, in order for us to sustain that productive work which is the feature of our everyday lives, a non-violent existence is the first prerequisite. To put it differently, direct action which is not based upon non-violence is no more than “pseudo” direct action. Secondly, direct action means producing directly for yourself the necessities of life, together with the gathering, distribution and mutual exchange of those products on your own initiative, and the creation by your own efforts of the necessary structures to do so. Only when people can do these things for themselves is their autonomy complete. Which means, finally, that individual independence and autonomy — in social terms, self-management — are essential functions of non-violence.