



War is a crime against humanity:

*The Story of War Resisters' International*

Devi Prasad

Foreword by George Willoughby

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This book is dedicated to the Memory of  
Herbert Runham Brown 1879-1949

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The plan to work on this book came out of my fairly long experience with the War Resisters' International (WRI). When I mentioned the project to some of my friends I was greatly encouraged by their responses. The Secretariat and the Executive Committee of the WRI welcomed the idea, but soon after getting such a response from them I told them that what I shall be trying to work on will be the 'story' of the International, and not what could or should be called the 'official history' of the WRI.

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## FOREWORD

George Willoughby

---

The war institution, a most diabolic machine invented by the human mind, has dominated nearly the whole history of humankind, but specially the twentieth century. In this brief period of a hundred years, the world experienced two major conflicts encompassing several continents, the fire-bombing of cities of Europe and Japan, the development and use of the nuclear bomb on two cities of Japan and most recently the hi-tech bombing of Iraq. In this violent century millions and millions of unarmed civilians were slaughtered and massive upheaval of populations, accompanied by severe economic and social disruption, resulted. In recent years we have witnessed the rapid development of 'hi-tech' instruments of death and destruction and the outbreak of dozens of 'little wars', all adding to the pollution of the earth's air, water and environment, and leaving in their wake massive population movements and severe economic and social disruptions. As the century came to a close the powerful nation states continued to spend massive resources on the war machine, preserving stockpiles of nuclear bombs, rockets and other hi-tech means of destruction.

Yet this century of institutional violence against humanity was not able to stamp out the flame of justice, freedom and humanity. This book turns the light on a long neglected chapter of twentieth-century history: the stories of many who spoke out and acted to bring an end to the war institution. It is about ordinary people in many European countries and in the United States of America who envisioned a world freed of war and militarism. It records the efforts of groups in many countries to give support to individual war resisters to advocate and to work for the elimination of the war institution as a policy and practice of the nation state.

It recounts the efforts of these tiny groups, often working under heavy social and political oppression, to link up with similar groups in other nations to arouse support. They were humble, ordinary people, often prophetic pioneers pointing the way to the future through the brave work of organisations such as the Religious Society of Friends, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the War Resisters' International, just to mention a few of the most active and dynamic ones.

This book tells the story of the War Resisters' International, a worldwide organisation of war resisters founded in a small town in Holland called Bilthoven, which, two years later in 1923, was moved to Great Britain. One thing special about the WRI is that in accepting members it does not make any kind of discrimination: religion, faith, conviction, sex, race or colour. The International received support and active contributions from people like Arthur Ponsonby, A. J. Muste, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Elinor Byrns, Romain Rolland and Mahatma Gandhi.

Soon after completing his college education in 1944, the author of this book, Devi Prasad, joined Gandhi in his educational experiment, in which he continued for 18 years. Then he was the General Secretary of the War Resisters' International for a little over 10 years and Chairman for three years. Devi Prasad continues to be active in the pacifist movement and often writes on the subject. His direct experience first with Gandhi and his movement and then with the pacifist movement has moved him to work on this book.

Without doubt the voices of the past will be renewed by others who will cry out in alarm and plead for change. A new generation of voices, hopefully tempered by the devastating history of the past century, will hammer home the connection between militarism and eco-

conomic power, and affirm the power of active nonviolence as an alternative to the military war machine in settling conflicts between nation states.

In some future time I believe that humanity will acknowledge its debts to these peaceful and nonviolent visionaries, and honour them for their courage and foresight in challenging the prevailing wisdom and practice, and for pointing the way to a world of total and universal disarmament, a world at last free of militarism and the war institution. The world must heed and act on this vision; it is not too late

## INTRODUCTION

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This is the story of the War Resisters' International (WRI), a worldwide pacifist movement founded in 1921, two years after the First World War ended with the Armistice in November 1918. This war had removed any doubt there might have been as to how disastrous and inhuman the institution of war can be, particularly when supported by modern technology.

An aim of this book is to draw the attention of the reader to the conviction, courage, and dedication of the many men and women who built the WRI, sometimes making tremendous sacrifices. Another is to show how the organised and collective work of such people carried the still potent promise of social and political change. The work of the WRI and of many men and women associated with it, directly or indirectly, has pointed to ways of ending militarism and organised collective violence to create a world without war.

The WRI was born out of, and built upon, the experience of many thousands of war opponents who, following the teachings of their prophets and leaders over the past many centuries, had refused to become soldiers, often at the cost of their lives. They chose suffering and even death rather than take up arms against fellow human beings. These people belonged to groups that were essentially sectarian in character. Their teachings may have propounded the oneness of the human family, but their teachings were limited to their own sects.

The WRI differs crucially from previous pacifist groups through its far broader basis and constituency. However, it must be recognised that the richness of the experience gained by religious groups and the traditions established by them were some of the most important elements in the founding of the WRI.

From the end of the nineteenth century, non-religious pacifist groups came into existence, but these were also of a special-interest nature. They included women's groups, the founding of which was an important development within the peace movement. Some of these were inspired by the nuclear disarmament movement. While their strength was in their being exclusively for women, there was active co-operation between them and other pacifist bodies.

The War Resisters' International was the first pacifist organisation which, from its foundation, aimed to address all men and women living in any part of the world, irrespective of their philosophical or political convictions, religion, faith, colour or creed. It called upon everyone to work together to get rid of the increasingly destructive institution of war. It aimed to form a body of activists that considered the whole of humankind as a family without any hierarchical distinctions in theory and practice.

This book is an attempt to present the story of the WRI with the purpose of acquainting the reader with its special perspective on the universality of the human family and the individual's relationship to it. This perspective comes from the belief that the individual has the sole right to decide about his or her beliefs and actions – as long as he or she does not hinder anyone else's freedom and welfare.

This work is not a learned history of the International, for I have left out, knowingly or unknowingly, many an important happening and document necessary for a complete chronology or thorough analysis.

The objectives of the WRI are uniquely non-sectarian and inclusive. The WRI accepts into its membership all those who believe in its Declaration and in the active participation it prescribes:

**War is a crime against humanity. I therefore am determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.**

I have long felt the need for a book that would tell the story of the WRI to people interested in peace and social change in the context of resistance to war and militarism. Some very interesting and useful dissertations and theses have been and are being written on the subject. But I have yet to come across a work that would project the work of the WRI and its uniquely holistic perspective on the subject of world peace and nonviolent social change.

Having had nearly 50 years of association with the world pacifist movement in general and the WRI in particular, including 15 years of responsibility as its General Secretary and Chairman, and later as a member of its International Council for several years, I felt an obligation to do the work myself. I started thinking about it in a modest way about three years ago with full awareness of the fact that I am neither a professional writer nor one able to do scholarly justice to such a subject.

Most men and women getting interested in becoming a part of a body like the WRI are moved by its humanitarian basis and the rational and courageous outlook on life it represents. Among those who are attracted by WRI, particularly in the present climate, very few are aware of the hardships pacifist activism can entail. Not all of them know about the richness of experience gained and sacrifices made by its founders. Few of the young entrants to this field have a clear image of the world they are attracted to enter. Without such knowledge it is more difficult for them to fulfil the responsibilities they take upon themselves as war resisters.

Furthermore, a good understanding, and an analytical one, of the background of the movement may help in making future plans for the organisation. For example, it was mainly for historical reasons that during the 1960s and 70s the major thrust of the War Resisters' International turned towards military conscription. WRI demanded that governments of all countries with conscription recognise in law conscientious objection to military service as a basic human right. It campaigned for objectors to be offered an alternative they would willingly accept, preferably total exemption from military service.

In the 1980s and early 90s the WRI had to spend a considerable amount of its time and energy on the situation that arose as a result of the dismantling of the Soviet Union. The effort was entirely in line with the aims of the International. But, as a Hebrew saying goes, *essential work is often left out because there is no time for it*. 'What is the goal of the WRI?' is the question nearly every Triennial Conference has been asking for decades. The search for the road to a war-free world was once again postponed because of immediate problems.

It follows that there is a need for a continuous dialogue among the activists within the WRI and other interested people to arrive at a point that can be defined as the beginning of the next phase of the growth of the WRI. This needs a long-term programme with the identification of practical activities.

To understand the existential reality the WRI can best be seen in isolation. It is a part of the history of humankind in its *sadhana* (endeavour, meditation in Sanskrit) to be liberated from the bondage that stops it from realising the importance of human unity. Creative human relationships are essential to build a world with imagination, co-operation, love and peace. That is the essence of pacifism as I understand it.

This book is in three parts. The first part deals with the pacifist foundations on which the WRI was to grow into a force. There are chapters on the early phases of pacifism and nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pacifist / peace organisations. One chapter tells the story of the origin of military conscription.

The second part of the book tells the story in several chapters of the WRI from the time of its foundation until the mid-1970s. These chapters deal with different stages of growth, the issues the WRI has confronted and the way it has planned and carried out its activities.

The WRI continues to be a lively, progressive and growing organisation, keeping pace with change. But at the same time it is remarkable to note the consistency with which it has been trying to pursue its objective: to reconstruct human relationships in accordance with its original purpose of building a world without war on the principles of nonviolence and universal unity.

So the story of the War Resisters' International is an ever-developing story. But I had to stop somewhere. I decided to stop at the point when the International transferred its headquarters from London to Brussels in 1974, a point where a new phase began.

Even though my narrative stops in 1973/4, I have remained an active and sympathetic observer of, and often a participant in, WRI's work since then.

At the end I allow myself to raise a few points about the future growth of the pacifist movement in general and the War Resisters' International in particular. I have tried to make suggestions as to how a future perspective could be developed to deal with the changing conditions for the work of the International.

# PART ONE

Pacifism: Its Roots, Birth And Growth

# CHAPTER 1

*One should not take away from others what belongs to them.  
The main reason for the absence of peace in the world is man's  
tendency to take away the peace of others.  
Ishavasya Upanishad<sup>1</sup>*

## The motive force

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The War Resisters' International (WRI) was founded in Bilthoven, Holland, in 1921. It was one of a number of organisations formed in response to the frightening situation created by the First World War. The gigantic loss of human life, the suffering of millions of people and an unimaginable degree of destruction of property motivated sensitive people to organise themselves to prevent anything like it happening again. For them the outcome of the World War was proof that war can no longer be considered as an institution capable of resolving conflicts between nations.

Those who founded the War Resisters' International were also convinced that to root out war mere verbal opposition was not sufficient as an agenda for their activities: they had to find the causes of war. Unless those causes were eliminated wars would continue to occur. Hence, for them the call for stopping war, or even non-participation in war, was only a part of their objective. The removal of all the causes of war was of equal if not greater importance.

To dominate and to be dominated, to obey and to disobey, to construct and to destroy, to secure one's own interests even at the cost of others'; these and many other such contradictory tendencies have been part of human nature from the very moment of the appearance of humankind on this earth. They are cultivable according to the needs and cultural and civilisational pattern of life.

So nature has provided human beings with the capacity to make choices according to their needs, circumstances and upbringing; a privilege other creatures do not have. However, depending on the circumstances and their mental and physical preparedness, human beings often arrive at decisions that may or may not be the correct ones for that point in time. They may look like the correct ones to an individual or a group of people in a given situation but later may prove to be wrong and harmful: harmful even to those – perhaps the innocent majority – who had no role whatsoever in the process of making such decisions.

In other words nature has put an extraordinary responsibility on human beings: to be careful in their behaviour and not to do anything that might be harmful, either in long or in short terms, to other human beings or to nature. Although it is a big responsibility, it makes the human being an extraordinary part of nature: a protector and a keeper. It involves deciding what is right-doing and what is wrong-doing, what is good and what is bad. Humankind has to prepare itself to be able to know the difference between good and evil. And to be able to do that humans have to realise that they are *one* among the *many*, that they have to own the *whole* of which humankind is an integrated part.

Naturally, this responsibility creates a variety of contradictions in the human mind, which many a time become impossible-seeming dilemmas. A tremendous amount of courage and creativity is needed to face these dilemmas. It is for this reason that I call these contradictions *creative contradictions*. Why do I call this phenomenon *creative*?

There is a belief that for survival and for achieving human goals, if necessary, human beings can resort to violence, and if need be, also to deceit. One argument is that human beings, being part of the animal kingdom, must submit to the laws of nature in which survival is the most important element. After all it is a necessity nature has imposed upon all animals to look after their own interests.

Because of their highly intelligent and analytical brain human beings have been able to invent all kinds of tools and methods to achieve their immediate practical aims – survival and safety. The need to build security and self defence has led them to construct a vast variety of weaponry with the purpose of removing all hindrances that may come in the way of growth and safety. This part of their nature can, and often does, tempt them to eliminate the forces which may prove a danger to the family, wealth and power, and to dominate over their servants and dependants. The need to survive has been so powerful that during the earlier period of human existence some societies did not spare even their own kith and kin in the face of danger to the life of the clan.

Many years ago I read Frazer's very comprehensive and authentic anthropological study of tribal societies in various parts of the world, *The Golden Bough*. In one of the hundreds of stories the author describes how the elders of a tribe living on a seashore threw their innocent young girls to the crocodiles which had invaded them from the sea. The crocodiles had started attacking their men and women as their food. The tribal leadership interpreted the attack by these creatures to be something that their god wished as a punishment for their sins. They believed that their god wanted them to make such a severe sacrifice as repentance. Naturally, after feeling satisfied with the food they got, the crocodiles went back into the sea, which presumably they would have in any case after eating a few men and women of the tribe, even if the tribals had not taken that horrible step to please their god.

Such things have happened for thousands of years, partly because humans have thought that it was the will of their god and that they must perform these acts for their own safety. For instance when a new tribe came near a settlement it was considered to be an invader. The settlement believed that their god was ordering them to take to arms and fight the invaders to protect themselves, in particular womenfolk, children and their material possessions.

That tendency in human beings has not yet changed, neither in quality nor in quantity. Outwardly, such practices may be different in form but the spirit is more or less the same. Excuses given for mass killing may sound reasonable to many, but wars that go on today are nothing less than mass-scale murders. They are said to be wars fought for the sake of justice. It is claimed that these wars are meant to resolve conflicts.

There is yet another side of human nature, which is in contrast with the one described above. Man is endowed with a special faculty which other animals do not possess: conscience. Conscience encourages human beings to reach into a world which is far beyond the realm of their animal instincts. This is the faculty that makes human beings different from all other animals. It can transform fear into assurance, anger into compassion, and can broaden the outlook towards other creatures and the whole world. Despite the fact that humankind is a part of nature, it has the capacity to transcend nature, a capacity that nature itself has given to it.

Rabindranath Tagore has very effectively expressed the above concept in one of his poems.<sup>2</sup> At one level he compares himself, a human being, with other creatures and elements of nature. The poet complains that nature has shown favouritism towards them. However, at the same time he acknowledges the special faculties as well as responsibilities nature has handed over to humankind. He addresses his god:



To everyone else you give, but from me you only expect. For example, you have given songs to birds, which they sing; on the other hand to me you have given only voice. But I make music. I give much more than I receive. You have given the air complete freedom to move around as it likes. But you have burdened me with all kinds of worries and responsibilities. Nonetheless, at the end of my journey, when it is time to return to you I come with my hands totally free to be able to serve you as you wish.

You have endowed the full moon with brilliant laughter and a happy dream world, which it scatters all over the globe. What have you given to me? Only pain and sorrow! I, on the other hand, after completing my journey through many births and deaths, shedding off all the burdens and sorrows, after cleaning them one by one with the tears of my own eyes and turning them into bliss I reach you completely free to serve you with joy.

At the end of the poem Tagore repeats his *complaint* but then he also identifies himself with the Giver.

When at the end, I come to you with whatever little I can give, you step down from your throne and come smilingly and hold my offerings near your bosom. Whatever you gave into my hands you received more from me into your own hands.

Like the sages of the past, Tagore is questioning the place and destiny of humankind. It is that spirit which gave him a vision of the future and of the path humanity has to take to fulfil its role in the universe. In the above poem Tagore shows that nature has indeed built up this contradiction in the human heart and mind and that it is essential that human beings resolve these contradictions by their own creativity. The capacity to be able to do so has also been provided to them by nature.

However, despite the efforts of great teachers to show that human unity and mutual respect are the highest and most desirable values that human beings should inculcate in themselves, the divisive and aggressive forces have continued to become dominant. The more aware humankind has become of the need to be nonviolent and peaceful, the more the opposite forces seem to have grown assertive and overwhelming. Why has that happened?

*Fear* and *Ego* are two of the major elements that play the crucial role in this process. Fear rules much of human behaviour. The dropping of the two nuclear bombs over Japanese cities is an example in this context. The anti-nuclear movement grew very much out of the fear of total annihilation of life on the planet if a full-fledged nuclear war broke out. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the USA had demonstrated the brutality of nuclear weapons and had given an indication of what could and would happen if another world war were fought with such weaponry. Those who could foresee the dangers and understood its destructive potential had started opposing the growth of nuclear power. Organisations like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament came into being in several countries of the West and became popular movements. Millions of citizens came out on the streets to demonstrate their fear of nuclear weapons and their opposition to them.

But, in spite of the scientific information about the dangers of nuclear weapons provided by some highly qualified scientists, they were not successful. And the same was true for many years of the movements against nuclear power. A large proportion of the public believed – indeed was made to believe – that nuclear power can and should be utilised for peaceful purposes without any danger. They continued supporting their governments in building more

and more nuclear projects ‘for peaceful purposes’.

The *Ego* of the ruling groups, whether in power or striving to be in power, has always made patriotism the highest value for mankind. The motto *my country right or wrong* became a part of the education of children. God is expected to help us *love our country more than even our parents*. The aim of the exercise – and too often the end result – is the conditioning of the minds of all children in pursuit supposedly of making them *good citizens*. ‘My country is the greatest universal truth’ – that is the ultimate objective. Educational systems have gone a step further. They teach children to follow the motto: *me and my country are the greatest truth*.

That is the struggle that human society has to overcome by realising that nature has given it the imagination, skill and power to transform this contradiction into *creative contradiction*. There is no doubt that for the survival of humanity with dignity and enduring peace human society will have to resolve the dilemmas that arise from this contradiction, as Tagore has so beautifully put it in his poem mentioned above.

#### **Notes Chapter 1**

- 1 *Ishavasya Upanishad* is the smallest of all Upanishads and the essence of Vedic philosophy.
- 2 Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Pakhirai diyeccho gan’ in *Balaka*, 1916, *Ravindra Rachnavali*, Vol. 12

## CHAPTER 2

*All tremble before rod, all fear death; putting oneself in the place of another, one should neither strike nor slay.  
All tremble before rod; to all life is dear. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should neither strike nor slay.*  
Dhammapada, Chapter x, verses 129 and 130

### How has humankind been handling its creative contradiction?

Founders of most religions have tried to project the concept that all human beings are children of the same god and the whole universe is created by him, and therefore they are all members of the same family. This leads to the conclusion that the ultimate destiny of humankind is not only unity within their own species but also with the universe as a whole. Despite recognising the contradiction between body and soul, the founders believed in the undoubted supremacy of soul over the body, i.e. soul being a generator as well as the home of universal unity in its present form.

### Abraham and Judaism

Judaism, which has come down in unbroken continuity through Pharisaism to the Judaism of today, rests on monotheism: belief in one and only one God. The second doctrine of Judaism is the Covenant Election of Israel to be the bearer of this belief. In Judaism monotheistic tendencies and beliefs as well as notions of covenanting God are determined exclusively by an act of free choice whereby God discloses his presence and will to the Elect. He is conceived as transcendent; unbounded by any form of manifestation of physical existence. As the transcendent creator, God is not force but character, a free personality possessed of ethical attributes. The moral qualities ascribed to the deity in some of the aspects of the religion do not necessarily make God ethical, as these qualities are invariably identified with the selfish interests of the tribe, not with the cause of ethical virtue itself, as in the case of Hebrew monotheism. Hebrew monotheism not only affirms the ethical character of *all* men; it also binds them to seek God, the creator of the world who made them all, and makes them obey his moral laws.

The doctrine of the Covenant Election of Israel means that the people – all individuals – become the recipients of the divine revelation, which they are called to share with all men. The conception of election is not for domination but for service.

According to the Old Testament Judaism originated with Abraham, who is thought to have been born in Ur in the twentieth century BC. He had spent some time in Harran, a centre of moon worship, but then moved away from there. He is said to have learned by reflection and revelation of the existence of ‘the one, everlasting God, maker of heaven and earth, who rules the world and whose way is the doing of righteousness and justice’. With Abraham God is said to have entered into a Covenant to give the land to his seed and to make them a blessing to all nations of the earth.

It is clear that the early followers of Abraham saw the world as the creation of God and considered the human family too as his creation. Holiness, applied to moral conduct, was to

express itself in terms of justice and righteousness. In other words in the Judaic tradition, righteousness and justice are essential values for the whole of humankind in its social behaviour. In the common life of the people everywhere it meant the recognition of the following rights:

(1) the right to live, (2) the right of possession, (3) the right to work, (4) the right to clothing, (5) the right to shelter, (6) the right to person, which is exemplified in the Sabbath law and includes the right to leisure and the right of liberty. History is the witness to the changes in human relationships when these human rights have been violated, not only in one country but everywhere in the world and at every phase of history.

The concern for the poor and the weak, the afflicted and the oppressed, and the restrictions placed on the powerful show how deeply this passion for justice and righteousness was to be felt. It was also to be shown in the conception of earthly goods, the possession of which was to be regarded not as a natural thing, but as a divine trust. The misfortunes of fellow men were not to be exploited to increase one's own income.

The Torah (the Law) was a necessary consequence of the Covenant. Its object was to train the people in holiness, in conformity with the Covenant. The significance of this holiness is indicated in the meaning of its Hebrew equivalent *kadosh*, which expresses a quality which consists negatively in 'separation from' and positively in 'dedication to'. Applied to the Hebrew people, holiness, in the negative sense, entailed separation from all the demoralising influences of the sensuous cults and self-centred morals of the surrounding idolatrous nations. Positively considered, holiness involved a dedication to the service of God. In the midst of the evil order it was not for them simply to keep aloof from all that was abominable and evil, they also had to strive to cultivate the good and the noble. The Torah provided the Hebrew culture with an ethic which placed service to others at the centre of its system.

The basis of the Torah are the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses. Along with the commandments related to the behaviour towards one's own family there are two commandments especially relevant to the anti-war concept: 'Thou shalt not kill' and 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'. 'Thou shalt not kill' also became the basis of Christian pacifism.

## Vedic and Upanishadic teaching – *Advaita*

The earliest civilisations that flourished in India were tribal: the *Dravidian*, the first and aboriginal, and later the *Aryan* (Vedic) by migration from the north. During its early period Vedic philosophy believed in the superiority of *Varuna*, the god of water. But when *Varuna* had to fight the 'enemies' – *asuras* (non-human) and non-Aryans – he found *Indra*, the god of firmament, to be the bravest of all gods. The Aryans invaded and conquered many lands and subjugated the people living in the regions. Among them there were some who continued to consider *Varuna* to be superior to *Indra*. Some considered *Agni*, the god of fire, to be more important and others took the Sun (*Soorya*) to be the highest of all gods. They were the worshipers of the forces of nature: sun, air, water and earth.

There are two ways of looking at Vedic civilisation. One is to try to interpret it in a purely historical manner, which is not very clear on account of the absence of written or any other kind of authentic records. The other is to study its philosophical and ethical aspects. The latter is more important in the present context than the historical one. *Rigved* is the oldest of the four major *Vedas* and develops a sophisticated philosophy. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the great scholar and saintly man, the founder of the reformist *Arya Samaj* in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, wrote that according to the Vedas, particularly the *Rigved*, the whole universe is the creation of one god, that is *Brahma*. The other gods, such as *Varuna*, *Agni* and *Soorya* are only the manifestations of the various powers of the same god.

Vedic civilisation reached its height with the *Ishavasya Upanishad*. The essence of the Upanishads can be understood through the question: What is that element through which one can know everything else? The answer is *Brahma*; everything is born out of it, everything operates from it and everything eventually goes back into it. But then what is *Brahma*? It is neither matter, minute or large, nor is it non-matter; it is neither shadow nor light; it is neither air nor smell; neither eyes nor ears; neither inside nor outside; it is neither face nor voice; neither life nor death . . . What is it then? The answer is: it is you. *I am Brahma, the soul itself is Brahma, hence try to understand the soul.*

The Upanishadic thought leads to the understanding that everything which exists in this universe, every creature, wherever it may be, has Him within it and it is essential for us to understand Him. And if you understand Him you can understand your relationship with everything else. *Ishavasya Upanishad*, the most concise treatise, with only eighteen verses, is considered to be the essence of the Vedic/Upanishadic philosophy. According to *Ishavasya Upanishad* 'one should not take away from others what belongs to them. The main reason for the absence of peace in the world is man's tendency to take away the peace of others.'

Dr S. Radhakrishnan wrote about the philosophy of Upanishads:

A life of reason is a life of unselfish devotion to the world. Reason tells us that the individual has no interests of his own apart from the whole, of which he is a part. He will be delivered from the bondage to fortune and caprice only if he gives up his ideas of separate sensuous existence. He is a good man who in his life subordinates personal to social ends, and he is a bad man who does the opposite. The soul in committing a selfish deed imposes fetters on itself, which can be broken only by the reassertion of the life universal. This way of sympathy is open to all and leads to the expansion of the soul.

Dr Radhakrishnan continues:

If we want to escape from sin we must escape from selfishness. We must put down the vain conceits and foolish lies about the supremacy of the small self. Each of us conceives himself to be an exclusive unit, an ego sharply marked off from whatever lies outside his physical body and mental history. From this egoism springs all that is morally bad. We should realise in our life and conduct that all things are in God and of God. The man who knows this truth will long to lose his life, will hate all selfish goods and sell all that he has, would wish even to be despised and rejected of the world, if so he can come into accord with the universal life of God. In one sense the Upanishad morality is individualistic, for its aim is self-realisation; but "individualistic" ceases here to have any exclusive meaning. To realise oneself is to identify oneself with a good that is not his alone. Moral life is a God-centred life, a life of passionate love and enthusiasm for humanity, of seeking the infinite through the finite, and not a mere selfish adventure for small ends.<sup>1</sup>

The Upanishads insist on the inwardness of morality and attach great importance to motive in conduct. Inner purity is more important than outer conformity. Upanishadic teaching not

only says 'do not steal' and 'do not murder' but also declares 'do not covet and do not hate or yield to anger, malice and greed. The mind will have to be purified, for it is no use cutting the branches and leaving the roots intact. Conduct is judged by its subjective worth or the amount of giving it involves.'

The Upanishadic approach to life is the culmination of Vedic thought. It is also called *Vedanta*, the climax of the Veda, a denomination that the Upanishads contain as the essence of the Vedic teaching. They are the foundations on which most of the later philosophies and religions of India have come into being. I again quote Dr Radhakrishnan: "The Upanishads do not content themselves with merely emphasising the spirit of true religion. They also give us a code of duties, without which the moral ideal will be an uncertain guide."<sup>2</sup> The object of the Upanishadic approach is much more than reaching only the philosophical truth; it is to bring peace and freedom to the anxious human spirit. Although the essence of Vedic thought is that everything is from Brahma and is of Brahma and that doing harm to others is wrong, it does not say 'do not kill'. However, a key aspect of the importance of Upanishadic thought is that by putting forward the idea of the oneness of the universe and the idea of moral responsibility it laid the foundations for the future philosophies of Mahavir and Buddha.

## Mahavir and Jainism

### *Nonviolence is the highest religion*

Animal sacrifice was still common during the Vedic period. However, during the Upanishadic period the doctrine of rebirth and the conviction that all things in the world possessed life with soul was also enunciated. It made a substantial impact on the thinking of spiritual leaders of that time. As a result, a new approach developed according to which the practice of animal sacrifice started being considered to be against life itself. The perspective that all things, animals, insects and plants were possessed of soul, along with the belief in rebirth, created a sense of horror of taking life in any form. It also led to a revolt against animal sacrifice.

Vardhamana, later Mahavir Swami, was born in 599 BC. He was the twenty-fourth *tirthankar*, 'the founder of the path' and one who has completed the whole cycle of births. This was the period of a religion started by Rishabhdev and continued by Mahatma Parshwanath, which had become lethargic and ineffective. Social relationships had grossly deteriorated. Although Mahavir is commonly considered as the 'founder' of Jainism, he actually rejuvenated the existing religion and gave it a new life and a specific philosophy.

The enlightened among the people who followed the teachings of Parshwanath requested Mahavir to give birth to a religion which would end injustice and improve social relationship. Mahavir insisted that man should not injure life whether in sport or in sacrifice. To strengthen their position of protest against sacrifice the Jains denied God, for it was, they said, for his propitiation that life was being destroyed in the name of sacrifice. As Radhakrishnan has it:

In metaphysics Jainism is opposed to all theories which do not emphasise ethical responsibility. The ethical interest in human freedom is the determining consideration. The theories of the creation of the world by God, or its development out of prakriti or its unreality, are criticised on the ground that they cannot account for either the origin or the cessation of suffering.<sup>3</sup>

According to Mahavir committing sin of any kind is an offence against humanity and not against God. In fact in Jain teachings God as such does not exist. The Jains believe in the authority of those individuals who are enlightened and are liberated from the process of re-birth. They are the *tirthankars*. The important point in this context is that Mahavir made his followers aware of the fact that destruction of life and inflicting injustice are the two greatest sins human beings can commit. Humanity has to discover this truth and practice it.

A balanced life according to Jain philosophy requires four kinds of compassionate behaviour. Instead of thinking of revenge, do good to others; feel happy at the success of others; sympathise with those who are suffering and try to remove the causes of their suffering; and be compassionate towards the sinner.

In Jainism virtue consists in the five-fold conduct of one who has knowledge and faith. (1) innocence, or *ahimsa* (nonviolence), which is not mere negative abstention, but positive kindness to all creation; (2) charity and truth speaking; (3) honourable conduct such as not stealing; (4) chastity in word, thought and deed; (5) renunciation of all worldly interests.

It should be noted that Mahavir was the first religious leader who made nonviolence one of the primary codes of conduct towards goodness. The Jains believed that *himsa* (violence), or infliction of suffering on others, is the greatest sin. This is the first time that nonviolence was pronounced to be the highest value – *ahimsa paramo dharma* – nonviolence is the highest religion. Although Mahavir's nonviolence does not say anything directly about the undesirability of the institution of war, his philosophy and teachings, centred on the total renunciation of violence, even against the smallest creature, have to be interpreted as a command not to go to war.

## Buddha and Buddhism

*A man is not noble if he injures living creatures . . .*

Buddha was born in 567 BC, 32 years after Mahavir. He was more pragmatic than Mahavir, as is evident from his sermons and discourses with his disciples. The well-known treatise *Dhammapada* provides us with a concise and compact collection of his teachings probably compiled about 200 years after his death (known to Buddhists as *Na ha nirvana*).

Whereas Mahavir's approach was of total renunciation, Buddha's philosophy was that of *majjhima nikaya* (the middle path). He discovered the solution for resolving what I have called the creative contradiction in human nature. The contradiction is between body comfort and morality. Buddha's teaching emphasised truth, righteousness, nonviolence, self-restraint and control. The following few verses from the *Dhammapada* relate to the Buddha's philosophy of nonviolence:

Even though a man be richly attired, if he develops tranquillity, is quiet, subdued and restrained, leading a holy life and abstaining from injury to all living beings – he is a Brahmin, he is an ascetic, he is a Bhikku.<sup>4</sup> (x, 142)

'Patience' is the greatest penance, long suffering the highest 'Nibbana'. So declared the Buddha. 'No recluse (pabbajita) is the man who strikes another, nor is he a Bhikku who does harm to another' (vi, 184)

Those sages who are without violence, and who are ever controlled in body, attain to the eternal Abode (Nibbana), where having gone a man is freed from sorrow. (v, 225)

The above statements illustrate the emphasis Buddha put on the ideal of nonviolence in its day-to-day relevance and as the highest goal. He does not comment on the phenomenon of war. Nevertheless, from what he preached to his followers, rejection of war seems to be a natural corollary. His repeated and constant emphasis on nonviolence as the highest human value did influence some rulers to give fresh thought to the wars they waged to conquer and subjugate new countries, which caused deaths and heavy suffering to thousands of people.

The most widely known historical evidence in this regard is that of Emperor Ashoka. Two and a half centuries after Buddha's death, after the battle of Kalinga, which destroyed thousands of lives, Ashoka renounced war and became a staunch propagator of the Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence.

As far as the growth of the philosophy of nonviolence is concerned Mahavir's along with Buddha's contributions have been profound. Their teachings spread at many levels – rulers as well as the masses. Jain philosophy became popular in the mid-west of India. However, it did not become as dynamic as Buddhism, which became the religion of many countries in north-central/north-eastern, south-western and south Asia. Emperor Ashoka sent emissaries to many lands for the propagation of Buddha's teachings. His own son went to Sri Lanka on behalf of his father to spread Buddhist thought.

Buddha's concept of nonviolence, while obviously different from today's pacifist's understanding of war resistance, made a great contribution to the concepts of a world without war.

## Christ and Christianity

### *Early Christianity and pacifism*

Christianity began as a reform movement within Judaism, which, while accepting the law and the prophets, refused to be bound by the oral traditions. Jesus claimed to 'fulfil the law', but preferred to follow his own interpretations and particularly attacked the 'fences for the Torah', such as the washing of hands, certain tithings and fasts as well as other prescriptions which in his view were but heavy burdens imposed by Scribes and Pharisees.

The principal source of information about the life of Jesus are the Gospels written by the four saints, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They deal with the life of Jesus in their own ways and with different audiences in mind. Mark, taken to be the earliest of the four, was interested primarily in the mighty deeds of Jesus; Matthew's Gospel was written with the Jewish audience in mind; Luke's was addressed chiefly to gentiles and John reported the sayings of Jesus in the form of discourses. These settings make it difficult to deal with the life of Jesus in a strictly historical manner.

The Gospels speak of three main groups among the Jewish teachers: the Sadducees, the Scribes and the Pharisees. The principal differences among them were in their attitude toward the oral tradition that had developed in Judaism since the days of the prophets. The Scribes and the Pharisees had elaborated the prescription and prohibitions of the Old Testament into a complex code of behaviour. Jesus clashed with them over the importance of external conformity with such a code of behaviour as contrasted with the true relation to God demanded by the prophets. The Sadducees were conservative defenders of the Mosaic Law against the innovation of the oral tradition. With them too Jesus clashed over issues such as the resurrection of the dead. So his was a struggle with the forces which were responsible for ritualising the teachings of the prophets. In this respect Jesus Christ's story is similar to that of Buddha, who



also had to stand against the superficialities and ritualistic practices introduced and enforced by the priesthood.

When Jesus talked of *the kingdom of God* he did not talk about the realm of God, but the reign of God; not a country or territory, but a divine activity and a revelation. He said that the kingdom of God is coming. He appears in the Gospels as the bringer of the kingdom. He said to his opponents: 'the kingdom is in the midst of you, not within you; you have to search for it and own it'. He himself was the sign of the kingdom. It was with the announcement of the kingdom that Jesus began his public preaching.

Jesus preached repentance and belief in the Gospel. Repentance meant a change of mind, a break with the past and a new direction. He denounced the pride of the religious men in his time, with their claim upon God and the inner corruption of their hearts. One of the purposes of Jesus' stress upon the severity of God's demands was to bring about the kind of awareness out of which true repentance would issue. The First Commandment was to believe in God and to love him.

The Second Commandment was to love one's neighbour. He insisted that outward performance is not sufficient. Not only murder but even hate was prohibited. What was revolutionary about Jesus' ethic of the kingdom was this insistence, coupled as it was with his primary emphasis upon the mercy and righteousness of God.

There cannot be a better example of the application of nonviolence than that of Jesus' relationship with his chosen twelve disciples. For instance, when the time of crisis (crucifixion) drew near, Jesus gathered the twelve disciples for the Last Supper. He also wanted to prepare them for what was to come. He gave them his last will and testament, together with the promise of the Holy Spirit. One of them, Judas, had put himself in the service of the enemies of Jesus. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him and all the other disciples would forsake him. He told them about it and to their protestations of loyalty he replied with further prediction that Peter, who was the closest to him, would deny him three times.

I have given the above example just to emphasise to what extent true nonviolence can and should stretch according to Jesus Christ. Despite the fact that he knew about the betrayal by the disciples he gave them his last will and testament together with the promise of the Holy Spirit. What happened to Christianity after Christ is a different matter, but that was Jesus' victory over the heart of all humankind. One of his Ten Commandments included in the Sermon on the Mount was 'Thou shalt not kill'. Peter Brock, the pacifist historian to whom I am indebted for much of the material on Christianity, explains:

Returning good for evil was Christ's way; avenging a wrong was the pagan path. 'Christians', according to Clemens of Alexandria, around 200AD, 'are not allowed to correct by violence sinful wrongdoings.'

'Jesus', writes Arnobius the Elder about a century later, taught that it was 'better to endure a wrong than to inflict [it], to shed one's [blood] rather than stain one's hands and conscience with the blood of another'. Gentleness and nonresistance and innocent suffering were Christ's methods of overcoming evil: this theme occurs constantly throughout the period of the early church. Take, for instance, Athenagoras in the second half of the second century: 'We have learnt . . . not only not to strike back and not to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but with some, if they buffet us on the side of the head, to offer the other side of the head to them for a blow, and with others, if they take away our tunic, to give them also our cloak.'<sup>5</sup>

Jesus declared 'blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. . . . Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' Given this clear teaching it does seem surprising that anyone can hold a gun and call himself a Christian.

It is only after the teachings of Jesus Christ that the roots of pacifism, as we define it today, were laid. Although most religions and their founders aimed their teachings and activities at human unity, universal brotherhood and non-killing of human beings, they did not clearly express the idea of rejecting war as an instrument for the office of kings and rulers. For instance, although Buddha and Mahavir pronounced that nonviolence was the highest religion they did not say that war was not a prerogative of the rulers. Even the peace-loving Essenes Jews had not completely given up their weapons of war. There is nothing to denote that even Jesus ever spoke about the rejection of war as such in his sermons. But of course Christ's using the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' implies a principle against the institution of war.

The first clear-cut renunciation of war as such appears only among the early Christians. Historically speaking, it was with Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount that total renunciation of war became a well-defined principle of the Christian faith. But the notable point here is that even Christ did not put it in such concrete terms. There is no statement or command in the Gospels concerning the rightness or wrongness of serving in the military forces. It was after some time that the implications of this message became clear. As Brock puts it:

Yet Christians for almost two millennia have sought confirmation in the books of the New Testament for either a pacifist or an antipacifist stand, for war has been too ever-present a social reality for Christians to have been able to escape making a judgment. That since the fourth century pacifists have formed a very small minority of the total number of Christians is incontrovertible. However, I will argue that early in that century the official stand of the church – and presumably the majority of believers – opposed Christian participation in war or the shedding of human blood. That these early generations of Jesus' followers supported antimilitarism may in itself be taken as circumstantial evidence for the pacifism of the Gospel era.<sup>6</sup>

## Mohammed and Islam

The founder of Islam, Mohammed (Abulquasim Muhammad Ibn' Abdullah Ibn 'Abd al-Mutliab Ibn Hashim) was an Arab born in Mecca in AD 570. After meeting a Christian monk, Buhara, during a trip away from home at the age of 12 he gave up worshipping images. Until the age of about 40, when he started preaching, he lived a peaceful life and attained relative prosperity. At a time when armed fighting was not uncommon in the commercial city of Mecca Mohammed's life might have appeared unusually quiet and uneventful. By the time he reached 40 he had formed the habit of withdrawing periodically into the mountains near Mecca to meditate and pray.

One night on Mount Hira, he had an overwhelming spiritual experience. The word of God was revealed to him by the archangel Gabriel. He heard an imperious voice and a luminous being grasped him by the throat and commanded him to repeat sacred words. At first he tried to flee, which was later explained by Khadija to be the manifestation of his doubts, his self-questioning as to the genuineness of the messages and his dread of turning into the kind of visionary poet to be seen in the market of Mecca with their pretence of being possessed. Khadija was the widow who had given Mohammed the responsibility of managing her busi-

ness affairs and whom he married at the age of 25.

Finally, Mohammed was again seized by the conviction that he had a message to convey. In its contents the message was a fervent and reiterated proclamation of the all-powerfulness of the one God, Creator of the universe. Mohammed's God was the God of justice and mercy, who had filled the earth with the signs of glory and grace. His hesitation and doubts disappeared and he started preaching from about the year AD 613.

The Holy Koran gives the very words that Mohammed uttered as that of his revelation, which were collected during his lifetime. The first disciple, Khalifa Abubakar got the words of revelation compiled as the Koran. Later, though, there were several versions of the Koran; the third Khalifa Osman declared the first version, which was presented by the first Khalifa, to be the authentic one and destroyed the others by burning them.

I would like to quote a few verses from the Holy Koran to give an idea of its oneness in several elements with the teachings of the prophets and founders of other religions given in the earlier sections of this chapter. For instance God is the maker of the universe and has filled this earth with signs of glory, grace and forgiveness. Although there are no commandments or statements like 'Thou shalt not kill' or 'Nonviolence is the greatest of all religions', the concept of all humankind belonging to the same origin and deserving of justice and protection is also present in Islam.

The following quotations are from *The Essence of Quran* by Vinoba Bhave, who, in addition to being a great follower of Gandhi, was a profound religious scholar. After studying the Holy Koran in its original form for 20 years he translated it to create a compilation with selected verses and a few linguistic variations.

#### **46. On Justice**

229. Be ever prepared to make friends

2. And if they would deceive thee, then lo! Allah is Sufficient for thee. He it is Who supporteth thee with His help and with the believers.

#### **47. Mercy better than Justice**

231. Forgiveness is the Highest Wisdom

#### **48. Creed of Non-violence**

232. Fill your heart with loving kindness and seek refuge in God

1. Keep to forgiveness, and enjoy kindness, and turn away from the ignorant.
2. And if a slander from the devil wound thee, then seek refuge in Allah. Lo! He is Hearer, Knower.
3. Lo! Those who ward off (evil), when a glamour from the devil troubleth them they do but remember (Allah's Guidance) and behold the seers!

233. Repel evil only with Righteousness

1. Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best Aware of that which they allege.
2. And say: My Lord! I seek refuge in Thee from suggestions of the evil ones.
3. And I seek refuge in Thee, my Lord, lest they be present with me.

234. When we ask forgiveness of God we should forgive others

1. Let them forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that Allah may forgive you? Allah is forgiving, Merciful.

235. Enemies are converted into friends

1. The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one

which is better, then lo! he between whom and thee there was enmity (will be come) as though he was a bosom friend.

2. But none is granted it save those who are steadfast, and none is granted it save the owner of great happiness.

236. How love can come into being?

1. Lo! Those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love.

### 50. Non-cooperation with evil

242. Listen not to those who reject truth

1. Therefore obey not thou the rejectors.
2. Who would have had thee compromise, that they may compromise.
3. Neither obey thou each feeble oath monger,
4. Detractor, spreader abroad of slanders,
5. Hinderer of the good, transgressor, malefactor,
6. Greedy therewithal, intrusive.
7. It is because he is possessed of wealth and children.<sup>7</sup>

Vinoba held that the implication of these verses is that a society which follows the teachings of their prophet will be truly nonviolent.

I believe that some of the offshoots of Islam are by their very nature nonviolent. For instance the Sufi philosophy generates nonviolence and human unity within and with the whole of nature, and there are other examples.

Here is an item published in *The War Resister* XXIII, Summer 1929, entitled 'The Protestants of Islam':

There is in Algiers a Mohammedan Sect called the Mozambites; they practice vegetarianism and abstain from alcohol, and, believing in world fraternity, they object to military service. Before the Great War, the French Government gave this people, numbering 45,000, full exemption from military service, but in 1914 this promise was broken and the young men were called up and forced to enter the French Army. Very many became war resisters. The struggle of this brave little group continues. The International finds it difficult to co-operate, as they fear European contact as demoralising.<sup>8</sup>

If at the time when this group came to the notice of the WRI, or earlier, there had been thorough research, it is very likely that more such sects and groups would have been discovered.

### Notes Chapter 2

- 1 Dr S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1977, p.212
- 2 Ibid. p.219
- 3 Ibid. p.312
- 4 A *bhikku* crudely translates as 'monk' but has more profound meaning in Buddhism implying the relinquishing of worldly things and search for enlightenment in the spirit of Buddha.
- 5 Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1972, p.8
- 6 Ibid. p.4
- 7 Vinoba Bhave, *The Essence of Quran*, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajghat, Varanasi, 1962, pp.146-53
- 8 'The Protestants of Islam', *The War Resister* XXIII, Summer 1929, p.24

## CHAPTER 3

*The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to – for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well – is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. . . . Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognising and organising the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognise the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbour; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbours and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.*

Henry D. Thoreau<sup>1</sup>

### Nonviolence and pacifism

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Because of the revulsion towards war felt by many of those who have knowledge of it nations and rulers have to work hard to make the people accept the institution of war. The demand for loyalty to the king made men work as soldiers in the royal armies. Military service was regarded as an obligation. The ruling classes glorified the profession of the soldier and rewarded him to impress upon the population that to be a soldier was to be next to the ruler and the priest. The concept of nationalism has been cultivated and exploited by the ruling classes to confuse people's feelings of love and respect for their homeland with faithfulness towards their rulers.

Although most of the apostles and prophets of all religions preached tolerance and justice and asked their followers not to inflict harm on others, they did not project any clearly defined philosophy which rejected war as a means of resolving conflicts between one nation and another. However, their preaching of these values inspired and motivated thousands of people to renounce participation in the system of war in their individual capacity.

The first known example of abstention from any use of violence in the form of war emerged from Buddha's teachings. In the third century BC Emperor Ashoka fought a bloody battle with the powerful kingdom of Kalinga to expand his empire up to the east coast of India. The death toll in this battle is said to have been nearly 250,000, which included a large number of the civilian population. It also resulted in large-scale spread of diseases and continued suffering.

When Ashoka realised the extent of killing that took place in war, and the suffering caused by it, he vowed never to go to war again and turned to Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Ashoka did not fight any battle again.

Ashoka's Kalinga war was a war of conquest. It is hard to envisage what he would have done in reply to an attack from outside. I believe that after his conversion to Buddhism he would have tried to follow Buddha's teachings in this respect too. It is said that he did decide not to retaliate against anybody trying to do harm to his kingdom, but to tolerate it as far as possible. He also instructed his son and grandson never to go to war.

It is not known what the situation was concerning the institution of war in most of the non-Christian world during those early periods of history. The impression one gets from most studies is that kingdoms, clans and tribes always used weapons to defend themselves and their property. There was though an exception in pre-Christian Palestine. The sect called Essenes, among the Jewish population, established some time before the beginning of the Christian era, renounced the use of violence throughout the greater part of their history.

## Early pacifism

Pacifism as a way of life, as we know it today, grew with Christianity. In his Sermon on the Mount Christ propounded, like Buddha, a philosophy which put all human beings at par with each other – to be respected, loved and protected on a mutual or even unilateral basis. Christ's approach was sensible and practical in its ultimate analysis, but it posed many questions regarding human relationships and lasting peace on earth. Although the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount become the essential part of Christianity, not all Christians adhered to them in practice. There were sections of people who, without expressing why they rejected the command 'Thou shall not kill', set it aside by saying that it lacked pragmatism and could not be applied in day-to-day life, an argument often used against pacifism throughout history.

With the rise of the Christian church the question of participation in war became a significant problem. Differences of opinion on the issue had arisen within the Christian body from quite an early period. At the early stages, the question hardly arose as a practical problem. Few members of the Christian community were either liable or eligible for service in the Roman army. Quite apart from that, they thought of themselves as a small body of the elect, living in constant expectation of the Second Coming, walking the path of separation and taking no responsibility for the affairs of the world, either in civil administration or in military service. However, they did not mind the civil powers using force 'whenever necessary'; indeed they expected them to do so. As far as their own lives were concerned Christianity, the religion of peace, used only spiritual weapons. There could be no question of its adherents attempting to advance their views by force and, above all, there was no thought of rising against the Roman government.

Gradually Christianity spread and drew in people from many parts of the Roman empire. It was natural that with the increase in the Christian population the concept of refusal of war service also spread further and the number of objectors to military service also increased. With some soldiers converting to Christianity the question arose whether their two positions – being a Christian as well as a soldier – were compatible with each other. The early church at this time firmly believed that the soldier's profession was totally incompatible with Christianity.

By the early church we mean the period between the death of Jesus in AD 29 until the year 313, when Emperor Constantine declared his conversion to Christianity. Among early Chris-

tian writings there are a multitude of passages condemning war in general terms and emphasizing its incompatibility with the Christian way of life. Sometimes war is depicted as the work of demons. Killing in war is branded as murder; the sword is accursed. Warfare is regarded as fit only for non-Christians, for the 'gentiles'. According to Geoffrey Nuttall, before the Constantinian period

Persecution of the Christians was not incessant; but they were liable to persecution at any time, they never knew when persecution might break over their heads; and it did, in fact, grow worse with every successive outbreak, the worst persecution of all being only two or three years before Constantine became emperor; . . .<sup>3</sup>

According to Peter Brock

The satanic character of the Roman empire is deduced, *inter alia*, from the fact that preparation for war and engagement in battle are among its most important functions. The church fathers condemned the pomp and glory of soldiery, and the work of war they castigated as an iniquity, "madness", a product of lusts of the flesh. "For how can he be just, who injures, hates, despoils, kills?" wrote Lactantius at the beginning of the fourth century of the warrior. Indeed the early Christians saw homicide as the essential characteristic of the soldier.<sup>4</sup>

The church fathers had been writing to stress the importance of love of the enemy and the doing of good to evil-doers. It was considered an essential element in Jesus' message to the whole world. Christ's way was to return good for evil. According to him avenging a wrong was the pagan path.

Military service was not a major issue for the early Christian community. The royal armies were, by and large, raised on a voluntary basis. Conscription was applied only rarely. A likely reason behind this was that at first the people who joined the Christian church were from the Jewish community, or were women and slaves, who in any case were not eligible for military duties. Later, when military service was introduced by the State it was on a voluntary basis. At a later period, the question of voluntary enlistment did occur, and the critical opinion about military service held by most church leaders did influence the situation.

There were cases of soldiers' conversion to Christianity, but the general environment of the church remained unfavourable to the idea of Christians serving as soldiers. Although conscientious objection to military service would have been logical, the existence of Christian soldiers was at least a possibility. The first authenticated instances of Christians serving in the Roman army dates back to shortly after AD 170, during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. The first evidence of Christians refusing military service on grounds of conscience comes from the same decade. They were accused of a disinclination to fight in the imperial armies and thus helping to expose the Emperor to barbarian attack.

Two contrary tendencies – Christians serving as soldiers and Christians refusing to serve as soldiers – happening at the same time indicates that the question of military service had become a serious concern for some sections of the Christian community and leadership. It is another example of the contradiction in human nature. 'Whereas my religion forbids me to take up arms against any human being, my duty towards the Emperor, my own people, my homeland, demand my services for their protection and safety: what should I do?'. While, on the one hand, the devout Christians ruled out bearing arms and doing armed service and even

considered the magistrate's office incompatible with Christian life, many others recognised righteous rulers, even if they were not Christians, as God's ministers, who would act as a terror to evil and would not bear the sword in vain to maintain law and order. These Christians believed that the State possessed a place within the divine order.

The temptation to prove that in fact the two roads were not really so incompatible as they might appear at first sight is inconsistent with the Christian position. The official church teaching remained on the side of the anti-militarists. Until the start of the Constantinian period the church did not approve the infliction of death even in self defence, whatever the provocation, or of the imposition of a death sentence, however deserved.

Lactantius, who was active towards the end of the third and the early decades of the fourth century, wrote:

When God prohibits killing, he not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed even by the public law; but he warns [us] that not even those things which are regarded as legal among men are to be done. And so it will not be lawful for a just man to serve as a soldier – for justice itself is his military service – not to accuse anyone of a capital offense, because it makes not difference whether thou kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so in this commandment of God, no exception at all ought to be made [to the rule] that it is always wrong to kill a man, who God has wished to be [regarded as] a sacrosanct creature.<sup>5</sup>

Constantine I after converting to Christianity considered himself, from AD 313 onwards, as the chosen servant of the highest divinity, whom he identified with the God of the Christians and who had given him victory over his enemies and raised him to supreme power. He believed that the prosperity of the empire and himself, to whose care it had been committed, would be increased by God if his worship were properly conducted, and would be endangered if God were moved to wrath by its neglect, that is, by not looking after the security of the empire and its subjects.

What were the motives behind Constantine's conversion to Christianity? Some believe that it may have been an astute stroke of policy designed to win the support of the Christians, or a wise act of statesmanship aimed at buttressing the decaying fabric of the empire with the strength of the Christian church. But the Christian minority was small and unimportant and the church was weak and divided. Nonetheless, a large portion of the Christian population rejoiced at the victory of the Emperor who had accepted Jesus as his God.

Constantine soon came to be regarded by the church as the champion of Christianity under whom there would be a guarantee that persecution of Christians would not recur. But some of the leaders of the church saw the alliance between the church and the State as the fall of Christianity. They were aware that Christianity aligned with the State was now committed to the institution of war. They also knew that those who would speak against militarism would be silenced and persecuted in some way or another.

In AD 314 a church synod was held in Arles. In one of its canons it was decreed that those who laid down their arms in times of peace would be excluded from communion, meaning that they would suffer excommunication. The synod recognised conscientious objection in time of war as legitimate but disapproved of it at times of peace. However, there were still those who remembered what Jesus had asked them to do; they dropped their arms and accepted the punishment.

There is a remarkable story of a young man, who later became St Martin of Tours. He



threw down his arms on the eve of battle and refused further service, declaring:

“I am a soldier of Christ; I cannot fight . . . I have fought for you . . . allow me now to become a soldier for God. . . .” accused of cowardice, Martin avowed his readiness to go unarmed into battle in front of the army.<sup>6</sup>

St Martin’s story shows that real Christian pacifism was not for the coward but only for a brave person. Brock relates that

The waning antimilitarism of the fourth century produced further examples of conscientious objection from within the circle of St. Martin of Tours’ friends. For instance, St. Victricius, later bishop of Rouen, followed St. Martin’s example, stating as one of his reasons that he had cast away “the weapons of blood”.<sup>7</sup>

However the larger reality was that the church hierarchy continued to become increasingly an annex of the State. There is an abundance of instances of nearly unconditional surrender to the official position regarding war among the church leadership. They accepted the notion that although it is not lawful to kill, to destroy the opponent is lawful and worthy of praise. Also that the bravery which guards the homeland in war against the barbarians, or defends the weak at home, or one’s allies from robbers, is full of justice.

Moreover, there may be tension between loyalty to the ruler and loyalty to humanity as a whole. There may also be tension between ‘reasonable’ morality based on social utility and morality which goes beyond physical requirements. These factors have their own psychological truths. The end result was that the clergy and the elite willingly accepted to be co-opted by the State to serve as its agents for the propagation of loyalty to the homeland and the ruler against loyalty to the whole of humankind. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire. As a result everything changed for Christians. For those who wanted to follow the teachings of their Prophet honestly and as fully as humanly possible there were more and more hindrances. This was to be a severe setback to the growth of pacifist thought and action.

In the early part of the fifth century St Augustine of Hippo evolved the theory of the ‘just war’ along with the concept of the crusade or holy war, to justify the ‘need’ of the king to go to war, whenever it was felt necessary. As a result

Only a vocational quasi-pacifism lingered on for many centuries in the custom, not always in fact observed, that the clergy, and especially members of the monastic orders, should be exempt from participation in war, in part because of the taint of blood which such service involved (also illustrated, rather curiously, in the practice among fighting clerics of sometimes using a club instead of sword when they participated in battle!).<sup>8</sup>

When the empire became officially Christian and the Christian rulers had to take the responsibility of keeping law and order within and dealing with barbarians’ attack from without, the pacifist view seemed to disappear. St Augustine held that a war to resist aggression or to enforce justice might be a Christian duty and that there was nothing incompatible with Christianity in the profession of a soldier. He must only fight in obedience to lawful authority and he must always remember that wars are fought for the sake of peace that will follow them. Pacifists who followed Christ’s commands strongly believed that Christianity had been militarised by barbarians.<sup>9</sup>

Pacifism declined during the medieval age. The general situation and the public opinion by and large now became, if not hostile, indifferent towards pacifism. Pacifists, under these conditions, had no option other than to go into monastic life. Later, when pacifism was revived within the framework of Christianity, it was through sects which had emerged in defiance of the mainstream of official Christendom during the Middle Ages. Generally the State in co-operation with the official church continued to persecute pacifists.

## Rejuvenation of pacifism in Christian sects

The withdrawal of pacifists from the mainstream should not be interpreted as a defeat of pacifism or the death of any hope for its future. Christian pacifists were not pessimists, for they knew through their faith that Christ's prophesy would one day be a reality.

Peter Brock writes of this historical phase of pacifism:

From the High Middle Ages onward the Catholic church continued its efforts to limit the incidence of warfare, to devise a "law of nations" that could regulate interstate affairs without recourse to bloodshed, and to provide a shelter for those who felt called to a peaceful way of life. Yet Roman Catholicism repudiated pacifism on principle as a perfectionist counsel.

This was not accepted by some medieval sects. For example among

the Cathars and the Waldenses, the Lollards and the Czech Brethren pre-Constantinian antimilitarism was renewed, so that beginning from the eleventh century we may once more, though at first only gropingly, take up the story of pacifist development.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that, if looked at in a cursory manner, for various reasons the story of pacifism may not show much continuity. It appears as if the presence of pacifists and witnesses within the church had been quite sporadic and occasional. But in reality this was not so.

In the following few pages we shall see that, despite the differences based on philosophical understanding, interpretation and reasons attributed to pragmatism, and despite the political and social forces trying to divide pacifist groups, the efforts to bring back the values of early Christian pacifism continued. We will see that the depth of understanding and commitment of many pacifist communities was taking firmer and more convincing form.

It was because of the efforts of the pacifists alone that this development took place. Other forces have helped determine the direction of human society, including the working out of the contradiction described above. The only path to peace with hope for the future is the path of peace itself, that is nonviolence and universal human unity: pacifist dynamics for human survival.

### Waldenses

In *Christian Pacifism in History*, Geoffrey Nuttall mentions three main heretical groups which repudiated war in the Middle Ages, namely the Waldenses, the Lollards, and the Bohemians or Moravian Brethren.

In AD 1170 Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyon, who had no theological training, went forth as an itinerant to preach the gospel of poverty after selling his goods or giving them to the

poor. He had not received the Holy Order necessary to be officially recognised as a preacher. Amid the wealth of the medieval church poverty exercised a powerful appeal as an ideal, proposed by many visionaries. Among these was St Francis, who some 30 years later in his turn sold his goods for a life of poverty.

What disturbed the authorities about Waldo was not his preaching of poverty but his disobedience. Waldo was excommunicated, and his followers became a sect which in AD 1215 was formally condemned. Their history since that date has been, and still is . . . a bitter tale of virulent persecution; and no doubt the persecution helped them, as it helped the early Christians, to repudiate war.

With the Waldenses the conception of the Law of Christ, as it is described in the Scriptures, stands out above all other marks by which the Church may be recognised; this law is present quintessentially, in the Sermon on the Mount; and it was from the Sermon on the Mount that to them, as to so many mediaeval sects, came the repudiation of oaths, military service, capital punishment and all shedding of blood.<sup>11</sup>

The main characteristic of these medieval pacifist sects was their return to the Bible; and within the Bible to the New Testament; and within the New Testament to the Sermon on the Mount. So much so that they placed a very high emphasis on the command 'Thou shalt not kill'.

### **Anabaptists**

The Reformation, which brought about Protestant Christianity, began in Switzerland in the third decade of the sixteenth century. Anabaptism was an extension of the Reformation under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli, the leading preacher of Zurich. After a while some young associates of Zwingli, headed by a local patrician's son, Conrad Grebel, became disillusioned with him upon realising that he was not prepared to do anything in the direction of restoring primitive Christianity. Zwingli wanted only church reforms while the group desired a complete restitution of the apostolic church. The good relations between the two groups deteriorated and developed into hostility. Their relationship broke apart in the autumn of 1524. The Swiss Brethren separated from their fellow Protestants. Although they repudiated the designation Anabaptists, for they denied the validity of infant baptism altogether, this was the name that soon became affixed to their movement.

The Swiss Brethren held to the major doctrines of Christianity such as a personal God existing eternally as a Trinity, the lost condition of mankind spiritually, salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ, and the two eternal destinies, heaven and hell. The major difference with the Reformed Church and the Lutherans concerned the nature of the church, and the relation to the 'world'. They conceived of the church as a fellowship of converted people, baptised on a commitment to Christ as lord, and kept pure by discipline. For these quiet Anabaptists, in contrast with the later revolutionaries of Munster, Christian discipleship involved the rejection of all oaths, as well as the magistracy, the constabulary and the military. This position was based upon a literal acceptance of the ethic of Christ and the New Testament in contrast with the 'lower' standards of the Old Testament on these points. The disciple of Christ must not resist an evil man.

The sect of Anabaptists was a prominent pacifist force in sixteenth-century Europe. They were treated to the most bloodthirsty persecution by both the Catholics and the Protestants.

Except for a small proportion of Anabaptists, who took to armed militancy, the majority remained true to their pacifist belief throughout. However, their total rejection of arms did not spare them the persecution that befell their militant brethren.

Discipleship, although it sprang from the conscience of each individual, was for the Anabaptists essentially a social product. It could not be divorced from the holy community (*Gemeinde*), the brotherhood of those who sought to obey Christ's law of love and share the sufferings of their fellow members as their own. Entry into the brotherhood was by baptism on confession of faith. There could be no birthright members, for discipleship was the result solely of mature choice.<sup>12</sup>

The first cases of Anabaptist conscientious objectors (COs) were in the middle of 1525 in the town of what is now Baden: Jakob Gross and Ulrich Teck. Gross refused to carry weapons in defence of his city. He was expelled, but later, probably under social and clerical pressure, he offered not only to do alternative service but also to stand watch as a guard wearing armour and holding a pike in his hand, as long as he did not actually have to kill, for that was against 'God's command'.

Menno Simons (1496–1561), a former Catholic country parson from Friesland, had taken to Anabaptism in 1536 and had become a leading force within the sect's groups. He was an ordained priest and curate at Pingjum, near his native birthplace. Simons became the leader of the Anabaptists in Holland and remained in that position for 25 of their most difficult years.

Menno repudiated the formation of a sect. Those who had experienced the 'new birth' were to him the true Christian churches. His Christology was mainly orthodox, though he rejected terms (such as Trinity) which he could not find in the scripture, and believed in the celestial origin of the flesh of Christ.

### **Mennonites**

The Mennonite sect originated in Switzerland as well as the Netherlands. Conrad Grebel, a young Swiss patrician and scholar and a follower of Ulrich Zwingli, in January 1525 inaugurated a 'believer's baptism' and set up a new church. The movement spread rapidly into other lands.

Mennonites rejected hierarchy and recognised no other authority in religious matters than the Bible. Their understanding of scriptures differs somewhat from that of Protestantism generally in that they stress the contrast between the Old and New Testaments, taking seriously the principle that Christ was the fullness of God's revelation to men, and understanding the teaching of Christ to constitute a genuine advance over the doctrines and standards of the Old Testament. For Mennonites oaths and the taking of life were absolutely forbidden; hence the magistracy and the army were unlawful callings. But magistrates were to be obeyed in all things, not being prohibited by scripture.

### **Old Amish Order**

In 1793 the Amish, who had been close to both the Brethren and the Mennonites broke away from the main body of Swiss Brethren under Jakob Amman, a supporter of the strict application of avoidance (*Meidung*).

The Mennonites and Amish for whom by the nineteenth century Alsace and Lorraine had been home for a century or more could not, of course, obtain freedom from conscription by showing Swiss citizenship papers. They were liable to the law of the land (after the Franco–Prussian War of 1870 most of the area where Mennonites lived came once again under German rule).<sup>13</sup>

The establishment of a united Germany led to the extension of the terms of the Royal Cabinet Order of 1868 to the rest of the new *Reich*. In the west and south of the country there were by now few young Mennonites anxious to take advantage of the possibility of noncombatant service thus opened to them . . . Even the Amish of central Germany, who were in the process of finally amalgamating with their Mennonite brethren, at a conference held in 1867 had decided to leave the matter of army service open: “How each congregation and each young man will indeed preserve our ancient Mennonite nonresistance, in order to satisfy his own conscience and the demand of the authorities, we leave to the judgment to each one”. “This,” comments Ernst Crous, “was the formula later often repeated to save the principle and at the same time abandon it.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Doukhobors**

Doukhobors, ‘Spirit wrestlers’, are a Russian religious sect, known in the eighteenth century. They reject all external authority, even that of the Bible, and believe in direct individual revelation, supplemented by a growing body of canticles and proverbs called the ‘Book of Life’, which is handed down orally.

They are egalitarian and pacifists. They have varied their attitude to communal ownership and resistance to government with their leaders. The persecution they suffered under the Tsars was due to their rejection of authority in church and State, to their proselytising activities and to their refusal to accept conscription.

Doukhobors were sporadically persecuted from 1773 onward. In 1801 the majority (about 4000) was settled by the Tsar Alexander I on the Molochnaya River near the Sea of Azov. They became prosperous for a time after the death of their leader, S. Kapustin (1820). A government investigation of 1834 revealed a state of corruption, which they themselves admitted. They were all deported to the Caucasus in 1840/41. Under the leadership of Kapustin’s descendants they enjoyed prosperity and peace. Later they were led by a young man called Peter Verigin who was banished to Siberia in 1887. He instructed his followers, on principles derived from Tolstoyan fellow exiles, to adopt vegetarianism and stricter pacifism and to return to communism. After disturbances culminating in a solemn burning of arms in 1895 they were deported to scattered villages in Georgia.

Tolstoy successfully petitioned the Tsar to allow the persecuted Doukhobors to emigrate. They renamed themselves in 1886 as the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood. English Quakers collected funds for them. After an unsuccessful attempt at settlement in Cyprus about 7,500 reached Canada. The Canadian government granted land on easy terms in Saskatchewan and exemption from conscription. After moving to Canada their clashes with the government turned on their non-compliance with land, tax and education laws. They tend to avoid schooling because they believe that ‘the letter killeth’ and the schools teach war.

## **Jehovah's Witnesses**

The group was first organised in 1872 by Charles Taze Russell as 'International Bible Students' but in 1931 it was renamed Jehovah's Witnesses. They regard both Catholics and Protestants as misguided by Satan. The Witnesses believe that there is only one true God and that is Jehovah. Jesus Christ is the perfect man and is God's agent in establishing the theocracy. As the perfect man, he is now man's redeemer since his death made possible reconciliation with God, which was broken by Adam's sin. They do not believe in hell; the wicked, they say, are destroyed. The present time is the 'last days'. Soon the forces of evil will be pitted in a great battle, Armageddon, against the forces of Jehovah, led by Jesus. The forces of evil will be defeated and for one thousand years Jesus will reign with the Witnesses and the resurrected, righteous dead. Soon afterwards Satan will be destroyed and paradise will be set up on earth.

The Witnesses have always been sharply critical of other religious bodies, including the Catholics. They refuse to recognise the superiority of the State and consider their own men workers 'ordained' and exempt from military service. They claim exemption not as conscientious objectors but as ministers. As a consequence many of them face prison sentences of various lengths. During my research into conscription I was not able to obtain exact figures, but I am certain that in some countries the majority of conscientious objectors in prison were Jehovah's Witnesses. Not often do these objectors seek help from any organisation other than their own when facing trials or tribunals.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not pacifists in the real sense, in spite of their not accepting military service and their preparedness to suffer for their resistance to it. They believe that they will take up arms when Armageddon comes and the order comes from Jehovah himself to fight.

Nonetheless, many twentieth-century pacifists have come to their assistance when the Witnesses found themselves in trouble through their disobedience of the law of the land. The War Resisters' International has consistently given them all the support it could without expecting any reciprocity.

## **Nazarenes**

This denomination was the product of the merger of some 15 religious bodies stemming from the nineteenth-century Wesleyan holiness movement. The first merger was in 1907, uniting the church of the Nazarenes with the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America to form the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarenes. In their worship there is emphasis on simplicity and revivalistic evangelism. In doctrine the church stands in the tradition of Armenian Methodism and regards its unique mission to be the promotion of entire sanctification as a work of grace subsequent to conversion.

The first congregation of the sect, called Evangelical Baptists, merged in Switzerland under the leadership of Frolich. In the meantime some members of the Emmantal Mennonite congregation, feeling that their own church had become spiritually dry, joined Frolich's movement, which also attracted dissatisfied elements from the Reformed Church. At first the new denomination encountered heavy opposition from the established church. However it slowly expanded, sending out offshoots into the neighbouring lands of central Europe, and from around mid-century emigrants transplanted the church to the United States, where it became known as the Apostolic Christian Church. In the Hapsburg empire and the Balkans its adherents were called Nazarenes. Since their inception these Nazarenes have borne a steady witness to their

pacifist beliefs despite the heavy burden of long-term military conscription.<sup>15</sup>

Just after the conclusion of the Austro–Prussian war two English Quakers reported the following on the basis of information received from the Nazarene congregation in Vienna:

Their testimony against war has been faithfully borne. One Peter Zimbrigh, a tailor, was in prison. . . . Through the indulgence of the governor of the prison, he was occasionally allowed to go out and spend an evening with his friends, who endeavoured to strengthen his faith. When the war broke out, he was sent to the army, and ordered to fight. His sword and musket were tied to his body; and at last at the battle of Konniggrätz (Sadowa), his officer ordered him to be shot. While almost in the act of pronouncing sentence, a cannonball killed the officer. Zimbrigh (we understood) was still in prison. . . . He offered, when first conscripted to act as a servant, but this was refused, though we understand hospital and other work was sometimes accepted in lieu of direct military service.<sup>16</sup>

According to a report there were 12–15,000 Nazarenes in Yugoslavia during the mid-1960s in nearly 100 Nazarene congregations. A majority of them lived in Banat and Vojvodina areas in Serbia, once a part of the Austro–Hungarian empire. In the past few decades whenever the rulers were sympathetic to the Nazarene approach, they were treated with some understanding. Under the Emperor Franz Josef the pacifist position of the Nazarenes was recognised and they were given three years of non-combatant service in the army. This arrangement broke down during the First World War when the Austrian authorities shot many Nazarenes for refusing to bear arms. After the creation of Yugoslavia, the position of Nazarenes deteriorated further and many were imprisoned; some of them together with Mosa Pijade, one of the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist revolution, who had promised that things would be different when the Communists came to power.

The Nazarenes enjoyed some protection from Marshal Tito because of the excellent relief work they had undertaken after 1945 but the position again worsened and they were repeatedly given long prison sentences. In the mid-1950s two of them fled and stayed for some time in a camp in Germany where two WRI members were in charge. After learning of the plight of the Nazarene conscientious objectors the WRI took up the matter with the Yugoslav government. After long negotiations and several meetings the Yugoslav ambassador in London in 1961 gave the WRI some assurance to the effect that they would make administrative changes to the advantage of the Nazarenes. Despite this assurance nothing much changed.

The WRI made fresh efforts in 1964.

A deputation consisting of representatives of the War Resisters' International, the British Friends Peace Committee, Peace Pledge Union, Amnesty International, and led by Fenner Brockway, met the Yugoslav Ambassador . . . The Ambassador promised once again that he would approach the Defence Ministry and other authorities in Belgrade suggesting and even pressing for the release of at least these young men, . . .

According to the information received by the International only two COs were released.<sup>17</sup>

Thoroughgoing peace sentiment was held in Austria by scattered groups and individuals who followed Tolstoy and Kropotkin, theoretical “anarchists” and Christian communists. There were about 2,000 of these in all, kept together by a fortnightly journal,

*Wohlstand für Alle* (Welfare for All), edited in German, by Pierre Ramus. He is a Nazarene, a body which, like the Quakers in England, refuses all oaths. On this ground, in the years of peace, this paper outspokenly repudiated the Army and the Oath of Allegiance. It existed from December 1907 till the outbreak of war. Its last article, calling for general strike against the war, came out on July 24, 1914, the very day before martial law was declared. This happy accident saved the life of the editor, but he was incarcerated in military prisons, with short interruptions, till the fall of the Imperial Government. The readers of the paper were organised in a Federation called “International Anti-Militarists Association”, founded in 1904 by the late Domela F. Nieuwenhuis, . . . It was anti-militarist, anti-nationalist, against violence of all kinds, and fearlessly outspoken; but, like similar bodies elsewhere did not become a mass movement.<sup>18</sup>

Refusing to do military Service offered a CO the prospect of spending four to ten years in the military prison on the island of Goli Otok – the devil’s island.

### **Quakers – The Religious Society of Friends**

The Quaker movement emerged around the middle of the seventeenth century, after the conclusion of the civil war in England and at the outset of the Commonwealth. Although they are commonly known as Quakers their official name is The Religious Society of Friends. They represent the ‘extreme left wing’ of the puritan movement. The Quakers, the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonites are commonly known as ‘the historic peace churches’ and the Quakers have steadily insisted that war is contrary to God’s will.

George Fox, their founder, son of a Leicestershire weaver, and of a mother whom he described as ‘of the stock of the martyrs’, became disillusioned at the age of 19 with the way in which professing Christians were failing to live up to the standards they preached. For four years he travelled from one group of sectarians to another in search of spiritual help. In 1647 he expressed his feelings in his *Journal* saying that when all his hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that he had nothing outwardly to help him, or that could tell him what to do, he heard a voice which said ‘there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’. Fox’s aim was not to establish a new religious denomination. He only wanted to convince people everywhere to follow the principles and practices of pure Christianity. According to Peter Brock

Fox appears fairly early to have reached a position where he personally repudiated the use of violent means, of “carnal weapons.” While rejecting violence for himself, he did not at first require his followers to do likewise. Among those to whom he preached in the early years were soldiers: we do not find him admonishing them to abandon their profession. Some soldiers were convinced; only rarely did they then resign from the army because of scruples concerning the bearing of arms. Nowhere do we find evidence that their continued service encountered opposition or censure from either Fox or any of the other “Publishers of Truth” (as the first Quaker missionaries called themselves). Yet as early as the autumn of 1650 Fox had himself stepped forward as the protagonist of a vocational pacifism that gradually expanded into a tenet of the Society of Friends.<sup>19</sup>

At that time he was just beginning the first of his many imprisonments; he had been sen-



tenced to six months in jail by the Derby magistrate. While in the house of correction he was approached by Cromwell's commissioners. They 'had fancied the idea of appointing a stout-hearted young man like Fox to be a captain of militia'.

To this proposal Fox answered with a clear 'no'. As he related afterward in his *Journal*:

I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars: and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust, according to James his doctrine. And still they courted me to accept of their offer, and thought I did but compliment with them, but I told them I was come into the covenant of peace, which was before wars and strifes was; and they said they offered it in love and kindness to me, because of my virtue, and suchlike; and I told them if that were their love and kindness I trampled it under my feet.<sup>20</sup>

Fox dwells continually on the fact that once a man allows the inward light fully to shine he can no longer wield a weapon for whatever cause. He said: "Fighters are not of Christ's Kingdom, but are without Christ's Kingdom."<sup>21</sup>

The three chief emphases of Fox's message were (1) Christ's teaching and guidance, (2) the consequent irrelevance of special buildings or ordained ministers and (3) the application of Christ's teaching to the whole of life. Fox put great stress on the need for first-hand experience: 'Christ has come to teach his people himself.' Some devoted people, the early Quakers, gathered for worship believed that out of an energetic and expectant silence God might use any one of the worshippers as a minister. Most Quakers' meetings follow this tradition everywhere. They sit together in silence. After a while when one (anyone) feels moved he or she gets up and presents his or her thoughts and feelings in a few words. After a short gap of time another person does the same. There is no doubt that this is a tradition that creates a special kind of togetherness among the members present.

In Britain, the extreme attitude of Friends towards what they called 'a hireling ministry'; their refusal to take oath or pay tax to the church and their testimony against 'hat honour' led to their persecution under the Commonwealth. The Cromwell proclamation of 1655 required that 'the rude unchristian disturbance practised by Quakers, Ranters and others henceforth be stopped'. Magistrates were asked to proceed against the offenders. About 15,000 Friends suffered various legal sentences. More than 450 are known to have died in prison.

Like all other groups Quakers too had their ups and downs. In his very comprehensive account of the Society of Friends Peter Brock describes an episode which shows how State power tries to sabotage the forces of peace. In 1653 when Oliver Cromwell's son Richard had been overthrown, there was much excitement among religious radicals and they thought that great events were afoot. Sir Henry Vane, the leader of the puritan left in the parliament, sought collaboration of the Friends in a thorough organisation of the country, offering them at the same time a number of posts in local administration.<sup>22</sup>

It has been said that there was ambivalence among Quakers towards war, that pacifism was not a characteristic of the early Quakers and that it was forced upon them by the hostility of the outside world. It is quite likely that it took some time before a firm pacifist position was defined by the fully convinced among them. It is also very likely that there were other factors which must have deviated their loyalty from the pacifist position to the *ideal of just war*. Several sects and denominations, given particular circumstances, either gave up a strict pacifist position or started having second thoughts about it. However, George Fox, and later William Penn and Robert Barclay, John Bellers and others with their vision and dedication, introduced

greater life and purposefulness into the Quakers' communities.

Frequently there were rumours spread around that 'Quakers were disturbers of the peace, fomenters of civil war'. These were denied as lies. Fox said in a tract published in 1654:

for dwelling in the word, it takes away the occasion of wars . . . and brings to the beginning, before wars were.

He told Cromwell:

My weapons are not carnal but spiritual, and my kingdom is not of this world. Therefore with the carnal weapons I do not fight, but am from those things dead.

He told Quaker friends in 1657:

For all dwelling in the Light, that comes from Jesus, it leads out of wars, ... and leads out of the earth up to God.<sup>23</sup>

In 1656 Quakerism was carried across the Atlantic, where a rich mission field opened up on the North American mainland from the Carolinas to Maine. At the same time Quaker missionaries were actively attracting new followers among the Protestants in Dutch and German regions. Thus the first decade of their work proved encouraging, though eventually it did not turn out to be as fruitful as it was in Britain and the United States.

The most important of the Quaker documents on their pacifist approach is the Peace Testimony and various versions and comments on it. The following paragraph is from the text of the version they called *The Historic Peace Testimony*, the declaration they had made to Charles II in 1661:

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdom of this world.<sup>24</sup>

Like many other denominations and religious groups Quakers also suffered ideological and interpretative differences within the sect. The whole process of getting into contradictory positions, doubting one's own attitude and action, going back to the source and trying to become 'realistic', all these are parts of humankind's search for the correct step in terms of both immediacy of issues involved and the long-term ideology pronounced by prophets.

William Penn introduced some new elements in Quaker thinking which became important in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Quakers of this school of thought regard the Peace Testimony as not just concerned with personal morality or the ethos of the sect; they feel that the Society, while still guarding as far as possible a strict renunciation of all war by each member, should broaden the outreach of the testimony for peace and attempt to lessen the likelihood of war internationally.

However, gradualism and optimism also existed in the thinking of the seventeenth-century

Quaker attitude towards magistracy. They did not follow in the footsteps of the forerunners like Anabaptists and Mennonites, who denied any place to the ruler within Christian community.

They were ready themselves to accept office in certain circumstances. For instance, at a general meeting of Friends held at Balby in Yorkshire in 1656 a resolution . . . was accepted: "That if any be called to serve the Commonwealth in public welfare and good, that with cheerfulness it be undertaken, and in faithfulness discharged with God, that therein patterns and examples in the thing that is righteous ye may be to those that are without."<sup>25</sup>

It is necessary to note here that while on the one hand an anti-war perspective was taking firmer grounds among Quakers, on the other hand the attempt to create bridges between the classical pacifist position and reconciling this with problems arising from day-to-day living was also taking place. For instance, although, as a rule, they were not supposed to pay war taxes, Fox and his family paid the poll tax imposed in 1667 during the second Anglo–Dutch war and again in 1678 during the war against France. This they did with the full knowledge that the money would be used for conducting war. Fox, it seems, advised Friends as to how they should react to the demands of the government, saying that to the earthly, give the earthly, meaning that to Caesar we give his things and to God we give what is His. However, the question is: can what is considered universal truth be adapted according to one's immediate situation and convenience?

The dilemma is understandable. But it is possible to resolve it and take action, one way or another. The organisation called 'A Quaker Action Group' is a good example. Formed in the summer of 1966 in Philadelphia in the United States of America its objective was to 'apply nonviolent direct action as a witness against the war in Vietnam'. Co-operating with such existing organisations as the American Friends Service Committee in confronting 'immoral military and political policies of the government' the Group did not represent any official body of the Society of Friends and accepted as members those non-Quakers who shared their concerns.

In the summer of 1971, in response to a need for a multi-dimensional approach to social change A Quaker Action Group was transformed into the Movement for a New Society. George Lakey, Lawrence Scott and George Willoughby were instrumental in its organisation and direction.

### Notes Chapter 3

- 1 Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, Peace News, London, 1961, p.21
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- 3 Geoffrey Nuttall, *Christian Pacifism in History*, World Without War, 1971, p.4
- 4 Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1972, p.7
- 5 Ibid. p.21
- 6 Ibid. p.23
- 7 Ibid. p.23
- 8 Ibid. p.24
- 9 Ibid. p.24
- 10 Ibid. p.25

- 11 Ibid. p.22
- 12 Ibid. p.64
- 13 Ibid. p.409
- 14 Ibid. p.430
- 15 Ibid. p.495
- 16 Ibid. pp.496-7
- 17 War Resistance, 1st quarter 1968, pp.26-7
- 18 John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1922, pp.354-5
- 19 Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1972, pp.258-9
- 20 Ibid. p.259
- 21 Ibid. p.268
- 22 Ibid. p.266
- 23 Ibid. pp.260-61
- 24 The Ulster Quarterly Meeting Peace Committee (eds.), *The Quaker Peace Testimony – Its Basis*, p.8
- 25 Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1972, p.277

## CHAPTER 4

*The Truth in its full meaning lies in what was said thousands of years ago. . . . Thou Shalt Not Kill. The truth is that man may not and should not in any circumstances or under any pretext kill his fellow man. . . . And so I think that if we who are assembled here at this Peace Congress should, instead of clearly and definitely voicing this truth, address ourselves to the governments with various proposals for lessening the evils of war or gradually diminishing its frequency, we should be like men who having in their hand the key to a door, should try to break through walls they know to be too strong for them . . . Can we, then, who desire the abolition of war, find nothing more conducive to our aim than to propose to the governments which exist only by the aid of armies and consequently by war – measures which would destroy war? Are we to propose to the governments that they should destroy themselves?*  
Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays*

### Pacifism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Leo Tolstoy wrote of

hundreds of thousands of Quakers, Mennonites, Doukhobors, Molokans and others unattached to any definite sect – who consider that violence, and therefore military service, is incompatible with Christianity.

They practised their beliefs and suffered for doing so under the Tsar's regime.

Every year in Russia, therefore, some of those called up for military service refuse it on the ground of religious conviction. What does the Government do? Does it let them off? No! Does it compel them to serve, and in case of refusal punish them? No. . . . In 1818 the Government acted in this way.<sup>1</sup>

Tolstoy then quotes from the diary of a conscientious objector, N. N. Muravev-Kurski, as follows:

In the morning the Commandant told me that five peasants belonging to a landowner in Tambov province had lately been sent to Georgia. These men had been sent for soldiers, but would not serve. They had already been knouted several times and made to run the gauntlet, but they submitted readily to the most cruel punishments, and were even prepared for death, rather than serve. "Let us go," they said, "and leave us alone, and we will not hurt anyone. All men are equal, and the Tsar is a man like ourselves. Why should we pay him taxes? Why should we expose our lives to danger in order to kill in battle someone who has done us no harm? You can cut us to pieces, but we will not change our opinion or put on a soldier's cloak or eat rations. Those who pity us will

give us charity, but we have not had, and will not have, anything from the Crown.” [These men said] that there were many like them in Russia. They were taken before the Committee of Ministers four times, and it was decided to refer the matter to the Tsar. He gave orders that they should be sent to Georgia for correction, and he instructed the Commander-in-Chief to report to him monthly on the gradual success he might have in bringing these peasants to a proper state of mind.<sup>2</sup>

Early pacifism was mainly religious and sectarian in spirit and practice. At the same time it was inspired by the humanity that is inherent in every man and woman and which is against killing another human being, and therefore by implication, in some cases directly, opposed to militarism, which is the inevitable product of the dynamics of survival even at the cost of anybody else’s life or property. That spirit is common in all religions and cultures. We have already discussed the teachings of Jesus, Buddha and Mahavir who considered the killing of a fellow human being to be an inhuman act. It was their inner voice that dictated them to take such a step even at the risk of being called ignorant and impractical. Their main emphasis was on nonviolence and unity with nature.

Right to object to war service has hardly ever been accepted by the State as the constitutional right of a citizen. Yet an increasing number of men have been inspired to reject armed military service. This is despite the general belief that the State has a legitimate right to order its citizens to take up arms for the defence of their motherland and the government of the country. However, in some situations the State had to accept the fact that there are citizens who consider the dictate of their conscience to be more important and binding than the orders of the State. They are a special category of people; the pacifists who, under no circumstance, will give up their anti-war stance. Very reluctantly some states had to yield to the demand of the pacifists to be exempted from the duties in their armed services.

The State giving exemption to the pacifists did not mean that the conscientious objectors were simply relieved of the duty to bear arms or to go to the battlefield. The State considered it a privilege given to the objector to accommodate his scruples, for which he had to pay by doing some kind of alternative service within the military framework, or in some cases with money. He was even deprived of some benefits that are due to every citizen. If he did not comply with the orders to do alternative service within the framework of the military structure he was sent to prison for a variable length of time. There have been cases in which objectors served five or more prison sentences. In countries where there was no provision for alternative service the objector was almost always sent to prison, and occasionally executed.

The procedure for obtaining the status of a conscientious objector has generally been very humiliating. For example exemption from wartime military service did not give him any choice regarding the so-called responsibilities to the State. In most cases the objector had to appear before a tribunal which was generally unsympathetic to his pacifist conviction. There he had to face all kinds of questions, for example about arcane theological matters for which he would have been quite unprepared. Some of the objectors were, in all likelihood, not able to verbalise their feelings adequately. Many members of the tribunals considered the war objector to be a coward and a ‘useless lad’, unfaithful to his motherland.

Some of the early war resisters included those who objected to *war* as something that had nothing to do with their particular community and its faith. For instance Jehovah’s Witnesses, as we have seen, refuse military service, but they cannot be called pacifists. Nevertheless, thousands of their members have gone through the heaviest sufferings for their stand against the State military service.

There is a category of people who consider themselves pacifists, yet are willing to take up weapons in what they call special circumstances. They are willing to join the military to fight for the *defence* of their country if the threat comes from an outside force or anti-national elements – traitors – within the country. They make distinction between war as such and war for some *high ideals and for self-defence*.

Peter Brock records that William Penn

seems to have considered the provision of military sanctions as a last resort, necessary in case any member state refused to submit its case to arbitration by the diet of Europe.

Such an action would have to be primarily humanitarian:

to save lives which would otherwise be lost if Europe continued, as hitherto, to be rent by ceaseless warfare.

With Penn there enters a new element in Quaker thinking on peace that was to become particularly important in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Quakers of this school of thought regard the peace testimony as not solely concerned with personal morality or the ethos of the sect; they feel that their Society, while still guarding as far as possible a strict renunciation of all war on the part of its members, should broaden the outreach of its testimony for peace and attempt to lessen the incidence of war in the international arena.<sup>3</sup>

Brock suggests that proponents of this view, who were gradualistic in approach and optimistic

in regard to the political order in general, the proponents of this view broke conclusively, though probably unconsciously, with an Anabaptist-like residue of “nonconformity to the world” present in early Quaker writing alongside apocalyptic yearnings for the earthly rule of the Saints.<sup>4</sup>

One thing seems to be clear, that most members of the pacifist sects of a Christian denomination took their faith as a personal matter, something that had nothing to do with the State. They adjusted and compromised their position according to each situation, as individuals or as groups. Most of them accepted the managerial responsibilities of the State as a matter of course, but they came in conflict with it when it was a matter of recruitment in the armed forces.

Quakers, on the other hand, did not keep themselves aloof from the community at large. In fact it was part of their faith to relate to others, and look after their welfare too. Let us see how the pre-nineteenth-century Quakers looked at the magistrate’s office and the functioning of the State. Did they differentiate between permissible police duties and the war-making powers with which all governments are equipped? There was surely some ambiguity in the minds of two earliest generations of Quakers, a lack of precision in defining the limits within which a weapon-less people could consistently act. Fox explained his view about the purposes of governments. He and his followers

formed a community patterned after that of Christ and his disciples. But within the world as at present constituted government was indispensable. Here it had a positive

role to play. It should be, as St. Paul had taught, both “a terror to the evil doers who act contrary to the light of the Lord Jesus Christ” and at the same time “a praise to them that do well.” “The magistrate bears not the sword in vain,” wrote Fox paraphrasing once again the words of St. Paul.<sup>5</sup>

Much before the beginning of the nineteenth century Quakers had reached a stage of compromise with the existence of the State. Isaac Penington, who converted to pacifism in 1658, wrote a treatise in 1661. In it he mentions that Quakers have to be separate from the magistracy. Friends form a people apart whose function is to follow a ‘gospel spirit’ in their relations with their fellow men, whereby they ‘are taken off from fighting and cannot use a weapon destructive to any creature’. Penington saw Quakers’ service to the State in acting within it as an island of godliness. He believed that a nation which renounced war might rely on the Lord for protection. Nevertheless Quakers did not aim at removing the sword out of the hands of present-day governments.

## Emergence of new peace organisations

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of several new pacifist organisations – nearly all with a religious basis, but some also with socio-political contents in their philosophical perspectives. The character of their anti-war positions differed widely in terms of approach and logistics. On one side there were organisations with an unambiguously anti-war position and on the other side there were some which sought world peace by making appeals, negotiations and working primarily for treaties and conciliation between opposing nations. It was more or less an approach to bring about compromises even if they would be for short duration.

It is important to note that few of them addressed themselves to the general public, in other words, to the common citizen, as to what could be his or her role in the process of peace-making and getting rid of war as a means of resolving national or international conflicts. Most of them addressed their appeals to governments in order to convince them that their objective ought to be the reduction of tension between opposing nations or parties and to sit round the table and negotiate for peace and understanding and the reduction of armaments.

### **Massachusetts Peace Society (MPS)**

W. Evans Darby, Secretary of the Peace Society, London, wrote a letter to a friend, Miss A. Carter of Philadelphia, USA:

The Peace Movement on both sides of the Atlantic originated about the same time and quite independently of each other. Mr. D. J. Dodge published his pamphlet earlier than anything I can find connected with our Society, but Dr. Noah Worcester who followed him as early as 1814, began to urge the Friends of Peace to organise themselves for united efforts. Mr. Dodge’s work resulted in the New York Peace Society which was formed in August 1815; Dr. Noah Worcester’s in the Massachusetts (Boston) Society which was formed on Christmas Eve, 1815. The American Peace Society was formed by William Ladd in 1828. Earlier than 1814 Mr. Joseph Tregelles Price a young Quaker at Neath in Glamorganshire had a *concern* to form a peace society, and came to London to consult with the leaders of the Society of Friends here. In 1814, one of these, Mr.



Wm. Allan assembled at his home in Plough Lane, Lombard St., E. C., a number of gentlemen with the view to establish a Peace Society. . . .

When it next met in June 1816, it was decided to form a Society to be called The Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace. Meantime, the promoters in London had come into touch with the promoters of the Boston Society, and from that time, the two organisations have worked together in the closest harmony. Our Society [Peace Society] was formed on June 14th, 1816.

W. Evans Darby<sup>6</sup>

The Massachusetts Peace Society “was the third American Peace Society and the most significant pacifist group until the founding of the American Peace Society”. Its membership, ‘dominated by clergymen, continued to increase until 1820. After 1820, local branches siphoned off much of the membership, especially after Worcester’s [Noah Worcester, the founder of the Society] retirement in 1828. . . . By 1845, however, the MPS had been absorbed completely by the APS (American Peace Society).’<sup>7</sup>

The Massachusetts Peace Society II, founded in 1911, could be considered the second phase (1911–17) of the MPS.

Active through the years of preparation for World War I, the MPS (II) advocated Belgian famine relief and anti-preparedness [of WWI]. The group, was taken to task by adherents to absolute pacifism, was a casualty of WW I, as it failed to outlive the war it had sought to prevent.<sup>8</sup>

### **League of Universal Brotherhood**

The League of Universal Brotherhood was organised in 1847 and had two national branches – one British and the other American. Each had approximately 15,000 members. The first annual meeting of the British branch was held in London on May 29, 1848. It had several Quakers as its members, with Edmund Fry as secretary. Their objects and principles were embodied in a pledge of which the text was as follows:

Believing all war to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and destructive to the best interests of mankind, I do hereby pledge myself never to enlist or enter into any army or navy, or to yield any voluntary support or sanction to the preparation for or prosecution of any war, by whomsoever, or for whatsoever, proposed, declared or waged. And I do hereby associate myself with all persons, of whatever country, condition or colour, who have signed or shall hereafter sign this pledge, in a ‘League of Universal Brotherhood’ whose object shall be to employ all legitimate and moral means for the abolition of all war, and all the spirit and all the manifestations of war, throughout the world, for the abolition of all restrictions upon international correspondence and friendly intercourse, and of whatever else tends to make enemies of nations, or prevent their fusion into one peaceful brotherhood; for the abolition of all institutions and customs which do not recognise and respect the image of God and a human brother in every man, of whatever clime, colour or condition of humanity.<sup>9</sup>

The above text of the League is, to a considerable extent, similar to the principles and objectives of the No More War Movement or the War Resisters’ International. The spirit of

universality is almost identical to that of the WRI. However, the Brotherhood, despite having such a profound pledge, could not develop into an active and dynamic body able to work out a practical pacifist programme.

### **Universal Peace Union**

The American Civil War (April 1861 to April 1865) brought about a wider understanding of the futility of war as a means of conflict resolution and the need for peace and reconciliation. Out of it was born the Universal Peace Union (UPU). The UPU was perhaps the most colourful and important organisation coming out of the Civil War. It grew out of a reaction against the compromising tactics used by the American Peace Society. The UPU was launched at Providence in 1866, with Alfred Love, Henry Wright and others as its leaders.

The UPU laboured to remove the causes of war, to discontinue all resort to deadly force . . . never acquiescing in present wrongs. They tolerated no compromise with the principles of love and nonviolence. Specifically they preached immediate disarmament and worked for a general treaty among nations, arbitration, and unconditional submission to an international tribunal.

The UPU denounced imperialism, compulsory military training, memorials and war demonstrations, war taxes, capital punishment, the spread of white imperialism in Africa, the exclusion of oriental immigration and many other things. Without their protests and aggressive agitation the Indians would have been treated far worse. Because of their work Pennsylvania laws were relaxed in their application to Conscientious Objectors. They did not win all their battles but they carried the torch of enlightenment down through decades of valiant struggle.

Early in its career the UPU said that peace should be obtained in industry through arbitration. In 1880 they settled a dispute between the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Reading Railroad. Alfred Love was their prime motive power and arbitrator.

The UPU held its annual meeting at Mystic Grove, Connecticut. At first only about 60 persons went, but in the 1880s and 90s it grew to close to 10,000. In the employment of symbolism the Society was unexcelled. In the course of time more than 40 branch peace societies were technically affiliated with the UPU.<sup>10</sup>

The Universal Peace Union held a commemorative meeting on May 18, 1901, in Philadelphia. It was attended by a number of people. One of them said afterwards that he had met there more real truth than he ever had before.

The President, Alfred H. Love, addressed the meeting:

We are meeting on the eve of a great event for the pacification of the world and the overthrow of the military system. On the 18th of this month, the Hague International Peace Tribunal is opened for business. . . . This remarkable achievement in the history of the world ought to make this day one to be observed with each New Year as an event second to none in the civilisation of the world.

It may be asked what has been accomplished by the Hague Peace Tribunal in the two years since the call was issued for the representatives of all countries to meet and what since the conclusion of their labours and the establishment of the Court till this

day of its announcement – we are ready for business.

The very fact that a Court is now providing is a gain. It takes time to arrange all the necessary paraphernalia of a great Court. M. De Beaufort, President of the Tribunal, sent out messages to all of the 26 powers that the Court was formally established.

This is the grandest word ever sent out to humankind to bless humanity and yet so little noticed by press or people.

While the recent wars have been in progress and still unended, this true reserve force for peace has been gathering strength. It is for us to appreciate this event and to recognise and commemorate it as the hope of the age, and the biggest ray in the morning light of the new century.

At the same meeting a message from Rev. Amanda Deyo was read. Among other things he said

May the meetings do great good. . . . The riches of His great love are constantly poured out upon us – yet slow are we to learn. God bless you each and all in this blessed day's work, when we have such abundant cause for gratitude in the calling together of this Permanent Court for Arbitration. Blessed opening of the century!<sup>11</sup>

In 1902 William H. Parry wrote a note entitled 'The Outlook of the World for Peace', from Germantown, Pennsylvania. In this note he enumerated nine reasons supporting the Union's work against war and why it was important: I quote a few words from its last point:

My final reason for believing that the outlook for peace is a rosy one lies in the fact that the Hague court of arbitration for the first time in human history offers to the nations of the world an acceptable and adequate substitute for war. When nations are in dispute and diplomacy has failed, it is no longer necessary to seek the arbitration of the sword. In the historic city of Hague, there has been established a tribunal which metes out justice to all nations that come before it with their disputes.<sup>12</sup>

This is how the peace movement operated with its naiveté and optimism, which had an abundance of enthusiasm and courage, but lacked the experience of the realities of life, of human nature and its priorities in that given time in history.

The UPU was dissolved in 1920 and the Pennsylvania Peace Society, one of its affiliates, declared as its legatee. Following the First World War the situation had changed. People started realising that the most important work was not only the signing of treaties between nations in conflict with each other. There was much more that needed their attention and the attention of people who wanted peace in a much wider and deeper sense and who were willing to take concrete steps to abolish militarism.

### **Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft**

Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft (DFG), one of the oldest peace organisations in the German-speaking area, was founded in 1892 by the well known pacifist Bertha von Suttner and Alfred F. Fried. It reached the zenith of its activities in the 1920s.

... the DFG was not originally interested in conscientious objection [to military service]. 'We are not prepared to incite conscripts to a refusal of their duty' declared a statement of the years 1900– 1910. The DFG accepted conscientious objection only in 1960.<sup>13</sup>

It took some time to sort out their long-term agenda. They also felt that to be a part of an international movement would be helpful. The organisation then turned to the War Resisters' International and became one of its three affiliated bodies in Western Germany; the other two being Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK) and Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer (VK).

### **National Council of Peace Societies**

The British set up a federation of organisations which were concerned with the promotion of peace and development of international co-operation and goodwill. It originated in 1904 and was called the National Council of Peace Societies. In 1908 an International Peace Congress was held, in which the National Peace Council was established on a permanent basis with its headquarters in London. Organisations affiliated with the National Peace Council included pacifist as well as non-pacifist groups, religious and political organisations, trade unions and educational societies. Through the years, the Council made efforts to co-ordinate the work of its affiliated members to inform and influence public opinion by organising conferences on specific issues including problems of war and international strife. It is hard to assess the contribution the National Peace Council was able to make in the social or political life of the people, but it did help in building links between various peace movements.

### **Bureau International de la Paix (International Peace Bureau)**

An International Peace Congress was held in Rome in 1891. The International Peace Bureau (IPB) was the result of a proposal from the Congress to form an international clearing house. The organisation described itself as 'service secretariat' and was first located in Bern and finally in Geneva, Switzerland, from where it still continues to operate. The IPB also established an affiliated office in 1894 in Washington, USA. At one time, along with other movements, some pacifist organisations became its affiliates.

The IPB had a setback during the Second World War. But after the War it re-emerged as International Liaison Committee of Peace (ILCOP). A few years later it switched back to its original name – IPB. The War Resisters' International was affiliated to it and still remains so.

### **New York Peace Society**

The Guide to the Swarthmore College Peace Collection lists four New York Peace Societies. Perhaps the oldest among these peace groups was the New York Peace Society (NYPS) founded in 1815 by a New York merchant, David Low Dodge. The Society organised the first National Arbitration and Peace Congress in 1907. From the time of its inception it had been advocating the creation of permanent international courts and the progressive development of international law, as well as the limitation of armaments by international agreement. It joined with other early peace groups and formed the American Peace Society in 1828. The NYPS was formed as an auxiliary society in 1837 but had become defunct by 1844. The third one formed in 1844 also did not stay active for long.

### **American Peace Society**

As mentioned above the American Peace Society was formed in 1828 as an association of several peace societies. The Society and its branches sought to promote permanent international peace through participation in international peace congresses and support for the use of arbitration to settle international disputes. From 1932 onwards the work of the society was primarily the publication of *World Affairs*, a quarterly journal on international problems.

### **The League of Nations**

The coming into being of the League of Nations in 1920 was the result of the climate created by the labour of several peace organisations, national and international, which had been working for several decades for peace through goodwill, negotiations and arbitration.

The terrible losses of the First World War produced, as years went by and peace seemed no nearer, an ever growing public demand that some method be found to prevent the renewal of the suffering and destruction which were now seen to be an inescapable part of modern war. So great was the force of this demand that within a few weeks after the opening of a peace conference in Paris in January 1919 a unanimous agreement was reached on the text of the covenant of the League of Nations. Although the League was finally unable to fulfil the hopes of its founders, its creation was an event of importance in the history of international relations.

There is no doubt, however, that the experience gained from the work of these organisations has been significant in convincing committed activists that it is not sufficient to make appeals and publish statements for creating understanding and co-operation among peoples and resolving conflict between nations. It is essential to take concrete steps with full personal commitment and responsibility. To some extent it is necessary to go back to the source of the concept of pacifism, the way to build paths which people can journey upon with hope, faith and intelligence.

### **Tolstoy: a new light on pacifism**

There was a growing belief among many concerned people that war as an instrument for bringing about peace between nations and groups was becoming totally redundant. The First World War provided plenty of evidence for this belief. At the same time it was becoming clearer that preaching peace alone was not the way to reach it. It was essential that the peace forces try to convince the belligerent parties that the primary requirement for making peace was committing themselves to it. That was, first of all, necessary to create the climate for letting peace grow from below and that they would do their best if peace could be maintained. It was again and again brought home to people that word alone can never be effective in bringing nonviolence and pacifism to fruition.

When a third party makes an appeal with the hope that the State will be generous or intelligent enough to understand their arguments, they are shoved aside saying, as Tolstoy stated:

... I shall be told, 'this is anarchism; people never have lived without governments and States, and therefore governments and States and military forces defending them are necessary for the existence of the nations.'<sup>14</sup>

Such appeals make hardly any impact on the policies of the State.

Talking about the influence of peace organisations, especially those which addressed themselves to the power centres, i.e. governments, Leo Tolstoy said in 1909:

The governments will listen willingly to any speeches of that kind, knowing that such discussions will neither destroy war nor undermine their own power, but will only conceal yet more effectually what must be concealed if wars and armies and themselves in control of armies are to continue to exist.<sup>15</sup>

This does not imply that all the work of those peace organisations, including the League of Nations, was of no significance. In fact those efforts have to be considered a part of the total process of change. What came out of those efforts of sincere and imaginative men and women was the realisation that man's future is not totally predetermined by forces beyond his reach, and that human beings have been endowed with the necessary tools, imagination, skill, determination and discretion to work out their relationships with others; to mould their own destiny.

The most convincing argument for promoting an active pacifist philosophy and approach was put forward by Tolstoy in his speech at the Swedish Peace Congress. But before I quote anything else from his speech I must point to his concluding remarks, which I think are of fundamental significance. He wrote: ". . . for me, a man eighty years old, expecting to die at any moment, it would be shameful and criminal not to speak out the whole truth as I understand it – the truth which, as I firmly believe, is alone capable of relieving mankind from the incalculable ills produced by war."<sup>16</sup> The whole statement being a little too long I am giving here only a few paragraphs:

. . . difficulty lies in the impossibility of making the Christian faith (which those who form the governments profess with particular emphasis) accord with armies composed of Christians trained to slay. However much you may pervert the Christian teaching, however much you may hide its main principles, its fundamental teaching is the love of God and one's neighbour. . . .

Perhaps Christianity may be obsolete, and when choosing between the two – Christianity and love or the State and murder – the people of our time will conclude that the existence of the state and murder is so much more important than Christianity, that we must forego Christianity and retain only what is more important: the State and murder.

That may be so – at least people may think and feel so. But in that case they should say so! They should openly admit that people in our time have ceased to believe in what the collective wisdom of mankind has said . . . what is written indelibly on the heart of each man, and must now believe only in what is ordered by various people who by the accident of birth have happened to become emperors and kings, or by various intrigues and elections have become presidents or members of senates and parliaments – even if those orders include murder. That is what they ought to say!

If it is admitted that Christianity forbids murder, both armies and governments become impossible. If it is admitted that the government acknowledges the lawfulness of murder and denies Christianity, no one will wish to obey a government that exists merely by its power to kill. And besides, if murder is allowed in war it must be still more allowable when a people seeks its rights in a revolution. And therefore the governments, being unable to say either the one thing or the other, are anxious only to hide from their subjects the necessity of solving the dilemma.

And for us who are assembled here to counteract the evil of war, if we really desire to attain our end, only one thing is necessary: namely to put that dilemma quite clearly and definitely both to those who form the governments and to the masses of the people who compose the army. To do that we must not only clearly and openly repeat the truth we all know and cannot help knowing – that man should not slay his fellow man – but we must also make it clear that no considerations can destroy the demand made by that truth on people of the Christian world.

Therefore I propose to our Meeting to draw up and publish an appeal to all men, and especially to the Christian nations, in which we clearly and definitely express what everybody knows but hardly anyone says: namely that war is not – as most people now assume – a good and laudable affair, but that like all murder, it is a vile and criminal business not only for those who voluntarily choose military career but for those who submit to it from avarice or fear of punishment.

With regard to those who voluntarily choose a military career, I would propose to state clearly and definitely in that appeal that notwithstanding all the pomp, glitter, and general approval with which it is surrounded, it is a criminal and shameful activity; and that the higher the position a man holds in the military profession the more criminal and shameful is his occupation. In the same way with regard to men of the people who are drawn into military service by bribes or by threats of punishments, I propose to speak clearly and definitely of the gross mistake they make – contrary to their faith, morality, and common sense – when they consent to enter the army; contrary to their faith, because by entering the ranks of murderers they infringe the Law of God which they acknowledge; contrary to morality, . . .<sup>17</sup>

Tolstoy made a great impact on those pacifists who were feeling lost between orthodox pacifism and the quasi-pacifism of those who were trying to bring about peace and understanding among mankind through appeals to governments and organising conferences. The time had come for those pacifists to do some hard thinking and to prepare themselves for the forthcoming hardships faced by defying the State with all its militarism and its various manifestations. Tolstoy helped them in their understanding of the situation and its possible results.

A man born in an aristocratic family of landlords, one who spent long years of his life in the Russian army, Count Leo Tolstoy became a committed pacifist when he was nearly fifty years old. He had been deeply impressed by the Sermon on the Mount in his adolescence. Once, when he witnessed a guillotining in Paris he experienced a profound revulsion against homicide. Nine years later he saw a soldier being executed. Such an experience made him disillusioned with established Christianity, which supported war and execution. Tolstoy saw nonviolence as an ethical imperative in its purest form in Christ's teachings and life. He wrote: "The Sermon on the Mount always stood out for me as something special, and I read it more than anything else."

Tolstoy wrote an essay in 1900 entitled *Thou shall not kill*. He considered revolutionary violence to be both useless and immoral, but war waged by states was "incomparably more cruel than the murders committed by anarchists". He added: "If Alexander II and Humbert did not deserve death, still less did the thousands of Russians who perished at Plevna, or of Italians who perished in Abyssinia."

Tolstoy did not believe in international arbitration, which he thought had become the panacea of the peace societies everywhere as a method of abolishing armed conflict between nations.

To think that arbitration between states could achieve this was, he thought, a delusion, since it was the very existence of governments and state apparatuses that made domestic violence and international war inevitable. When in 1899 the first Hague Peace Conference took place, largely on the initiative of Tsar Nicholas II, Tolstoy was filled with contempt for those peace workers who imagined that this marked a step forward in the direction of a warless world. “The aim of the Conference”, he wrote “will be, not to establish peace, but to hide from men the sole means of escape from the miseries of war, which lies in the refusal by private individuals of all participation in the murders of war.” He envisaged a time in the future when personal conscientious objection would reach such dimensions as to take on the character of a general strike against war, of a boycott of the army by masses of individual objectors.<sup>18</sup>

Tolstoy was also critical of the peace societies active during his period for not being able to understand the fundamental importance of the precept of a ‘personal witness against war’. They kept their eyes shut as far as the personal responsibility of the individual to stop militarism at its roots was concerned, i.e. the question of the rightness or wrongness of taking part in military service. These societies side-tracked the basic issues by taking up problems of secondary importance. The depth of Tolstoy’s feelings about personal responsibility can be gauged from a statement he made referring to the suffering the Doukhobors were going through. He regarded the Dukhobor conscientious objectors as Christian martyrs. His biographer, E. J. Simmons, wrote that Tolstoy felt humiliated in being a modern Christ without a cross to bear. In January 1897 he declared:

I by no means see why the government, persecuting those who refuse military service, does not turn its punishment upon me, recognising in me an instigator. I am not too old for persecution, for any and all sorts of punishments, and my position is a defenseless one.<sup>19</sup>

At a time when genuine war resisters were looking for light, Tolstoy proved to be a beacon.

## The first two decades of the twentieth century – the First World War

### **Formation of organisations with an anti-war stance**

The initiative to do something against growing militarism came from people engaged in religious and social reform activities. Some members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) took the initiative in the formation of groups like the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. The inspiration behind the formation of these groups was their personal concern about the growing militarism and the politics of war-making so evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, in Europe specially. They addressed themselves to the people of all European nations, all the Christians, not to any particular sect.

However, many of the sectarian groups, still active in their own way, did not join these efforts, except for a few of their members in their personal capacity. For example not many Roman Catholics collaborated with the efforts made by, say, the Fellowship of Reconciliation; much of the support for the FOR came from Protestants. For a long time the Mennonites or the Doukhobors did not take much interest in the work of these new organisations. The Jehovah’s Witnesses remained completely aloof on account of their entirely different approach to worldly affairs.



## Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The roots of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) lie in the women's suffragette movement, the foundations of which were laid a little more than two hundred years ago. In England women's suffrage was first mooted by Mary Wollstonecraft in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. It is the story of a hard struggle against male domination, over a period of 150 years, by a large number of brilliant and determined women to obtain their rights equal to the male members of the society. The WILPF was formed by some of these women.

On April 28, 1915, for the first time in history, women of different nations met together at a time of war to express their opposition and consider ways of ending the conflict. The International Congress of Women that gathered at The Hague in Holland in the ninth month of the First World War included delegations from both Europe and America, from 'enemy' as well as neutral countries.

The Hague Congress was the offspring of the International Suffrage Alliance, an already well established organisation with a strong pacifist bias in its leadership.

The organisers [of the Congress] were soon faced with a serious problem. Would governments permit the delegates to attend? Amongst the most enthusiastic supporters of the Congress were the German suffragists. Some of them set out for The Hague, and were stopped at the Dutch border, but 28 got through. No French or Russian woman was able to attend. The British committee had recruited an imposing delegation of 180, but passports were refused to all but 25; and even as these delegates reached Tilbury, the North Sea was closed to all shipping and they could not sail. Three British women, however, succeeded in reaching The Hague . . . This group, too, was delayed on government orders in the English Channel, so that Jane Addams and the other 41 American delegates only reached The Hague just as the Congress was due to open.

In her opening address Dr Aletta Jacobs said:

Those of us who have convened this Congress . . . have never called it a Peace Congress, but an International Congress of Women assembled to protest against war and to suggest steps which may lead to warfare becoming an impossibility.<sup>20</sup>

Else Zeuthen wrote:

The immediate object of the founding Congress was to try to stop war, the outbreak of which had been a profound shock to all progressive and liberal-minded people. In a longer perspective, the aim was to abolish the war system and replace it by ordered co-operation among the nations. From the start there was a clear realization that a permanent peace would have to be based on the freedom and equal rights of all men.<sup>21</sup>

The Hague Congress adopted 20 resolutions, which laid down the principles and policies of the women's peace movement under six headings: Women and War; Action towards Peace; Principles of a Permanent Peace; International Co-operation; Education of Children; and Action to be Taken. One of the resolutions asked "the neutral countries to take immediate steps to create a conference of neutral nations which shall without delay offer continuous mediation".

Another resolution decided to send envoys 'to carry the message expressed in the Congress Resolutions to the rulers of the belligerent and neutral nations of Europe and to the President of the United States'.

[The Hague Congress also resolved] that an international meeting of women shall be held in the same place and at the same time as the Conference of Powers which shall frame the terms of the peace settlement after the war, for the purpose of presenting practical proposals to that Conference.<sup>22</sup>

The Manifesto issued by envoys of the WILPF Hague Congress to the governments of Europe and the President of the United States quoted some of most prominent personalities of several governments. They praised and welcomed the proposals of the WILPF Hague Congress. For example the prime minister of one of the larger countries said that the Hague Congress proposals were the sanest that had been brought to his office in the last six months. Another minister expressed that it was right to propose that it would be of the greatest importance to finish the fighting by early negotiation rather than by further military efforts, which would result in more and more destruction and irreparable loss.

It is understandable that the leadership of WILPF felt contented to see that their efforts were being welcomed by the concerned governments. There need not be any doubt that the warring countries themselves wanted to end the fighting and that the 'pressure' from so many prestigious bodies had some impact on their attitudes. From that point of view the WILPF and other peace bodies had their constructive role in the processes of peace-making. But how significant it was in the long run is difficult to assess.

One thing is certain: that the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom kept up its pacifist position and continued to demand those changes in social and political matters which were essential for building enduring peace. The *Statement of Aims* of WILPF, revised at its Stockholm Congress in 1959, described its aims as

bringing together women of different political and philosophical tendencies united in their determination to study, make known and help abolish the political, social, economic and psychological causes of war, and to work for a constructive peace.

The primary object of the WILPF continue to be total and universal disarmament, the abolition of violent means of coercion for the settlement of all conflicts, the substitution in every case of some form of peaceful settlement, and the strengthening of a world organization for the prevention of war, the institution of international law, and for the political, social and economic co-operation of peoples.<sup>23</sup>

### **Fellowship of Reconciliation**

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) came out of the radical wing of Christianity. In 1914 an ecumenical conference was held in Switzerland organised by Christians seeking to prevent the outbreak of war in Europe. Before the conference ended, however, the First World War had started and those present had to return to their respective countries. While returning to their homeland two of the participants, Henry Hodgkin, a British Quaker, and Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, a German Lutheran, met at a railroad station in Germany and pledged to find a way of working for peace even though their countries were at war. On the basis of this pledge some Christians gathered in Cambridge, England in December 1914 and founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The following autumn Henry Hodgkin, also one of the founders of the British FOR and a secretary of the foreign missions enterprises of the Society of Friends went to the United States of America. After speaking widely throughout the country on the spiritual crisis which the war represented, a conference was called to meet with him on Long Island to understand the meaning of *love your enemy*. It was there that the US Fellowship of Reconciliation came into being on November 11–12, 1915.

After setting up the US FOR the group sent a circular to find out who and how many would join in their struggle against war and preparations for it. The circular said:

The Movement thus launched differentiates itself from others occasioned by the war in certain important particulars. It is obviously not simply an addition to the already long list of peace societies. While there is no doubt that the members of the Fellowship find themselves unable to take part in war, the acceptance of the spirit of Christ as the only sufficient basis of society clearly involves for them very much more than the question of war. They view war not as an isolated phenomenon but as only one out of many unhappy consequences of the spiritual poverty of society. While it may at the present time be the most serious and most pressing problem confronting them, they conceive their task to be no less than a quest after an order of society in accordance with the mind of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

The leadership of the FOR, in the United States as well as in Great Britain, with their deep commitment and enthusiasm appealed to the people to join the Fellowship and help them in getting rid of war and all preparations for war. They argued that moral principle is a safer guide in the day of crisis than the most eloquent pragmatism. In their appeal the US Fellowship said:

Now is the time for this nation to have courage to go forward in a better way. This is the hour for us to dare to make trial of the will to love as the effective power for the maintenance of the moral and spiritual order. . . . The highest task that confronts us as a people, in the present situation, is to generate and set in operation between nations on a scale never before known the irresistible energies of love. The immeasurable needs of humanity plead with us to dare all risks in trying Christ's method of serving the cause of mankind.<sup>25</sup>

Some of their friends counselled that they should not be hasty, at least for the duration of the war. However, these idealists were sure of not failing to speak out in truth-bearing witness against the whole method of war and to plead for the war's speedy conclusion on the basis of *peace without victory*. Two conscientious objectors, Evan Thomas and Harold Gray, were sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to join the armed forces.

After his court-martial Harold Gray said in a letter:

So far as I am able to learn, Thomas and I are the only men for whom the death sentence has been asked, and since Thomas received twenty-five years' hard labour at Fort Leavenworth, my fate will probably be the same. However, if they should give me the death sentence and it should be approved by Washington, I know of no one who is more ready to die for a great cause than I am, and I certainly know of no greater cause than that of upholding the majesty and freedom of conscience.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime, on November 2, Evan Thomas was sent to solitary confinement at Fort

Leavenworth, where he remained continuously till the end of December. During his period in jail he was chained up in a standing position with his hands above his head for nine hours each day for nearly five weeks. The reason behind this punishment was that he had refused to do prison work in order to bring to the attention of the outside world the barbarous treatment being inflicted upon some Russian conscientious objectors. Such a great sacrifice could not go unnoticed by a large number of concerned people. It did not take a long time for many a young Christian idealist to join the Fellowship of Reconciliation and build it into an inspiring and dynamic movement. The driving force behind the FOR has been the desire on the part of many people to make a new study of the teaching of Jesus and to apply the results unflinchingly wherever they might lead.

The pacifist movement found institutional expression not only in national societies but in international organisation. According to Peter Brock

The twentieth century indeed has been an age of internationals. Socialists and co-operative internationals, Communist 'Red' and peasantist 'Green' internationals do not exhaust their number. It was natural, therefore, that after the war the ex-conscientious objectors of Britain and America, along with a handful of sympathisers from the former allied, enemy and neutral lands, should band together in some form of fellowship, which would provide a basis, they hoped, for the expansion of the movement beyond its Anglo-American heartland.<sup>27</sup>

### **International Fellowship of Reconciliation**

At a conference held in October 1919 in Bilthoven, Holland an organisation was formed with the name of the Movement for a Christian International. In 1921 its name was changed to International Fellowship of Reconciliation. All the national FOR groups got themselves affiliated to the International FOR. The 50 participants at the Bilthoven conference had solemnly acknowledged "each his own share in the sins of his own country in connection with the war and the making of so-called peace", and proclaimed their "shame for their part in the failure of their respective churches to maintain a universal spirit during war".<sup>28</sup> The number of affiliates had reached 11 already in 1919. The story of the Fellowship of Reconciliation is a story of the most dynamic pacifist Christian movement, one that received guidance from some of the most renowned and dedicated women and men from nearly all over the world.

By now the general public had started hearing openly things which were not generally publicly spoken of before, that is, that the institution of war had to be abolished if humankind was to live in peace and harmony. Tolstoy had explained the situation bravely and clearly. After the appearance of the German edition of his book, *What I Believe*, he received a letter from a professor of the University of Prague informing him of *The Net of Faith*, a book written by Chelcicky, a fifteenth-century Czech. The professor told Tolstoy that the writer had put forward the same views as his expressed in *What I Believe*. Chelcicky's book was not allowed to be published. After making much effort Tolstoy obtained some information about the writer from Pypin's history of Czech literature in which there was an account of *The Net of Faith*. Later Tolstoy also managed to get proof copies of the book, which he found 'in all respects a wonderful book'. He said:

Chelcicky entitled his book *The Net of Faith* because – having taken for epigraph the verse of the Gospel about Christ calling his disciples to be fishers of men – he says,

continuing that metaphor: “Christ by means of his disciples caught the whole world in his net of faith, but the big fish burst the net and escaped from it, and through the holes they made the other fish got out, so that the net has been left almost empty.”

Tolstoy said that the big fish that burst the net were the rulers, emperors, popes and kings, who, without renouncing power, accepted not Christianity but only its mask.

Chelcicky teaches what is taught to-day by the non-resistant Mennonites and Quakers, and was taught in former times by the Bogomiles, Paulicians, and many others. . . . A Christian, according to Chelcicky, not only cannot be a ruler or a soldier; he cannot take any part in the government, nor be a merchant, or even a landowner; . . .

This book is one of the few exposing official Christianity that have survived the *autos-da-fé*. All such books, which were pronounced heretical, were burnt, together with their authors, so that ancient works exposing the errors of official Christianity are very rare.<sup>29</sup>

Tolstoy had the farsightedness to be able to warn humankind that if it did not put an end to the growth of militarism its existence would be in jeopardy, and that it would not take long to reach the stage of non-reversal.

Pacifism, until the beginning of the First World War, was not taken seriously by the intelligentsia. When groups like the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the War Resisters’ International came into existence it dawned upon them that these pacifist men and women meant what they said: that they were willing to give up their comforts and everything, even their lives, to save the world from the disaster being created by the misconceived policies of the rulers.

#### Notes Chapter 4

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## CHAPTER 5

*What do you think? Wherein is courage required – in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior – he who keeps death always as bosom-friend, or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.*

M. K. Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

### Conscription, its origin and opposition to it

The use of the word ‘conscription’ with its present connotation, that is, compulsory national military service, dates back to the early nineteenth century. It first came into common use in connection with the mass national armies employed by the French in the Napoleonic Wars and from that period onwards was used by all the belligerent countries in the Franco–German war of 1870.

The power to compulsorily recruit men for the maintenance of armies, specially in the time of war, was used by the State from the earliest days of the Roman empire. Even in the days earlier than the period of the Roman empire rulers used coercion to recruit men for their armies whenever needed, whether for the defence of their kingdoms or for invading other regions. In other words conscription in some form or other had existed since the very early days of history, and presumably in every stabilised society.

#### **France**

Denis Hayes says of the origins of French conscription:

though Prussian regulation of 1733 had imposed compulsory service on quite a large scale, it was in the surge of the French Revolution that the live seeds of modern conscription were sown, seeds which in due time were to spread the roots of compulsion throughout the world. Notwithstanding a remarkable voluntary effort, the Republican Government in February, 1793, had been obliged to conscript 300,000 National Guards for foreign service. This levy failed to secure the necessary numbers and a few months later the Government, at the instigation of Carnot and Barère, introduced a general levy of all able bodied men from eighteen to twenty-five.<sup>2</sup>

The War Resisters’ International’s world survey of conscription states:

Under attack from Austria and the German States in 1792 the French improvised an army by Requisition which has been called “a special law of unprecedented despotism”. Compulsory military service was put into effect in February, 1793. . . . The Law of Conscription was substituted for the Requisition in 1798. This law made all French men liable to serve whenever the Government declared the country to be in danger and conscription was applied to men in the 20 to 25 age groups.<sup>3</sup>

This law of conscription service became a fundamental clause of the Constitution.

The French Revolution of 1789 saw the beginning of mass armies formed under the compulsory national military service law. When Napoleon saw that it had become difficult to meet the country's need to have an adequate number of soldiers by voluntary enlistment he used the law of conscription, and enrolled 2,613,000 conscripts between 1800 and 1813. For that time in history it was an immense figure.

After his victory in the battle of Jean in 1806 Napoleon restricted the size of the Prussian army, which gave birth to the idea of using a small cadre of professional soldiers as a 'sausage machine' to train batches of conscripts in a short time and pass them to the reserves. This method enabled Prussia, in a few years, to build up a large reserve of trained men without infringing the conditions restricting the size of the standing army. This was the system on which the continental powers based their armies in preparation for the First World War: a comparatively small corps of professional officers and soldiers, who were responsible for operational and administrative staff work and for instructing the conscripts forming the bulk of the army, who served for one to three years as full-time soldiers, before passing to the reserve. By this means France, Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary, in 1914, were able to deploy large armies within a few days of mobilisation and to follow these up quickly with reserve divisions composed of conscript reservists.

The civil authorities were required to prepare a national register from which conscripts would be drawn. . . . The Law permitted no Frenchman under the age of 30 to travel or serve in any public office unless he had discharged his military responsibilities. Escorts of police marched the conscripts in bodies of 100 to various depots throughout the empire so that no mass opposition could be organised. There were exemptions for clergy, doctors, only sons of widowed mothers, workers in war industries and soldiers who had survived five campaigns. Penalties for defaulters were harsh. Death or the "peine de boulet" punished them – ten hours hard labour a day for ten years chained to an iron ball and solitary confinement. In 1807 for using a false document to save his son from conscription a man was sentenced to 8 years' labour in irons, branding with a hot iron, 6 hours' exposure and a fine.<sup>4</sup>

When conscription was introduced in France, one of the arguments presented in its favour, supported by the social-democratic groups, was that international socialism should invariably throw its weight against the aggressor party, the party that fires the first shot. This argument was put forward by the French Parliamentarian Socialists under the leadership of Jean Jaurès. In fact the French syndicalists wanted Congress to "call on all comrades to answer any declaration of war, no matter from what side it is made, with the military strike and with insurrection".<sup>5</sup>

The French lived for years in the midst of the Second World War under great stress and fear. There was hardly a family from which at least one male member had not been lost or had undergone severe suffering. However, the same families were supporting their government in building weapons of mass destruction in the 1960s. Although there were some groups engaged in anti-war activities, compared to the UK and the USA mass movements against war, specially against nuclear weapons, were much weaker in France during that period.

"As recently as 1958 French citizens were called to arms, with full support of trade unions, to defend their country in response to rumours of a parachute invasion by Algerian generals who were opposed to a negotiated end to their war with France."<sup>6</sup> Whereas provision for



exemption from military service on grounds of conscience and/or religious beliefs had been introduced in some countries already before the First World War, in France it was not until 1963 that a law was introduced to provide exemption from military service to a very limited category of conscientious objectors (COs), who would do alternative service.

### **United States of America**

In the United States of America, although a number of States were already using compulsory methods of military enrolment, it was during the Civil War (April 1861 to April 1865) that military conscription in the modern sense was introduced.

In the North, the Act of 3rd March, 1863, ruled that “all able-bodied male citizens of the U.S. (and applicants for citizenship) . . . between the ages of 20 and 45 . . . are hereby declared to constitute the national forces, and shall be liable to perform military duty in that service of the U.S. when called out by the President for that purpose.”

Violations of the Act were punishable by up to \$500 fine and/or 2 years imprisonment. At the outset there were no provisions for conscientious objectors, but on 24th February, 1864, another Act granted alternative service in hospitals for whoever would swear that he was conscientiously opposed to bearing arms and could produce evidence that his “deportment had been uniformly consistent with such a declaration”. In addition substitutes were allowed on payment of \$300. In the South conscientious objectors had a more difficult time but could secure exemption on payment of \$500. The draft encountered general opposition in many cities of the North and in New York City on the 13th to 16th July, 1863, 100,000 infantry, three batteries of artillery and a division of the National Guard were needed to enforce it on an unwilling working population. At least 1,200 people were killed and damage to property amounted to \$1,500,000.<sup>7</sup>

The development of war and weapon technology forced governments to give some thought to the strategic as well as tactical aspects of war management on the one hand and on the other hand to the implications of international relations. With the expansion of war on land, sea and air it was important to co-ordinate the efforts of all the three fighting services. It meant that recruitment for the three services by conscripting men – and in some cases also women – had to be on a different basis.

In addition to the increase in the number of personnel trained in operations of sophisticated equipment of a large variety the size of armies for actual fighting had also to be increased. Although machines conserved manpower on the battlefield, they increased the number of men required for supply and maintenance of the equipment and its production in factories. Except in the USA all the other belligerent countries suffered acute shortage of manpower. Under these circumstances the concept of conscription came to be useful to all the nations.

After the Second World War, the Cold War provided a reason for many governments to impose conscription. Divided into two blocks, East and West, nearly all the countries of Europe and the USA continued compulsory military service. The reality or myth, whatever one wants to call it, dictated that the USA and European countries, of both East and West, not only continue with conscription but increase their armaments and make the nuclear bomb look like the greatest necessity for national defence.

## Switzerland

The principle behind military conscription in Switzerland has been very different. The Swiss military tradition has often been quoted as an example by pro-conscription forces in other European countries.<sup>8</sup> The Constitution of May 29, 1874, Article 18, states “Every Swiss citizen is subject to military service. . . . Each soldier receives gratis his initial arms, equipment and dress. The arms remain in the soldier’s hands, subject to conditions fixed by the Federal legislation.” According to the amendments of April 12, 1907: “These obligations commence from the year when the citizen reaches the age of 20 and lasts until the end of that year in which he reaches 60.” In Article 2 of the regulations the word “obligations” remained the same but the change of the age limit for *military service* was reduced from 60 to 48. Article 3 stated: “In the case of personal service not being accomplished, the Exemption Tax is applied.”

In 1924 people signed a petition asking for a choice between civilian and military service and between civil and military taxes. The National Council rejected the petition by 102 votes to 44. In 1947 another motion came before the Federal Council. In support of it the Commission for Civil Service of the Swiss Council of Associations for Peace published a comprehensive brochure examining all aspects of the problem, comparing the situation in Switzerland with that in other countries and proposing detailed legislation. All this came to nothing.

In the 1960s an increasingly active group of objectors and their supporters put their case for alternative service with growing force and demonstrated and held work camps to make their position known. In the 1960s an objector who was exempted from military service but refused to pay military tax had already undergone his eighteenth prison sentence at the beginning of 1968. During the same year another objector aged 26 was sentenced to three months for refusing three times to join military training courses, though he was willing to go to Algeria for one year civilian service camp.

There has been some difference of approach as to whether the French or the German system of comparatively long-term conscription is preferable to the “Swiss system of compulsory militia service, administered with reason and flexibility. The military efficiency of Switzerland’s Forces, which had been demonstrated by their spectacular mobilisation in the first week of August 1914, sprang from the complete popularity of the system itself, which was a source of pride to the people and a result of the ancient democracy of the Swiss Confederation. The ideal of equality seemed somewhat weakened in practice” because “about 48 percent of the recruits were rejected as physically unfit for service. . . . In any event the unfit were liable to a poll-tax to help level the burden.”<sup>9</sup>

It was a clever step on the part of the Swiss State to cut down the size of the Forces by rejecting nearly half of the recruits by declaring them “unfit for health reasons”. This step reduced the administrative and financial burden of the State while maintaining the democratic ideal as well as the number of soldiers considered necessary for the country’s defence. Moreover, the poll tax paid by the “rejected” recruits for being exempted from military service helped the State coffers. Furthermore, it also provided young men with the opportunity of not doing military service by paying the military tax.

Gradually sections of the Swiss youth also realised the futility of militarism. They now wanted a “Switzerland without army”. On September 12, 1982 10 members of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland formed an organisation called Gruppe für eine Schweiz ohne Armee (GSoA). In reply to a questionnaire I had sent to all the WRI member organisations, the secretary of the Group sent back the completed questionnaire with the following note:

The Swiss army used to be “sacred”. It was considered the best education a young man could get. Any critique of the army was considered treason. Objectors were rigorously sent to prison for several months. In our opinion the army was/is an institution of hatred, hierarchy, and patriarchy, although this army hasn’t fought in war for 150 years. We did not believe that the Swiss army was able to defend Swiss territory in a European war. So our conclusion is that the army is superfluous. It does not do anything good to Swiss society only spreads submission and aggression. So let us abolish the army.<sup>10</sup>

The State held a national referendum on this issue. Although the Group lost in the referendum it was by a very narrow margin.

### **Norway, Denmark and Sweden**

In Scandinavian countries a loose form of conscription was in operation prior to 1914. However, the fear and uncertainty of war caused many countries, including these countries, to tighten up their conscription machinery. Norway’s constitution of 1814 stated: “Every citizen of this State is generally bound to serve in the armed forces for his native country, without consideration as to birth and economic circumstances, for a fixed period. The manner of application of this principle should be determined by law.”<sup>11</sup> But until the General Compulsory Service Act of 1866 was introduced it was one of the first countries to provide humane treatment for conscientious objectors and legal provision for their exemption from military service.

The new Act did not provide for exemption on any grounds. A number of conscripts, mostly belonging to religious groups, refused to bear arms and were usually assigned to non-combatant branches of the army. The situation changed gradually. But even in the mid-1960s it was far from satisfactory. “Although conditions are still far from satisfactory from the the FMK’s (Norwegian affiliate of the War Resisters’ International) view, from now onwards (beginning of 1968) Norwegian COs may expect to have somewhat better prospects than previously of getting peace promoting work for their alternative service.”<sup>12</sup>

Denmark and Sweden were the first countries in Scandinavia to introduce laws to allow COs to render civil service in lieu of military service. In Denmark such a law came into operation on December 13, 1917 and in Sweden on May 21, 1920. An official report stated that in Denmark a large proportion of COs refused to choose an alternative service and went to prison instead.

### **Russia**

In Russia the Tsarist government sentenced conscientious objectors for a period of four to twenty years’ imprisonment or penal servitude, and sometimes even capital punishment was used. A WRI *Bulletin* in 1924 stated:

After the fall of the Tsarist Government the Provisional Government released all COs, but as the war was still going on and the Government still kept a regular army based on conscription it had to face the same problem as the former government with regard to COs who still refused to serve in their army. The Provisional Government prepared a special decree concerning those religious COs and providing for them alternative service. However, the Prov. Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks before this decree was issued.<sup>13</sup>

The WRI's survey continues the account:

On assuming power the Soviets dismissed all COs from the Red Army but shortly afterwards re-introduced conscription without making provision for their exemption. There was no conscription from 15th January to 29th May, 1918. The treatment of objectors depended on the attitude of local officials. In some cases they were given alternative work. In others they were released unconditionally and in the majority of cases they were imprisoned and a few were shot. Conscientious objectors had many friends among the general population and leaders very close to Lenin, including the head of his office staff, his wife and the circle of Christian Communists.

In October, 1918, a Decree (No. 190) was issued for all applications for exemptions on grounds of religious conviction to be examined by a court of inquiry and if approved to be assigned to alternative work in military hospitals. This arrangement was not acceptable to a large proportion of objectors.

After a conference of all concerned people the United Council of Religious Groups and Communities for the Defence of Conscientious Objectors was formed and its first action was

to approach the Government with an offer to act as the "Court of Inquiry" named in the Decree and to promote the establishment of other Councils throughout the Union. As a result a new Bill for objectors was published in *Izvestia* on 4th January, 1919.<sup>14</sup>

There was a great increase in the number of objectors and it was suggested that some religious sects which had not previously sanctioned conscientious objection, suddenly found appropriate commandment in their sacred books. This led to a ruling, published in *Izvestia* on July 24, 1919:

In the spirit of the Decree of 4th January, the expression of opinion must be complete, that is, the United Council of Religious Groups must reply formally that each individual person . . . is known personally to the Council; . . . The Tribunal . . . may reject the application if it finds . . . the applicant is simply trying to use it as a means . . . of getting out of civic duties.<sup>15</sup>

Such a statement alarmed the United Council. They demanded the withdrawal of the statement. The demand proved effective and the new Bill for objectors was published. As a result, by 1920 there were 30,000 cases registered as objectors in Moscow alone. The Government modified the law in 1924 to grant exemption only to certain specified religious groups among which Tolstoyans were not included.

In 1926, compulsory military training was introduced for students in higher educational establishments. In 1929, it became quite impossible for pacifists to associate together at all.<sup>16</sup>

The fate of the objectors depended largely upon the personality of the communist military commander who had to deal with their cases. For instance in the Moscow military district the military commander Mouralof trusted only V. G. Tchertkoff, the friend and colleague of Tolstoy, and agreed to grant full exemption to all those COs who would bring him a letter from Tchertkoff

certifying the sincerity of his religious convictions. It became more and more difficult for Tchertkoff to deal with an increasing number of cases; besides he felt he had no right to probe another man's conscience.

The WRI *Bulletin* IV described the cruel treatment the COs received for refusing to cooperate with the military structure. For instance in the County of Smolensk seven COs were shot in 1921 in spite of the protest made by the Moscow Central Soviets to stop the execution. The local tribunals shot more than 100 COs. Vallsilij Tarakin quite independently came to the conclusion that war of any kind was a great crime and he was ready to meet death for his faith. The Revolutionary Tribunal gave him the death penalty by shooting. He was given 48 hours to reconsider his decision. Eventually when the soldiers refused to shoot him the president of the Commission himself shot Tarakin. All the witnesses of the execution cried. Tarakin's last words were:

“Know it brethren, and always remember that by shooting my body you are killing your own soul. My body shall perish but my spirit will live, because I die for love and brotherhood.”

Some of the COs refused to accept the certificate of their religious sincerity supplied by the U. C., saying that it only weakens their spiritual side when they can get a certificate which will help to release them from military service. They also said that such a certificate brings forth envy among other people and lowers the significance of their attitude in their eyes instead of letting them act as an example.<sup>17</sup>

## **Finland**

Finland was a Grand Duchy of Tzarist Russia and from 1809 had its own army, however small in numbers, based on general conscription. But as a first phase in the 'Russification' policy of the Tzarist regime the army was disbanded in 1901. The liberation of the country took place with the spontaneous organisation of voluntary armies. Both white and red guards were established. After a bitter and cruel civil war independence of the New Republic was established in 1918. The Constitution of 1919 provided for military service as a duty of all citizens, male and female. The first military service law of 1922 made all those physically fit liable for military training, without any provision for conscientious objectors.

## **Asia and Africa**

The situation in the Asian and to some extent African countries in regard to conscription has been very different. Anti-conscription or even an anti-militarist perspective of the Western kind has taken a long time to be introduced. The experience of colonialism must be an important factor responsible for this near-total absence of anti-militarism.

It is interesting to note that the policy of the colonial powers was different in the colonised countries as compared to their home countries. In many colonies conscription was introduced only for the citizens of the ruling nations. The local population was kept away from the use of weapons of war. The British actually deprived the people of whatever weapons they possessed; so much so that in India there was a time when an average farmer could not own even an ordinary gun to protect his crops from wild animals.

High levels of unemployment in many of the countries of Asia and Africa are another factor which has not helped in developing a realistic understanding of militarism among the

people. It is an eye-opening experience to see the kind of crowds drawn at the recruiting centres specially when there is a call to arms based on national security. For instance when India and Pakistan and India and China went to war in the early 1960s, there were queues several miles long at recruiting centres in both India and Pakistan. Many of the slogans on posters used by both the sides to evoke nationalistic sentiments and the sense of obligation to defend one's motherland were alarmingly one-sided and devoid of basic human values. The conditioning of minds was so deep-rooted that the basic values propagated in most religions by their founders and prophets completely disappeared from the mind of the average person.

### **United Kingdom**

Britain, the biggest power involved in the First World War at its commencement, did not possess any form of conscription at the beginning, therefore it was natural that the struggle against conscription on the grounds of conscience started in that country.

When early in 1916 the first Conscription Bill was introduced into the British Parliament, the No-Conscription Fellowship (known as the N.C.F.), in which the Conscientious Objectors (COs) were organised, was already a powerful movement – so powerful indeed that the Government was compelled to take cognisance of it. From first to last the policy of the N.C.F. was to offer an uncompromising resistance to Conscription. The N.C.F. did not seek a way of escape for COs. It asked for no conscience clause; its sole aim was to defeat Conscription.

Nevertheless a conscience clause was inserted in the Bill. This was due partly to the efforts of influential pacifists, etc., and partly to the fact that in the N.C.F. were some of the finest and most respected young men in the country. It is also worthy of note that, notwithstanding that a war was in progress, the Tribunals, before which the COs had to appear, had the power to grant "absolute" exemption from all compulsory services whatsoever, military or civil.<sup>18</sup>

In actual practice, however, the tribunals, except in a few rare cases, refused to grant total exemption. Instead they offered either non-combatant military service or compulsory civil service. The majority of COs refused these offers and chose to be court-martialled for disobedience. They then were sent to prison, usually for two years.

Despite her very special geographic situation, about which we have already made a mention, gathering war clouds made the British government feel it necessary to recruit more soldiers than possible on a voluntary basis.

With the last months of 1915 the recruiting position became even worse and the advocates of conscription both within the Cabinet and without were becoming more and more insistent upon its introduction. But still the Government hung back, hesitating to take a step unprecedented in modern times and fearing that the support for the introduction of conscription might be less substantial than the loudmouthed fury of its advocates led them to believe.

So on October 5th, 1915, Lord Derby was appointed Director of Recruiting to carry out a last canvass of the country's man-power.<sup>19</sup>

Derby was a keen conscriptionist himself. He made a scheme for a voluntary system known as the Derby Scheme, which was bound to fail because those who were at the heart of affairs

wished it so. After a few days of sharp debate the Bill for the Military Service Act 1916 was carried by 431 for and 39 against, and received the Royal Assent. The Act provided that every male British subject who on August 15th, 1915 was ordinarily resident in Great Britain and had attained eighteen but not forty-one and who was either unmarried or a widower was to be deemed to have enlisted for general service for the period of the war. There were some exemptions left to the Tribunals to decide who could or could not apply for it.

In an all-night sitting in a dignified speech T. Edmond Harvey, an elected Liberal, spoke on behalf of the Society of Friends and put frankly, and moderately, the case for the conscientious objectors with which Parliament would soon have to deal if and when the threatened call-up of single men came about. Sir John Simon's opposition to compulsion for service was one of principle. He said:

The condition that compulsion should only be adopted by general consent has been abandoned in favour of the condition that compulsion should be adopted without any regard to the numbers to be compelled or to the strength of the opposition . . . Does anyone really suppose that once the principle of compulsion has been conceded you are going to stop here?<sup>20</sup>

Opposing the Bill, Arnold Rowntree begged the House "to leave men still the masters of their own souls, and to do nothing to destroy the fabric of England's appeal to the conscience of the world."<sup>21</sup>

The military machine always likes to secure an increase in the number of its personnel. To this end it creates public alarm leading to a climate which makes it easier for the public to accept youngsters' going to war. Politicians post-rationalise such events as shown by this extract from the *War Memoirs* of David Lloyd George:

Looking back after the event, no one can now doubt that the adoption of conscription was vitally necessary for carrying the War through to victory. Without it we should have been overwhelmed when Russia, Roumania and Serbia had all cracked and the French Army was threatening mutiny.<sup>22</sup>

There is another side of the practice of conscription related to the United Kingdom. It is true that on account of its unique situation, it faced no serious threat from any nation, hence did not need large armies for its own protection. It based its defence on its insular geographical position – surrounded by sea. Yet it had the largest navy in the world – the Royal Navy. Since the days of Oliver Cromwell's major generals the British people had resolutely opposed any form of compulsion for military service. Even in the beginning of the twentieth century when Britain became associated with France in an *entente cordiale* its commitments on the continent were so small that no attempt was made to increase the size of the army.

However, the British needed armed forces to keep their hold on the countries they had occupied as a colonial power. The British dominions did not have threatened land frontiers, therefore they faced no serious danger of attack from any nation. Therefore they could manage with comparatively small but very well trained and equipped garrisons, which were provided for India and other overseas possessions. The size of the garrisons was so limited that the question of conscription never arose.

When Britain needed more soldiers for the First World War in 1914–15 it had a large

enough number of volunteer recruits to train them properly and to be well equipped. But with the high number of casualties in the war it became apparent that it was not possible to increase the strength of the army further on the basis of voluntary recruitment, so Britain introduced conscription in January 1916. As soon as the war was over in November 1918 it reverted to a no-conscription position.

## Conscription and the First World War

When, later, the USA came into the war, a similar struggle took place with, on the whole, similar results. The next storm centre in the fight against conscription was in the Scandinavian countries and in Holland. In these countries a loose form of conscription – from which in most cases it was not difficult to arrange exemption – was in operation prior to 1914. But the First World War, owing to the fear and uncertainty which it created in the neutral countries, caused the latter to tighten up their conscription machinery. This increased stringency produced revolt, and gave rise to a powerful anti-conscription movement. That period encouraged a large number of young men to declare themselves COs, resulting in their imprisonment in all these countries.

The persecution of COs and their increased number might have encouraged governments to modify their conscription laws to try to establish various forms of alternative service for COs. However in these countries no attempt was made to secure full exemption from any kind of service. Denmark and Sweden were the first countries to introduce laws to allow COs to render civil service in lieu of military service. In Denmark such a law came into operation on December 13, 1917 and in Sweden on May 21, 1920.

An official report stated that in Denmark a large proportion of COs refused to choose an alternative service and went to prison instead. The Norwegian parliament considered a law in March 1922, but it was not passed. In Holland a law for alternative service was carried. Wilfred Wellock wrote that some comrades informed him that not many COs availed themselves of the provisions of this act.

In Switzerland an agitation went on to ask for alternative service. Swiss anti-militarists presented to the public a petition for their signatures to be presented to the government asking for civilian service in place of military service. It stated that in order to prevent abuse, the period of the alternative service could exceed military service by one-third in duration. It also suggested that those who objected to the paying of taxes for military purposes should pay a tax one-third greater in amount, which should be devoted exclusively to civil purposes.

Herbert Runham Brown had asked the WRI Sections for their opinion about alternative service. The great majority of those replying simply affirmed their agreement with the views expressed by him in his June letter. They looked upon alternative service as a dangerous support to military conscription and not likely to help in making war impossible. Some said that there were other ways to be of use to the community than by accepting the kinds of alternative service likely to be imposed. Some pointed to the demoralising effects of confining people in barracks.

One member thought that in the countries with conscription introducing alternative services would soon make a breach in military conscription itself. However, the experience in Scandinavia and Russia did not confirm this opinion. According to Runham Brown:

Most of us . . . think that we will have to educate the new generation for voluntary services for the community; but *we will have to strive against every form of compulsory service, in order to make the organisation of war impossible.*<sup>23</sup>



The debate over the question of giving priority to the demand for alternative service went on and on for a long time. It has remained an important issue and looking at the work of the International since the Second World War, particularly in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, it is clear that much of the effort of the WRI Sections, and to some extent of the International itself, went into the struggle to introduce legislation for recognition of conscientious objection as a human right. It has, naturally, encouraged the demand for alternative service. Even those who were not dedicated pacifists preferred alternative service to military service for the simple reason that it would save them from going to the battlefield.

### Why do people accept conscription?

It is said that protecting your home, your country, is the greatest truth and must be adhered to as your highest duty. For instance, "It is your *dharma*" says the *Gita*, the most revered scripture of the Hindus, the essence of the epic *Mahabharat*. The epic deals with the conflict: which side has the truth? Two branches of the same family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, ultimately come face to face on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Lord Krishna is the chariot driver of Arjuna, the commander-in-chief of the Pandavas. He stops the chariot on the battlefield and commands that the battle having been declared, Arjuna must do what his duty demands. Arjuna expresses his inability to lift his bow and arrow against his own kith and kin.

The *Gita* is the discourse given by Krishna in response to Arjuna's doubts. Krishna's reply to Arjuna is that for the sake of sentiment he must not forsake that which he considers to be the truth. According to most interpretations of the *Gita* Krishna's order is: "it is your duty, Arjuna; do not be misguided by worldly sentiments – of blood relationship. You must fight the battle as a brave and dutiful man, as you have always been". All the belligerent parties have often used this interpretation of *Gita*. Hardly anybody has questioned this teaching of *Gita*. It is taught as a ritual and considered to be something that cannot be disputed. However, Gandhi had something different to say about it.

According to Gandhi's interpretation *Gita* is not about the Kurukshetra battle as such; it is about the battle that goes on in the heart and mind of each individual and it is for himself or herself alone to decide as to what action should be taken to solve the dilemma or dispute. But Gandhi implies that Arjuna would have refused to take up arms if he had been knowledgeable about this aspect of nonviolence advocated in *Gita* by Krishna himself; which is the major emphasis of the scripture. It is in this context that Gandhi often said: "Violence is preferable to cowardice, but the only desirable thing is nonviolence." Gandhi says: ". . . on the present occasion, his [Arjuna's] reason was suddenly clouded by ignorant attachment. He did not wish to kill his kinsmen. He did not say that he would not kill anyone even if he believed that person to be wicked . . ." <sup>24</sup> Gandhi's interpretation of *Gita* is the opposite of the one popularised and that recommends retaliation or even aggression.

The experience of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) in Britain after a few years of its founding is a significant example of a similar dilemma faced by pacifists in modern times. For some of its members the idea and slogan of war resistance as a universal principle was fine up to a certain level and was to be adhered to; but when it started conflicting with intellectual or sentimental attachments it became hard to continue accepting pacifism as a lifelong pledge.

A few years before the Second World War 'Dr. H. R. L. Sheppard, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, invited any men who felt as he did to send him a post card stating that he renounced war and would never take part in another one. The response was immediate and

overwhelming ... So “Dick Sheppard’s army” was enlisted.’<sup>25</sup>

In the first year the Peace Pledge Union received 80,000 signatures to the pledges. Its pre-war membership rose at one point to 140,000 and with its weekly newspaper, *Peace News*, it came to dominate the pacifist field.

But let us see what happened when Hitler jumped into the war in the late 1930s. People rightly believed that Nazism was one of the greatest of all evils of the century. The corollary was that the war against Nazism and Hitler was a just war and had to be fought and supported by everyone who wanted to save democracy. Before long the Peace Pledge Union was left with just a few thousand members. Many who had considered themselves staunch pacifists, including many intellectuals, left the PPU and extended support to their government. Several joined the armed forces and supported military conscription, introduced in May 1939.

One question that bothered the pacifists was, and still is, how to resolve the psychological conflict many people face in accepting the pacifist argument against the so-called just war. People like Fenner Brockway, Chairman of the WRI for a long time, Albert Einstein, one of the greatest names in the worlds not only of science but also of humanism, and C. E. M. Joad, to mention three of the most well known personalities, gave up their pacifist position when they had to face that question. To solve this dilemma one must look at the problem in its long-term and broadest perspective. People forget that destroying enemies like Hitler and Hitlerism by using the instruments of war does not destroy the evil forever; in fact in today’s conditions it destroys innocent masses more than it ever did. After the defeat and death of Hitler many people asked whether Hitlerism had been eliminated from the world.

Despite the understandable senselessness of the institution of war and militarism and its inhuman character, and the ultimate destruction it causes, the dilemma remains in the minds of a large majority: should I fight against injustice with weapons or do I sit quietly and watch the happenings as a helpless creature? Or, is there any other way I can face the situation courageously and creatively? What are the factors which influence many an individual or even group to tilt on the side of violence and lead people to the battlefield? Why has the pacifist movement, especially the War Resisters’ International, been unable to find the answers?

The ‘just war’ argument is perhaps the most challenging for pacifists. I would like to touch upon a couple of relevant points in this connection. The first is about the prevalent notion that democracy and conscription are closely connected with each other. At the time of the introduction of military conscription the argument put forward in its favour was that it should not be the responsibility only of the paid soldiers – generally from the poor strata of the society – to defend the country; each citizen belonging to every strata of the society should consider it to be his or her duty, and therefore, each able-bodied person must take part in the process of defending their country, and should be ready to perform the duty at any time required by the State. The introduction of military conscription therefore added a new dimension into the psychology. It injected compulsory militarisation into the social structure.

The second is the notion that as discipline is a virtue and one of the chief qualities associated with militarism, the armed forces have something valuable to teach. Even a person like Mahatma Gandhi, whose philosophy and programme were against militarism, admired the military kind of discipline as part of education.

Lord Hugh Cecil put forward the following counter-argument in a talk he gave in 1909 on ‘Liberty and Authority’:

If by discipline is meant self-discipline that certainly is a most precious quality. But is it the case that soldiers are pre-eminent in self-discipline? I confess that I have never

been able to notice that the soldiers are superior in self-control and self-discipline to civilians. Discipline then, in the military sense means something different. It means, I apprehend obedience – what is called in military language subordination. Obedience is in truth a non-moral habit. It may make for good, but it may also make for evil.<sup>26</sup>

## WRI opposes all conscription

The question for the WRI is: is our task only to get rid of military conscription? Our major task cannot be to go on increasing the number of conscientious objectors doing alternative service, even if for social welfare, but to strive for the removal of all the causes of war. The authority of the State itself is often one of the causes of war. Hence, one of the things that has to be confronted is the compulsion exercised by the State to make people do things under its authority. The pacifist struggle is not only against military conscription but conscription in its every form; in other words to liberate the individual and humankind as a whole from the absolute authority of the State.

The WRI has constantly been aware of the reality that it has not been able to do as much as it was expected or wanted to do in using the anti-conscription concept for its goal of social change. One of the underlying reasons for being conscious about it was the fact that rather than being directed to building a warless world, too much of its energy was being spent in securing the right of conscientious objectors – many of whom were interested primarily in securing exemption from military service or obtaining alternative service. There have been several occasions when at its International Council meetings or the Triennial conferences statements to that effect were made.

In 1967 during the US war in Vietnam the Council meeting held in Spode House in Great Britain made the following statement after a discussion on the question of a pacifist approach to military conscription:

The WRI is opposed to conscription for military or civilian purposes and advocates its total abolition. The Council recommends the Executive to explore with the Sections the possibility of an International anti-conscription campaign.

Because the WRI is opposed to conscription on principle, it does not recognise the right of the State to impose an alternative to compulsory military services. Nevertheless it admits that in countries where military conscription exists, the provision of alternative service may be a step forward. In such cases we consider that civilian alternative service should be granted to all who apply for it. Such service should be socially constructive and should include the possibility of international service or participation in a peace programme under the auspices of a voluntary agency.

The WRI takes note of the special problems that have arisen in the USA in connection with the war in Vietnam where a number of young men for reasons of social or cultural background have not applied for the traditional CO status or have been refused exemption because their objection was not of a religious nature or applied only to this particular war. The WRI views all these men as genuine conscientious objectors to conscription and therefore deserving its full support.

The WRI reaffirms that its campaign against conscription is only part of its general struggle against war and its causes and for the establishment of a nonviolent social order.<sup>27</sup>

It is not military conscription alone that the WRI wants to get rid of, it has to get rid of the State's authority to force people to do those things that are harmful to humankind. Yet it seems that the State and the authority inherent in the State cannot be separated. Does it mean that as long as the State exists with its present structure and tradition conscription too will remain?

In this very context another basic question has to be raised. Does the State build armies only for protecting the country from outside interference and for defence? Or is it under the garb of national defence it tries, nearly always successfully, to subjugate the population – condition it to be able to keep it under control by all sorts of methods? These issues cannot be separated from each other.

### Notes Chapter 5

- 1 M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Navjivan Trust, 1938, p.82
- 2 Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, Sheppard Press, London, 1949, p.291
- 3 Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe, *Conscription, a World Survey*, WRI, London, 1968, p.37
- 4 *Ibid.* p.37
- 5 David Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, Macgibbon & Kee, London, 1967, pp.18–19
- 6 Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe, *Conscription, a World Survey*, WRI, London, 1968, p.38
- 7 *Ibid.* p.139
- 8 *Ibid.* p.124–5
- 9 Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, Sheppard Press, London, 1949, p.294
- 10 From the author's own archives
- 11 Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe, *Conscription, a World Survey*, WRI, London, 1968, p.101
- 12 *Ibid.* p.106
- 13 *Bulletin* IV, March 1924, p.2
- 14 Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe, *Conscription, a World Survey*, WRI, London, 1968, p.131
- 15 *Ibid.* pp.132–4
- 16 *Ibid.* p.134
- 17 *Bulletin* IV, 1924, p.5
- 18 Wilfred Wellock, 'Alternatives to Military Service', *Bulletin* II, November 1923, p.2
- 19 Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, Sheppard Press, London, 1949, p.194
- 20 *Ibid.* p.202
- 21 *Ibid.* p.204
- 22 *Ibid.* p.194
- 23 Wilfred Wellock, 'Alternatives to Military Service', *Bulletin* II, November 1923, p.2
- 24 M. K. Gandhi, *The Bhagwadgita*, Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1993, Introduction: 'Any interpretation of a *Shashtra* which is opposed to truth cannot be right. . . . Anyone . . . who does not find the principle of nonviolence in the Castries is indeed in danger, but his case is not hopeless. Truth is a positive value, while nonviolence is a negative value. Truth affirms. Nonviolence forbids some thing, which is real enough. Truth exists, untruth does not exist. Violence exists, nonviolence does not. Even so, the highest *dharma* for us is that nothing but nonviolence can be. Truth is its own proof, and nonviolence is its supreme fruit. The latter is necessarily contained in the former.  
' . . . Let us now examine the *Gita*. Its subject matter is simply the realisation of Brahman and the means thereto; the battle is only the occasion for its teaching. One can say, if one likes, that the poet used it as an occasion because he did not look upon it as morally wrong. On reading the *Mahabharata* I formed quite a different impression. Vyasa wrote his superbly beautiful epic to depict the futility of war. What did the Kauravas' defeat and the Pandavas' victory mean? How many among the victors survived? What was their fate? What was the fate of Kunti, mother of the Pandavas? What trace is left today of the Yadava race?  
'Since the *Gita*'s subject is not description of the battle and justification of violence, it is per-

fectly wrong to give much importance to these. If, moreover, it is difficult to reconcile a few of the verses with the idea that the *Gita* advocates nonviolence, it is still more difficult to reconcile the teaching of the work as a whole with the advocacy of violence.'

Gandhi asks: 'But then had Arjuna's obstinate refusal to fight anything to do with nonviolence? In fact, he had fought often enough in the past. On the present occasion his reasoning was suddenly clouded by ignorant attachment. He did not wish to kill his kinsmen. He did not say that he would not kill anyone even if he believed that person to be wicked. Shri Krishna . . . understands the momentary darkening of Arjuna's reason. He, therefore, tells him: 'You have already committed violence. By talking now like a wise man, you will not learn nonviolence. Having started on this course, you must finish the job.' . . . Krishna, who believed in nonviolence, could not have given Arjuna any advice other than that what he did. But to conclude from this that the *Gita* teaches violence or justifies war is as unwarranted as to argue that, since violence in some form or other is inescapable for maintaining the body in existence, dharma lies only in violence. The man of discriminating intellect, on the other hand, teaches the duty of striving for deliverance from this body which exists through violence, the duty, that is, striving for *moksha*.'

25 'Our New British Section – The Peace Pledge Union', *The War Resister* 41, Winter 1936, p.13

26 Quoted by J. M. Todd in *Conscription*, Peace Pledge Union, London, p.5

27 *War Resistance* 2:22, 3rd quarter, 1967, p.5

## PART TWO

### The War Resisters' International

## CHAPTER 6

*And so I fell asleep to dream of the International of those who would refuse all war service, not to keep themselves unsoiled from the blood of their brother, but so that they might render the greatest of all service, that they might be his comrade and rekindle his faith in men. I saw the great walls of race and nation, of differing language and custom, of creed and political opinion, of wealth and poverty, of caste and class, rise up before me. We had broken prison walls and re-established an effective contact. Here, surely was a bigger task we must set ourselves steadily and systematically to accomplish. We must break through the barriers.*

H. Runham Brown, *Cutting Ice*

### The beginning

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The First World War ended with the Armistice agreement with Germany signed on November 11, 1918. Consequently, the pressure of conscription on young men was no longer so acute. Some of those who had become war resisters felt relieved, but others, who had gone through experiences which made their pacifist commitment firmer and stronger, felt the need to continue the struggle against militarism. They planned to form an active body that would continue the work in an organised manner and with a long-term perspective. The idea was to go deeper into the implications of their pacifist approach to war, which according to the philosophies of statehood and militarism, was supposed to be the instrument for bringing about peace in the world, a view once again proved by the First World War to be futile and totally disastrous.

An initiative came from some dedicated individuals and organisations, such as the Religious Society of Friends and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, that were deeply engaged in pacifist activities. However, a further step of the ladder had to be climbed to reach the goal of making this a really warless world and a world aiming at human unity. There was another challenge, that is to consider human beings as human beings and not as Jews, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, atheists, agnostics or any such category. The need was to create a body that would work incessantly against militarism in all its forms and manifestations and without any discrimination between women and men, or between people belonging to different races and religions or creeds. This body would consider all humanity as one family.

Until that time pacifist groups had their own well-defined constituencies and followers to address and seek support from. Even if in an organisation 'others' were welcomed to sit and discuss matters of common interest they could not fully identify with them. Their language and focal points were often different. Even if they tried, which they very often did wholeheartedly, it was not easy for them to go far enough to be able to feel at one with their way of expression.

At this point some Quakers and members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation attended meetings of other denominations and started feeling that this gap was a crucial one. They felt the need for a body that would address every man and woman of every country in the world asking them to come out openly and work together for getting rid of war and militarism. They strongly felt that to achieve that goal they themselves must organise to do everything they

could to root out all the causes that make war a likely possibility.

At this time politics was being influenced by socialist thinking and enlightened anarchism was also making its impact on the minds of many concerned people. This was another factor which caused some activists to feel the need for a radical and non-sectarian pacifist organisation with a well-balanced political and economical analysis, able to approach and attract people of all strata – social as well as economic.

The two philosophies, socialism and anarchism, were making an impact particularly on the younger generation, which was willing to look at the phenomenon of war from a fresh angle – different from the way the majority of the men and women of the older generation did. However, the pacifist activities of members of some sections of the Society of Friends and the Fellowship of Reconciliation were attractive and meaningful enough to the younger generation to share in the efforts to build a new movement.

They began to make contacts, nationwide as well as internationally, with the purpose of holding a get-together to discuss what they could jointly do next as pacifists. There were already anti-militarist organisations in several European countries. Holland, although it was neutral in the First World War, had many war objectors, and among them a good proportion had anarchist views. They decided to call a meeting to discuss their future plans.

It was decided that the consultations would be held in Holland, which was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, Holland was a neutral country in the First World War; it was comparatively easy for delegates to travel there from many European nations. Secondly, there were certain characteristics of Dutch society as described in the note entitled 'The Birthplace of Internationalism' published in *The War Resister*.

The remarkable fact that nearly all the international anti-militarist organisations have been founded in Holland is due to something more than the geographical position of the country. The Dutch working class people are largely anti-militarist.

The Anti-Militarist Union was founded more than twenty years ago and is a big and influential organisation, out of which has grown the International Anti-Militarist Bureau Against War and Reaction, a most effective organisation which is always in co-operation with the War Resisters' International. We would draw the special attention of our readers to the excellent Press Service published by the Secretary of the I.A.M.B., Albert de Jong, . . .

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom held its first meeting in Holland in 1914, shortly afterwards the International Fellowship of Reconciliation held its inaugural meeting in that country, and in 1921 the War Resisters' International was founded at Bilthoven, Holland; while official peace institutions, such as the World Court of Justice, meet in the Netherlands.

More recently the International Union of Anti-militarist Clergymen and Ministers has been formed and its Secretary, the Rev. Dr. J. B. Th. Hugenholtz, who is also secretary of the Dutch Federation of Peace Movements, has published a most valuable Year Book entitled "Jaarboek voor de Vredsbeweging in Nederland," . . . The Dutch Baptists have a special War Resistance Committee, which is affiliated to the Union of Anti-Militarist Clergymen and Ministers. The Bond van Religieuze Anarcho-Communisten is the official section of the W.R.I. All the movements are linked together in a special committee working in conjunction with the Joint Peace Council in the campaign against military training.

There is also a special council for the assistance of imprisoned war resisters.<sup>1</sup>



A Dutch pacifist and anarchist, Kees Boeke, whose wife was a Quaker from the Cadbury family, took the initiative and made his home available for the meeting, which took place from March 23 to 25, 1921. Representatives from four countries – Britain, Germany, Austria and Holland – took part in it. The most prominent and active among them were Ernest Fletcher; Wilfred Wellock, representing the No More War Movement; Muriel and Doris Lester, Britain; Max Josef Metzger, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944; Wilhelm Meyer, one of the founders of the German Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner (Union of War Service Refusers) and a number of Dutch pacifists.

## The birth of the War Resisters' International

The Bilthoven Conference founded an organisation with the name Paco, the Esperanto word for Peace. A Declaration, on which every person seeking membership of the organisation was expected to put his or her signature, was formulated:

**War is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.**

The Bilthoven meeting also made a Statement of Principles elaborating the implications of the Declaration. The wording of the Declaration was later changed at the Hoddesdon Conference held in 1925. The Declaration and its implications explained along with it show the sound socio-political perspective which modern pacifists were developing within the framework of their philosophy and action.

Jo Meijer was appointed as Secretary of the organisation. During his 18 months in that position Jo Meijer wrote to a great number of individuals, including conscientious objectors and organisations sympathetic to the pacifist cause in various countries, and established contacts with as many of them as possible. He arranged lecture tours for some of the members who were present at the first meeting of March, 1921. Wilfred Wellock travelled to some countries talking about the organisation, Paco, and seeking help from people interested in pacifism and anti-militarism. This formed a sound basis for Paco as an international pacifist movement. Jo Meijer managed to build a good-sized mailing list of interested people from many lands.

Jo Meijer organised the second conference of Paco, also in Bilthoven. It took place from December 16 to 18, 1922. From a letter about a change of the dates, written by Jo Meijer on November 22, sent to the people who had attended the first conference, it could be concluded that he was having some difficulty in carrying on his work with Paco, probably on account of monetary problems and partly relating to the work itself. The dates he fixed for the Paco conference had to be suited to the conference of the International Absolutist Anti-Militarists in Holland. Jo Meijer expressed his inability to continue as the Secretary of Paco and asked to be relieved of the position. No one offered his or her services and no name from Holland was proposed. Jo Meijer then asked Wilfred Wellock, who attended the meeting on behalf of the British No More War Movement, if someone could be found in Britain to volunteer for the job.

### **Herbert Runham Brown**

After his return to London Wilfred Wellock held a meeting at the London office of the No More War Movement with Beatrice Brown, the Secretary, and three members of the Move-

ment, Theodora Wilson, James Hudson and H. Runham Brown. After he presented his report of the conference, and told them that Jo Meijer was unable to continue as Secretary of Paco, and that Paco would like someone from Britain to volunteer for the job, Runham Brown offered to take over the task himself and became Secretary early in 1923.

The War Resisters' International had found the right man and the man found his dream come true. Here are Runham Brown's own words:

One night I sat alone in my prison cell. Men had been killing each other for three years, and for two years I had sat in this same little cell, looking out on the small cabbage patch which covered the space between my window and the great wall which surrounded the prison. My thoughts went back to the first night when the door had clanged behind me. I was not alone now as I was then. That first night, with all the faith and courage I could muster, I had tried to believe that I was not alone. I tried to think of all the men and women who had folded their arms with a determination that not one act of theirs should help to carry on that war. It was not without some success that spirit joined spirit that night, but oh! How I longed for the human touch, just the sound of a comrade's voice, or a grip of the hand! It was all different now. Even in that prison we had broken through the walls. The iron bar no longer stopped all our communications; a grip of the hand was sometimes felt; and a comrade's voice was often heard. Slowly but persistently we had broken every rule and crumpled up every bar that stood between friend and friend. As I sat there, I thought of the boy who came from a country village, thinking that he was the only one; now he knew that there were three hundred within these prison walls and three thousand within all the prison walls of our land alone. Was I tonight like that boy? Were we the only ones? Or were arms outstretched behind still greater walls? Was the human voice only British, or did it cry in many tongues behind even grimmer barriers, for comradeship? If *we* had understood that the greatest service we could render, not only to our country, but to the whole human race, was to resist the call to arms, others must have seen what we had seen.

And so I fell asleep to dream of the International of those who would refuse all war service, not to keep themselves unsoiled from the blood of their brother, but so that they might render the greatest of all service, that they might be his comrade and rekindle his faith in men. I saw the great walls of race and nation, of differing language and custom, of creed and political opinion, of wealth and poverty, of caste and class, rise up before me. We had broken prison walls and re-established an effective contact. Here, surely was a bigger task we must set ourselves steadily and systematically to accomplish. We must break through the barriers.

Now, I know that I was not the only one that dreamed that night and for many a night. Neither were all the dreamers within prison walls. Many a restless slumberer lay under the starry sky in the rain-drenched trenches.

And so it happened that three years later, a little group of people met together in Bilthoven, in Holland, and the War Resisters' International was born. Messages went out in the darkness like the first rappings on the walls, then we listened, and the answer came – slowly and quietly – but it came.<sup>2</sup>

Herbert Runham Brown was a builder by profession. He had spent two and a half years in prison during the First World War as a conscientious objector. He was an *absolutist*, i.e. one who refused to do any kind of alternative service. When he took over the responsibility of

Paco as its Secretary, he received an extensive mailing list from Bilthoven, which Jo Meijer had built during his period as Secretary. He believed that it was not so much that the organisation had to be built, it had really to be *discovered*.

There were already thousands of people throughout the world who, often in complete isolation, were feeling that they would not be able to participate in any kind of war. It was necessary to find such people and bring them closer to each other. In other words the first task was to make these individuals feel that they were not alone in their struggle, and that there were thousands of objectors in the same situation in many countries.

That is what Runham Brown started doing from the time he took on the work. His home became the home of the organisation and he spent every minute of his spare time working for it. His first job was contacting all the people on the Jo Meijer mailing list, explaining to them what the organisation was and whether they would like to join it as members by signing its Declaration. Gradually the mailing list extended and by the time the organisation moved to London in 1923 four European Unions of War Resisters had already been affiliated to the International. The name Paco was changed to War Resisters' International at that point.

Runham Brown worked ceaselessly to build the WRI into an organisation with the potential of bringing about a nonviolent revolution. There have been many pacifist bodies committed to a pacifist philosophy, but hardly any with a programme for a socio-political revolution. Runham Brown did not do all the work by himself. He brought with him to the task his earlier practical experience in resisting war and the insight gained from his lengthy imprisonment. There were a good number of stalwarts with him in the field, but without him they could not have built the WRI into a pacifists' body with such a farsighted perspective.

I would like to quote some parts (the full text is in Appendix 8) of what Harold Bing<sup>3</sup> wrote as Runham Brown's obituary in *Peace News*, December 1949:

No man has done more in the past 35 years for the pacifist cause and particularly to help and encourage those young men in many countries who were facing persecution, imprisonment and even death on account of their refusal to submit to military training or co-operate in the crime of war.

The War Resisters' International, in the course of the past 27 years, has become far more than a world-wide organisation standing uncompromisingly for pacifism: it has become a great living family bound together by ties of deep comradeship and a common philosophy of non-violence. It was the spirit of Runham Brown which created and sustained it.

No one I have ever known expressed in his own life and action more clearly the principles which he held. ... never once ... have I heard him utter an unkind word or speak harshly of someone with whom he disagreed – even under the greatest provocation. ... Herbert Runham Brown was born on June 27th, 1879, at Redhill, in Surrey, the son of a Sunday school Superintendent and grandson of a minister of religion. He showed no particular scholastic gifts and left school at fourteen to be apprenticed to the building trade. Here his skill as a craftsman and his genius for establishing human relationships, ... whilst still only 19 years of age, he became foreman on a small building concern and a year later founded his own business. ...

He was only 20 years old when Britain entered the Boer War. He at once felt bound to oppose it and his first public speech, made in 1900, was a denunciation of the British concentration camps in South Africa. Even earlier, at the age of 14, he had written a paper showing the incompatibility of war and Christianity. ...

Runham Brown's early pacifism grew stronger as time went on and 1914 found him taking prominent part in opposition to the First World War.

In 1915 he joined the No Conscription Fellowship which had just been formed by Fenner Brockway, Clifford Allen and others, for he saw clearly that he could take no part, directly or indirectly, in the prosecution of the war. ...

A Mr. Beavis brought him one day a letter from his son, H. Stewart Beavis, who had just been sentenced to death in France, along with some thirty other C.O.s for disobeying military orders. In an effort to save his friend's life Runham Brown had the letter printed and circulated to M.P.s and local clergy and residents.

He was prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act for prejudicing recruiting and the discipline of the forces, and fined thirty pounds or two months' imprisonment.

In the summer of 1916, shortly after the coming into force of the second Military Service Act, which conscripted married men, Runham Brown appeared before the local Tribunal as a C.O. Three members of the Tribunal were for granting his absolute exemption and four were against. The result was the useless offer of non-combatant military service.

. . . Like many more he served three successive Hard Labour sentences and was released only in November 1918, after two and a half years' imprisonment, on medical grounds.

. . . For a long time he edited the manuscript magazine which was secretly written and circulated among the C.O.s in Wandsworth Prison, London, and he used remarkable means to have news conveyed to the outside world.

In the solitude of his prison . . . He realised that in every belligerent country there must be those who felt as he did . . . He had a vision of all those lonely pioneers united into a great world-wide family and, largely through his own faith and efforts, he lived to see that vision realised.

In 1921 came the foundation of the No More War Movement in Britain, and in this Runham Brown played a leading rôle. He became and remained throughout, a member of its National Committee. . . .

From that day to this, the work of the W.R.I. has occupied the greater part of his thought and filled a large part of his life. . . .

For thousands of men and women of all nations, creeds and colours, Runham Brown was the W.R.I. and the W.R.I. was Runham Brown. . . . "My greatest intellectual gift," he once said, "is the ability to recognise exceptional ability in others."

Runham Brown's life and work will form a keystone in the triumphal arch of peace which we who remain have yet to build.<sup>4</sup>

## The growth of the International

People scattered over the face of the world, of different races, of varying outlook, living under vastly different conditions, all unknown to each other, men of religion and men who have turned from all creeds, many hardly able to trace how the idea came, have found themselves possessed by the conviction that war resistance is a means, probably the greatest means, of abolishing war and armed violence.

Runham Brown wrote:

I remember when the term “War Resistance” was first framed and how rapidly it became a slogan which without explanation conveyed a general idea of an attitude that was up against war. I am sitting in the room where a few short years ago the term “War Resistance” was first spoken. Deliberately it was repeated. The *idea* had sprung into existence through the long years of war, but without a long thesis it could not be explained. Only the slogan was the creation of one or two brains, it was adopted as a ready means of identifying an idea which they had discovered to exist in the minds of a great multitude, an idea which was being lived out in action by many. Other terms had served for a limited purpose in a prescribed period. “No Conscription” during the war had served in certain places as a slogan for the opposition to forced military service; while “Conscientious Objector” was a term thrust upon those who refused to render such service. . . . After the war the phrase No More War became a slogan, but it was vague and could be used to denote only a general dislike of war, while the word “Pacifist” meant many different things and involved those who adopted it in endless questioning as to the extent to which the pacifist philosophy of non-violence should be carried.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually the potent term, ‘War Resistance’ was discovered, and simultaneously the War Resisters’ International was born.

It was obvious that trying to build a centralised worldwide body, which could keep in close contact with, leave aside control the activities of, hundreds of its affiliates and associates spread all over the world, was neither possible nor desirable. It was not possible for practical reasons, and undesirable because the affiliated bodies, in all likelihood, would have their own practical, political and/or philosophical differences. With such considerations in mind and to save time Runham Brown sent the following letter to a number of people on April 14, 1923:

Dear Comrade,

For two years our comrades in Holland have been working to form an International Movement of War Resisters, under the name *Paco*. We are greatly indebted to them for all that they have done in that direction.

For some time it has been realised by them, and by all in close touch with their effort, that it is neither possible nor desirable to establish one International Organisation with a central control. Accordingly it was decided to work on new lines, and it was resolved at an International Conference held at Bilthoven in December last to transfer the Centre to England, under the name of The War Resisters’ International.

The delegates from the German, Austrian, Dutch and British movements agreed in this direction.

I have since been asked to become International Secretary, and upon the arrival of the documents and addresses of correspondents from Holland on March 18th, the centre has been officially set up in England.

I hope to form a Kartel, or central Federation, which will not only link together the few National Organisations already in existence, but which will draw together the innumerable unorganised groups we know to exist all over the world.

The War Resisters’ International will adopt as its basis the formula which was the foundation of “Paco”. (*War is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of War.*)

I am writing to you because I have been given your name and address as one who is in

sympathy with the object of our movement. I do not know whether you have been in close touch with “Paco” or not, and I should therefore be gratefully helped if you would let me know whether you desire to associate yourself with the War Resisters’ International.

As I have some thousands of names, I cannot keep up a constant personal correspondence with all. Where there is a National Organisation, it would be most serviceable to link up through that, but in countless places where there is no organisation I hope to enroll associates of the War Resisters’ International. I believe, however, that it will be productive of the best results if little groups can be formed wherever few of like mind are in touch, so that one or two can correspond on behalf of the group. In this way, I believe a foundation may be laid and a great network rapidly spread over the entire globe which shall knit us all together.

I have no desire to control such groups; I want to be used as a means of contact one with another. I therefore ask that you will send me only such information as will be of interest and service to encourage and strengthen our comrades in other parts of the world. Where I think it will be helpful, I am enclosing a translation of this letter in French or German.

Will you please let me know whether I may write further to you in English, or whether it is more convenient for you to have my letters in French or German? Please write in your own language unless it is quite convenient for you to write in English.

As I happen to be the British National Secretary for the No More War movement and Universal Disarmament Demonstrations which we hope will be held this year all over the world on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War, I am enclosing the demonstration Manifesto and beg that you will give this Movement all the support in your power.

The Demonstrations are an endeavour to lead the thoughts of the great mass of well-meaning people a step further on the road which must, for each of us, end in the consciousness of our duty personally to refuse all war service.

I trust that the War Resisters’ International will everywhere be the backbone of this and all other Movements directed towards both the removal of the causes of War and the stimulating of the will to resist it.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

H. Runham Brown<sup>6</sup>

In this letter Runham Brown clearly stated his opinion that the International could not be and should not be a centralised body to dictate or even ‘guide’ the individual members or the groups associated with it. It had to be a body whose role should be to bring together like-minded people and organisations, organise common projects and actions and do some basic group thinking, both constructive and analytical. The other thing that is important to be noted is that Runham Brown did not project the WRI as a European or Western organisation. His outlook was clearly global and secular.

There was hardly any money, but of course they had a clear picture of what they wanted the organisation to be and they could see that the time and situation were ready to receive new ideas. The “war to end war” had ended in the destruction of human life and the homes of millions of families. This experience, though, reaffirmed the conviction of War Resisters that the end of war “would not come by fear of the next war and its even greater horrors, not by slow and cautious bargaining to limit armaments, abandoning gun by gun and cruiser by cruiser; but by faith and courage, by risk and adventure”.<sup>7</sup>

Young men and women who had grown up during the war wondered at the incapacity and insensibility of their parents. Many were in the mood to revolt. Although the Armistice had ended the war superficially the hatred between nations, and between groups within nations, had not gone away. The spirit of class war was in the air. But the War Resisters did not want to give up.

Runham Brown wrote:

It was our opportunity. We saw clearly that the Peace Movement in the future must be a war resisters' movement. There must not be merely a wish for peace, but a consuming desire to right wrongs must possess us. We had no wish to suppress revolt, but to bring justice and liberty. Revolt and defiance must be harnessed to faith in our fellow-men without distinction of colour, race, class or creed; we had to discover those who would themselves personally refuse to use any form of violent domination over their fellows, who would give to others the liberty which they desired for themselves, who would lay down their arms and rely as their only defence on the sense of justice in their fellow-men.<sup>8</sup>

Runham Brown and many others started feeling, on the basis of worldwide contacts they were trying to make, that in many countries men and women had given up resorting to arms and had begun to live in fraternity. Many were waiting to break the barriers which kept them away from the information about like-minded men and women in other parts of the world. The job of the WRI was to remove their seclusion and harness the collective energy of all such people.

### **Publication of the *Bulletin***

A campaign which aims at building a people's movement needs to have a regular means of communication between the headquarters and the regional, national or local sections. It is also important to make it practical for even individual members to keep in touch with each other as well as with the centre – both international and local. With the WRI there was another reason to have such a communication mechanism. Unless they are in regular contact with other similar-minded people – war objectors – the hundreds of war resisters spread in all the corners of the world feel isolated. Therefore all the more reason to have a journal which most people can afford and find useful to get rid of their feeling of isolation.

It was a wise step on the part of the WRI to start publishing the *Bulletin* within a few months of the WRI moving to England. The first issue of six pages came out in October 1923. On the cover it said that the *Bulletin* "will be published in English, French, German, Russian and Esperanto". It was also offered to persons other than the WRI group correspondents for a donation sufficient to cover the cost of production.

The *Bulletin* became popular in pacifist circles. Unfortunately, after a time the Russian edition had to stop on account of the changed situation in the Soviet Union. After publishing 14 issues in two and a half years the *Bulletin* was renamed *The War Resister*, starting in March 1926. Every issue of the journal was full of information about war resisters all over the world and relevant articles and reports on militarism and related subjects.

It will be useful to reproduce here in its entirety the Editor's Foreword, published in the first issue of the *Bulletin*. It will not be difficult for any pacifist to imagine how encouraging it must have been to the anti-militarist youth at that time:

The exercise of violence as the final arbiter in the settlement of differing interests has

been hailed as not only necessary, but as worthy of the highest honor.

Throughout the world the profession of the soldier has been held in the greatest esteem (except possibly in China and India) even when the soldier was but a paid mercenary, while the right to conscript in the cause of national defence has generally been taken for granted.

Many years ago a new consciousness was born, the first Christians, the Doukhobors of Russia, the early Quakers of England and America, and other little groups believed that to use violence was wrong, and they refused to take part in duelling and in war fares, but they were isolated and little was known of them.

When the Great War came it was discovered that many thousands of men and women could no longer consent to the rule of violence, not only did they refuse to participate in the war themselves, but they actively opposed the sanction of war. They were not all in one country, they were found to exist in every land, while the rulers in some nations were successful in keeping them entirely isolated and ignorant of each other's existence; other nations found them organised and comparatively strong.

Since the conclusion of the war, they have been recognized as forming a new and disturbing factor in the old order of rule by violence. In most of the conscript countries new laws, known as alternative service laws, have been or are about to be introduced in order to meet this new phenomena. Utterly useless as they are for the purpose for which they are designed, e.g., to avoid a conflict between the new thought and the old belief in the right of might, these laws are a significant recognition of wide growth of the conviction that power of violence is not only wrong but futile in achieving any worthy ideal.

For centuries efforts have been made to avoid the danger of war, but every effort has had the sanction of violence behind it and has necessarily failed. Nothing short of a total change of the industrial and economic systems of the world could have even a chance avoiding periodical resort to force of arms, and even the most revolutionary change would not necessarily be free from the scourge of war.

Hand in hand with the new social order based upon co-operation rather than competition and rivalry, must come this new sense which is now making itself manifest by the rapid growth of the groups of war resisters, "conscientious objectors" and absolute anti-militarists, which are found to exist in every country throughout the world.

The War Resisters International seeks to make and maintain effective contact between these groups, so that never again shall it be possible to wage war without let or hindrance by those who will risk as much and more than the soldier in their patriotic devotion to humanity as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

### **First International Conference**

The WRI had made its first public appearance in August, 1923, when it took part in the demonstration organised by the No More War Movement of Britain, which had become an affiliated body of the International. Under a War Resisters banner, with names of the associated bodies in many countries, walked many of the members; to name a few: George Lansbury, Beatrice Brown, Margery Fry, Fenner Brockway, Runham Brown (Britain), Martha Steinitz (Germany), Tobias Hagtingius (Holland) and many more.

It was now time for the International to gather together as many active and concerned pacifists as it could at one place and *launch* itself on a global level. Its presence was established already in over twenty countries, in Europe, America, Asia and Australia. Hence the people



responsible for its work at the headquarters felt the need to hold a conference to work out the future plans and put down in writing its objectives and framework. Runham Brown sent a questionnaire about the suggestion to all the affiliated bodies. He also suggested London as the venue.

Many meeting places have been suggested but London is felt to be the most suitable by the majority. . . . Many of our Sections have asked for the return fare to London for their delegates . . . The International has but a few pounds in hand. This is the reason why I have not called the conference before.

I believe now, that if we delay any longer we shall miss the opportunity of meeting at all and that if we do not pay the fares . . . we shall shut out from our conference many whom it is essential to have with us.<sup>10</sup>

Runham Brown then called the Conference to meet in London from July 9 to 12, 1925. The English Youth Section undertook to make all arrangements for the comfort of the delegates and to meet them at the station upon arrival. After much preparation the First International Conference met at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, on the outskirts of London. Ninety-five representatives from 20 countries took part, representing 42 Sections of the International. Some could not attend the Conference on account of being prevented by their own or the British government.

The delegates unanimously chose Runham Brown to preside over the meeting. He addressed the Conference:

We have met here to take part in no ordinary International Peace Congress. For a century men and women have met and carried resolutions at Peace Conferences. They have called upon their Government – and sometimes appealed to the people – to agree to limit their armaments and to submit “some classes of disputes” to arbitration courts. They have sought to *avoid* war. Their voices have been unheeded. War has gone on; it has, in fact, never for a moment ceased. It has widened its embrace until none are left untouched by its awful arms.

*This Conference is different.* We are either a party of cranks dreaming of the impossible, a party of impracticable people beating the air in our impotence before the overwhelming forces of militarism, or else this Conference is the symbol of a great and wonderful idea which, although born long ago, has only in our day begun to feel its strength.

We are not the makers of a new organisation, but the representatives of a movement which has spontaneously sprung into being.

Four Continents and Twenty Races. You have come from every part of Europe. Some of you have crossed the Atlantic on purpose to be here. You have come from Australia, and Asia is represented by our Indian and Chinese comrades. You will speak for tens of thousands of your fellows who have sent you here, not to pass resolutions or to plead with Governments, but to consider together how this new-found power can be made effective.

It is not nations which you represent, but the peoples of twenty different races. There are 42 sections of the War Resisters’ International in 19 countries, and representatives in many other lands where organisations will shortly be formed. This moment is fraught with great potency. We meet here representing thousands of men and women, who have declared war, whether between nations or classes, and the use of armed violence, to be a crime against humanity, and that they are determined not to take any part in it.

How different is this conference from any other international gathering! We have not met here to make a bargain or to come to an agreement. If we carry any resolution at all it will be to declare unitedly what we have already declared individually.

. . . Some [delegates] are absent because they are detained in the prisons of Europe for their heroic refusal to train themselves in the art of warfare. Many of you have suffered already as the result of your resistance.

We invite our comrades of every land to stand with us and to refuse to co-operate in armed violence. We are prepared to assist in any properly organised general strike to prevent war. It is, however, not primarily in mass action that our hope lies, but in the individual will and determination, if need be to be the first to become absolutely disarmed.

. . . We do not intend to die, but to *live* for the cause of humanity! ... War is not to be avoided, it must be *resisted*. . . .

The power of non-violence and non-co-operation is not enough. It must be reinforced by the power of love for humanity, the power of the individual will be inspired by the vision of a new social order, where competition, exploitation and all that is associated with capitalism shall give place to co-operation for the common good.

Frankly, we are idealists. We shall put before the world not expediency, not self-interest, although these are valid arguments against the present order. . . . We have to show that this movement is possessed of sound common sense. . . .

We have met, then, in order to seek to make the resistance of our comrades of practical value, to encourage them to resist, and to formulate practical proposals for achieving a new social order of co-operation for the common good.<sup>11</sup>

Then Runham Brown went on to describe the story of the International and its work done over four years. He talked about the staff. He told the Conference that since he became the Secretary Martha Steinitz had worked as his colleague and that she had been the inspiration of the movement, while he had been the business manager. Together, they worked as a good team complementing each other's responsibilities. He ended with the following note:

In this statement I have dealt only with the work of the centre, but this is but a small part of our movement. The greater work has been done by you in your organisations and groups; of this I hope that you will tell.

I beg you not to be discouraged in the difficult work before you. Those who are for us are greater than those who are against us. We have met in order to face the facts and to strengthen one another. We are at the beginning, the end is not in sight. We are not the whole, but a tiny part of those who are moved by a great idea. Youth (the manhood and womanhood of the future) is represented in this conference. There stands our hope.

When you are tempted to think that you stand alone, listen! I hear the sound of feet, a thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and they beat this way! They are the feet of those that shall follow you.

Lead on! Make a track! Where you stand now, the ground will be beaten flat by ten thousand times ten thousand feet. Where we fall they will mount. Lead on! Make a track!<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly in the minds of quite a large number of workers and many an intellectual the Soviet Union presented a dilemma. Most were socialists rather than Marxists and unable to accept the Soviet concept of the State. Runham Brown's picture of the ideal society was exactly what many such socialist-anarchists had in mind.

## A Statement of Principles

Some of the important outcomes of the Conference were, (1) the Constitution of the International, (2) a revised version of the Declaration and its implications, and (3) a sense of solidarity among the radical pacifists and the strengthening of the movements. The Statement of Principles as follows was adopted by the Conference:

### Statement of Principles

The following statement was adopted by the first International Conference at Bilthoven, Holland, 1921, and amended at the Hoddesdon Conference, 1925.

#### **War is a crime against Humanity.**

It is a crime against life, and uses human personalities for political and economic ends.

#### **We, therefore,**

actuated by an intense love for mankind,

#### **are determined not to support**

either directly by service of any kind in the army, navy, or air forces, or indirectly by making or consciously handling munitions or other war material, subscribing to war loans or using our labour for the purpose of setting others free for war service,

#### **any kind of war,**

aggressive or defensive, remembering that modern wars are invariably alleged by Governments to be defensive.

Wars would seem to fall under three heads:

- (a) *Wars to defend the State* to which we nominally belong and wherein our home is situated. To refuse to take up arms for this end is difficult:
  1. Because the State will use all its coercive powers to make us do so.
  2. Because our inborn love for home has been deliberately identified with love of the State in which it is situated.
- (b) *Wars to preserve the existing order of society* with its security for the privileged few. That we would never take up arms for this purpose goes without saying.
- (c) *Wars on behalf of the oppressed proletariat*, whether for its liberation or defense. To refuse to take up arms for this purpose is most difficult:
  1. Because the proletarian régime, and even more, the enraged masses in time of revolution would regard as a traitor anyone who refused to support the New Order by force.
  2. Because our instinctive love for the suffering and the oppressed would tempt us to use violence on their behalf.

However, we are convinced that violence cannot really *preserve order, defend* our home, or *liberate* the proletariat. In fact, experience has shown that in all wars, order, security and liberty disappear, and that, so far from benefiting by them, the proletariat always suffers most. We hold, however, that consistent pacifists have no right to take up a merely negative position, but *must recognize*

#### **and strive for the removal of all the causes of war.**

We recognize as causes of war, not only the instinct of egoism and greed, which is found in every human heart, but also all agencies which create hatred and antagonism between groups of people. Among such, we would regard the following as the more important to-day:

1. Difference between *races*, leading by artificial aggravation to envy and hatred.

2. Differences between *religions*, leading to mutual intolerance and contempt.
3. Difference between the classes, the possessing and the non-possessing, leading to civil war, which will continue so long as the present system of production exists, and private profit rather than social need is the outstanding motive of society.
4. Difference between *nations*, due largely to the present system of production, leading to world wars and such economic chaos as we see to-day, which eventualities, we are convinced, could be prevented by the adoption of a system of world economy which had for its end the well-being of the entire human race.
5. Finally, we see an important cause of war in the prevalent misconception of the State. The State exists for man, not man for the State. The recognition of the sanctity of human personality must become the basic principle of human society. Furthermore, the State is not a sovereign self-contained entity, as every nation is a part of the great family of mankind. We feel, therefore, that consistent pacifists have no right to take up a merely negative position, but must devote themselves to abolishing classes, barriers between the peoples, and to creating a worldwide brotherhood founded on mutual service.<sup>13</sup>

At Hoddesdon the Conference also adopted a constitution of the organisation. At the same time it elected A. Fenner Brockway as Chairman and H. Runham Brown as Secretary together with an International Council of five members, with three co-options: Helene Stöcker (Germany); Marianne Rauze (France); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); Jo Meijer (Holland); Olga Misar (Austria); Allan Degerman (Sweden); Hans Kohn (Palestine) and Harold Bing (Britain).

The Conference received reports about war resisters from participants from various parts of the world, who included representatives of bodies associated with WRI. They told stories of the struggles against conscription and militarism in many countries.

With this began a new phase in the life of the International, which involved firstly the clarification and concretisation of its philosophy and secondly the working out of a practical programme of activities.

#### Notes Chapter 6

- 1 *The War Resister* XXVII, Winter 1930/31, p.10
- 2 H. Runham Brown, *Cutting Ice*, WRI, London, 1930, pp.29–30
- 3 Harold Bing was a member of the International Council when Runham Brown died. First he was asked to be the acting Chairman; when the Brunswick Triennial Conference took place in July 1951 he was elected Chairman and remained in that position until 1966.
- 4 Harold Bing, 'Herbert Runham Brown, 1879–1949', *The War Resister* 57, Spring 1950, pp.3–6
- 5 H. Runham Brown, *Cutting Ice*, WRI, London, 1930, p.11–12
- 6 WRI Archives in the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam
- 7 H. Runham Brown, *Cutting Ice*, WRI, London, 1930, p.31
- 8 *Ibid.* p.32
- 9 *Bulletin* 1, October 1923, p.1
- 10 From a letter dated March 1925 sent by Runham Brown to all the affiliates
- 11 *War Resisters of the World: An account of the movement in twenty countries and a Report of the International Conference held at Hoddesdon, Herts., England, July, 1925*, pp.12–13
- 12 *Ibid.* p.15
- 13 *Ibid.* p.9–10

## CHAPTER 7

*Believe me, sir, that it needed strong reasons to compel me to break with everything dearest to me in life, with an old father and old mother, with friends, in order to accept the existence of an outlaw, an existence allotted to all those who dare to oppose military law. However, I preferred an uncertain future and these separations to lying to myself, to counter-acting the very essence of my existence, my ideal of goodness, of fraternity, and of solidarity. As a young man I experienced all the horrors and miseries of the last war. I suffered profoundly through it, and the fact that it was not capable of solving any problem and obliges the nations again to prepare for war has only consolidated my determination. . . . I am returning to you my papers and the sum of forty-three francs which were handed to me on my release in order to enable me to rejoin the army.*  
Georges Chevé, *The War Resister* 50, pp.18–19<sup>1</sup>

### The growing struggle of the war resister

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By 1923–24 the movement started growing rapidly. The youth in several countries of Europe, such as Russia, France, Czechoslovakia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America started participating in campaigns against military conscription.

#### **Russia**

The situation in Russia has been discussed briefly in the chapter on conscription, including the way objectors were treated by the Tsarist and Communist regimes. Let us now look into the situation during and after the First World War.

The antimilitaristic movement in Russia is largely based on religious convictions and had its beginning many years ago. Already as far back as 1893 there were a few cases of conscientious objectors known which were treated very severely by the Tsar's Government. The C.Os. suffered great torments in prison and in some instances died there. In 1895 about 10,000 Doukhobors, ... suddenly refused to serve in the army, and those who had rifles and other arms at home burnt them. Most of them were imprisoned or sent to Siberia where many of them died from cold and hunger. . . .

The number of individual cases of C.Os. greatly increased during the last years of the World War. Most of them belonged to different sectarian groups and followers of Leo Tolstoy. No one knows the actual number of cases as there was no central organisation to register them, but according to the official statistics there were 837 cases from 1914 to 1916, ...<sup>2</sup>

Since 1921 the cases of C.Os. became more numerous, every day. The Moscow U. C. could hardly cope with all the applications for certificates of sincerity, and its secretary and other voluntary workers were working day and night, as every hour of delay meant an extra hour of imprisonment or even death for a C.O. The applications for certificates

came in bundles, sometimes all the young people of a village applying at one time.

This stupendous growth of the C.O. movement all over Russia made the Soviet Government rather uneasy, and in order to stop it they found some pretext to make an attack on the Moscow United Council. They charged the U.C. with not carrying out their work properly and sealed and locked their offices, so that the U.C. was left powerless and could neither go on with their work nor inform their C.Os. or the People's Court about the pending matters.<sup>3</sup>

The general situation for anti-military propaganda in Russia became almost impossible for the formation of any peace group or even a peace society. Pacifists were liable to be imprisoned or exiled out of Russia. Some people prepared a book on the international peace movement but its publication was banned. Publishing anything on anti-militarism or anything based even on Tolstoy's ideas was prohibited.

Dr Helene Stöcker, one of the leading members of the German war resisters' movement, spent several weeks in Moscow in September 1923. She published a series of articles in *Die neue Generation (The New Generation)*. In one of them she said:

It was one of my most interesting experiences that I was able to attend a trial against a C.O. at the People's Court. Several cases of so-called "Evangelists" were to be heard in the big hall of the law court. Numerous comrades and relations had come to listen to the proceedings. The court consisted of one judge, two jurymen or rather women both of them, the clerk, and the so-called "public prosecutor". In front of them stood the C.O. and as his only counsel – without a real advocate – the leader of the Sectarian group of Evangelists to which he belonged – as an expert. The C.O. was a bookseller by profession, about 25, his parents belonged to the Greek-Catholic Church, but he himself according to his own report turned atheist when he began to think independently. However, this teaching did not satisfy him, and after much searching and groping he joined the Society of Evangelists whose faith was entirely based on the New Testament. From this he had gained the conviction that it was a sin to kill and that therefore he could no longer take part in war-fare. It was an aggravating circumstance for him that not all members of the sect had come to the same conclusions. After a long hot cross-examining by the judge with only a few interruptions from the part of the public prosecutor during which the judge tried again and again to confuse the young man, (who stood before him in quiet dignity trying to defend his position,) and to entangle him in contradictions, the court withdrew for about twenty minutes in order to pronounce the sentence. It was a very painful disappointment for us that exemption was refused to him. The public prosecutor said that his convictions could not be sincere because he once had been an atheist. Then we ought to call every communist unsincere, as probably none of the present communists was born and educated as communist.

A few days later numerous cases of free-thinking C.Os. were expected to be heard, and Tschertkoff was to attend as their expert. The biggest hall of the law court had to be taken. Several hundreds of people had come to attend the proceedings which proves the great interest taken nowadays – after the terrors of the World War – not only in Russia but everywhere in the world, in this highly individual attempt to struggle against the slaughtering of men. After a long time of waiting the proceedings were adjourned as the public prosecutor did not turn up.

... I met wonderful human types among those Russian C.Os., by no means fanatics or

canting self-conceited hypocrites, but delightful personalities, glowing with the pleasure of living with love for humanity. . . . One of them told me that shortly after the outbreak of the war he had been called up to fight against war, and that he and more than hundred of his comrades had been spending several years in prison. According to his words . . . the Government knew well that he and his friends were no counter-revolutionists. . . . Most of them had welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution. . . . The conflict arises only because they believe that already to-day they have to live out their methods and convictions, whereas the Bolsheviks only believe this to be possible in the future.<sup>4</sup>

### **United States of America**

Along with Britain, the United States of America has been the most active region in the field of pacifism. Pacifism came to the USA with migrants of several Christian sects from Europe and took firm root with the growth of the Quaker movement and the contribution of dynamic individuals like Jessie Wallace Hughan and John Haynes Holms.

Several of the peace organisations, formed during the later part of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century, hoped that peace would come through making appeals to governments and organising conferences to declare their opposition to war. Much hope, too, was invested in the League of Nations when it was established after the First World War.

On the one hand there were individuals and movements who had developed great faith in the socialism of the Soviet Union and thought that it would lead the world to peace. On the other hand there were the Christian pacifists who believed that peace would emerge from their personal faith and non-participation in the use of weapons as individuals.

The question of resisting military conscription, however, had to be faced, and many individuals were doing so, courageously. A number of States of the United States of America were applying compulsory methods for recruitment in the army, but it was only in the second year of the Civil War that conscription in the modern sense was operated. In the North the Act of March 3, 1863, had ruled that all able-bodied male citizens between the ages of 20 and 45 were declared to constitute the national forces, and made liable to perform military duty in the service of the USA.

Many pacifists had become convinced by their own experience that war would never end unless a substantial number of people decided that they would not take part in any war in the future. Efforts were being made to form a body of war resisters with different political and religious beliefs, including people of socialist and anarchist orientation, who did not feel comfortable being in organisations based on their particular religion and faith. Some of the people concerned about this matter were encouraged to know that an organisation of war resisters with the name of War Resisters' International had already been formed in Holland.

Jessie Wallace Hughan, an active socialist pacifist, had formed the Committee for Enrolment Against War within the US Fellowship of Reconciliation. It adopted the WRI pledge and in 1923 she, with representatives of the Women's Peace Society and the Women's Peace Union, founded the War Resisters League (WRL), which later became the American Section of the War Resisters' International. One of their tasks was to enrol men and women who were prepared to refuse to support any war.

Although the War Resisters League was founded in 1923 its background goes back to 1915, when Jessie Wallace Hughan, Tracy Magyar and John Haynes Holms set up the Anti-Enlistment League to oppose the American participation in the First World War. The League was organised on the basis of Jessie Wallace Hughan's concept of individual war resistance.

Its members signed a pledge against “enlistment as a volunteer for any military or naval service in the international war, offensive or defensive, and against giving my approval to such enlistment on the part of others”. The pacifism of Jessie Wallace Hughan was derived from the Christian idealism which had pervaded her childhood home and from a socialist interpretation of international relations – the premise that all wars are fought solely in the interests of ruling economic elites. Tracy Magyar and John Haynes Holms also derived their pacifist ideology from a synthesis of the ethics of a Christian idealism with the historical perspective of socialist thought.<sup>5</sup>

From its beginning the War Resisters League gave support to COs whether they were in civilian camps or in prisons. Other pacifist groups accepted the forced labour system embodied in Selective Service provision for alternative service in the camps. WRL was unable to go along with the Peace Churches in their programme, which evidently implied supporting the Government to administer conscription. When the 1940 Conscription Act was put into effect the focus of the league shifted from enrolling men and women against war to offering moral and legal support to conscientious objectors.

### **France**

Harold Bing, who travelled in France as Secretary of the youth wing of the International in 1924, published a report about the situation in France in the *WRI Bulletin*:

Pacifist propaganda of all kinds is being carried on in France by several vigorous peace movements. However, the severity of the French law with regard to military service is a great difficulty for the formation of a war resisters movement. There are quite a number of different groups of people opposed to all military service and prepared to refuse it and to suffer for their refusal. Yet they think it better not to have any definite pledge and to keep no register of their friends.

But the spirit of non-violence is constantly growing in France and is alive in many of its peace organisations and still more so in groups of pacifists, scattered all over the country, some of which already affiliated with the W.R.I. Some other bodies, altho’ not affiliated with us and perhaps not taking entirely our view, are manifesting a growing tendency towards the standpoint of war resistance.

There is a general consensus of opinion among radical French Pacifists that the legal recognition of Conscientious Objection would be the most practical step and would be in itself a tremendous gain, even though in many cases they do not look upon compulsory civil (alternative) service as desirable in itself. Thus some of the prominent French pacifists have formed the League for the Legal Recognition of Conscientious Objection. About 300 members have already joined after the issue of the following appeal, which was signed among others by Romain Rolland, Paul Reboux, Grillot de Givry, Paul Bergeron, and Marceline Hecquet:

#### **APPEAL**

Respect for human life is the basis of all the religious and philosophical morals of our day.

That is why so many philosophic and religious creeds are against murder in all its forms, individual or collective murder, and above all against war.

That is why the Christians in the first three centuries have chosen martyrdom rather



than fulfilling the so-called duty of military service.

After a long darkness interrupted only by isolated protests against the war, coming from men like Pascal, la Bruyere, Voltaire, J. J. Rousseau, Alfred de Vigny, feeling of revolt against this murder, ordered and organised by the authorities, has appeared again during the last hecatomb.

In the United States and chiefly in England men have opposed conscription by "Conscientious Objection to Conscription".

Under the pressure of public opinion the governments of England, the United States, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Russia were obliged to recognise conscientious objection. Other countries: Switzerland, Norway, Roumania, Tscheco-Slovakia are preparing to do the same.

It is important that France, the country of the Declaration of Human Rights, should not lag behind in that question of primary importance which, being solved, will give to men liberty of conscience in its broadest sense.<sup>6</sup>

The above is a clear indication of the climate changing in favour of a radical pacifist outlook and the growing determination of the young to oppose conscription. The following paragraphs from a letter written by a teacher show the earnestness of a young French pacifist:

It will be evident that I cannot become a soldier, a hireling of death and of hate. But it is clear that my conscience requires from me something more positive even.

In a few weeks, in a few days, perhaps, I will confide myself to my God and to the humanity which I would serve. I will help, I will console, going perhaps to the North or to Germany, till the good days return, when I will wander from village to village through France, endeavouring to penetrate into the life of mankind: And; if God wills, I will see clearly that which I now see but dimly.

But I am a teacher . . . In a few days I will hand in my resignation. I object to a lay school, such as has been instituted in a society where every pivot of action is self-interest. I object to the school with its prison-rooms where, children are prepared by slaves for a life of servitude. I reject it with its programmes its false knowledge. I reject it, but I do not condemn, – I understand. But I feel that the true lay school should be one open to all, a school where men should open the ways to children, a school where one will affirm "God", where human pride will diminish on learning the significance of that Name.

Much must be changed, certainly . . . Before entering into life, without ever having been children, our children are slaves. It is miraculous that they do not turn against mankind. Our lay school is a national institution, and with that false title they are less a state institution than Government work.

On the 8th November I informed the Inspector of my views my resolution to resign, my refusal of military service. This was at an interview resulting from a protest I had made during a teachers Conference against a recommendation from the Inspector that the children should be allowed to act scenes from history, and giving as examples the broken Vase of Soissons and the massacre of French peasants by the Normans.

I will now go where it is my human duty to go, in full consciousness, knowing what the consequences of such a step may be, knowing the barriers, the precipices, but confident in the love which inspires and sustains me.<sup>7</sup>

## Czechoslovakia

In Czechoslovakia Premysl Pitter sent a note for consideration to the Hoddesdon Conference in July 1925 to describe the work they were doing in Czechoslovakia:

The Anti-militarist Movement, as a result of the last War, begins to spread in all nations, as evidenced by the many and large demonstrations. Until now there were found only individual heroes, to become martyrs by refusing to take part in that which outraged their conscience. Now, these scattered individuals, multiplied by those whom their action has invoked, long for a unity corresponding to a 'national' unity, discovering a brotherhood in lands of different nations.

In our Czechoslovak Republic, there has been established an association of Anti-Militarists, the 'Nova Jerusalem', under which name we bend to the task of reconstructing the sacred City of Love, into which the world shall change.

We are disillusioned as to the indefinite pacifism of the past, and firmly believe that only through the will of the people, through renaissance individuals, can come the salvation of the world. We intend to unite all these brothers in ideal, into a powerful international association, and along that line obtain a unified onward march in all countries to abolish armament. To this end we strive, that:

1. In all nations and countries where yet no similar association exists, there shall at once be founded associations of Anti-Militarism, with moral and religious conviction.
2. Societies in existence shall approach each other form a one power Anti-Militarist World-Association.
3. We can no longer look on and see how many good men, refusing military service etc., must for their moral conviction suffer in prison and lunatic asylums. In the first place this association demands that the governments accept and adopt a law allotting some other compulsory service in place of service in the army for those whose conscience forbids them to serve as soldiers. . . . The law should contain well thought out safeguards against dishonest elements and egoistic motives, which might prompt, to the misuse of the advantage of such law.<sup>8</sup>

Premysl Pitter sent this circular also to the Pacifists Convention at the fourteenth World Esperantist Conference in Helsingfors. He hoped that the Convention would accept it and the efforts to realise its objective would soon commence. The other recipients of the circular he asked for approval and support in the future. The Czechoslovaks were working on the proposals by organising meetings, distributing reading material relating to the purpose and for the education of their children. In the refugee camp in the suburb of Zizkov they started educational work with one hundred children. The circular ended with 'We regard our work as divine, and therefore no one can suppress us.'

This circular emphasised the idea of an alternative to military service, which became an important point for theoretical as well as practical reasons. It questioned the basic concept of war resistance and the role of the State.

## The Anti-Conscription Campaign

One of the fronts of the anti-war and anti-militarism struggle carried on by the War Resisters' International was to oppose military conscription at both levels – individual as well as collective. The individual war resister was fighting the battle, which was becoming quite widespread. However, there was also a feeling among many pacifists that an organised campaign against conscription should be started and the WRI was the body that should take the initiative to launch it.

Following a suggestion of Hans Kohn, a WRI Council member from Palestine, an ad hoc committee was set up for the purpose of an international Anti-Conscription Campaign. The ad hoc committee prepared the following Manifesto:

During the war people in all the countries determined to throw off for ever the yoke of militarism, and, when peace came, the League of Nations was welcomed as the offspring of this hope. It is our duty to see that the terrible suffering of the war does not recur.

We call for some definite step towards complete disarmament, and the demilitarization of the mind of civilised nations. The most effective measure towards this would be the universal abolition of conscription. We therefore ask the League of Nations to propose the abolition of compulsory military service in all countries as a first step towards true disarmament.

It is our belief that conscript armies, with their large corps of professional officers are a grave menace to peace. Conscription involves the degradation of human personality, and the destruction of liberty. Barrack life, military drill, blind obedience to commands, however unjust and foolish they may be, and deliberate training for slaughter, undermine respect for the individual, for democracy and human life.

It is debasing human dignity to force men to give up their lives, or to inflict death against their will, or without conviction as to the justice of their action. The State, which thinks itself entitled to force its citizens to go to war, will never pay proper regard to the value and happiness of their lives in peace. Moreover, by conscription the military spirit of aggressiveness is implemented in the whole male population at the most impressionable age. By training for war men come to consider war as unavoidable and even desirable.

By universal abolition of conscription, war will be made less easy. The Government of a country, which maintains conscription, has little difficulty in declaring war, for it can silence the whole population by a mobilisation order. When Governments have to depend for support upon the voluntary consent of their people, they must necessarily exercise caution in their foreign policies.

In the first draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations, President Wilson proposed to make conscription illegal in all affiliated countries. It is our duty to restore the original spirit, which created the League, a spirit shared by many of those who fought in the war, and professed by many of the Statesmen of the countries concerned. By the universal abolition of conscription we can take a decisive step towards peace and liberty. We therefore call upon all men and women of goodwill to help create in all countries a public opinion which will induce Government and the League of Nations to take this definite step to rid the world of the spirit of militarism, and to open the way to a new era of freedom within nations and of fraternity between them.<sup>9</sup>

The International Manifesto was launched in August 1926 on worldwide level, initially signed by more than 60 eminent personalities of the world. Among these were Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, C. F. Andrews, Lajpat Rai (India), Toyohiko Kagawa (Japan), Henry Barbusse, Romain Rolland (France), H. G. Wells, George Lansbury, Arthur Ponsonby, Bertrand Russell, Lord Parmoor (England), Albert Einstein, Harry Kessler, Martin Buber (Germany), Selma Antilla, Jindriska Wurmova, Maikki Friberg (Finland), Miguel de Unamuno (Spain), Carl Lindhagen, Elin Wagner (Sweden), Ignaz Seipel, Friedrich Hertz (Austria), Frans Daels (Belgium), Chr. L. Lange (Norway), August Forel, Leonhard Ragaz (Switzerland)

### **The Anti-Conscription Manifesto and world opinion**

The Manifesto had an extraordinary reception in the press. It was published in every country in the world except in those countries where the free press is entirely suppressed, and in even these lands it was circulated to a considerable extent. The hostile comments of the French and Belgian press only indicated the strong feeling which existed on the subject in countries where compulsory military service was enacted by law. Since the publication of the Manifesto, it has been counter-signed by eminent people in 20 different countries. Among the additional notable signatures are those of people such as Anna Kethly (Hungary), Eugen Relgis (Roumania), Dr Kurt Hiller (Germany), and Dr J. Polok (Poland).

A striking fact was that a large number of organisations identified themselves with the demand to abolish conscription. Among those which should be mentioned were the Socialist Party of Estonia, the Independent Socialist Party of Poland, Young Socialists of Poland, the Labour Party of Spain, the Socialist Party of Portugal, the Agricultural Labour Party of Cyprus, the Fabian Society of India, the Danish Sailors Union, the Committee on Militarism in Education, USA, Jeunesses Laiques et Républicaines, France, and sections of La Fédération Ouvrière des Anciens Combattants and L'Association Universelle pour Supprimer ce Crime, la Guerre, France.<sup>10</sup>

It may be useful to quote a comment on the Manifesto from a Bulgarian paper called *Mir*. The article was written by 'Nikolov' referring to both the Manifesto and the Geneva International Conference of Anti-Militarist Clergymen:

Here are two world-phenomena which in themselves are of great value. They witness to a tremendous psychological change in the intellectual circles of those nations who bear the standard of present-day culture . . . They are convinced that in our day war is not a suitable means of settling disputes, and for the civilised and moral people of today war can only be a remnant to barbarism. . . . They are convinced that if the victory of the sword brings chains to the vanquished, it also brings serious and incurable wounds to the victors.

Mankind no longer desires war. It has seen, not for the first time, its evil features.

And now, behold, the enlightened idea of disarmament descends from the distant heights of diplomacy to the levels below, lightening and inspiring the masses, and new life appears for suffering humanity.

This is not a vain imagination. This is not merely a delightful dream . . . It is a newborn reality which brings within itself all the elements of complete success.

And this worldwide reality brings good for our country, more, I believe, than for any other.<sup>11</sup>

The publication of such an article in an otherwise militaristic paper (even though *mir* means peace) was a remarkable indication of the impact the Manifesto was making on the intelligentsia at a time when the results of the First World War had blinded the militaristic mind to the real need of human kind.

The Sections and associated bodies of the International took up the task of educating the people of their own regions about the issues involved with conscription and the importance of the Manifesto. For instance, the No More War Movement in Britain gave a 'Call to Governments to Disband Armies, Navies And Air Forces':

The European war has again evidenced the futility of wars to achieve any permanent evidence of human progress. It has, however, demonstrated to the world that war brings destruction to all that is worthy in human life, and is accomplished by economic ruin. The result has been two fold; on the one hand a great reaction has set in, in favour of Nationalism based on armament and the restriction of intercourse between peoples and nations, and on the other hand, there has been a great revolt against the whole idea of armed force as a determining factor in international relationships. This is seen in the spontaneous growth of Pacifist groups throughout the world, and in the return, in some countries, of Members of Parliament, who are pledged to oppose war under all circumstances, and to establish in constitutional life an entirely new principle, upon which the future of the peoples is to be based.

Now, when public opinion is veering round to the pacifist point of view, is the time for us to ask the nations of the world to take the supreme act of faith, and to disband their armies, navies and air forces. It is not enough to place our hope in the League of Nations; useful as we hope it will be in the promotion of international organisation of world friendship. The nations themselves must decide whether they are prepared to base their national and international life finally upon armed forces, or upon friendship and international goodwill. The two cannot exist side by side. A reduction in armament will not meet the situation. No country that has arms can avoid the accusation that it believes in force as the final arbiter in international disputes. Further, there is the possibility of reactionary Government arising, and using the forces provided for an aggressive Imperialism. A reduction of armaments leaves us still with the stigma that finally we pin our faith to force and violence.

We ask you therefore, to unite with us in calling upon our Parliaments to take the only true and logical course, which is to disband all armed forces, and prohibit the manufacture of armaments, whatever may be done by other nations. Make them realise that there are no means of defence at the present time, only methods of attack; that there are no frontiers that can form barriers to modern armaments – there are only centres of military activity; that, whether on the grounds of humanity, of military possibility, or economic well being, or of spiritual truth, war must be ended, and this cannot be accomplished without complete disarmament. Disarmament is the best road to national prosperity and international peace.

We appeal to you to urge the Government of your country to follow this course, believing that those countries that first disarm, will not only be pioneers in the greatest step in human advancement ever taken, but will be the only countries able to develop a real life in peace and security.<sup>12</sup>

The Manifesto made an impact on many people and organisations. For example Professor

Walther Schücking said on behalf of the sub-committee of the League of Nations: “We must realise that the principle of military conscription is passing through a crisis. It is obvious that an era, which is ceasing to look upon war as a legal means of international procedure and beginning to consider it to be a crime, must necessarily look upon military conscription from a different angle. There are war resisters in many countries, and several States where military conscription still exists, have taken into account this war resisters’ movement in their legislation. Does not the fact that the law in several countries exempts conscientious objectors from military service, show that the principle of compulsory military service has already been considerably weakened?”<sup>13</sup>

While discussing the Manifesto at the WRI Council Meeting held in Enfield in May 1927, Fenner Brockway made a crucial point for the perspective and work of the International. He stressed the need for a movement wider than just resisting conscription and suggested that by working on the Manifesto the WRI should not give an impression that it was favourable to voluntary service as an alternative to conscription. Elinor Byrns pointed out that men were being forced into the Army because they could not live in any other way. Fenner Brockway and some other Council members had a strong feeling that on the destitute part of the working class in England military service was being imposed as unavoidable as it would have been if conscription were the law of the land. Young lads were being sent to the army owing to their desperate economic position.

According to Jo Meijer Holland was opposed to the Manifesto. They saw a great danger in it as the militarists too were moving towards an anti-conscription position. There was a strong feeling in the Council that the Manifesto should not be issued from England – partly because at that time Britain was not a conscripting country. Therefore the possibility of the Manifesto being launched from Germany should be explored.

The leadership of the International was not clear and united about its stand, as activists, on having a firm political outlook. This fact became clear at the Enfield Council meeting held in May 1927, where the following resolution was adopted:

The Council of the War Resisters’ International declares that the first object of war resisters, must be to prevent war by –

1. Arousing the peoples to such a determination to refuse war that Governments will refrain from resorting to war;
2. Working for complete disarmament, not only by International agreement, but also by national action which shall be independent of other countries;
3. Securing national and international recognition that war is a crime against humanity and should be outlawed; and
4. Working for the supersession of Capitalism and Imperialism by the Establishment of a new social and international order based on the principles of co-operation for the common good.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, the objective of the International was of laying pacifist foundations for an egalitarian and humane social order. Had it been able to make a significant enough headway in that direction and prepare a sophisticated and workable plan? This question has been raised from time to time, both directly and indirectly. The sincerity and determination of the International as a whole has always been clear in regard to its ultimate goal, i.e. social revolution.

At the Council Meeting of May 21–22, 1927 a question was raised, and a long discussion took place: “whether we are to say to resisters in imperialistic countries: do not resist imperi-

alism by force; whether we are to accept groups from such countries if groups are formed; and whether we are going to have any answer for such a problem.”<sup>15</sup> It was the task the WRI had taken on itself, to work out pacifist policies to resist imperialism and to believe in these policies so thoroughly as to be able to go to the people and say: here is the alternative to resisting imperialism by force.

Fenner Brockway presented a summary of the discussion, as he saw it. The following are some extracts from it:

I think we have to keep in our minds the ultimate thing which we are after – a society in which differences in race and class are gone; a Society where you have not merely your machinery of co-operation, but where each individual is animated by the sense of love for his fellows and a desire to serve.

You look out on the world today, and the gulf between the world today and the ultimate ideal is about as deep and broad as it is possible for it to be. Somehow we have got to work out our own personal lives and the policies of our Movements and the things for which we stand, so as to bridge that gulf.

On the one hand today we have the dominant class or dominant nation using the method of violence, and on the other side we have the subject class or subject nation also inclined to use the method of violence in order to resist. Yet there are in every part of the world a few people who have seen the vision of the new society, even while they are in this world which is using violence; people who feel that this use of violence is all wrong, and feeling that, cannot take part in it, and yet somehow want to be contributing towards the coming of their ultimate ideal.

As I see it . . . there are two possible courses for the individual who has seen the vision. The first is the course which Christ took. Christ, quite deliberately, I think, stood right above the battle. He said ‘I will stand in my own life for the big, ultimate image. My contribution to the world will be a contribution which will live on and on and on and on, and because I have lived out his great principle now, I will stand as an example for mankind for long ages. . . . But I do not think that kind of life is the kind one is going to live as a result of sitting round a table and discussing things. I think it is a much bigger and deeper thing than that.

I think most of us who are ordinary mortals, and do not dare to claim the name of ‘Christian’, have to be content to work out our lives for our own time and generation, have to think out how we expect our ultimate ideal is to be reached, and associate our lives with the problems with which we are surrounded. Looking at it from this standpoint, I say we have to give our lives to the advocacy of policies which are opposed to capitalism, and imperialism and which are making for the new co-operative order. We have each in our countries to be opposing those things which make for domination and division as vigorously as we can, and to seek to construct the new society. . . .

My own position is quite clear on this point. I am not going to remain outside these Movements for human freedom and equality. I am going to identify myself with them, even if they use methods of violence to which I am opposed. I will exert my utmost influence within these Movements to prevent methods of violence being used; and try to get the alternative methods adopted as much as possible. . . .

. . . It isn’t a matter of mental conviction: it is a matter of spiritual perfection. But I believe that the man or woman who is big enough to do that, is doing the biggest thing in life. I doubt whether most of us are equal to it.<sup>16</sup>

## Conscription, alternative service and war resistance

As a result of the wide publicity gained by the Manifesto and pressures coming from various sources, several countries adopted laws on conscientious objection and the granting of exemption to recognised conscientious objectors. However, in some countries they did this on condition that the COs would do non-combatant military service and some others civilian alternative service.

Consequently, along with their awareness regarding the relationship between conscription, world peace and human liberty on the one hand and on the other, the individual and his country, reinforced by the publication of the International Anti-Militarist Manifesto, some very pertinent questions were raised in the minds of people. The questions were not simple or convenient. For instance one had to ask oneself: do I have any responsibility towards my country? If my conscience does not permit me to do anything that would, in all likelihood, cause death of human being/s, and if at the same time I feel an emotional or rational relationship between my motherland and me how do I resolve the dilemma?

Perhaps some individuals – and they may be fairly large in number – do not feel any emotional or philosophical relationship between themselves and their country. Or they may be afraid of joining the military because of the risks it involves. In such cases the idea of refusing military service might sound convenient. Otherwise, what alternative do they have? Should they try to take the risk because of the general belief that war comes very rarely and it may not happen during their service period? Hence, isn't the risk worth taking, specially because life in the military is comfortable and has a glorified image in the minds of the public. So, why not accept conscription and enjoy the comfort and glory as long as it is available!

There can be yet another incentive, specially in situations where the general population is not allowed to possess weapons. For instance the British applied this principle to most of their colonies, e.g. Ireland, South Africa and India. Under such conditions a psychological factor comes into play. When people are barred from the use of weapons they may start hankering for opportunities for owning and using them. I could identify three major categories of people who joined the miles-long queues in front of recruiting centres at the time of India–Pakistan war.

Firstly, a large number of these people were the poor unemployed; military service came as a most welcome opportunity for getting employment to earn a livelihood for their nearly starving families.

Secondly, there were many young men who were fascinated by the thought of using weapons especially because they never had the chance of handling weapons. They liked the idea of joining the army as long as it provided them with an assured livelihood and guns on their shoulders. Most of them could hardly have a deeply rooted sentiment for their country's freedom.

Thirdly, among them there were quite a few, both young and middle-aged, whose motivation for joining the army was their love and loyalty to their *matra-bhoomi* (motherland), to defend her from the invaders coming from the north or north-west.

In the case of India the factor of unemployment was an important one. Nevertheless, the elements of loyalty to one's country, to the rulers and the defence of the nation, all put together, created the climate of war. Although some jingoistic elements asked for conscription, the government in that situation had no need to take such a step. It had many times more volunteers than needed for the forces. Thus the issue of alternative service did not arise.



## Alternative service

A majority of the activists in the War Resisters' International were convinced that acceptance of alternative service in place of military service is another way of telling the State that it had the ultimate authority to conscript every citizen. However it was necessary to be considerate and at the same time recognise the importance of the dictates of the individual's conscience. In other words, did it make any sense saying that we will not press the trigger but we can carry the gun to the place where you need it! Or, we shall not handle weapons or go to the front, but shall nurse the war-injured and do the work for the Red Cross, etc.

After discussing the issue of conscription and alternative service the WRI passed the following resolution at its 1925 Hoddesdon Conference:

This Conference refrains from laying down a general rule regarding alternative service in view of the different opinions and circumstances of the affiliated organisations. It registers the view, however, that in its opinion acceptance of alternative service may be taken to imply the recognition of the right of the State to impose military service upon others. The War Resisters' International denies this right, and urges that in time of war alternative service should be strongly opposed, because all such service becomes part of the war organisation.<sup>17</sup>

The WRI had been repeatedly saying that its work was not to find alternatives to war service, it was to abolish war altogether. Yet, it took the stand that it would be wise not to lay down rigid rules about the way people decide to oppose military service in a nonviolent manner. The International realised that in certain situations or cases choosing a reasonably acceptable alternative service could be the only practical step, the first in the direction of the abolition of conscription altogether. In many situations it could be taken as an initiation into the fully-fledged pacifist conviction for many a beginner. In some other situations it was a tactical step toward educating the people to be ready for the next step, i.e. refusal of compulsory military service and total rejection of militarism.

Runham Brown had expressed his opinion about alternative service already in a letter dated June 14, 1923. It was particularly in response to the approach expressed in a circular sent to the second Balthoven Conference written by Premysl Pitter on behalf of Nova Jeruzalemo, the Czechoslovakian pacifist organisation, later a Section of the International.

With his letter Runham Brown had enclosed a copy of Premysl Pitter's circular, which had reached the office of Paco (War Resisters' International) before it was transferred to London. He wrote:

I am now glad to be able to send you a letter by Premysl Pitter, which expresses the thoughts of many of the members of our Movement in Czechoslovakia on the question of Alternatives to Military Service.

It is of great significance that proposals are being put forward from many countries for solving the problem of the Conscientious Objector. The War Resister is no longer negligible. He is a fact which has to be reckoned with before Conscription can again work smoothly or War be carried on without hindrance from at home.

My personal view is different from our Comrade Premysl Pitter. I will state it briefly without any claim to speak for the W. R. I. with more authority than any other member.

I believe that War Resisters would be well advised to oppose any Law providing

Alternative Compulsory service. The reason for the proposal is the existence of compulsory Military service. But compulsory military service is itself wrong and dangerous.

I know that many Anti-Militarists are deeply concerned to be of real service, while those of their friends who see them suffer are anxious to save them from the penalties of resistance. There is a prevalent idea that they should undertake work that is more unpleasant or of greater danger than that which the Soldier is required to do, and so prove their conscientiousness.

I believe that the job for Anti-Militarists is not to go about trying to find something unpleasant or dangerous to do. There is more than enough for them to do arising naturally out of the World's condition.

Their work should be undertaken solely on the ground that they feel called to do it and not because it is unpleasant or because there is such a thing as compulsory military service.

I am not concerned to prove my conscientiousness. I am concerned to make the organisation of war impossible.<sup>18</sup>

The debate on the question of alternative service continued. The two sides were quite firm on their positions. Premysl Pitter said during a discussion at the Hoddesdon Conference of 1925 that it was not possible to organise war resisters under that name in his country. They had, therefore, named their organisation as New Jerusalem. With the Fellowship of Reconciliation they had proposed a law for civil alternative services. 'This did not mean work for the army, but work similar to that done in Switzerland, e.g., the clearing of roads after an avalanche. This might not please the British delegates, but if they were in Czecho-Slovakia they would be pleased if such a law could be enacted.'<sup>19</sup>

Despite the position of the WRI being firmly against alternative service, some of the members tried to find different ways and reasons for introducing it, especially in countries where conscription existed. According to Premysl Pitter there was nothing in the actual Constitution of the WRI which would prevent the International from taking action upon the above proposal. He and even Fenner Brockway recognised the right of the State to compel its citizens to do certain things.

In the mean time the WRI received a letter from Dr Arnold Kalisch on behalf of the German Bund, suggesting that it send 'A request to all Governments to introduce the Scandinavian Alternative Service Laws signed by well-known international people'.

The Council accepted the following statement made by Fenner Brockway and asked the Secretariat to send it to Dr Kalisch as an official reply to his letter:

I think there is no possibility of reaching a decision as to the question of the right of the State. Personally I do not deny the right of the state to organise the communal life and if it were a part of a general scheme to insist that every citizen in the State I should not have an objection. But this is not a scheme of that kind. It is a compulsory military service scheme and as part of that scheme there are alternative service laws. The acceptance of alternative services under a compulsory military service scheme means, the recognition of that scheme itself, and the right of the State to impose military service. It means that you become a party to that scheme and a party to the State acceptance of alternative service.

In actual fact, in those countries where Alternative Service is being generally accepted, the Movement for Resistance to all compulsory military service is weakened.

Norway is a great example. I doubt whether there is any war resister who is resisting compulsory military service now to the point of going to prison, and the result is that the moral force of the war resistance movement in Norway has almost entirely disappeared. In many cases the upon those taking part.

But when that has been said, the WRI must take a broad view of this question and must recognise that many of its members are prepared to accept alternative service and want alternative service. I think the Headquarters here must be prepared to assist all those who are seeking to obtain alternative service in their various countries. We must be prepared to provide information and to co-operate even with other International Organisations which are seeking to do this, but it is important that the War Resisters' International itself should be concentrating upon the principle of resistance and should not become known publicly either as a relief organisation or an organisation for securing exemptions. There would be a great danger of such a position becoming our public witness if we ourselves were to concentrate upon this Alternative service work. We must keep our absolute resistance position clear.<sup>20</sup>

The debate as to the legitimacy of a war resister accepting alternative service was to become a recurring theme for the International. For example it was reported at the Council Meeting held in Enfield on January 2–5, 1932, that

in Scandinavia an extraordinary opportunity was presented for war resistance propaganda among young men who had already accepted Alternative Civil Service . . . in Denmark where the Movement had definitely taken the Alternative Service outlook, there was an increasing number of cases where men had refused to accept the civil alternative and gone to prison, and a general tendency to adopt this attitude was developing, and that in the International had been particularly effective and a new Law had been introduced to deal with War Resisters.

Hitherto the Movement had accepted both alternatives – the attitude of those who accepted a civil alternative in peace-time, and the 'absolutist' attitude. It had not been the business of the WRI to propagate the idea of Alternative Service but it could be regarded as highly satisfactory when the propagation of war resistance ideas had resulted in the passing of a Law similar to that introduced in Finland. In view of the difference of opinion in the Movement on this question . . . it was stated that the time had come when the Council should make a further official statement.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the fact that Premysl Pitter had expressed the impossibility of organising war resisters under that title in Czechoslovakia, he himself had not the slightest doubt about his personal pacifism. That much is evident from the striking letter he wrote to the President of the Czechoslovakian Republic:

I am unable to serve as a soldier and therefore I return my military papers to you as to the commander-in-chief.

. . . In one of your pre-war essays, in an article on the Czech Reformation, you write 'I admire Zizka, he obliges me to follow him, but with Chelcicky (founder of a pacifist Bohemian sect) I must say that one should not use violence as Zizka did. I sympathise with Chelcicky who is quite as energetic a character as Zizka, but who did not use violence.'

But now I read in your recent work 'The World Revolution', that 'Chelcicky has gone too far,' and that we must find a compromise between violence and non-violence. Several years ago, through the experience and the barbarism of war, through bitter sufferings and struggle, I came – like you – to the decision: 'Jesus, not Caesar; Chelcicky not Zizka.' From moral reasons I became an opponent of every form of violence.

To-day we are only a handful in comparison with the others, the majority, but this handful is growing in size and in inner strength. Our enthusiasm attracts others, carries them away, enflames them, and our number increases. To-day we are ten, to-morrow a hundred, soon thousands, and not only in this country, but everywhere, all over the world. For there are no borders for the spreading of truth – truth cannot be prohibited, love cannot be defeated. . . .

Therefore I am returning my military papers. I do not like the feeling that I still belong to a military organisation, if only on paper, and that I am still counted as a soldier. It appears to me insincere and dishonest to wait with the refusal of military service and with returning my military papers until I am called up. People might think that I shall do this from other than idealistic reasons. On the other hand, I do not want to make a martyr of myself. Therefore I am sending my papers to you, Mr. President, and not to the military authorities, . . . We are strengthened by the knowledge that people are with us who are not easily passed over, and who are also quoted often by you Mr. President: Jesus, Chelcicky, Tolstoy, and among those still alive men like Romain Rolland and Gandhi.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever the state of the debate on total refusal versus alternative service among pacifist groups, the WRI's stand in favour of total rejection of militarism and the war machine remained as firm as ever. As a pragmatic approach it was accepted that if alternative service had occasionally to be supported, it should be only as an initial step towards total war resistance.

#### Notes Chapter 7

- 1 Georges Chev  died in prison in 1943 whilst serving his sentence for 'refusal to obey military order'. He was an ex-soldier of the war of 1914–18, the first French man to openly declare himself a war resister in 1927.
- 2 *The Antimilitaristic Movement in Russia, Bulletin IV*, 1924, p.2.
- 3 *The Present Situation, Ibid.* p.5.
- 4 Dr Helene St cker, *Travelling in Russia as a Pacifist, Bulletin IV*, March 1924, pp.6–7
- 5 Quoted by Michael David Young in 'Wars Will Cease When Men Refuse to Fight' (MSS), in John Haynes Holms, *I Speak for Myself*, War Resisters League, 1975, pp.4–6
- 6 *News from the International Movement, France, Bulletin VI*, September 1924, pp.2–3
- 7 *Ibid.* pp.4–5
- 8 Premysl Pitter sent this circular for consideration at the Hoddesdon Conference held during July 1925. The note was not dated, but it is evident that it was sent to London before the beginning of July 1925. The document is in the WRI archives of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, Holland.
- 9 *International Manifesto Against Conscription*, issued at the end of August, 1926, WRI archives at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Holland
- 10 *Military Conscription and World Opinion, The War Resister XIV*, December 1926, pp.3–4
- 11 *The War Resister XV*, February 1927, p.10
- 12 The War Resisters' International archives in the Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, USA
- 13 *Military Conscription, The War Resister XIII*, 1926, p.3

- 14 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, May 21–22, 1927, *Anti-Conscription Manifesto*, p.40
- 15 Ibid. p.22
- 16 Ibid. pp.23–5
- 17 *View of Alternative Services, The War Resister XIII*, July 1926, p.4
- 18 Runham Brown, Letter addressed to *Dear Comrades*, dated June 14, 1923, the original is in the archives of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, Holland.
- 19 *War Resisters of the World: An account of the Movement in twenty countries and a Report of the International Conference held at Hoddesdon, Herts., England, July, 1925*, p.22
- 20 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 4–7, 1929, *Alternative Service*, p.34
- 21 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 2–5, 1932, item 17, *Propaganda in Alternative Service Camps*, p.8
- 22 *Striking letter to the Czech President in The War Resister XI*, March 1926, pp.6–7

## CHAPTER 8

*Many people feel that an organization that uses non-violent methods to reach its objectives must continue winning victories one after another in order to remain non-violent. If that be the case, then a lot of efforts have been miserable failures. There is a great deal more involved than victories. My experience has been that the poor know violence more intimately than most people because it has been a part of their lives, whether the violence of the gun or the violence of want and need. I don't subscribe to the belief that non-violence is cowardice, as some militant groups are saying. In some instances nonviolence requires more militancy than violence. Non-violence forces you to abandon the short-cut in trying to make a change in the social order. Violence, the short-cut, is the trap people fall into when they begin to feel that it is the only way to attain their goal. When these people turn to violence, it is a very savage kind.*

*When people are involved in something constructive, trying to bring about change, they tend to be less violent than those who are not engaged in rebuilding or in anything creative. Non-violence forces one to be creative; it forces any leader to go to the people and get them involved so that they can come forth with new ideas. I think that once people understand the strength of non-violence – the force it generates, the love it creates, the response that it brings from the total community – they will not be willing to abandon it easily.*

Cesar Chavez<sup>1</sup>

### Social revolution and war resistance

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As we have seen, from its very foundation in 1921 the War Resisters' International had *non-violent socio-political revolution* on its agenda as a major item. In reality, however, even now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has not been able to work out a practical programme in that direction, neither for itself nor for its Sections and other affiliates. Why has it not yet been able to do so despite its sincerity and honest efforts in everything else it tried, and its successes? What is the reason for this? One explanation is that it spent so much of its time and energy trying to pressurise governments to provide legal status to war resisters and on the debate on the 'absolutist' position verses alternative service; so allowing no time to prepare itself to launch a nonviolent struggle for social revolution. Its inability to make progress in this area is despite the fact that it has been able to carry on theoretical work and debate quite effectively throughout its existence.

Obviously, for a movement to be able to bring about such a fundamental change, it requires, among other things, answers to many questions. For instance, how clear is its leadership about the issues involved? What is its perception of the future relationships – structural, political as well as social? And above all, how strong is the will of its leadership to bring about such a fundamental change? Equally important is to prepare the people, mentally as well as practically, to work and be willing to *suffer* for achieving the goal. At the same time, individual

members and the movement as a whole have to ask themselves whether they are sufficiently equipped with the skills needed to provide guidance to a large enough section of the population for such a revolution.

The meeting of the International Council held in Berlin on January 1–2, 1926, discussed the question as to what was the eventual objective of War Resisters' International. Helene Stöcker emphasised the need for a constructive social policy and asked 'Can we achieve the new order by organising work and reform, or only by perfecting the individual?' Martha Steinitz referred to the constructive work in education and promoting freedom which was being carried out by many of the WRI Sections. The Council decided to ask the Sections if the next Conference could include this question on its agenda, and also if they would encourage their members to have discussions on it before then.

No doubt most of the key people within the WRI were trying to look for ways and means to bring about social changes to make war an outdated phenomenon and build a society based on socialist and enlightened anarchist principles, that is a society that respected human life and was endowed with a sense of equality and freedom. Jo Meijer, from Holland, believed that 'it ought to be made clear that we are in favour of people and classes fighting for freedom, though we differ in methods'.

Fenner Brockway

believed that in Vienna was to be found the most acute problem of pacifism today. Vienna, the most socialist city in the world, was surrounded by reaction, isolated from Germany by the Versailles Treaty. The general strike is useless because it has no goods to supply. Under these circumstances it could not stand an invasion from without. Therefore our suggestion of a general strike would not help.

Vienna pacifists should urge closer political and economic union between Germany and Austria. . . . Economical unity was more practical at present, and may produce a situation in which the general strike was workable.

If Vienna were filled with a spirit of pacifism and could make every possible gesture for co-operation and the reduction of tariffs, they would break down tyranny in the surrounding countries. Any attempt by the Austrian workers to use violence would mean destruction to themselves, and possibly to all Europe. The assassination of a tyrant either produces a sense of relief in the community, or it makes him a great hero.<sup>2</sup>

Some members were of the opinion that pacifists should try and make war legally impossible. For instance, at a later International Council meeting (May 1927) Elinor Byrns said: "in making any statement of our case we should be clear that we do not wish armies or navies, but she would go much farther than that, and that in many countries, especially in England, Germany and the US . . . it was possible to help the war resister Movement very definitely by accepting a resolution . . . which would mean that we should have a definite movement to try and make war legally impossible, and work for disarmament . . . She did not wish to force the position on anyone who did not believe that political action was the only thing that they could do."<sup>3</sup>

## Pacifism and freedom

The WRI Secretariat often received communications from people who were attracted by the work and philosophy of the WRI, but had serious doubts about the applicability of nonvio-

lence and pacifism for the management of a nation and maintaining its freedom. Lithuania was one of the countries to become independent at the end of the First World War. On February 3, 1927 Vitoldo Ozelis wrote from Lithuania that after having been

governed in oppression during long centuries, war gave [to the Lithuanians] the opportunity for national rebellion. And for these sufferers there exists no other language by means of which to speak to their oppressors than the language of arms with the device of national liberty . . . Would it not be ridiculous to proclaim anti-militarism amongst the Riffs of Morocco, the Syrians, and at present the Chinese, who rightfully demand the removal of their shackles? . . . I only present to you briefly, my true friend and brother, the real feelings of the mass of the people, thus showing how rough is the path for bare feet. To attack imperialism and militarism with bare hands is a task very exhausting, dangerous, and not soon accomplished. . . .

Now, in these circumstances to speak of anti-militarism when every day the Polish Government inspired by England and France in order to form a barrier preventing the union of Germany and Russia, threatens the occupation of Lithuania, is not only useless, but for such conduct long imprisonment and even death is threatened: and the military tribunals do not jest.

Evidently Dr Ozelis was confused and wrote this letter to Runham Brown to say that although he agreed with the spirit of the Anti-Conscription Manifesto he did not know what actually he himself could do. His letter continued:

Notwithstanding, I am preparing for printing a call to Lithuanian youth to resist militarism, and if circumstances permit, I will translate and print separately the Manifesto. And I hope my authority will escape imprisonment, but it is possible that my work will be confiscated. But for wider usefulness of my work, I beg you to send me, dear brother, more material in German and French. Also please enrol me a member of the WRI and accept my support and approval for the Anti-Conscription Manifesto.

I most heartily greet your courageous and valuable work and much desire that you untiringly continue it for the good and happiness of mankind.

Always fraternally yours,  
Dr V. Ozelis<sup>4</sup>

Runham Brown's reply must have given Dr Ozelis much courage and food for thought. It began with a sensitive comment:

I am very impressed with the masterly survey you have given me showing the outlook of the great mass of the people in your country, and that seeing all the difficulties, you still have the courage to face them, and to attempt to co-operate with us. I am well aware that our task here in England is at present not attended with the same risk that you have to run, and I am therefore not prepared to persuade you to take up this work, any more than I should be prepared to go to tell the people of the Riff in Morocco, the Syrians or the Chinese and tell them what they ought to do.

. . . You have alluded to the domination of the strong and the rich. Their strength and their riches lie in their power to brutalise the labour of the weak and the poor. When with a united will the workers refuse to co-operate, this power of domination is gone.



The resort to violence is weakness, it may bring a temporary relief, but nothing more, and in the end can only set up a new power of domination.

We, who are nationals of the big military nations, such as Great Britain, have the greatest responsibility. Our task is first to disarm ourselves and thus to throw in our lot with the weak and the oppressed. During the Great War some thousands of us did this. We refused to take any part which would help in the prosecution of the war. Our lot was not as hard as that of many of our comrades in other countries. We spent some years in prison and when we were offered release, if we would agree to do some civil work, we refused this also, because it was not the sin of committing violence which we sought to avoid, but because we desired to be as effective as we could in our opposition to all war. . . . Resistance to war was undertaken by men in other countries without knowing of each other's action. Now we have come together. The work of the War Resisters' International is to discover those who in future will refuse all war service and all violence and civil war, so that we may strengthen one another. We are opposed to compulsory military service of course, but we are equally opposed to voluntary military service.

We are but a handful compared with those who have not yet become conscious of the way they are being used to strengthen the hands of the strong and the rich, in their oppression of the weak and the poor. Only a few think – the great mass feels and learns only by object lesson. It is not a theory but a fact which we stand for. Many have refused, many have been shot, some are in prison today, and still their number grows. We can at least be masters of ourselves and give by our life, or if need be, by our death, that one thing which humanity needs, the object lesson in weak men made strong by being possessed of a great passion – love for their fellow men. That is our ideal. I do not know whether I shall live up to it, but I hope so. Such ideals and such action must be prompted by individual conviction. We can only become effective when individuals unite in groups and groups become international.<sup>5</sup>

## WRI's contact with Gandhi

During this period the British Government as well as an important section of the Labour Party were becoming increasingly engaged, in their different ways, with the Indian national freedom movement, which was waging a nonviolent struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Whereas the British Government was quite nervous about the growing strength of the Indian movement against colonial rule, some of the leadership of the left and the anarcho-socialists were looking with great interest at Gandhi's methods of nonviolent struggle for freedom.

The Indian struggle offered an example for the radical pacifists to follow in devising the methodology for their pacifist programme. They identified with the Indians in their 'nonviolent war of liberation', especially because in the climate of that time there was much glorification of liberation struggles. A popular belief was that for the oppressed there was no alternative but to use violence. However, the nonviolent struggle of the Indians added to the faith of the pacifist world with a vision and hope for achieving their goal by nonviolent means. Some men and women from the pacifist circles established friendly contacts with Mahatma Gandhi and many others among the leadership of the Indian freedom movement.

In the pamphlet, *Brief Report of the Work of the International Council August 1928 – Spring 1931* it was stated:

We have remained in the closest possible touch with our comrades in India and we see the struggle made by Mahatma Gandhi and the National Congress, the first experiment on a large scale to carry our principle of non-co-operation with the tyrant into aggressive action. The British members of the Council have co-operated in the publication of 'Indian Events' a paper bringing particularly to the English public, a knowledge of the actual happenings in India.<sup>6</sup>

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom had sent a message in support of the Appeal by Gujrat women to the Viceroy and the Executive Committee of the WRI sent Gandhi a letter of greetings, which he published in *Young India*, of 1st May 1930. Gandhi's accompanying comment was: "... I must reproduce the following two messages as they are from English friends. It is the conversion of England that civil resisters are aiming at. I have enough criticism from England, some of which I have published in these pages. It gives me pleasure therefore to publish good wishes of some English friends."<sup>7</sup>

Later, when in 1931 the WRI Council heard, with "deep regret", the news of the arrest of Gandhi, they immediately sent a cable to him: "War Resisters' International Council representing organisations in 25 countries send affectionate sympathy to you and all Indian followers of Gandhi and assures you of its support for India's claim to independence and the non-violent method of securing it."<sup>8</sup>

Significant in this context is the participation of Dr Rajendra Prasad as Gandhi's representative at the International Council Meeting held in Vienna in 1928. Gandhi himself could not go to Vienna but sent a message through him. Fenner Brockway said that when he met Gandhi in India at Christmas Gandhi told him about his great pride in the work of the War Resisters' Movement and that he had absolute sympathy with it. He also expressed his desire to be present at this Conference, which he could not attend due to the pressure of work in India. But he had particularly asked comrade Rajendra Prasad to come and to bring his greetings.

Rajendra Prasad:

It has been my privilege in India to be associated with Mahatma Gandhi in the great work which he has been doing there for the last eleven years. And the message which he has directed me to convey to this Conference consists in the first place of an apology for his absence. As the Chairman has been pleased to tell you, Mahatma Gandhi was desirous of coming to Europe and of meeting the kindred souls engaged in similar work in other parts of the world. He has had to deprive himself of the great pleasure which he would have derived from coming here. In the second place he has also felt some hesitation in accepting invitations which have come to him from time to time from Europe and America. The hesitation on his part has not been due to any want of appreciation of the work in which you are engaged. He feels that he is not yet in a position to deliver a message to the world. He feels that he is now engaged in a great experiment in India which, if successful, would in course of time place before the world a new idea of life. And that struggle in which he is engaged is nothing less than a struggle for the freeing of three hundred million of souls from the greatest tyranny and oppression yet known in the world. The method which he is pursuing against the mightiest empire of the world which exists to-day, is also unique. It is because this method has not proved

successful as yet, that he hesitates to accept invitations from abroad. During the last ten years in India he has created a revolution of the heart which is unparalleled in that country. To-day it is not only a few persons who accept his message, but the Indian National Congress has accepted it as its creed – no arms and non-violence as its method. And with this method of non-violence Gandhi hopes to subdue and bring to its knees the mightiest empire of the day. Up to this moment we have not succeeded as we had expected. We have had failures and we do not know when we are going to succeed. But the people have made up their minds to obtain their freedom and to obtain freedom for the world.

Mahatma Gandhi is convinced that it is the social and economic order of the world to-day which is responsible for all the wars and miseries. Therefore he is not only pursuing this method of non-violence but has also devised a means for the economic restoration of India. He feels that it is the rivalry for trade and markets and gaining colonies which has been creating all the trouble in the world. The Western nations of to-day are engaged in an industrial movement which makes for war. Over-production means the seeking of new markets in which to dump the surplus goods. It is for this reason that big nations want to keep their colonies and mandated areas.

Gandhi thinks so long as it is possible for one country to force another country to take its goods wars cannot be abolished. He has therefore asked his own country not to be dazzled by the industrialism of the West. He has called upon us to go to the poor villages to ask them to revive their spinning wheel, which is the symbol of revolution, of the mind which is unknown to-day. In India to-day there are thousands like myself who are engaged in carrying this message to the villages. Because they have accepted Gandhi's doctrine and use the spinning wheel there are thousands to-day who have a little food, who were previously starving. It is his work in connection with the spinning wheel which will live longest.

When he has established freedom in India by the method of non-violence, he will be able to speak to the world. It is possible that India one day may be in a position, through Gandhi's help and God's grace, to deliver a message which you may be inclined to listen to and accept.<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of Gandhi's ideas came to the WRI at the right time, when the International was struggling to clarify its political perspective within pacifist thinking and activities. To reach the desired goal it was not sufficient only to increase the number of war resisters. Of course, what the WRI wanted to do was basically political; not the politics of State power, but the politics of the power of the people, of liberation from the power of the State. However, the crucial question facing WRI as a committed pacifist body was how to go about developing people's power with the aim of creating a military-free nonviolent society? Gandhi's work, to an extent, was a guiding factor for the pacifist movement.

## WRI and the League Against Imperialism

The League Against Imperialism invited the WRI to send delegates to their Second World Congress to be held in Paris in July 1929. The January 1929 Council meeting agreed that the WRI should be represented at this Congress, and so identified itself with the struggle against imperialism. The Council felt that it would be a good opportunity to use its presence to urge

the use of nonviolence in order to free the world from imperialism. Dr Helene Stöcker was asked to be the WRI delegate.

Helene Stöcker reported to the Council meeting in Zurich (August 30–September 2, 1929) that there were ‘five general groups in the League – the Communists, Gandhi-ists, Left-Socialists – mostly English, Radical Pacifists and Anti-militarist Anarchists’. Stöcker emphasised the need for the League to bring together representatives of oppressed peoples. She insisted that the ‘value of our principles being represented and expressed to Colonial people, and that we should try to express our ideas and ideals as much as possible within this movement, to balance the tendency towards Communism and because the nonviolent pacifist element was still in a small minority.’ She urged that there ought to be systematic co-operation among the pacifist representatives on the League.

The Council felt that it was necessary to define the WRI’s relations with the League Against Imperialism. If not only ourselves but other pacifists and anti-militarists, particularly the socialist bodies, had realised the tremendous possibilities of the League Against Imperialism at the beginning, it might have developed on other lines. Fenner Brockway was under no illusion that the League was commenced definitely by communists with a view to assisting the revolutionary Movement against Imperialism, which at the time was very strong. The Council had an in-depth discussion about the attitude of the WRI towards the League. It decided that instead of affiliating, WRI would remain associated with it and pay a yearly subscription; it would make clear that the WRI principles are those of nonviolence, and it would carefully consider its representation at the next conference of the League.

The Council prepared the following Manifesto on Imperialism to be given as wide a publicity as possible:

The War Resisters’ International extends its cordial greetings to the peoples of Colonial Countries who are struggling for political and economic freedom.

The WRI realises that the Imperialism of which they are the victims rests upon military domination and that it causes frequent cruelties comparable with the sufferings of war. Moreover, the WRI sees in the imperialist rivalries of the Great Powers the most provocative causes of modern war.

The WRI, therefore, calls upon its members in Imperialist countries to demand the withdrawal of the Armies of Occupation from the territories of Colonial Countries and to oppose relentlessly the political persecution and economic oppression of their peoples. At the same time, it urges those peoples to strengthen their political and industrial organisations, so that they can achieve their freedom without a disastrous conflict of violence in which the deadly armaments of the Imperialist Powers would certainly be used to crush them.

The WRI understands that there can be no true basis for internationalism without national freedom and racial equality; it recognises the right of all peoples to self-government and independence and identifies itself whole-heartedly with those who are actively engaged in the struggle for their achievement<sup>10</sup>

The spirit and the approach of the war resister was expressed in the following words:

Give by our life, or if need be, by our death, that one thing which humanity needs, the object lesson in weak men made strong by being possessed of a great passion – love for their fellow men. That is our ideal. I do not know whether I shall live up to it, but I hope

so. Such ideals and such actions must be prompted by individual conviction. We can only become effective when individuals unite in groups and groups become international.<sup>11</sup>

Even at that time the WRI, in fact the whole of the pacifist movement, had yet to create a consensus regarding its approach and strategies to reach the objectives it was striving to reach. A successful approach would have to be based on the qualitative preparedness of the individual as well as the community. The Sonntagsberg Conference provided a forum to deal with these issues.

## The Sonntagsberg Conference

WRI's second Triennial Conference was held at Sonntagsberg, Vienna, Austria, from July 27 to 31, 1928. It proved to be a crucial event in the history of the International by raising some key questions about the functioning of the International and its goals. It was clear that some of the WRI activists were not fully satisfied with the direction of the movement and the speed with which it was moving forward.

The discussion started with a comprehensive statement by Hans Kohn of Palestine. He said:

Regarded from the sociological standpoint we are today a sect, and we must become a movement. It is undoubtedly of great spiritual value that we have begun as a sect, ... a community of people united by one idea, who have gone out to seek to discover men who already belong inwardly to this sect. We must come out from this position as a sect and enter into the position of a movement.

... we do not aim at making martyrs, ... we regret that there have to be martyrs amongst us. We did not come into our movement for the sake of a few hundred War Resisters, . . . We must consider ourselves as an outpost, as, morally, the most responsible group, which, just from the idea of war resistance wants to abolish the idea that, against their conviction, against their wills, against their longing to live, men must die and kill other men. We are not there for the purpose of upholding giants and martyrs, but for representing all those who are called upon to die and to kill for any cause whatever which is indifferent to them and with which they do not willingly co-operate. . . . We do not say we will not cover cowards. We do indeed cover cowards. We cover men who simply do not want to give their lives for anything to which they are not inwardly driven. We consider no one a coward, who wants to cling to the sun and moon, the mountains and everything green and beautiful. We and the War Resisters are merely an outpost of all other men who do not possess the power of theoretic exposition, and the sacrificial courage of the martyr; of the humble and the dumb, who cannot speak for themselves. It is for these we must speak and not for saints and martyrs, who can speak for themselves on the ground of their conviction.

Hans Kohn wanted "to see our future activities directed from these hypotheses". He pointed out the approach the WRI ought to take in their future work. The first task should be to strengthen the weak.

... We find certain spots in which our movement is at its weakest. . . . Our chief work has

hitherto been concentrated in England. But we are very strong in England. ... We are strong in Germany . . . but we are frightfully feeble in other lands. Do not delude yourself with facts like the Ponsonby campaign, and the popular vote against war, as they have been carried out in England. It stands to reason that people should subscribe to the pledge there. The non-existence of compulsory military service in those countries must be remembered in connection with that. Here is the salient point from which we must proceed. If we wish to free the world from the compulsion to kill men, then we must strain every nerve against compulsory military service. If we wish to effect for mankind of the present day what was effected 200 years ago for the religious world, namely, freedom of conscience in respect to religion – then we must create freedom of conscience in respect to the State. If at that time the Moloch of religion politically fettered by the State was the oppressor, then to-day we have to turn in the same way against the Moloch of the National State.

Some really peaceful countries have introduced Alternative Service alongside compulsory military service. That is no direct result of our campaigns but lies above all in the nature of the geographical situation of these States . . . I must tell . . . that compulsory military service is something sacred, to most people. It had its birth in a great revolutionary movement in France, surrounded by the “glory” of 1789. It was the expression of the sovereignty of the people who overthrew the domination of the Autocracy. In Germany the Liberation Movement of 1813 was its root. It is sacred to the people in the newly arisen States, – that is – in the Austrian and Russian Succession States, where compulsory military service, in the view of the broad masses of the people, protects the long-desired newly won independence, sanctified by years of propaganda. Therefore we have a difficult spiritual struggle before us to turn this matter of compulsory military service into a problem, when to these people it is no problem. . . . I regret one thing; we issue so many beautiful publications in Germany and England. I consider that superfluous. I hope that will not be misunderstood. Our organisations can publish these themselves in these countries for they are strong. But in countries where we are weak, in languages which only now have awakened to life, as for instance, Lithuania, etc., where yet no word of our movement has penetrated, we must succeed in finding an entrance. . . . Therefore we must turn our attention to these countries and not to England, which stands to-day at the zenith of its power, which has only to lose by any war which it conducts, and therefore will not conduct any war.

Another point Hans Kohn elaborated concerned the question of co-operation between the WRI and the organisations which shared or almost completely shared its standpoint. They included, for example, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Women’s International League, the International Anti-Militarist Bureau (IAMB), the Pacifist Youth Organisations and The Society of Friends,

to whom we are all so much indebted. ... We must come into close combination with them in the form of Cartel. I propose that between our International Council and the executives of these Unions, sessions in common, for the consideration and organisation of different activities, should take place, . . .

The next point raised by Hans Kohn was connected with the idea of working with the Socialist International,

This is partly hostile, and partly moderate in feeling towards us. We appear to them either fools or a danger – fools because we seek an object which they regard as unattainable, and a danger because we earnestly desire what they allege is desired in all their solutions. They will therefore partly fight us with all possible means, but they will through their own watchwords, . . . be led more and more towards us. ...

Thirdly, I think of Religious Movements. While in the case of the previous organisations there are political reasons which make them slowly draw towards us, so there are inner reasons for the same development within the Religious Movements. Nowhere in the last ten or fifteen years have such strong new forces broken out as in the religious world. In all churches, even in the German Lutheran Church, youthful forces have broken through. . . . To bring God into the daily life, into practical and social life, means the abolition of war.

Hans Kohn as a Palestinian pointed out that there was not a WRI Section there, hence he could not give any report. But, he said that there were indications of a revival among the Jews both in the national and religious life. Judaism had been through a process of rebirth during the last 20 years.

I have seen with interest the Community Settlement of our young Christian Communist friends in Waidhofen, which arose out of the desire to conquer the present day system of exploitation. . . . There, however, exists for us a pacifist problem of a more difficult and serious nature. . . . for instance, in Czecho-Slovakia, complete disarmament depends upon the solving of the problem of how Germans and Czechs are to live together; for the Czechs require an army not to fight an external enemy, but to hold the Germans down in their country. . . . a similar problem exists in Palestine. . . . it gives us the possibility not only to hold principles theoretically, which is easy, but to test them.

Hans Kohn asked the Congress to urge the International Council to set to work on the formation of a working cartel. The WRI should address appeals to the movement as mentioned in his speech, and build a press and propaganda service.

We certainly meet here in order to discuss practical questions, and dare waste no moment of our very short time in going beyond them. Yet there is need to bring theoretic clarification to the business.

He asked the Conference to send an appeal to ‘our intellectuals’:

Everywhere there are people of distinguished intellect, . . . who write books and poetry in which they say very similar things to what we feel. Yet those people are never at our service. They are in truth lost to the Movement. ... I have read their books and have the feeling that, when they are put to the test, they will not risk their reputation in the bourgeois world; that all this is only a romance or an essay to them. ... it will only become a serious matter when it is proclaimed from the street corner. I am convinced that these people will only join us when we are successful. . . .

The problem of violence and non-violence cannot be solved by thought, only by action. An Antimonian foundation like that of violence and non-violence is soluble and acceptable only in religion, but not in our Movement. The foundation of our Movement

must be the solidarity of the human race, and the respect for life and the worth of human personality. . . .

I believe that our Movement can look hopefully into the future, because we are attempting to transform into reality what hitherto has been the universal religious and philosophic conviction which we are trying to live in our lives.<sup>12</sup>

Bart de Ligt, the author of *Conquest of Violence*,<sup>13</sup> as the representative of the International Anti-Militarist Bureau, said:

...he also had to come to Sonntagsberg in order to learn how to get out of the position of sectarianism. The I.A.M.B. realised that as a sect they could get no further and he was grateful to Hans Kohn for speaking not only with a broad, but with a deep outlook, and for showing the Conference that the thing to be fought was the *jus belli* of the State which can demand of every citizen the readiness to kill and die.

...

It seems to me, pacifists like to preach but mostly act too late and then quite unnecessarily, become martyrs to their ideals. Hans Kohn is too optimistic, especially as regards England. The attitude of the MacDonald Government against India should be remembered and their strengthening of the defence of the Empire. But in spite of this the British Labour Movement is better than the Continental ones.

One international organisation that has not been mentioned is of decisive importance – the International Trades Union Movement. All those among us who believe in political parties will agree that the war against wars will have to be waged mainly by economic means.<sup>14</sup>

Bart de Ligt reminded the Conference about WRI's failure to get the IAMB resolutions to propagate war resistance at the Hague World Peace Congress. So much so that there was no mention of it in their report. He said that the task was more difficult than Hans Kohn described it. We must have the courage to admit that, otherwise we shall certainly lose the war against war, just as the working class in 1914 lost it. Bart de Ligt also said that Hans Kohn's picture of the political world situation was too provincial. He did not mention the United States of America, Pacific Ocean and the Far East, from where many dangers were threatening. Asia was attempting to liberate herself. There was a tendency among the Africans towards military organisation against their white oppressors.

The Indian struggle for independence was not reliable as an anti-militarist movement. During the World War Gandhi had helped the British Empire and even appealed to the Indians to volunteer in the British army, thus helping to build that cursed monument of the unknown soldier. There will always be the danger in India that religion and pacifism will be used as means towards a national end. But Nationalism has not the right to use the universal elements of religion and ethics for the limited purposes of nationalism. Prominent Indians admit that there is the desire in India for the organisation of a national Indian Army, in order to enable the Indian people to "defend themselves".

Bart de Ligt's emphasis was on the economic aspect of war rather than on military conscription.

Immediate abolition of military conscription by the actual rulers does not seem to be an



essential thing. In the present economic and political situation abolition of military conscription alone is of little avail for the prevention of war. Perhaps the dominating class will not need much longer military conscription, for several reasons . . .

Our fight for the abolition of conscription must be only an inferior part of our fight against modern State and for social revolution. No war will be possible, in so far as the people who are with us are able to control the economic life.

With these words Bart de Ligt commended WRI's collaboration with the IAMB.

From the report of the Conference given in the pamphlet, *War Resisters in Many Lands*, it appears that Bart de Ligt's comments did not initiate any serious discussion on what Hans Kohn had said. Pierre Ramus, a very active member of the International did, however, make a comment saying that Bart de Ligt's critical attitude on the Anti-Conscription Manifesto was mistaken.

Eugen Relgis, from Roumania, believed that there was a great need for a Pacifist International and the War Resisters' International therefore at this Conference should proclaim the Pacifist International. According to Eugen Relgis the tendency towards unity was both a cosmic and biological law, the law which was often forgotten, since each individual rather tries to regard himself as a world centre. Biologists call this tendency *Gigantansie*, an unlimited passion for expansion. It leads to destruction; to catastrophes in the world of nature, and to war in the human world.

Relgis argued that Capitalism suffered from this tendency:

With its extreme measure of growth, and like the frog who wanted to blow himself up to the size of an ox, it will burst, that is, it will be overcome by the tendency towards unity of which Pacifism and Internationalism are the expression. . . . This Conference represents forty groups from over twenty States and people of very different outlook, Socialists and Individualists, Christians, Tolstoyans, Catholics and Freethinkers, young people and workers and women. . . . This Pacifist International needs a doctrine which will be founded on the universal and permanent interests of humanity, the doctrine of humanitarianism. That doctrine is wider than the dogma of Socialism. It wants Peace between nations and peace between the social classes. It condemns war and revolution. Humanitarianism needs as a practical expression an International of Intellectuals, which will be to the Proletarian International what a nervous system is to the human organism.

Eugen Relgis believed that the Sonntagsberg Conference could form the international of intellectuals in the form of a Pacifist International under the auspices of the WRI.<sup>15</sup>

Eugen Relgis read out Romain Rolland's letter, which he had addressed to the Conference. It was very much in the spirit of the discussions going on at the Conference:

Monsieur le President,

Villeneuve, Switzerland, 24-7-28

I extend the expression of my fraternal sympathy to all those who take part in the Sonntagsberg Conference.

I believe the moment has come to bring about a Federation of all movements opposed to war, a *real pacifist international*. The most important fact of these last fifteen years has been the close contact between all the oppressed consciences in the world, through the World War itself. It is now time to sort them out, to consolidate them, and

to oppose with their mass, all those ever-present menaces of a new scourge. I do not believe in the “sudden and near disparition of war through its own elephantiasis” which our friends Eugen Relgis and Professor Nicolai are predicting. War, armed with new and gigantic weapons, threatens not to disappear before it has made humanity disappear.

*Humanity is in danger.* Let her organise her defence!

Put aside all that separates us, all these little shades of political, social, religious and philosophical ideas! At present, it is not the question of working out one single doctrine that should be accepted by this pacifist federation. Every doctrine – may it be scientific or religious – is subject to discussion. If we want too anxiously to bring about unity of spirit, we may easily destroy it!

For us it is the question to create at this very moment, one united front against war. Let us decree resistance, opposition, the refusal, the “absolute no” to all war!

And if we need one central principle on which to base our action, it is sufficient to point out the principle of solidarity, of mutual co-operation, of – let me say – *communion between all living beings*. This is a clear, immediate principle. And if we derive this principle from different faiths, either from the belief in a Father God, of whom we are all children – or from scientific monism – it is for all of us ultra-evident and categorically imperative.

Let us unite all the spiritual forces of life against the forces of death.

Yours with my heart,

Romain Rolland<sup>15</sup>

Jo Meijer, from Holland, said that Hans Kohn’s speech was splendid, but he expressed his dissension by pointing out that they should not trust too much on the reawakening of religious instincts, as it might lead into a blind alley. The WRI was not sectarian. It had been a centre for groups differing very much in outlook. Now it should not only act as a centre, but should become active in itself in the weak countries. Unity among different movements was most important and, at the end, the first common action ought to be the prevention of another war. Jo Meijer added that that co-operation should mean self-restraint in the criticism of other movements. The policy as regards those movements should be that in writing about them in papers one should further the good in them rather than fight the bad in them.

Franz Kobler, who had edited *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit, Handbuch des Aktiven Pazifismus*, made an interesting comment. He said that while Hoddesdon had created the WRI and brought forth its constitution Sonntagsberg had brought a synthesis of ideas.

It is the object of the Handbook to show this unity of ideas in the many movements which are moving towards us. Our movement will not only be movement against war, it will not only be political, it will be a spiritual. It will be linked up with other social reforms.

After saying some of these sensible things, including “Co-operation with other groups is necessary” Franz Kobler added: “Our movement should not comprise the Communists, but Movements, as for instance, the ‘Arbitrate First’ Movement organised by David Peat, whose members refuse war service only in wars started by a Government that did not want to arbitrate.” This may have been a confused or more likely even a reactionary way of thinking, but what he said about the work was sensible and to the point.

Franz Kobler seems to have been somewhat of an admirer of this aspect of militarism; for instance he said: "Our struggle against conscription should be constructive. We should propagate physical training and sports instead. Our physical passions will have to be sublimated."<sup>17</sup> People have a problem separating discipline from militarism. They tend to think that military training imparts discipline – not a logical or self-evident conclusion. But it makes it imperative that the pacifist world defines what discipline is in the context of nonviolence and pacifism.

Pierre Ramus drew the attention of the Conference to the fact that the WRI had not been able to attract the working class, although it was the proletariat who had the power to save humanity. The WRI must win the workers. The Syndicalists International had a membership of 250,000. The WRI had the intellectuals, but unity with the working class was essential. The discussion that took place at the Conference was good not only for WRI but also for the younger participants of the Conference and their future practical work. They would, hopefully, realise that the purpose of the fight was not to encourage an ever-larger number of young men to go to prison, but to influence the military legislation of conscripting countries. The significance of the refusal to do military service was to heroically point out the obsolescence and monstrosity of the claim of the State, which sins against all human and divine right. It was necessary to point out that the refusal to comply with military conscription did not necessarily mean opposition to law and state in general, but might be born from a real, a more modern and more humane form of patriotism.

Ramus added that the WRI should not forget the organisations of ex-soldiers, of war invalids and war victims. Some of the participants felt that by showing sympathy for the oppressed, the WRI might be led into activities which were all too distant from its main object. Another danger was, as pointed out by some, under-estimating the obstinacy and even wickedness of the opponents. Therefore in its propaganda it should consider not only those who are already sympathetic to it, but attempt to propagate its idea even among those circles who may be hostile to pacifism in general and the WRI in particular.

Obviously, after such a rich experience derived from remarkable contributions made by the delegates, many participants felt the need for some kind of final resolution. Eugen Relgis put forward a resolution asking for a Pacifist International under the auspices of the War Resisters' International. There was not enough time available for discussion on this proposal. Hence the Conference decided to refer the matter to the newly elected Council. Fenner Brockway's closing remarks ended with the note:

This Conference has, I think, marked the development of our Movement to a stage where we have grown from being just groups of individuals sharing a faith, to a Movement which is going to spread that faith throughout the world. During the next two years, that must be our work.<sup>18</sup>

The delegates were given a reception at the Vienna Town Hall. As a response to the reception the Chairman of the War Resisters' International, Fenner Brockway, thanked the Vienna City Council and expressed admiration for the great work that was being carried on by the Vienna Socialists Council.<sup>19</sup>

## Notes Chapter 8

- 1 Edward Guinan (ed.), *Peace and Nonviolence*, Paulist Press, New York, 1973, pp.38–9
- 2 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 1–2, 1926, pp.13–14
- 3 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, May 21–22, 1927, p.39
- 4 Ibid. pp.19–20
- 5 Ibid. pp.20–22
- 6 WRI, ‘Brief Report of the Work of the International Council, August 1928–Spring 1931’, included with the Minutes of the Council Meeting held in Lyon, France, August 1, 1931; WRI, London, p.6
- 7 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XLIII, pp.365–6
- 8 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, India, January 2–5, 1932, London, item 31
- 9 *War Resisters in Many Lands, Sonntagsberg Conference Report*, July 27–31, 1928, WRI, London, p.19–20
- 10 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Zurich, August 30–September 2, 1929, item 5, ‘The League Against Imperialism’, pp.5–6
- 11 *War Resisters in Many Lands, Sonntagsberg Conference Report*, July 27–31, 1928, WRI, London, Reports: Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Finland
- 12 *War Resisters in Many Lands, Sonntagsberg Conference Report*, July 27–31, 1928, WRI, London, pp.32–8
- 13 Bart de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence*, first published in 1937 by George Routledge, London; re-published in 1989 by Pluto Press, London
- 14 *War Resisters in Many Lands, Sonntagsberg Conference Report*, July 27–31, 1928, WRI, London, p.39
- 15 Ibid. p.40
- 16 Ibid. p.41
- 17 Ibid. pp.42–3
- 18 Ibid. p.64
- 19 Ibid. p.65. After the Conference,  
“On Wednesday, 1st August, the Graz War Resisters had arranged a public meeting which was to have been addressed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Albert de Jong and Runham Brown. A group of organised reactionaries succeeded in breaking up the meeting. Rajendra Prasad was slightly injured in the turmoil. The cause however did not suffer. A few days later nearly 2000 Graz proletarians declared their solidarity with the cause of war resistance, in spite of persecution and opposition. Messages from the would-be speakers at the original meeting were read and encouraged the Graz comrades in their decision to continue their work for a warless world.”

## CHAPTER 9

*Throughout the war we have stood for the brotherhood of man, and in the name of that ideal have resisted conscription. We now reaffirm our unity of aim with those in all countries who have given their lives that they might serve the cause of freedom, but declare our belief that it is not by bloodshed that freedom can be won or Militarism destroyed.*

*We acclaim the new hope of human liberty now challenging ancient tyrannies in industry within the State and between the nations, and dedicate the liberty we have regained to such service as shall contribute to the healing of the wounds inflicted by war, and to the building of a world rooted in freedom and enriched by labour that is shared by all.*

*It is in this spirit that we go forth to meet new tasks, confident that through its long and bitter suffering mankind must yet come into the way of love.*

Resolution adopted by the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) at their concluding Convention held on November 29–30, 1919 in London. Clifford Allen gave the farewell speech on behalf of the NCF and read the above resolution to a gathering of 400 delegates and many more members.<sup>1</sup>

### After Sonntagsberg

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The Sonntagsberg Conference (1928) had given an indication of the direction in which the WRI had to forge on. The next Council Meeting, held on January 4–7, 1929, had discussed the issues that were raised by Hans Kohn. Runham Brown had urged that the Council should realise that it would involve a development in the work of the International and that the suggestions to be made should be practical.

First of all they looked upon the WRI as a centre which would link together the groups, assist and encourage them, while the groups would do the actual work. The WRI office would operate as a clearing house. This would make the WRI headquarters a worldwide propaganda organisation. Under such situations there is always a basic question: should an affiliating body take the initiative in the work itself, or should it leave that to its Sections. The Council therefore should decide the future pattern of the WRI as such. In other words the Council must define the work and working of the activities of the headquarters.

At the Sonntagsberg Conference the point of view was expressed that the WRI should extend its activities into the wider political field. This view had been stressed by the No More War Movement (NMWM) of Britain and found considerable support. ‘Consequently, a scheme for the development of the International’s work had been prepared and circulated to the Council Members and submitted to the NMWM.’

These were suggestions as to the way the International could expand its activities into the wider field for the sake of influencing organisations, especially political groups, to support pacifist activities.

Runham Brown pointed out that, although from the financial point of view the scheme was absolutely impossible,

it was important that the Council should discuss the scheme quite apart from the question of finance and consider how far it wished to endorse the scheme in principle as a whole, or in part, and whether any further action should be taken in the matter.

Runham Brown also reported that the NMWM had written to say that although they endorsed the scheme, they would not be able to help the WRI financially in the carrying out of the proposed Scheme.<sup>2</sup>

The Women's Peace Union (WPU) of the USA sent a letter to the WRI with a resolution passed at a meeting of their working committee held on August 7, 1929, in New York:

Resolved that the WPU hereby request the Council of the War Resisters' International to concentrate all effort on the development of the war resister idea in relation to:

- 1 The present economic system and the conflicts it produces.
- 2 The struggle for achieving and maintaining, without organised violence, a society based on co-operation instead of competition.

To test every plan, every project, by asking whether it will clearly and directly further the war resister idea; to reject every proposition which cannot meet this test.

To attempt only such work as it can finance and under no circumstances incur any financial obligations for which it has not the funds in hand.<sup>3</sup>

This resolution, or advice, did not move the Council from the decision it made at the Sonntagsberg Conference, desirous of extending the activities of the WRI from being a link between existing groups to act as propaganda and organising body within the limits of its outlook and resources. The extension, however, should not mean compromising in any way at all *its war resistance attitude*, but that it should seek to influence more effectively other organisations towards that attitude and thus become an influence within the great formative movements of the time in the direction of war resistance.

The development scheme was not sent to the WRI Sections, but the Chairman urged: 'that the Council should carefully consider how it could influence other Movements in our direction.' They decided to ask the Executive to prepare reports upon the Socialist, Youth, Educational, Religious and other peace movements and find a way to influence them in the direction of the WRI approach to *a world without war and exploitation*. Council members also should prepare confidential reports on the political situation in their respective countries to be discussed by the Council. After studying these reports the WRI Sections also should suggest the most effective action which might be taken to reach the goal. The Council was very keen on this project and despite the financial problem decided to add a full-time typist to the office staff so that the Secretary, Runham Brown, could concentrate on this work.<sup>4</sup>

### **War resistance and the stand of socialists**

In a letter, Elinor Byrns, Women's Peace Union, USA had urged that the Council should not lose sight of the absolutist war resistance basis of the WRI.<sup>5</sup> Fenner Brockway, Chairman, admitted that there was always a danger of compromising principles without realising it, especially under the pressure of other work. Therefore there should be some within the Council who held the absolutist position so clearly as to be able to keep a vigilant watch upon developments. There ought to be a realisation of an ultimate state of society, which expressed pacifism not only in relation to war but also to social conditions.

In his statement to the Council the Chairman said that in seeking to end capitalism and imperialism and to bring peace to the world he was personally prepared to co-operate with non-absolutist movements so long as their methods did not fundamentally deny pacifism. If any movement adopted methods of violence he would disassociate himself from such actions. He told the Council: if he were ever asked to take a position in a Labour government he should decline it so long as such a government pursued a policy of armament and he would vote against a Labour government on that issue. He would be prepared to risk exclusion from these movements on these issues. At the same time he would not wish to disassociate himself with a general movement which he believed was creating the new world they were seeking.

Brockway thought that to apply this philosophy of action the WRI should act with other bodies, such as the Women's International League, the Society of Friends, the International Anti-Militarist Bureau and the International Co-operative Women's Guild, for a left policy which went further than the general peace movement in standing for total disarmament, the defence of war resisters, and largely even for the principle of war resistance. It should go as far as possible with all these bodies. There might come a point when the WRI would not be able to secure the support of these bodies; then it would have to act alone. The WRI might arrive at that point in the case of the International Anti-Militarist Bureau, on the issue of civil war; he could equally see it arriving in the case of the Society of Friends on the issue of a new social order.

These were two extremes: working alone in certain areas and in others working with like-minded bodies. Between them was a large field of activity where they could co-operate without compromise of principle, and where effective work could be done to advance the policy of the general peace movement. The WRI should not think of the Joint Advisory Council as the pivot of its future policy. That pivot should be the building up of its own organisation, the influencing of other organisations towards absolute pacifism by direct efforts, and the carrying on of its own propaganda clearly for war resistance and pacifism.

The Council expressed general agreement with Brockway's statement and desired it to be circulated. Apart from this matter the Council took decisions in regard to other issues which were raised at the Sonntagsberg Conference: (1) keeping constant contact with countries where the movement was weak, (2) making visits to groups under the auspices of the WRI, not necessarily by workers from England, but also from neighbouring countries which have strong Sections, (3) arranging visits by prominent members to countries where the movement was weak, (4) making an appointment as soon as possible of a Field Secretary who would concentrate upon weak and critical countries.

On July 9, 1929 socialist members of the British parliament, inspired by the reports of the Sonntagsberg Conference, sent a message to the Second International Congress of Socialist Youth held in Vienna in July.

Dear Comrades,

We, the undersigned Socialist Members of the newly-elected British Parliament, who, at the same time are active supporters of the WAR RESISTERS' INTERNATIONAL and its British Section, the NO MORE WAR MOVEMENT, extend our warmest greetings to Socialist Youth from many lands. While wishing you every success in your endeavours towards the establishment of a Socialist Commonwealth of Nations, we urgently ask for your help in our work for the world-wide organisation of war resistance.

Some of us were imprisoned during the war because of our refusal to fight our comrades across the sea; some of us are ex-servicemen who are determined "Never

Again” to take part in the slaughter of our brothers. Our belief in total disarmament, in war resistance, in a fraternal commonwealth of nations based on co-operation and not on imperialistic exploitation, is still unshaken. We are continuing our fight for these ideals in the firm expectation that you, the Socialist Youth of the World, will join us in our struggle and will return to your countries prepared to fight military conscription, the granting of war credits, and every kind of war preparation, and to refuse to participate in warfare.

Yours for the Socialist Commonwealth,

[Signed by 18 prominent members of the British Parliament]<sup>6</sup>

During a NMW demonstration of the Düsseldorf Social Democratic Youth Group, Herman Greid, a member of the WRI Section, addressed the gathering of young proletarian leaders. He said that fate had made them the guardians of world peace. They should consider that military conscription and military school education, which had made them a victim of military mentality, had enslaved the pre-war working class. The socialist youth of today was more enlightened. They were fortunate that conscription did not exist any more. If the youth allowed itself to be dragged into a war, it would indeed be guilty. Herman Greid ended his speech with the following words:

We young ones who build the future – we call: No more murder, no more war; we say ‘No’ to all weapons, to ‘defensive force,’ to the slaughter of the nations, to the killing of brothers. We stand on guard! We watch. In the factories – the colour factories, the silk factories – the manure factories, the scent factories, the chemical factories – in all the factories, those sources of poison gas, of war, of death – we stand on guard. We, the proletarian youth – we, the guardians of the earth, we thunder over the world; No, No, No. No More Murder, No more War.<sup>7</sup>

The same issue of *The War Resister* published news of American socialists and war resistance. Clarence Senior, with wide experience in municipal government, in adult education and in Labour questions, and a member of the war resisters movement who attended the Sonntagsberg Conference, was appointed national secretary of the Socialist Party in the USA. His co-operation in the Labour field was expected to be of great value to the war resisters movement.

The Amsterdam (Holland) Secretariat of the International Transport Workers’ Federation sent out a circular to all its affiliated bodies, reminding them of the resolutions accepted at the international congresses of their federation for direct action against war and militarism. They requested them to keep watch over all transports and to refuse co-operation with war-like measures.

## Christian pacifism and war resistance

The objectives of the Christlich-Soziale Reichspartei, a small but very active political party in Germany, were the realisation of Christian principles in the political sphere of life. Vitus Heller, an ever-active champion of war resistance, edited its journal, *Das Neue Volk*. The following is an extract from the leading article he wrote in its issue of August 1, 1929:

we curse and condemn war and war preparations and war spirit and everything that



serves war and the slaughtering of the nations.

Into the rivers with guns, into the ocean with the cannons, to Hell with all armed cruisers, war planes, and poison gas.

Never shall we be able to recognise a Christianity, or representatives of Christianity who bless murderous weapons and who preach hatred and war!

Never shall we be able to recognise Parties and Politicians as 'Christian' who vote for cruisers and Defence Credits, and for Poison Gas Manufacture.

Never shall we elect members of parliament who do not denounce bloody violence and manslaughter, who, in face of modern war, do not stand for war resistance and war sabotage, and who do not do their utmost to create a real basis for the peace of the nations.<sup>8</sup>

Anti-war educational efforts of this kind were widely made, many inspired by the atmosphere created by the Sonntagsberg Conference. It is neither possible nor necessary to give a detailed description of such activities within our present context. However, I am sure it will be useful to give here a few examples, both on an organisational and an individual level.

The Grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft (GV), the German Catholic Section of the WRI, distributed a pledge of war resistance. It had quotations from the words of Christ and Pope Leo XIII. Within a few days they had received signatures of 77 Catholic priests, 30 teachers, 60 university students and 640 workers. At the same time the organisation also sent a protest to the German Government against the building of new cruisers. The protest included the following:

As Catholics we emphatically protest against the military budget of the Government, (1) because we consider a radical moral and military disarmament of Germany the only means of avoiding another European War, (2) because we consider it to be inexcusable to spend all these millions for senseless armaments, while German people is perishing in misery, unemployment, housing shortage and hunger!

The Government is composed entirely of ministers who call themselves Christian, among them three Catholics. We feel obliged to protest against their action on behalf of wide Christian and Catholic circles, and to dissociate ourselves from their armament policies.

Editors of 'Vom Frohen Leben', G.V., War Resisters from conscientious reasons.<sup>9</sup>

The WRI received the following message from Andrej Poliszczuk, Poland, after his release from prison:

My warmest thanks to you and to our mutual friends who took such an interest in our common struggle against violence and militarism. When I started this struggle I did not know whether or not there were other people acting as I was doing. I only knew one thing – that I had to be sincere; that I had to act in accordance with the dictates of my conscience and my reason; and that if I was alone, I had to testify by word and deed for the greatest human ideal, and by my example urge the world forward and to overcome violence, evil and militarism. But what happiness! After long and difficult years of lonely struggle, to see a whole army of sympathetic friends scattered all over the world, who came to rescue me, an ill man, and to set me free. This does not mean that I am going to remain quiet and do nothing more. . . . I am prepared to struggle to every end for justice and the freedom of mankind.<sup>10</sup>

Having obtained the permission of the local Mayors in his own town Constant Petit, a farmer of St Sauveur-de-Nuaille, took an unofficial plebiscite of all the voters in that district. "They were asked to state whether they were in favour of complete and immediate disarmament and as a first step, the abolition of military conscription and the destruction of all war materials on the given date ... 1st April, 1932, ... Ninety per cent voted in favour of total and immediate disarmament." The success of the plebiscite was so gratifying that Constant Petit wanted to attempt a similar action on a much larger scale.<sup>11</sup>

The 1931 Spring issue of *The War Resister* reported that a record Christmas post was received at the prison in Scheveningen, Holland, where 20 war resisters were confined; over 4,000 letters and cards of greetings from comrades in all parts of the world. As it was not possible for the prisoners to reply to these greetings the WRI was requested to publish the following letter from them:

To all War Resisters,

With simple words we herewith want to let you know that we received a great many letters and postcards from you, showing sympathy with our deed.

They have done much to cheer us at Christmas, therefore we ask you to accept the best thanks of all who are in prison here for our cause. May we together attain our purpose – Peace on Earth.

With many fraternal greetings on behalf of all my comrades here, your Dutch friends,  
Bram Hessels<sup>12</sup>

### **A WRI friend visits two COs in prison**

There are countless stories about war resisters, their sufferings and of the solidarity within the war resister movement. Just to give one example I would like to tell the story of Platon and Josef from Poland.

Platon Kosciwicz, a CO in Poland who was serving his second sentence, protested to the authorities that the sentence did not include exclusion from the army. The judge replied 'exclusion will follow after a third sentence'. Platon and another CO, Josef Stankunas, who was then serving his third sentence of two years, were ill with tuberculosis in a military hospital. Both had almost completely broken down in health following a hunger strike of nearly three weeks. A friend of the WRI agreed to visit them. This is his report:

I went to the Military Court in Wilna and asked for an interview with Platon and Josef. The President himself received me. I introduced myself as a friend of the nearest friend of Tolstoy, that I was one with them in thought, and that to me the two sentenced men were almost like sons. In reply . . . the President . . . insisted that he could be of no assistance, stating that he was only the executor of the existing law. I reminded him that the repeated sentences without dismissal from the army, and his own announcement that there was only a prospect of a further series of sentences, were tantamount to a death sentence. I reminded him also, that I knew it would be impossible to compel the youth to do anything against their conscience, and that they would deem it better to die now than to suffer such a long-drawn-out execution.

"You are a Christian," I said, "How then can you expose these noblest children of God to such a fate?"

"Their hunger-strike does not frighten the authorities," he replied, "for they would

not be allowed to die. Yes, I am a Christian and I understand and even highly esteem the teaching of Tolstoy. I know also of the refusal of military service by the early Christians. But you must remember that the State comes first, and that even Jesus Christ Himself taught 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' Remember also, that Poland can be attacked any day."

At last I was granted an interview with both Platon and Josef, the only question being whether the Superior of the Military Hospital would sanction it. I made my way at once to the Military Hospital. . . . I introduced myself in much the same terms as to the President of the Military Court, but there followed a much longer and more difficult dispute. All the information vouchsafed was, "the youths will not be allowed to die. Recourse has already been taken to artificial feeding but we have no time to prolong the treatment. They will be placed, therefore, in a lunatic asylum, where with those who are insane, they can be artificially fed for a year or more. But I ask you to use your influence to persuade them to break off the hunger-strike."

"I cannot promise to do that," I said, "but I certainly will not use my influence for its continuance."

After a long argument he agreed to examine Platon, promising that if genuine sickness were proved, he would give him such a category as would free him from military service; . . . Permission for the interview was granted . . . We made our way to what is called the "Ward of the Barred Ones", and in conversation I explained the significance of "War Resistance".

"We should indeed be sorry for these young refusers," said he, "and therefore we should encourage them to serve."

"One should be more sorry for the millions of young men who serve as cannon fodder," I replied. "It is impossible to ignore the voice of conscience, and to obey that voice is the only way to save mankind."

At last we stood before Platon's room and the door was opened to me. I cannot adequately describe what I saw. The poor lad could not speak, and blood was flowing from his mouth and nose, the result of the artificial feeding. I sat on the bed and held his hand. . . . There was silence, and I understood at once that in Platon's case, at all events, the hunger-strike had reached a climax which could only eventuate in a nightmare end.

We thought it better to leave him for a while and in the meantime visit Josef. Although terribly weakened he was far removed from Platon's condition. How delighted he was to see me! He had heard of me, but up to now we had not met. I passed on to him greetings from his parents and from many of our friends. We spoke together of the hunger-strike, and then I made my way again with the major and his assistant to Platon.

I found him somewhat rested, and we were able to converse. I passed on to him the major's promise and greetings from friends in the War Resisters' International. But here the major and his assistant intervened, and Platon began to explain that for him and Josef there was no other way than to continue in their course of resistance. Then the major became very harsh and ironical. I could not contain myself and turning to him I said:

"Are you not ashamed to speak so to a man in such condition?" He took my words as an insult and threatened to break off the interview.

"They are not meant as an insult," I replied, "but you cannot expect me to remain quietly listening to your harsh statements."

I discussed with Platon the question of the hunger-strike and its possible signifi-

cance as *suicide*. After deep meditation, he declared that he was somewhat in doubt as to whether suicide, even under such conditions, was in conformity with the voice of conscience. And so after some consideration he decided that the hunger-strike should cease. I then asked whether Platon and Josef might be allowed to see each other. Permission was granted, and taking Platon, who could scarcely walk, by the arm, we went to Josef's room on the other side of the corridor.

At this point the major took his leave, shaking his hands with me and saying that he realised my sincerity. His assistant remained.

Together Platon and I explained to Josef the decision as to the hunger-strike, adding that in case the authorities at any future time became inexorably cruel, such a means of protest could always be repeated and thereby ... finally arouse the conscience not only of Poland but of other countries too.

...

I am unable to say what would have been the entire significance of the hunger-strike had it not been broken off, for no one would have been allowed to see them. We had visited the editorial offices in Wilna, but not one of them would report even the bare fact of the hunger strike, stating that it would mean the suppression of their papers. . . . The major himself was so astonished and dismayed at their constancy in the hunger-strike and their determination to continue unto death, that he labelled it 'psychopathic'. The new psychology would seem to explain conscience in terms of mental pathology.

When I returned two days later, I received a ready permission to see both Platon and Josef again. The major informed me that both had broken the hunger-strike. I explained to him that since my first visit I had interviewed Josef's parents and had learned that their son was most probably consumptive, the result of long confinement in a civil prison in a cell which was continually wet. He promised to do for Josef exactly as he had agreed to do for Platon. He expressed his opinion that the youths were possibly abnormal.

"Then why," I asked, "do you judge them and imprison them?"

"I am not firmly convinced that such is the case," he replied, "but if on examination I find them to be so affected, I shall at once, set them at liberty. But in any case, I agree that it is undesirable to keep such men as these either in the barracks, the prison or the military hospital."

But even he is bound by the law.

This friend visited the young men again. At the time of the visit the sergeant was also present. Platon expressed the opinion that they should approach the court, but apart from anything else there was the question of money. Anyway he thought that the International must do everything to support them.

On leaving them again, I gave them the greetings of their fellow comrades throughout the world, as represented in our International Movement. . . .

So Platon and Josef went back to their prison cells and I . . . thankful for the testimony of such young men, the number of whom is steadily increasing even in Poland, yet wondering deep in my heart what the future holds for them and, indeed, for us all.<sup>13</sup>

## Joint Advisory Council – Joint Peace Council

The Sonntagsberg Conference created much enthusiasm among the WRI leadership about the future of the International and the importance of the work it had been doing. Runham Brown wrote in *Cutting Ice*:

Here it was recognised that if the International was to maintain its rapid growth, and was to become a world-wide power both for the prevention of war and armed violence, and for the resistance of warlike policies in peace-time, it must organise its work in a bigger and more ambitious scale than it had done in the past. We recognised that we had come to the end of a period when the International had been mainly concerned with linking together those who had declared their intention to resist all participation in warfare and armed violence and the beginning of a period when the International was becoming a vital force in the world towards building up a world-wide pacifist and anti-militarist movement in which war had no place and in which personal and massed refusal to take part in war and preparation of war would rank as an effective force by which warlike policies would be changed to policies of peace and understanding and through which all should be able to co-operate for the common good.<sup>14</sup>

The reality, though, was that there was more than one international peace movement. To a greater or lesser degree, all such movements, in their different ways, embodied war resistance as an important part of their work. It was generally felt that there was a degree of overlap in their activities. To avoid undue overlapping, there ought to be some kind of co-ordination among these international movements.

It would, however, today be more correct to speak of the movements reinforcing each other. Happily there never has been the slightest suspicion of rivalry, but always the fullest desire for co-operation.<sup>15</sup>

Grace M. Beaton, Secretary of the International (1933–56) wrote in *Twenty Years' Work in the War Resisters' International*: "The machinery of the W.R.I. was used for the purpose of launching this Manifesto [Conscription]; it was taken up energetically by our Sections and naturally brought many new contacts for the International. We had also enjoyed the co-operation of other International organisations. This close association was found to be so valuable that two years later, namely in 1928, the War Resisters' International took the initiative in forming a Joint Advisory Council"<sup>16</sup> with seven international, Europe-based, organisations and one from Britain. The organisations which joined the Council were:

International Fellowship of Reconciliation with headquarters in England, later transferred to Austria, subsequently to France, then still later back to England (and now in Holland);  
International Anti-Militarist Bureau, headquarters in England;  
Women's International League, headquarters in Switzerland;  
International Co-operative Women's Guild, headquarters in England;  
International Union of Anti-Militarist Ministers and Clergymen, headquarters in Holland;  
Peace Committee of the Society of Friends, UK; and  
War Resisters' International.

The Hon. Secretary of the WRI acted as the Secretary of the Advisory Council. The first meeting of the Joint International Advisory Council (JIAC) was held on November 29, 1928. It was decided that the JIAC should hold its meetings once every six months.

The JIAC, as soon as it was formed, had an urgent task to perform, which it completed successfully. The action was in connection with the imprisoned Nazarenes in Yugoslavia. As a result of their efforts 112 of the young Nazarenes were released in December 1928. This success increased the optimism of pacifists everywhere. On behalf of the International Peace Bureau, Ben Gerig asked the WRI and other Peace Societies for assistance in regard to their work in helping the Nazarenes. The Council agreed but pointed out that the WRI should not be precluded from taking any supplementary action it thought fit.

There was, however, an understanding within the Council that the WRI must not go into the Joint Advisory Council regarding it as the pivot of their future policy. That pivot should be the building up of their own organisation, the influencing of other organisations towards absolute pacifism by direct efforts, and the carrying on of their own propaganda definitely for war resistance and pacifism.

This ad hoc Advisory Council was later named Joint Peace Council (JPC) and in 1930 it launched another worldwide Campaign against Military Training and Conscription of Youth, with Oskar Bock of Vienna as the campaign secretary.

On December 14, 1930, the Joint Peace Council met in Paris to receive Oskar Bock's report. The Anti-Conscription Manifesto was translated into 12 languages and some 10,000 copies were sent out to the press in all European and a majority of non-European countries. Ad hoc committees for the propagation of the Manifesto functioned in Czechoslovakia, Finland, Germany, and Holland, whilst in the United States of America, Great Britain, Austria, Norway, and Switzerland existing peace federations or organisations co-operated. In France and Belgium small groups of individuals undertook propaganda for the Manifesto, which had been receiving much attention from peace groups.

For instance,

In Holland the work soon developed to such an extent that a special committee had to deal with it, with sub-committees in several parts of the country. Five hundred and thirty thousand copies of the Manifesto were printed and meetings for promoting the object of the Manifesto were held all over the country.

In Germany and Great Britain the Manifesto was published simultaneously with declarations suited to the special political situation in each country, signed by prominent men and women. The German Ad-Hoc Committee is continuing its activities by giving special attention to the attempts to introduce a compulsory Labour Service in Germany, and in Great Britain the National Council for the Prevention of War is waging a strong campaign against the Officers' Training Corps.<sup>17</sup>

The success of the campaign was mostly due to the hard work of Oskar and Florence Bock, to whom the JPC expressed their special appreciation.

Runham Brown, Hon. Secretary of the WRI, was appointed the Acting Hon. Secretary of the Joint Peace Council at the very beginning of its foundation. After the termination of the campaign he was made the Hon. Secretary of the JPC. The WRI continued to stimulate the general campaign for demanding real disarmament, specially directing to this purpose the disarmament conference which was to be held the following year. Some of the activities of the WRI included supporting their USA Section against conscription in the Philippines and help-

ing the campaign against the reintroduction of conscription in Austria. The No-Conscription Fellowship was also set up in Britain.

To help the campaign the WRI published a booklet in English, Esperanto, Spanish, French and German, entitled *Is It Universal Conscription?* The spirit of anti-conscription was manifesting itself in several ways and interpreted in several manners, but with one thing in common: that war did not make any sense. In the USA, the Boston University abolished compulsory military training. The president of the university gave the following reasons for taking this decision. Firstly, he considered military conscription as foreign to the genius of America; secondly, he believed that Boston University was not founded to train men how to fight, but to stick to the business of education; and finally, he was convinced that the spirit of Christianity was opposed to war and military preparedness because these guarantee war instead of peace.

In Nebraska a petition was circulated demanding the total abolition of compulsory military drill at the university. The national convention of the American branch of the World Alliance for International Friendship, through the churches, accepted a resolution demanding the abolition of military training in high schools and opposing compulsory military training in schools and colleges. The resolution was widely accepted.

## A youth wing for the International

An idea for a world federation of youth against war and militarism was mooted at the Council Meeting in January 1929. The World Youth Peace Congress held in Holland in August 1928 had sent out a manifesto to youth groups. Council member Franz Rona had sent a memorandum to the WRI International Council, which made some proposals which were going round in various countries. One of these was that the WRI should stimulate youth groups in all countries and that a WRI Youth International be formed.<sup>18</sup>

This proposal did not seem to be practical to the WRI because the majority of its membership already consisted of youth. Was it therefore necessary to have a special Youth Section of the International? The Council, however, asked Harold Bing to keep a special watch on youth activities, and on behalf of the International encourage youth groups where they existed and put them in touch with one another. The Council did not feel able to initiate them where they did not exist. Nevertheless the appointment of Harold Bing as Youth Secretary proved very useful. He travelled to various countries in Europe and North America talking about the WRI, making it more widely known.

Later, Franz Rona, a Hungarian, became the Youth Secretary, with his headquarters in Vienna. The Section published a regular circular in English and German, which was sent to youth organisations all over the world. It carried out international correspondence, encouraged summer camps and visits and exchanges of pupils between different countries.

After many years' valuable work Franz Rona (Hungarian living in Vienna) handed over this work to Frans Angs, of Belgium, who continued for a time, but subsequently Marcel Pichon, of France, took over. Marcel Pichon was secretary of the French Ligue Scholaire pour la Paix (School League for Peace), which after a while became an international organisation with affiliated groups of young people of under twenty years of age in Austria, Belgium, England, France, Poland, Peru, Holland, Roumania, Switzerland and the U.S.A. . . . after the outbreak of war Marcel Pichon wrote to us from a prison near Lyon . . . In some miraculous way he was kept informed of all that was going on in France,

knew the whereabouts the whereabouts of individual war resisters, and if we wanted any correct detailed information, we knew that to get it we could do no better than to address an inquiry to Marcel in his prison. He knew more than the people outside!<sup>19</sup>

## Study conferences

Some of the participants of the WRI Conferences found them not fully satisfactory, especially the WRI Triennials. They were too crowded with topics relating to the regular work of the International and lectures, and comparatively speaking, with hardly any time for discussions and dialogue.

The consequence of leaving a gap of three years between two conferences was that the agenda became too crowded to do justice to. The period of discussions was often tense, although full of enthusiasm and activities for the devoted ones. It was a time when the pacifist movement in general and the WRI in particular needed more frequent consultations among its own members as well as with sister movements. A long time gap between the official Conferences did not seem to be logical. For example, "certain matters concerning the constructive application of war resistance ideas came up for discussion but there was hardly any adequate opportunity and time to discuss them fully. They have to be referred to the next Council or to the Executive Committee meeting."<sup>20</sup>

At the same time everyone was aware of the fact that holding the Conferences more often would be financially almost impossible. So it was suggested at the Lyon Council Meeting in 1931 that whenever there was a special problem which needed discussion, the International should consider organising a study conference in between the Triennials. These study conferences need not always be organised directly by the headquarters, as some Section or Sections might find a certain issue that may be of special interest to them. They could either be approached by the International Secretariat or they might themselves offer to organise the conference.

The Council decided to refer the matter to the next Conference and if approved there, to the new Council. The Council suggested that an experimental study camp in 1932 should be organised by a Section or group with the endorsement of the WRI. The chair pointed out that no financial responsibility should fall upon the Secretariat of the International.

The first suggestion for a study conference was presented to the Council at Lyon. Harold Bing drew the attention of the Council to some problems concerning the future work of the International, e.g. the relation of war resistance propaganda to education and educational methods; of our movement to industrial war resistance; of war resistance to the new social order. Harold Bing suggested that such topics needed study and full discussion, which was possible only in a prolonged conference. The Council endorsed the suggestion for holding a school of study organised by some Section of the International and asked Harold Bing to draft a letter to Sections setting out the proposal, but pointed out that the International would not be able to take any financial responsibility for the project. The decision arrived at was to be executed only after it had been discussed by the Council or the International Conference.<sup>21</sup>

### **The first study conference**

At the next International Conference in 1931 the proposal was approved, and the first study camp was held from July 25 to August 3, 1932, on the island Lille Oxeo in Flensborg Fjord, an



inlet of the Baltic between Denmark and Germany. The island was placed at the disposal of the study camp by its owner at the request of the International Ungdoms Liga, a peace organisation. About one hundred delegates from 14 countries attended it.

Two main subjects occupied the attention of the gathering: Youth, War Resistance and Revolution, opened by Harold Bing, and International Co-operation of Youth Against War and Militarism, opened by Franz Rona, Youth Secretary of the WRI. The main emphasis of discussions was on working out a pacifist strategy in face of the present world situation and the need for a pacifist technique of revolution. The participants of the Conference felt the need for the periodic issue of a circular letter of the WRI youth groups.

### Affiliates outside Europe and North America.

The WRI was now worldwide. For instance correspondence in its central office was carried in 15 languages and the number of its affiliated Sections had gone up to 47 in 26 different countries, with individual membership in 64. In 1923 there were WRI groups in almost all the countries of Europe, including Russia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Finland, and the number went on growing. This shows that the WRI was representing a network of radical pacifist efforts through the whole world.

The first group of the WRI in Asia had been formed in India in the summer of 1925 in Kanchipuram in the south. It was called 'the Anti-War League, Indian Section of the War Resisters' International'. The young group had started corresponding with people in other parts of the country with the hope of forming local centres.

Australia already had a WRI section in 1926. The Council Meeting held in Lyon, France (August 1931) accepted the application of a Mexican group, all the members of which signed the WRI Declaration. The Council heard an interesting description of the nonviolent methods used by the General Workers Union, Japan, in a recent strike in Tokyo. Their application too was accepted for affiliation.

In 1935 a group with the name of Alexandria Peace Movement was formed in Egypt. It was working closely with the WRI. Not all its members signed the WRI Declaration or any statement equivalent to it. However, in response to its wish to be affiliated to the International the WRI Secretary had successfully sought to group together those within this movement who accepted the WRI position. The Council, at its meeting held in Zurich towards the end of July 1935, agreed to accept the group as a Section if every member of the group pledged to the Declaration.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, a committee was set up to form a war resistance movement, which was then called Committee of Anarchist Youth. The WRI had already been in touch with them for some time. The group could not affiliate to the International for tactical reasons. However, knowing about its activities, the Council decided to treat it, for practical purposes, as a WRI group.

There were Sections also in Israel, South Africa, New Zealand and Uruguay. One of the most notable characteristics of the WRI was that the International with its affiliated bodies was all-inclusive, without any element of exclusion due to nationality, race, language, culture, political ideology or religion. It attracted people from every section and strata of society into its comradeship and became a worldwide community of pacifists.

## The Digswell Park Conference

The Fourth International Conference, 1934, was planned to be held in Holland. But at the last moment the Secretariat was informed that the Dutch Ministry of Justice had forbidden the holding of any WRI conference in their country. Therefore a hurried transfer of the Conference to England became necessary and it was held in Digswell Park in England.

The Digswell Conference was another step forward towards the goal of building a world without war by developing the socio-political aspect of the pacifist–nonviolent revolution. It was a conference in which the co-operation between the various international movements generated much hope for the future work of the WRI.

No closer co-operation could have been desired than that accomplished at Digswell Park, when the International Anti-Militarist Bureau, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the International Co-operative Women's Guild and the International Voluntary Service, all represented by their leaders, merged their efforts with ours to achieve the most effective results from our deliberations.<sup>22</sup>

Lord Ponsonby, the Chairman of the International, built on the spirit of the revolutionary contents of the movement in his comprehensive opening address:

In war, my comrades, there is money to be made at once by investors and by profiteers, who give no thought to the inevitable and terrible impoverishment of all nations which participate, and of the people who are fortunate enough to remain alive. But in peace unfortunately there is not immediate profit for the investor, but there are immeasurable riches for humanity in the long run. . . .

. . . Now in what sort of world have we to work to-day? It is a world dislocated, confused and shattered by war which is called "great" because the loss of life and the devastation of territory was greater than any ever experienced before in human history: a world in which the reign of force is in many cases supreme: a world in which people are filled with resentment, fear and despair: a world in which vast numbers of innocent people are terrorised by governments: a world in which the expression of a desire for peace or for social justice is in some countries often severely punished by governments which in their criminal blindness believe that the destiny of a nation can be shaped by violence, by persecution and by the suppression of opposition and even criticism. The only lesson these governments have learnt from the war is the devastatingly effective nature of modern armaments. So with machine guns and shells they put their opponents to death, or with truncheons and torture they force them into submission. Fools they must be to believe that by killing men you can destroy an idea, or by torturing a body you can extinguish the flame of a soul. . . .

Fellow members of the War Resisters' International, we must admit that in the world of to-day when so many are either deluded or intimidated, our voices can hardly be heard. But this is no reason why we should weaken our convictions. It is a testing time for us. In spite of the clamour, in spite of unfavourable circumstances, in spite of the derision with which our seemingly feeble protest may be met, let us continue to proclaim the eternal truth of our belief, let us firmly refuse to be driven with the herd and let us cherish and preserve the ideal to which we know enlightened humanity must eventually turn if civilisation is to be preserved.

Our opponent is not any particular nation as is often erroneously supposed. Our opponents are within every nation. Our cause is weakened not by militarist nor by the soldier, who is only conscientiously carrying out the duties assigned to him. Our cause is weakened in each nation by those who pay lip service to the cause of peace, while they support the authority which prepares for war. . . . What use is it for scientists to pose as the champions of a new civilisation while they are devising and inventing more devastating methods for the destruction of life? What use is it, indeed, for those who fervently desire the establishment of a new social order, founded on service and co-operation, to expect the attainment of that object while they readily swallow down the falsehoods presented to them about the iniquities of some foreign nation whom it is their duty to fight, and so allow their ranks to be divided and their objects defeated? ...

So, we, few as we may be, must take upon ourselves the responsibility of political, religious and social propaganda, each according to our capacity, inclination and national circumstances. Our strength lies in the fact that we are firmly convinced that there is no half-way house: that in smaller wars, fewer arms, less dangerous weapons, limitations of expenditure and in all the absurd attempts to make war more humane no solution of the problem can be found.

Come what may we will have nothing to do with it. Come what may, at no man's dictation, at the command of no authority will we aid and assist in this imbecile brutality. We are not taken in by being told we must defend ourselves against an aggressor, because this has been told to every people in every country which has waged war since the dawn of history. . . .

Our claim is not to intellectual superiority but to clearer vision, not to special wisdom but to ordinary sanity. Readily will we sacrifice ourselves . . . but for a cause which will benefit our fellows and not for a cause which can be shown without question only to bring ruin to nations.

No, our mind is made up, come what may, war must be resisted, and perhaps there may not be prisons enough to receive us should the fatal day come . . . Let your deliberations at this conference be devoted to strengthening our common ground for persuasion and for action, for mutual help and for co-operation, and let us avoid widening the differences in detail which we, like all progressive parties, may discover amongst ourselves, lest we undermine our strength and become divided and consequently weakened in our efforts. Let the result of our conference be a message of hope to those in all nations who like ourselves can see clearly that this overshadowing problem of peace and war can only be solved by determined resistance to a call to arms.<sup>23</sup>

Reginald Reynolds also addressed the Conference. He said:

There remains the minority who will oppose the war whatever the cause. How great is it? How is it to be organised ... These are questions for de Ligt to answer. I shall speak of the pitfalls that lie before us, of the temptations we have to face and will continue to face. . . . If there is an "aggressor state" in this world, then we are all aggressors. And yet every "Collective Security" proposal is based upon the fallacy that "aggressors" can be singled out among Imperialist states that are all aggressive by definition! And the Labour movement, having missed this simple fact, finds here its first pitfall; which shows that war is actually the direct product of false peace policies.

This first pitfall is the attempt to base peace upon our own security, on domination,

on the acquisition of what does not belong to us, on mere immunity from invasion or rebellion. Defence of the existing order is not peace; it is the maintenance of a war-motivated civilisation, where violence is the moral basis of the state itself. We must put it before the working-classes of the World that peace through justice is the only peace worth achieving; and when I say “justice” I do not mean “doing good”. This “doing good” is the negation of justice and social ethics. The reformist conception of social relationship is doing to other people what *you* consider good for *them*. That is not justice, which means the creation of conditions in which people can be themselves and achieve their own destiny.

Reginald Reynolds drew the attention of the Conference to a sermon given by Bishop Barnes to the gathering of the National Peace Congress. The Bishop asked the British government to return the former German colonies to the German government.

... as though those thousands of people living in the Colonies were so much property to be disposed of! “Justice” here meant that people who had endured British Imperialism should be handed over like chattels to Nazi Imperialism! When we speak of social justice, and of capitalism being incompatible with pacifism, we must realise that freedom and justice begin with the “Bottom Dog” – that we do well to demand these things for ourselves, but have an even greater duty to grant them as inalienable rights to other people. ...

I am therefore utterly opposed to the fig and thistle policies of Geneva. You can’t get peace through diplomats whose aim it is to secure the war-motivated society they represent. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union has recently become almost as dangerous as that of the Capitalists. There is a trend towards participation in “Collective Security” pacts, defining “aggressors”. This policy is itself un-Marxist.

... Pacifism is not “non-resistance”: it is the opposite to non-resistance. The non-resister is the man who goes to the front because he won’t resist “authority”; but we are a war resisting movement. The pitfall of passivism (as distinct from pacifism) consists in the illusion that it is sufficient to do nothing and take no part in the more obvious forms of militarism.

Reginald Reynolds also elaborated the misconception of an International Police Force.

Without clear vision and a steady eye on the main issue we shall fall into these traps. ... [These are] the Death Racket, for handing over Colonies from one Empire to another, for concealing Imperialist ventures as mandates and “sacred trusts”.

He added:

I have therefore tried to plant the seeds of destruction in any hope anyone here may still cherish that the present system is reformable. I have tried to show that this is not true faith, for there are two kinds of faith. There is the faith of the hen who sits on a china egg; and all the faith of all the hens in all the world will not hatch one single chicken that way. I warn you against the china eggs of Geneva; and I would persuade you that disarmament under capitalism is as easy as sitting on a chair that isn’t there.

But there is still one thing left, and that is our faith in Men. On that basis we can build, as de Ligt will show you.<sup>24</sup>

Reginald Reynolds made a strong plea to the Conference to adopt the plan Bart de Ligt had presented on behalf of the IAMB.

## The Bart de Ligt Plan

Bart de Ligt, an outstanding scholar and intellectual and a deeply committed pacifist (July 17, 1883–September 3, 1938) was the son of a Calvinist pastor, born in a small village near Eindhoven, Holland. He was appointed pastor of the little Reformed Church of Barbant village of Nunen. He read widely, but when he went to study theology at the University of Utrecht his high hopes for intellectual enrichment were shattered as he found that there was nothing less universal than the university. However, he was impressed by the teachings of Bolland, the leading Hegelian philosopher who was a conservative, but was able to stimulate in his students the growth of a strong revolutionary consciousness.

Like Bakunin, Bart de Ligt always insisted that a two-fold revolution was necessary: one in the external world, affecting economic, social and political relations, and a moral and spiritual one, no less vital, inside each human being. His life-motto was – *only he is free who wants to set free the world around him*.

In 1921 Bart de Ligt, who had already once been in prison for his beliefs, was imprisoned for a second time, when he organised a general strike in order to obtain the release of Herman Groenendaal, a conscientious objector, who had started a hunger strike. In a meeting organised in that connection he said that he was there to incite them in the name of Jesus, in the name of Marx, in the name of Bakunin, in the name of Tolstoy, in the name of Groenendaal, so that they leave behind them all evil work, to refuse to build army barracks and prisons, to refuse to produce war material.

The same year he took the initiative in the formation of the International Anti-Militarist Bureau. More than anti-militarism de Ligt's main objective was to create a new culture and society, which required the ending of militarism and a thorough renewal of society. His book entitled *The Conquest of Violence – an Essay on War and Revolution* is a classic in the field of pacifism and social revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The International had long desired to have a practical plan, setting out the methods by which its members could resist war and war preparations. De Ligt presented such a plan for the first time to the Digswell Conference.

Bart de Ligt's Plan was thorough in its details and presentation. He covered various aspects of the subject, authenticating it with quotations from authorities from over a dozen nations and regarding the relevant issues discussed in the Plan. Though elaborate and comprehensive the Plan was perhaps too long.

In his editorial note in the special issue of *The War Resister* 36, September 1934, Runham Brown stated: "Unfortunately the subject was far too extensive for adequate discussion at one Conference. The Plan in all its details has not yet been endorsed by the International Council, but as the Conference considered it of extreme importance, it is hoped that Sections will earnestly study all the proposals therein made."<sup>26</sup>

The Plan as it was presented to the delegates was in the form of a large chart to make it easier to follow. The original version can be seen at the end of the book, *The Conquest of Violence – an Essay on War and Revolution* – pages 269–85. The following is only a summary from the "somewhat amateur condensation of the Plan itself" as introduced by Runham Brown in *The War Resister*.

## Bartholomew de Ligt's Anti-War Plan

### INTRODUCTION

This plan for the mobilisation of all anti-war forces is not based on any kind of compulsion, compulsory service or conscription. The anti-militarist movement is entirely composed of volunteers, every one of whom is called upon to act as energetically as possible according to his conscience but without being obliged to go beyond his strength. The deeds to be accomplished and the attitudes to be taken up under the following plan are dictated to no one.

They are instanced in order that individuals and collective bodies may become conscious of the numerous possibilities within their reach to-day, to make all and every war impossible. The cases mentioned below should especially stimulate men to put into the service of this new fight their maximum of energy, devotion and courage.

### PRACTICAL METHODS, INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE

- A. *Refusal of Military Service*
  - 1. As conscript; 2. As soldier or sailor; 3. As reservist (return your Military Papers to the State); 4. As citizen called to arms: (a. for the purpose of manoeuvres, b. on the occasion of a strike, c. on the occasion of political and social conflicts).
- B. *Refusal of non-combatant Military work*  
(even in the Red Cross or the Army Medical Corps which both are by their nature subordinated to the military system).
- C. *Refusal to Industrial, Technical and Social Service*
  - 1. Refusal to make war materials, munitions, etc.
  - 2. Refusal to take part in military aviation
  - 3. Refusal to construct barracks and fortifications
  - 4. Refusal to make: a) military clothing, b) military boots, etc.
  - 5. Refusal to make optical instruments, instruments of precision, etc., destined solely for war purposes
  - 6. Refusal to set up type for or to print articles, pamphlets, books, manifestos, tracts, etc., of a distinctly military, militaristic, jingoistic or imperialistic tendency
  - 7. Refusal to make military toys
  - 8. Refusal to handle, forward or transport anything used for war and its preparation, etc.
- D. *Refusal to put trade at the service of War (as employer or employee)*
  - 1. Banks; 2. Co-operatives; 3. Publishers; 4. Clothing Trade; 5. Saddle makers, harness makers; 6. Shops for technical, optical and precision instruments, etc.; 7. Bookshops; 8. Bazaars (children's toys etc.) ,etc., etc.
- E. *Refusal to pay taxes*
- F. *Refusal to put up soldiers billeted on you*  
(Or they may be received hospitably and as imposed guests may be subjected to a judicious anti-militarist propaganda while the indemnity paid by the State may be used in favour of anti-war propaganda.)
- G. *Refusal of Intellectual and Moral Service*
  - a) DIRECT ABSTENTION  
(Refusal to undertake research work which aims at creating means of war purposes or to draw up plans connected therewith, and refusal to direct any technical or intellectual work of preparation for war): 1. as physicist; 2. as chemist; 3. as bacteriologist; 4. as civil engineer; 5. As technician; 6. As speaker, orator or broadcaster, etc.

b) INDIRECT ABSTENTION

1. *As parents:* a) by keeping the children as far as possible away from all nationalistic, militaristic, jingoistic and imperialistic influence (by watching over the influence exerted by their reading matter, their teaching, festivals, etc.) b) by refusing to hand over to the State children who have not yet attained their majority, for the purpose of military training or of compulsory military service.
2. *As schoolmaster, teacher or professor:* By refusing to educate youth in a national, imperialist and militarist spirit.
3. *As journalist, publicist, lecturer or man of letters:* By refusing to influence public opinion in a nationalist, militarist or imperialist spirit, by showing up modern politico-economic life, etc.
4. *As religious or moral leader:* By refusing to sanctify or glorify national defence or war.
5. *As chief of a movement or political group or party:* By refusing to prepare public opinion in any manner whatsoever for national defence.
6. *As jurist:* By refusing both to subordinate international law to national interest and to interpret the law with a bias in favour of one's own country.
7. *As historian:* By refusing to commit the common error of making the history of one's own nation the starting point of world history (by elevating it as the chosen one above any other nation) and by refusing exclusively to glorify one's own race.
8. *As artist:* By refusing to place one's services at the disposal of nationalism, militarism and imperialism.
9. *As sociologist:* By showing up nationalism, militarism, imperialism, pride of race, etc.
10. *As medical man, psychologist or psychiatrist:* By revealing the unconscious and subconscious tendencies which make war, and the retrogressive character of military discipline, and by showing that modern war is an odious crime against life, the physical, moral and mental health of man, as well as against his aesthetic sense (millions of dead, mutilated, unbalanced, sexual illnesses, consequences of under nourishment, rachitis, tuberculosis, etc.)
11. *As philosopher:* By showing up all forms of dogmatism and absolutism, especially in the field of the history of civilisation, of religion and comparative philosophy.
12. By organising effectively from the points of view of science, propaganda and action in respect to the above-mentioned aims and by associating on a federal basis with other organisations for direct action against war and its preparation.

CONSTRUCTIVE METHODS

- Direct:* The endeavour to place at the service of peace and human civilisation alone those technical and intellectual inventions and means which are actually placed at the service of war; the endeavour not to pervert science in its application:  
1. as physicist; 2. as chemist; 3. as bacteriologist; 4. as civil engineer; 5. as technician; 6. as speaker, orator or broadcaster, etc., etc.
- Indirect:* By preparing a humanitarian and international mentality:
1. *As parents:* a) By leading as harmonious as possible a family life, inspired by a truly universal spirit (the home atmosphere exercising a domi-

nant influence on youth); b) by educating youth in as free and wide a spirit as possible, and especially indirectly by awakening in youth a sense of respect for others, love for sentient and insentient life; by awakening sympathy for foreign peoples and races; by awakening the sentiment of social justice and admiration for all forms of courage and heroism, even in war – by a constant direction of the attention of the new generation to that which rises above all violence; c) by sending one’s children to schools where they are sure to receive modern and up-to-date instruction in the widest sense (and if such schools do not exist, establish same), remaining in constant touch with the pupils themselves by taking part in parents’ circles, teachers’ and pupils’ meetings, etc.

2. *As schoolmaster, teacher or professor:* By educating youth in a truly universal spirit according to the method of self-government (and with this aim in view seeking to keep up regular contact with the parents).
3. *As journalist, publicist, lecturer or man of letters:* By directing public opinion as much as possible to the ideals of justice and freedom and teaching the readers to appreciate foreign nations and races.
4. *As religious or moral leader:* By awakening by word and deed the sentiment of universal solidarity and a sense of responsibility to mankind generally, seeking to sublimate the fighting habit and war.
5. *As chief of a movement or political group or party:* By inciting the masses to work for a new civilisation, giving them confidence in the method of non-violent struggle.
6. *As jurist:* By directing law towards a harmonious international world in which individuals, groups, nations and races would entertain free relations and exchange all their products (material, intellectual and spiritual) according to their nature and need.
7. *As historian:* By taking universal life as a starting point, pointing out the qualities of every nation and race, demonstrating the relations and influence which each has with and upon the others and showing according to universal history the existence of an undeniable tendency towards a social life which would be as free as it would be varied, offering to every individual the greatest possibility of free development.
8. *As artist:* By directing every effort towards a truly human and universal harmony.
9. *As sociologist:* By recognising the relative meaning of war and showing why and by what means the nations may rise above it and pass out of the stage of violence and barbarism.
10. *As medical man, psychologist or psychiatrist:* a) By analysing the pathological phenomena of society with a view to individual and social self-cure and the establishment of moral hygiene; b) By demonstrating the possibilities of canalising and sublimating the instincts and passions which formerly found their outward expression in war.
11. *As philosopher:* a) By recognising the relative value of all traditions of thought and civilisation, by permitting them all full expression and in showing how they complete each other mutually; b) By making universal philosophy a force of social dynamics.



12. By organising effectively from the points of view of science, propaganda and action in respect to the above mentioned aims and associating on a federal basis with other organisations for direct action against war and its preparation.
- H. Organisation of a movement based on direct action for the immediate abolition of military slavery (compulsory Military Service).
  - I. Organisation of a movement based on direct action for the immediate liberation of all objectors to military service.
  - J. Organisation of special movements for direct action connected with special events of an anti-military character (such as for instance the 1921 movement in Holland on the occasion of the hunger strike by the objector Herman Groenendaal, and the one of 1932 in Belgium on the occasion of the hunger strike by R. A. Simoens).
  - K. Organisation of a popular movement with the aim of eliminating immediately from the laws of one's own country the right to declare war.
  - L. Unarmed mass opposition to the imprisonment of objectors in any town or village and organisation in connection with such injustices of demonstrations, meetings, strikes of protest, etc.
  - M. On the occasion of parliamentary discussions or special governmental measures (such as a vote for the increase and the modernisation of war material, manoeuvres, dispatch of military or naval forces to a place where a strained situation has arisen, dispatch of military forces to some colony), to prevent such measures from being carried out by demonstrations and strikes.
  - N. Wide distribution of manifestoes inciting to refusal of service in which thousands of men and women – giving their names, callings and addresses – declare openly that they refuse to take any part in wars or in its technical and moral preparation whether it be in the army, the navy or in social life.
  - O. Creation of funds in aid of the victims of refusal to take part in war:
    1. In favour of those objectors who have lost their work in consequence of their anti-military attitude;
    2. In favour of propagandists in a similar situation;
    3. In favour of those who refuse to make war material or to participate in the technical, intellectual or moral preparation of war.
  - P. Compelling the governments to renounce all forms of national defence (if for instance reasonable plans for universal disarmament are proposed the masses must compel the government by direct action to accept the same).
  - Q. Organisation of international itinerant peace crusades (such a campaign lasting several weeks or several months, begins at the same time in different countries and in the most important centres. The crusaders pass through towns and villages holding meetings and march to a designated spot where a grand international demonstration is to take place).
- Should political tension between two countries threaten to lead to the danger of war:*
- R. A common front of all organisations which are opposed to war and its preparation should immediately be established in order to:
    1. Create a Committee and a special fund for any proposed action.
    2. Inform public opinion of the threatening danger through: a) The Press; b) lectures and meetings; c) manifestoes, tracts and pamphlets dealing with the political difference in question in an objective and anti-war manner.

3. Appeals should be launched by wire or express letters to all pacifists, anti-militarist and workers' organisations etc. to exert pressure upon the government and parliament to avoid war at all cost.
4. Leading personalities of the country should be supplied with full particulars concerning the point in dispute with a request that they should influence public opinion, the government and parliament, to avoid war at all cost.
5. Appeals should be addressed to all teachers, journalists, religious or political leaders, lawyers, historians, etc., that they may use all their influence to avoid war; (see G. b. 2–11).
6. The government and parliament should be warned that in case war is declared the masses will refuse to take part in it and this all the more since modern states possess political and juridical means – such as arbitration – for settling any political difference and so avoiding all war.
7. In the country which might become the enemy country, manifestoes should be published declaring clearly that should war break out the masses will refuse to take part in it and inviting all human beings worthy of the name, on the other side of the frontier, to act in a like manner.
8. Enter into immediate contact with kindred movements, committees and organisations in a prospective enemy country so that parallel action may be taken in both countries in peace time as well as when war threatens to break out.
9. In towns and villages situated on the frontiers of both countries in question, conferences and meetings should be organised at which the war resisters of both countries should meet in order to
  - a) examine the political dispute in question and devise means for a pacific solution;
  - b) examine all possible means to be employed for preventing the outbreak of war;
  - c) examine all means to be employed to oppose mobilisation and prevent the outbreak of war.
10. A general strike, the collective refusal of military service and non-co-operation, etc., should be prepared in advance, and if necessary commenced at once, and any other steps taken to render the threatened outbreak of war impossible.

Since it is likely that, in case of a mobilisation or on the outbreak of war, the members of the directing committees of anti-war organisations and the best known propagandists of the anti-war movement will be arrested and the documents, archives, etc., of these organisations confiscated, it is necessary

S. To take the following preventive measures:

1. Educate the members of the organisations in question in such a way as to enable them more and more to continue their illegal work even should all their leaders be arrested, banished or killed.
2. To keep several duplicates of membership lists in different places in order to avoid the consequences resulting from confiscation.
3. Bear in mind the possibility that the funds of the organisations in question which may be deposited in official institutions (Savings Banks, Banks, etc.) may be confiscated by the State and avoid the danger of being deprived of means at the moment of action.

In order to be able to act effectively at the given moment and to forestall possible proclamations launched by the government, it is necessary:

- T. To have prepared already in advance proclamations of different sizes and colours, drawn up in clear terms, inciting to direct action, individual as well as collective, against war and its preparation and calling upon all to mobilise their forces in the service of humanity, to meet the following cases:
1. State of war;
  2. State of siege;
  3. Rumours of mobilisation;
  4. Mobilisation;
  5. Rumours of war;
  6. Civil war;
  7. Colonial war;
  8. International war.

NOTE: *Most of the foregoing methods from A to G can be practised either individually or collectively in times of peace, mobilisation or war. Those from H to T are for collective purposes only.*

#### THEORETICAL METHODS, COLLECTIVE

- A. *Propaganda:*  
By public and open meetings, by Congresses, courses, schools, etc., by study circles, by writing or pictures, plays, pageants, etc., by the cinema, wireless, by processions and demonstrations, by house to house canvas (*a far too neglected method*).
- B. *Youth organisations:*
1. *Children:* Do not moralise; borrow what is good from the Boy Scout Movement; awaken above all a sense of respect for others and for oneself and a sentiment of responsibility and of human solidarity.
  2. *Adolescents:* Should organise themselves according to their own methods to discuss the subjects in question.
- C. *Women's Organisations:*  
These are chiefly needed where women do not yet or have only for a short time taken any interest in social questions and where in connection with their maternal and social functions they require special education. The central idea must here be their responsibility towards the new generation in respect of physical, moral and intellectual health; it is of the greatest importance that women should become conscious of the fact that in modern war the industrial, intellectual and social work of women behind the front is as necessary as the men's work at the front; that if the system of national defence is to work well, at least 20 per cent of the mobilised men should be replaced by women and that without the constant collaboration of millions of women the making of munition would be paralysed. In this connection house to houses canvass by women of women is of the highest importance.
- D. Special propaganda amongst the workers adapted to every kind of trade, especially those of first necessity for war purposes, in order to explain to these workers the technical function of their trade and what can be done individually or collectively – by each on his own ground – in order to undermine and to prevent war by refusing to serve:
1. Transport (goods and material, men):  
By a) rail, b) autobus, c) car, d) tramway, e) boat, f) aeroplane, g) beast, h) men.
  2. Minerals:  
a) coal, b) iron, c) lead, d) aluminum, e) zinc f) tin, g) nickel, h) mercury, i) copper,

k) manganese, l) sulphur, m) pyrite, n) tungsten, o) chromium, p) antimony, q) graphite, r) mica, etc.

3. Iron and Steel industry (engines of war material, munitions).
4. Chemical Industry (asphyxiating gases).
5. Mineral Oils, petroleum, heavy oil, petrol (gasoline), wells, refineries, pipelines, tanks etc.
6. Alcohol
7. Cotton
8. Wool
9. Rubber
10. Leather, etc.

NOTE: *These methods are intended as collective activities in time of peace, to prepare for the methods of active and organised resistance outlined in the section which follows.*

#### COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE IN TIME OF MOBILISATION AND WAR

##### A. Boycott, Non-co-operation and General Strike

NOTE: *In time of war danger to oblige the government to give up its disastrous plan and in time of war to stop the slaughter*

- B. Creation of United Anti-War Front in preparation for general Strike and mass refusal of military services.
- C. Attempt to win over soldiers, sailors and workers still mobilised for war by
  1. Demonstrations; 2. House to house canvass.
- D. Paralysation of Transport by mass picketing of roads and railways and passive resistance.
- E. The collective opposition to war should be converted into social revolution. In this revolution it will likewise be the duty of all pacifists to carry on their fight by such means only as may be worthy of men, methods of violence being in contradiction to any rebirth of human civilisation.

NOTE: *These methods should be attempted where war or mobilisation finds the anti-militarist movement insufficiently strong to mobilise immediately on a national scale (see A).<sup>27</sup>*

The Bart de Ligt Plan, as it came to be known, was a timely and meaningful proposal aimed at creating a practical way of thinking out the next stage of development – the objective of the WRI – a nonviolent social revolution. This need had been quite clear to the WRI leadership and at no time overlooked by the International Council or the central and regional workers. The International Council kept a watch on the affairs of the movement and its future. Whenever it learnt about any international conflict it did not hesitate to express its opinion, give statements or write to the concerned parties. But until now the major activity and focus of the International had remained limited to opposition to militarism, a field in which it had achieved an unexpected degree of success.

The Digswell Conference was a historical event of special significance in the development of the War Resisters' International because it helped clarify the core task of the WRI. While reporting on the Conference in *The War Resister* Runham Brown wrote:

The lectures and discussions which followed showed the general recognition that personal war resistance is but the first essential step in combatting war. Further, that the world had never ceased to be at war, for the economic and social conditions to which

Capitalism and Imperialism had reduced the world, were the results of a warfare equally, if not even more, terrible, than armed warfare. The Conference was resolved not only to resist war, but to seek to build a new Social Order.<sup>28</sup>

With a speech like that of Ponsonby and proposals like the de Ligt Plan, the Digswell Conference inspired and motivated many of the participants to start thinking with a sense of urgency about formulating a programme of action by the International. Years of hard work by hundreds of workers and sacrifices by thousands of conscientious objectors had created confidence in the power of nonviolence. There was an atmosphere of optimism among pacifists all over the world.

A careful study of the de Ligt Plan suggests that de Ligt was more an anti-militarist intellectual and a theoretician than a field worker. The Plan goes into almost all the details of actions that he could think of as necessary to oppose militarism and military conscription. But he did not take into consideration those countries or societies in which there was no military conscription, nor did he give much consideration to the socio-economic and cultural factors which make war inevitable.

The Council meeting that took place immediately after the Conference asked Reginald Reynolds to study the Plan and prepare a statement which, along with the Plan, should be sent to the Council and Sections inviting them to comment on the whole scheme. The Council was asked to study it before taking any action. Reginald Reynolds made *Proposals for Revised Draft of the de Ligt Plan* after it was published in the *The War Resister*. He proposed the following Introduction for the English edition:

The problem of War Resistance divides itself naturally into two principal categories – viz., that of a policy to be pursued in time of peace under ‘normal’ conditions and that of activities in time of mobilisation and war.

This distinction is not absolute, for the pacifist recognises that the conditions of a capitalist and militarist world are never really ‘normal’ (in any social or ethical sense) and that the differences between what we call ‘peace’ in a world of armed imperialism and the state of war to which it gives rise is in reality only a difference of degree – i.e., in the sharpening of conflicts.

Thus, the conditions of a ‘democratic’ country in time of mobilisation will closely resemble those of a fascist state in time of ‘peace’. Dictatorships again will be found to vary in the degree of centralised control, suppression of liberty, blatancy of class rule, etc., so that in certain countries today it would be hard to say whether the government was dictatorial or parliamentary.

The conditions of war itself will be found to vary according to a number of determining circumstances. In the last few years there has often been war on the North West Frontier of India without the slightest interest shown by the mass of the people in this country, although their government has been directly responsible. This has been due to the fact that such wars are fought at a distance from the ‘motherland’ against foes unable to retaliate in kind – i.e., by bombing London as we have bombed their villages – and unfortunately war only appears to excite interest and opposition when we are fighting a nation strong enough in its military equipment to hit back effectively.

The other extreme would be a war against, for instance, Germany or France, in which it seems highly probable that hostilities would commence with the blotting out of the chief industrial towns on both sides and a paralysation far more effective than

anything that could be produced by a general strike. This does not mean, however, that talk of industrial resistance in time of war should be regarded as impracticable, for there still remains the third possibility – that is to say, the war with a distant but powerful enemy (for example, America or Japan) which might be less devastating in its immediate effects and more prolonged.

The next consideration is the number of people in the various industries, professions, etc., likely to respect any call to War Resistance. Here we shall see that the often-debated question ‘Industrial versus Collective Resistance’ is also a problem only of degree. The scholastic logician used to argue as to how many grains of sand made a heap; and it would be equally futile to discuss how many individual resisters constituted collective resistance. Clearly to say that one believes in one method but not in the other is to draw an artificial line somewhere and to say that it is desirable for less than  $x$  persons to resist, but undesirable for  $x + 1$  persons to resist – vice versa.

If we bear this fact in mind, the distinction of degree is still an important one – the number of people involved, their relative isolation or organisation (actual or potential) – and these facts will determine at all times the technique of resistance that is possible and suitable to the circumstances. Methods theoretical and practical, constructive, abstentionist, destructive and obstructive will all have to be decided upon with regard to the objective situation and the actual personal.

Reginald Reynolds also suggested modifications to the text itself. One of the major suggestions was to include those countries with no conscription. The amendment was:

As most of these clauses are compiled with a view to countries where there is conscription, a clause should be added for non-conscriptionist countries, pointing out the necessity of individual and collective (i.e. organisational) work against recruiting, especially among the unemployed.

The section [2.G] shall also include a clause urging citizens in countries with parliamentary institutions to raise the pacifist issues specified later in this revised draft in the form of questionnaires to parliamentary candidates, questions at election meetings, letters and deputations to the local member of the legislature, ‘lobbying’ of such members etc. etc.

. . . Further a clause shall be added for countries having a parliamentary form of government, urging the permeation of the ‘left’ parties and a campaign for the election of deputies pledged to oppose all war credits and to demand total unilateral disarmament. Such a parliamentary programme to include:

a) Withdrawal of troops from Colonies; b) Self-determination for all peoples and c) Abandonment of concessions, investments etc. in such colonies and foreign countries.<sup>29</sup>

There were several amendments suggested by Reginald Reynolds, which made the Plan much more holistic and not exclusively anti-militaristic, and in which anti-militarism and socio-political elements were fully integrated. Despite the enthusiasm in favour of the Plan among most of the delegates, it could not be adopted by the Conference. This was partly because there was not sufficient time to go through it thoroughly, but it was also obvious that some among the leadership of the International did not think it to be a practical proposal. Many thought it to be too academic. At the same time the European climate was becoming tense with the likelihood of war breaking out. The defeated nations of the First World War had been rearming

themselves. As a result demilitarisation, disarmament and anti-conscription received the highest attention from the WRI leadership as well as the WRI Sections.

#### Notes Chapter 9

- 1 John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1922, p.338
- 2 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Zurich, August 30–September 2, 1929, ‘Development Scheme’, p.7
- 3 Ibid. p.8
- 4 Ibid. p.9
- 5 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 4–7, 1929, ‘Policy of the International’, pp.8–12
- 6 *The War Resister* XXIV, Winter 1928/29, pp.12–13
- 7 Ibid. pp.13–14
- 8 Ibid. p.15
- 9 *The War Resister* XXVIII, Spring 1931, p.16
- 10 Ibid. p.12
- 11 Ibid. p.17
- 12 Ibid. p.12
- 13 *Until the End, The War Resister* Special Issue XXXIII, 1932, pp.13–17
- 14 Runham Brown, *Cutting Ice*, WRI, London, 1930, pp.34–5
- 15 Ibid. p.35
- 16 Grace M. Beaton, *Twenty Years’ Work in the War Resisters’ International*, WRI, London, September 1945, p.11.
- 17 *Joint Peace Council, The War Resister* XXVIII, Spring 1931, p.21
- 18 Joint Meeting of the WRI Council and the National Committee of the No More War Movement, held in the Penn Club on January 5, 1929, *Youth Section*, pp.28–30
- 19 Grace M. Beaton, *Twenty Years’ Work in the War Resisters’ International*, WRI, London, September 1945, p.14
- 20 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Lyon, France, August 1, 1931, *Study Conferences*, p.8
- 21 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 2–5, 1932, item 33, p.19
- 22 *The WRI in Conference at Digswell*, England, July, 1934’, *The War Resister* 36, September 1934, p.3
- 23 *Address by Lord Ponsonby, Chairman of the War Resisters’ International at the Conference at Digswell Park, Welwyn, Herts, England, on 27th July, 1934’*, *The War Resister* 36, pp.9–14
- 24 Reginald Reynolds, *Pitfalls for Pacifists*, *The War Resister* 36, September 1934, pp.14–18
- 25 Bart de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence – An Essay on War and Revolution*, Introduced by Aldous Huxley (New Introduction by Peter van den Dungen), Pluto Press, London, 1989 (First published 1937)
- 26 Runham Brown, *Bartholomew de Ligt’s Anti-War Plan*, *The War Resister* 36, September 1934, p.18
- 27 Ibid. pp.18–26
- 28 Ibid. pp.4–5
- 29 *Proposals for revised Draft of the De Ligt Plan*, from the WRI Archives of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Holland

## CHAPTER 10

*If you do not want to honour objectors' suffering at least be quiet!  
We ask therefore, quite the contrary of what you are asking.  
We ask to stop every discrimination and division of Motherland  
in front of every country's soldiers and uniforms who, dying,  
sacrificed themselves for the sacred ideals of Justice, Freedom  
and Truth. We respect suffering and death, but in the sight of  
our young people who are watching us we must not cause dan-  
gerous confusion between good and evil, between truth and  
error, between death of an aggressor and that of his victim.  
If you wish we can say; "Let us pray for those unhappy people  
who, poisoned through no fault of their own by a propaganda of  
hatred, were sacrificed for a misunderstanding of the Mother-  
land's ideal, and unknowingly trampled over other human ideal"*  
Don Milani<sup>1</sup>

### Gathering war clouds – a challenge

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At the International Council Meeting held in Zurich (August 30–September 2, 1929) Olga Misar had reported on the fascistic situation in Austria. The Social Democratic part of the political circle was very anxious about the political freedom they had built up during a period of 10 years and were trying to defend it by all possible means. However the financial support from the industrial powers for the Home Guards, specially from outside Austria, had created a dangerous position. The mentality among the people was very much for war, there being hardly any neutral people left. The situation was extremely dangerous and had made it almost impossible for war resistance work to go on.

A Dr Seipal had a powerful influence on the people, including the 'Home Guards', who had developed a peculiar mentality. Some of them believed they could threaten anybody without actually causing bloodshed, hoping that the Socialists would give way. On the other hand the Socialists were making the same mistake, believing that they too would be able to carry their policy through without any real bloodshed while still maintaining their 'Protection Guards'. "It was this *belief in violence*," Olga said, "which is causing the greatest danger in Austria today." She added: "The Chancellor, the Social Democratic leaders and Christian Socialist leaders are for peace, and they should be strengthened from outside by those who have access to the press."<sup>2</sup>

#### **WRI resolution on Austria**

Recognising that civil war in Austria would almost unavoidably involve the danger of external political developments and war, the WRI, in the interests of the Austrian people and the maintenance of world peace, approaches the Austrian Government and the leading parties, urgently begging them to do their utmost to avert a civil struggle.

For the second time, Austria has become a danger-centre to world peace. It is, however still possible, by wise and decisive action, to avoid the worst. It seems to us, filled as we are with warmest sympathy for Austria, that the best way out would be the imme-



diate calling of a conference for internal disarmament, in order to avoid a violent conflict, with all its fatal consequences. Both parties, in touch and unity with the Government, must then decide the dissolution and disarming of their organisations.<sup>3</sup>

### **The political situation in Germany**

At the same Council meeting (Zurich), Helene Stöcker pointed out that the fascist danger in Austria heightened the fascist danger in Germany. She reported: "Major Pabst, head of the Austrian 'Heimwehr' was responsible for the murdering of Karl Liebknecht and of Rosa Luxemburg. The greatest danger at the present is the existing hatred between the Communists and the Social Democrats." Dr Stöcker suggested that the most effective help the War Resisters' International could render was to help people to realise the difficulties of the situation; and that the prominent members of the two parties should discuss plans to overcome it.

Fenner Brockway, the WRI Chairman, told the Council that he was trying in the Labour and Socialist International to group together the 'Left' elements. The WRI Council decided to send a letter to people with whom they were in contact and about whom they thought they had the necessary knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

### **Changes in Europe**

Europe was passing through a phase of political and economic turmoil. The victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia had created a new hope, nearly all over the colonised world, for liberation from imperialist oppression. For many in the West also the 1917 Revolution was a great victory of the proletariat. Unfortunately, despite the apparent dedication of Marx and Engels to internationalism, the results of the revolution were nationalistic, ultimately leading to the building of highly centralised States.

For some pacifists who had a socialist orientation the image of the Soviet Union was that of a messiah landed on the earth to show the way to the liberation of humankind – the force that would generate the spirit of equality and peaceful living which would end war for ever. Something like Marx's dream of a communist world. They could not imagine that what was coming would be very different from that dream. It would be more centralist and authoritarian than most other States; in which the freedom of the individual and the right to follow one's own conscience would have no standing whatsoever.

Economic power, as a logical consequence, produces political power. For a lay person the concept of democracy implies a non-exploitative society, a society with free enterprise, opportunities for every citizen and practical application of egalitarian values. But when a powerful minority of the population monopolises the fruits of industrialisation power is bound to get further concentrated in the hands of the few and individual freedom gets lost.

What happened a decade before and during the Second World War was a logical development of a situation that had been created during the previous hundred years or so. Both the systems – democracy with free enterprise and the socialist–Marxist system, aiming at collectivism – reached a centralist and nationalist stage in which neither freedom for the individual nor any real spirit of collectivism could flourish. What came into existence was a powerful nation-state, which might be socialist in intention, but had many fascistic characteristics.

I had the opportunity of meeting a few young Germans who had joined the Hitler Jugend during The Second World War. Several of them thought it to be a great opportunity to serve the nation as social workers. The image of the Jugend projected to them was that of a philanthropic

organisation – one motivated by the love for their nation. However many of them later realised that it was an exercise for recruiting the youth into the Nazi forces including the military. Even Fascism could have an idealistic aura. And it was presented to appeal to idealistic impulses.

According to Mussolini's Fascist plan everything was part of the State, there was nothing outside the State. He himself had once said that Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State was the synthesis and unity of all values; it interprets, develops and lends potency to the whole life of the masses. Is this not the underlying reality of the nation-state? Are not all the States, be they communist, Fascist, capitalist or so-called democratic, not authoritarian to different degrees in their treatment of the individual?

The War Resisters' International, in contrast to the above, visualised a society that would be free from any authoritarianism, particularly of the State. Its major stress has always been on nonviolence as the dynamics of human management. Nonviolence of the pacifist can never force or instigate authoritarianism. At the same time it has a sophisticated dynamics of social management and a natural tendency toward co-operation between people. When the WRI opposed militarism and conscription (not only military but all kinds of conscription) it was also endeavouring to fight against all the forces which are the causes of war and organised violence in society. Its repeatedly pronounced objective has been to build a society run on the principles of nonviolence and free from all kinds of authoritarianism.

The situation that was developing in Europe, and in many parts of the world, came as a challenge for and a test of pacifist thinking and activism. Eventually these developments proved to be a serious setback, though a temporary one.

The uprising of Fascism–Nazism manifested in the occupation of Abyssinia by , the Spanish Civil War, the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and above all the Second World War, involved directly or indirectly, almost the whole of the European continent. This affected the world at large, changing the trends of history nearly everywhere. Questions and doubts were raised about the concept of *collective security* and the relevance of international bodies like the League of Nations.

### **Italy's occupation of Ethiopia**

After an internal struggle within the ruling class of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) Ras Tafari became Haile Selassie, who tried to regularise the country's relations with foreign powers by a tour of Europe, Egypt and Palestine. In 1925 an Anglo–Italian agreement accorded Italy a sphere of economic influence in Western Ethiopia. Italy, in return, undertook to give diplomatic support to a British demand that Ethiopia should build a dam at Lake Tana to regulate the water supply for irrigation in Egypt and the Sudan. Ethiopia appealed against the agreement to the League of Nations, but the appeal was rejected. Britain did not insist on the project and Italy tried to reduce the tension by making a treaty of friendship and arbitration with Ethiopia (1928).

In the meantime relations between Italy and Ethiopia had deteriorated owing to disagreement over some building projects, disputes and incidents on the Eritrean and Somali boundaries. An Anglo–Ethiopian commission was inquiring into the grazing rights of British Somali tribes where the boundaries of Ethiopia and British and Italian Somaliland met. Fierce fighting took place between Italian Somali troops and the Ethiopians. Ethiopia retreated, but the Italians demanded heavy reparations from Ethiopia for this incident. Ethiopia again appealed to the League of Nations, which appointed a commission of arbitration. Economic sanctions were voted against Italy. But Italy continued its assaults on the country and in May 1936 occupied Addis Ababa. Haile Selassie escaped and reached Geneva, where he pleaded for the cause of his people to the

assembly of the League of Nations; but his claim against Italy was not supported.

Did this surprise the WRI pacifists? No, it did not, for, according to their analysis of the phenomenon of war and the understanding of the character of the powers behind organisations such as the League of Nations, these things were bound to happen. At its meeting held in July 1935, in Zurich, Switzerland, the International Council of the WRI considered the implications of the happenings in Abyssinia.

Runham Brown wrote that the Council

gave special consideration to the danger of war between Italy and Abyssinia. It organised a mission to the International Labour Movements. On the Council's behalf, its representative urged on the various International organisations of the workers for a united refusal to send munitions, not only into Italy, but even into the countries of potential aggressors.

Appeals were made to the International Federation of Trade Unions, the International Federation of Anarchist Trade Unions, the Labour and Socialist International, the International Federation of Transport Workers, the French Communist Party, and the General Confederation of Workers (France). A WRI representative attended the annual conferences of most of these organisations to stress the WRI point of view.

[The WRI] mission failed. The Labour Movement of the world was too busy ranging itself behind its respective Governments assuring them of its support for the League-Sanctions and Collective Security. The [War Resisters'] International has been doing all it can to persuade the workers of the rest of the world to refuse to co-operate with Italy in its aggression in Abyssinia. There is a minority view in the Movement which is the majority view in the world at large, which believes that we have a League of Nations to keep the peace – that one member has wantonly attacked another member of the League – that all therefore must unite to stop her supplies and thereby stop the war, and by doing so that they will prevent future similar aggressions. ...

There is only one way. Let Great Britain, and the other nations, but I speak of Great Britain, as the nation most responsible, let her go to the League of Nations and lay on the table the spoils of aggressions; let the biggest thief do that and say – “these things have been obtained by robbery with violence – we now stand for the League, we stand for International Peace and Justice.” If that were done, the whole world situation would be changed. There is no other way. ...

Fear of a Great War – a world war – is so terrible that the minds of statesmen may be open even to consider justice as a means of preventing it. The enormous pressure of public opinion may yet have greater effect than at one time seemed possible, but something more is needed. Behind all stand the guns, a menace to security. There is one way to “Collective Security” – remove the guns, remove the power of Governments to resort to war under any pretext whatsoever, remove the fear.<sup>5</sup>

The Council was unanimous that some action should be advocated by the WRI, and as a general economic boycott was not approved, it was recommended that a boycott of all shipments to Italy of material likely to be used for war purposes should be organised. They decided to urge Great Britain to make permanent their temporary embargo on this trade. For assisting Sections to a clear understanding of the issue the WRI sent out a number of information bulle-

tins prepared by the International's Political Advisor, at that time Reginald Reynolds.

The WRI Council asked Eugène Lagot to interview the officials of the International Federation of Trade Unions in Paris to ascertain what action could be undertaken along these lines. If this step proved successful the International Federation of Anarchist Trade Unions was to be approached by Bart de Ligt or Albert de Jong; and the Third International through Madame Nadezhda Krupskaya, the widow of Lenin, Department of Public Instruction in Moscow.

### **In Fascist Italy**

Italy by now had come fully under Fascist rule. To give an example of the general situation, as early as 1926, I quote from a letter addressed to the members of the No More War Movement, England, by an Italian colleague living in Milan who had attended the WRI Bilthoven Conference:

About three months ago I came to – with my family in the hope of finding some permanent occupation (with the help of God) – no matter of what nature as long as it might bring me out of the dreadful situation in which I had been lately.

You who have lived in Italy so long will appreciate what is the condition of the isolated War Resister who exists in Italy where no one is counted as a citizen who is not a Fascist. . . .

Lately there has been held in Rome the first conference of the Scholastic Corporation, a conference of official and national character, Mussolini, in his inaugural speech, said, among other things, by way of threat: 'The Italian school is a Fascist school. All must adapt themselves to the *fait accompli* – to the annihilation of the old democratic regime. The school must draw its inspiration from Fascism and everyone in Italy must live in the Fascist climate.' And so it is. It is easy for those abroad to imagine what, under those conditions, is the life of Pacifists and War Resisters, who are not few, although they are unable to organise in parties, because all parties have been dissolved by law, but who have not ceased to keep alive the flame of their ideals of brotherhood and love between man.

It seems to me to be the duty and the business of the War Resisters' International to occupy itself closely with their friends and comrades in Italy, more than in other countries, in this time of indescribable martyrdom, remembering their most urgent wants, so that they may not perish with their families.

. . . I have got to know many Pacifists and War Resisters, and we meet from day to day in different places and exchange ideas, experiences, sorrows, and hopes. . . . I should like to start a private school to inculcate pacifist teachings in the young. . . . To do that it is necessary that the comrades and friends in the various countries help me in my dire need with liberal and individual subventions so that I may also be able to help the most needy friends who surround me.<sup>6</sup>

At that very critical time Italian pacifists needed much courage to maintain their nonviolent principles. There was already a movement of war resisters in the country. In one town of only 20,000 inhabitants there was an organised group of 300 war resisters carrying on propaganda in the surrounding areas. They had also secretly organised a conference in circumstances of great danger. While giving this information in *The War Resister*, the WRI could give no further information, as mere suspicion might have thrown their members into prison and robbed them of their livelihood.

## Japanese occupation of Manchuria

Since the Meiji period (Emperor Meiji Tenno – 1852–1912) there had been a number of rightist organisations dedicated to the theme of *internal purity* and external expansion. In the early 1930s some civilian groups of ultra-nationalists opposed parliamentary government as *un-Japanese*. They sought to preserve what they thought unique in the Japanese spirit, and therefore fought against excessive western ways and ideas. Most of these organisations attracted rootless young men who were willing to risk their lives in the tactics of terror and suicide that traditionally stirred male emotions in Japan.

Their leaders were as much against political parties and big business as they were against acculturation and westernisation. In March 1931 a coup involving highly placed military generals against the civilian politicians had to be abandoned due to lack of agreement among the leaders. In 1932 the army announced that no party cabinet would be acceptable to it. The military appointed retired Admiral Saito Makoto as Prime Minister. Japanese fascism was now fully in power.

Japan occupied Manchuria in early 1932. Some believed that the Disarmament Conference should be able to put pressure on the League of Nations to do something, possibly, by enforcing sanctions against Manchuria. They explained the inaction of the League over Japan's invasion of Manchuria in terms of Japan being allowed to develop as an imperialist power.

What could the WRI do in a situation created by the Manchurian crisis? It had no meaningful contacts whatsoever in that part of the world. At the most it could express its agony and anxiety about the repercussions of the Japanese occupation. Wilfred Wellock, member of the International Council of the WRI, gave a summary of the events in the Sino-Japanese conflict. For immediate action he suggested a resolution protesting against what had happened, to be adopted at public meetings and meetings of concerned organisations and forwarded to the leaders of the home government and to the council of the League of Nations. Regarding what might have been done earlier he suggested that there were two possibilities: 1. that under Article 15 of the League of Nations, the withdrawal of ambassadors be sanctioned, and 2. that under Article 15 there be economic sanctions.

However, looking at the miserable performance of the League, not all the members of the Council were of the same opinion. But the Council agreed that 1. In future in any declaration the WRI might make on war dangers the International should concentrate upon the exposure of the general imperialistic background; upon an appeal to the peoples to resist war and to refuse to provide munitions for war and upon a demand for total disarmament; and 2. That the WRI Council should be particularly careful in any positive proposals which it might make in relation to the League of Nations. Only where these proposals were clearly constructive and in line with its general philosophy could the WRI be justified in making them. At the Enfield meeting, January 2–5, 1932, the International Council issued the following statement:

In view of the continuation of warlike activities in Manchuria, the Council of the War Resisters' International reaffirms its belief that in the long run the preservation of peace can be assured only by refusal to participate in war and appeal to the peoples of Japan and China to refuse to take any part in further hostilities and to peoples of other nations to refuse to provide munitions.<sup>7</sup>

## Industrial war resistance

The 1932 International Council meeting discussed the role of industry in supporting the military system. In the past the WRI had emphasised the refusal of war service and preparation for war. But making and handling of war material was not reconcilable with a war resistance attitude. Council member Martha Steinitz presented an outline of a campaign for Industrial Resistance to War Preparation.

The discussion at the Council emphasised the importance of this subject and it was decided:

1. That the subject of 'Industrial War Resistance' should be kept on the Agenda as an important part of the WRI work, constantly to be considered.
2. That Fenner Brockway should write a pamphlet for the WRI on Industrial War Resistance dealing with the resistance of the British working class to war with Russia in 1920.
3. To request the Swedish Section to approach the Swedish Trade Unions with a view to creating a movement amongst their members for the conversion of War industries to Peace industries – Sweden being suggested as 'the country where the working class movement was most likely to respond'.
4. That Allen Skinner be asked to prepare a draft pamphlet on the 'Relation of the conversion of War Industries to peace industries, to the general necessity for a complete change in the social system'.<sup>8</sup>

Geneva was going to host an International Disarmament Conference. The Council felt that it would be desirable to have the presence of the WRI in Geneva at the time of the Disarmament Conference, specially to firmly propagate total disarmament. Two suggestions were made:

1. To appoint a representative in Geneva, and
2. To open an office in Geneva for the sale and display of literature and as a propaganda centre.

Bjarne Braatoy (Norway) who would be present at Geneva during the period of the conference had agreed to act as the representative of the WRI and to send out a weekly letter to certain Press and Sections of the WRI and advise when further action seemed necessary.

The Women's Peace Union (USA) was desirous of opening the proposed office and had raised a special fund for this purpose. Their representative would shortly join the representative of the WRI in Geneva to make the necessary arrangements.

It would also be desirable that the International publish a special Disarmament Leaflet in English, French and German for free distribution in Geneva. Harold Bing had prepared a draft which, after certain amendments had been made to meet expressions of view of several Council Members, was passed for publication.

The International's representatives in Geneva should convene a meeting of the representatives of the 'Left' pacifists movement at Geneva with a view to co-ordination and co-operation, e.g. in regard to Disarmament proposals likely to be put forward by Russia, etc.<sup>9</sup>

## The Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War created, or brought to the surface, a crisis of conscience within pacifist circles, particularly in the WRI. Never before had pacifists experienced such a conflict of conscience.

The emergence of the anti-militarist movement in Spain during the Second Republic (1931–9) was largely the result of the meeting of two currents. On the one hand there was the native tradition of opposition to the military, which showed itself as much in spontaneous draft evasion as in the activism of the trade union movement (including opposition to the colonial wars in Morocco and the 1909 general strike in Barcelona). On the other hand, the rise in pacifist thought and action after the First World War created some form and structure, partly as a result of the founding of the WRI in 1921.

The experience of the Spanish Civil War was the first major crisis for the War Resisters' International within its first decade of existence. It was a crisis for pacifists in general. They faced two big questions: 'What would I have done if I were living in Spain?' and 'What is it that I should do as an honest pacifist living outside Spain?' In his essay *Spain, a Challenge to Pacifism*, Runham Brown quoted Professor Brocca, who was working in Madrid as the WRI representative in Spain:

In the circumstances in which the fascist rising has taken place, the people have had no alternative but to meet violence with violence. It is regrettable, but the entire responsibility for the tragic and bloody days we are enduring lies with those who, heedless of the most elementary social principles of humanity, have let loose destruction and slaughter, to defend, not ideals, but out-of-date and hateful privileges, tending to a set-back to medieval barbarism.

I stopped a few days in Barcelona to take part in the mass meeting against war that we had organised, but which could not be held, as on the very night when it was to take place, there broke out the criminal militarist-fascist insurrection, the danger of which I had already notified to you.

In Barcelona there were days of bitter strife. From the first moment I placed myself unreservedly at the service of freedom, without thereby renouncing my principles of absolute war resistance; that is to say, I have done and continue to do what I can by word and deed, but without participating in violent actions, for the anti-fascist cause, and within the proletarian and democratic organisations which are struggling to save Spain from this reactionary tyranny. My work is that of information and propaganda. In Barcelona, in Valencia, in the province of Caceres and in Madrid I have acted, and continue to act, in such interesting tasks as stimulating, directing and organising the peasants so that instead of abandoning their agricultural work, they work, even in those areas abandoned by the fascists in their flight, to avoid interruption in production and provision of supplies for the towns; in establishing and organising schools and homes for the children of those citizens who have fallen or who are fighting on the various fronts, and in general taking advantage of all opportunities to spread among the combatants our humanitarian ideals and our repugnance to oppression and cruelty.<sup>10</sup>

Professor Brocca found a personal answer to the question: 'What would you do in Spain today?' And he followed the dictates of his conscience by rendering practical service by assisting the people in maintaining the food supply of the country. Professor Brocca had to make his

decision and he made it quickly. He did not give up his belief in pacifism. Unfortunately, many among the top leadership of the pacifist movement, including some of the War Resisters' International, failed to realise that by abandoning their long professed pacifism they were unwittingly becoming a party to the processes of centralisation of State power. By supporting the armed conflicts, they may have helped eventually in destroying Hitler but they did not succeed in ending the basic elements of Hitlerism – Nazism or Fascism.

Runham Brown stated:

War resisters are as much opposed to tyranny and injustice as they are to war and violence and it is possible that some in the hot blood of their indignation might find it difficult to restrain themselves from taking up arms, but on cooler reflection with their previous training, I have little doubt but that they would refrain. If they did not, at least their error would be more pardonable than if they had betrayed their principles by accepting the cold blooded preparations for the slaughter as in an international war. For myself, I should have no delusions, to assist in supplying food for the people, and the people are the army, is to help to win the war; to refrain is to help the insurgents to win the war. I lay myself open to the charge of inconsistency. That would not worry me, for I have yet to learn that consistency is an absolute virtue. . . . I do not judge my Spanish comrades for not understanding the technique of non-co-operation, but I ask instead, "How can I best serve my fellows in their distress?" My judgment is that I can best help them by feeding them, by helping the wounded, by lending my hand in carrying on the normal life of the country. Then I hear someone say, "For heaven's sake go right in." No, I know a better way, even if I cannot practice non-co-operation just now. To join in the fighting entails destroying my fellows, even my own comrades captive in the cities held by the rebels. It means shooting down deluded men fighting on the other side. I know only too well that victory even for the Spanish people will not necessarily bring peace. I disapprove of the methods being used, although I do not blame my comrades who use them.

Runham Brown was in the *middle position*. He did not have a clear and dependable answer. "What would I do if I were in Spain? Give my sympathies and my hopes and otherwise be neutral? No. I am sure I should offer something much more active than that." Evidently, he had no suggestion as to what he could offer as a pacifist. He was hoping that it might be discovered sometime in the near future. All the same, he was not absolutely clear and firm on the conviction about *not using violence under any circumstance*.

We may agree that the new social order of society cannot be achieved by armed violence, but does that really mean that when some substantial measure of social progress has been made, any little group of desperate men can overthrow it by the resort to violence and that we are to do nothing to defend that new society? No, it does not. I am not opposed to the use of a certain measure of physical force, but that force must be a restraining force and not a destructive one. For instance, we will suppose that a freely elected Government representing a certain measure of progress has been established, such as was the case in Spain last February, and that a "small" group of violent men representing class and privilege try to overthrow it by violence and so to thwart the will of the people. I should be prepared in such a case to arrest and imprison those men, even if in so doing, there were some broken heads, even at the risk that the necessary



use of force was exceeded and some were killed. Then, does it mean that if the opposition come with sticks I would use the policeman's truncheon, but if they come with guns I will let them have their way? No, it means that up to the point where there is reasonable prospect of restraining them, I should be prepared to use the necessary force, but directly it became evident that I had no alternative but to attempt to destroy them, at that point I should stop. If I found that this reactionary gang were in such numbers or possessed such weapons, as to make restraint impossible and that mass destruction was the only means of subduing them, I should definitely reject that method, even if I had to allow them to take control; but if they did take control, it would not be with my help. I should refuse them all co-operation, refuse to become their tool, and should use my best endeavours to bring everything to a standstill.

Now if, "I" were the will of the progressive majority who were in this way being ousted from their control, we should soon see if the usurpers were in reality a small group of violent reactionaries. If they were, they would be powerless and their government would collapse within a few weeks as the Kapp Putsch in Berlin in 1920. They might shoot their way to the Government offices, but their guns could not help them to run the country or to provide its food. But on the other hand, supposing they were not such an insignificant group, supposing they could persuade or cudgel a sufficient number of their countrymen into their service, then we should have to start again to rebuild our new society. If that new society was only a liberal democratic government, still believing in a certain measure of capitalism and imperialism, we should repeatedly fail and remain always a prey to the reactionary minority with their guns, because having to maintain even a small measure of imperialism, we also should have to rely upon armed violence.

The Big Thing. We therefore have left to us one hope. The change in society which we must work for must be a total and radical change.

In this statement there is a sense of confession, of helplessness. The positive element in the statement was his continued and honest belief in pacifism. Although confused, Runham Brown had, by no means, lost his hope in the pacifist future. He added:

Just as the war resister cannot wait for all to resist the call to arms, – he must alone face ostracism and persecution, imprisonment and perhaps even death – so each nation must make its struggle and falter and suffer – first one to the water's edge and then another. So they will learn to protect each other. There is no salvation for one race without the rest. We are members one of another, sharing each other's guilt, unable to live out our ideals alone.<sup>11</sup>

There was a serious divide within the pacifist movement as to how it should respond to the crisis brought about by the rise of Fascism. The crisis had actually started at the time of the occupation of Manchuria by Japan and later Abyssinia by Italy. There were two main camps. On the one hand there were those who stood absolutely firm on their anti-militarist, nonviolent position; and on the other those who were

... finding it more and more difficult to remain pacifists in face of the increasing danger with which the war threatened the things they most value – the safety and welfare of their own country and the lives of those they love. And as the danger of war increases

so does the unpopularity of those who remain convinced that the far-reaching evil done by war more than counter-balances the seeming good which military victory might bring about. It is long range verses the short range point of view; and the short range is the more attractive – it seems so much more “practical”.<sup>12</sup>

The above paragraph is from the statement by Laurence Housman, newly elected Chairman of the WRI. He, along with two other co-authors of the booklet, *Autocracy, Internationalism and Common Sense*, were of the opinion that giving up their stand against war at that stage would be the end of the long-term pacifist approach.

### **The loss of Brockway and Einstein**

Among those who resigned from the movement was Fenner Brockway, the first Chairman of the War Resisters’ International and one of its founders. He had served the movement with great conviction and dedication to pacifism and the WRI for many years. He was a leader of the socialist movement in Britain and a key member of the British Labour Party. But the Spanish war and the role of the War Resisters’ International made him uncomfortable with the pacifist position. He did not see any hope in the pacifist approach to a war waged by Fascist forces. He resigned from the International – not only his position as the chair but even as an ordinary member. He wrote:

It is with great regret that I feel I must resign from the War Resisters’ International. I have never had happier associations than with its members, and the period during which I was Chairman and a member of its International Council will always remain a memory of worth-while service and the most wholehearted comradeship with friends from many countries. This close association with the Movement makes the decision to resign difficult, but I feel it is the only honest course which I can take. My temperament and ultimate philosophy remain pacifist. I recognise that the degree of happiness, equality and freedom in the world depends upon the absence of domination, and that in so far as the temper of violence animates movements for social change, those movements will disappoint our hopes.

But I am faced by this fact. If I were in Spain at this moment I should be fighting with the workers against the Fascist forces. I believe it to be the correct course to demand that the workers shall be provided with the arms which are being sent so freely by the Fascist powers to their enemies. I appreciate the attitude of the pacifists in Spain who, whilst wishing the workers success, feel that they must express their support in constructive social service alone. My difficulty about that attitude is that if anyone wishes the workers to be triumphant he cannot, in my view, refrain from doing whatever is necessary to enable that triumph to take place.

I shall be sorry if my resignation is a cause of disappointment or discouragement. To Runham Brown, Grace Beaton and all the members of the International Council, as well as to the rank and file in the affiliated sections, I wish to express my gratitude for the comradeship of past years and to express the hope that, despite the present break, the feeling of comradeship will continue.<sup>13</sup>

Fenner Brockway’s letter of resignation was a surprise and shock to many pacifists. A large number of letters came in response. Some pacifists welcomed it. But the more telling letters

were from the disappointed ones. One of the letters published in *The War Resister* from the disappointed ones was from Bulgaria and had the following to say:

The letter of our dear and valiant Fenner Brockway overwhelmed me with surprise and dismay and . . . I say to both you and our friends of the International Council, 'Take courage'!

This is not the only victim – nor the first – nor the last – that war resistance, non-violence and brotherly love must offer in this immense, eternal and daily struggle. The political storms of each period, and above all of our own, are so violent, that whatever has its basis in the whirlpool of events will be inevitably torn from the eternal and glorious position of love and non-violence. There are few minds which can resist the temptation to employ hatred and arms in struggles which are momentary, but which have an enormous attraction. Those who can are the true builders of peace and the new humanity.

. . . The worst in the Spanish civil war are the professional assassins – the Fascist generals. War is their domain. It is not only arms which give the victory, and it is in vain that our Fenner Brockway has sacrificed his convictions. Unfortunately it is the generals who will be victorious. Let us imagine that the workers will win in this infernal struggle. The Russian example is sufficiently discouraging for anyone to sacrifice the noblest ideal one can find for such a bloody victory. The oppressed classes will be strong and will win their victory in their own sphere – that of non-violence, and by means of the only weapon which is worthy of peace, liberty and humanity – war resistance . . . The W R I is the sole architect of this victory. With all the forces at its disposal, I cry, 'Forward, even to the end'.<sup>14</sup>

The loss which most saddened Runham Brown was that of Albert Einstein, who abandoned his long-standing pacifism after the immensely valuable contribution he had made to the work of the War Resisters' International. Einstein had supported the War Resisters' International much more than any other prominent personality of a comparable stature. He was with the International almost from its beginning. He supported each and every campaign organised by the International. Hardly anyone could imagine that such a devoted pacifist would ever be on the side of the armed forces – however "desirable" their objective. Earlier in July 1929, when the editor of the journal *Christian Century* had called on Einstein, who had expressed deep admiration for Gandhi, and asked about his own pacifism, Einstein had replied:

My pacifism is an instinctive feeling, a feeling that possesses me; the thought of murdering another human being is abhorrent to me. My attitude is not the result of an intellectual theory but is caused by antipathy to every kind of cruelty and hatred.<sup>15</sup>

Jacques S. Hadamard, a friend, had previously tried to persuade Einstein to soften down his pacifist position by citing a good deal of historical evidence to show that countries refusing to defend themselves against aggression did not thereby prevent aggression and that aggressors were not deterred either by opposition in their own country or by the pressure of world opinion. On September 24, 1929, Einstein mailed him the following letter systematically explaining why he held pacifist views:

I was very glad to receive your letter, first because it came from you, and then because it displays the great earnestness with which you are considering the grave problems of Europe. I reply with some hesitation, because I am well aware that, when it comes to

human affairs, my emotions are more decisive than my intellect. However, I shall dare to justify my position. But let me first make a qualification. I would not dare preach to a native African tribe in this fashion; for the patient there would have died long before the cure could have been of any help to him. But the situation in Europe is, despite Mussolini, quite different.

The first point I want to make is this: In a Europe which is systematically preparing for war, both morally and materially, an impotent League of Nations will not be able to command even moral authority in the hour of nationalist madness. The people in every country will insist that their own nation is the victim of aggression and will do so in perfectly good faith. . . . You cannot educate a nation for war and, at the same time, make its people believe that war is shameful crime.

My second point: I admit that the country which decides not to defend itself assumes a great risk. However, this risk is accepted by society as a whole, and in the interest of human progress which has never been possible without sacrifices.

My third point: While the risks are great, they are not necessarily fatal. Since Germany, after four years of exhausting warfare, did not suffer more permanent damage than she actually has, a European country which does not even engage in war will certainly not suffer more than Germany actually did.

My fourth point: As long as nations systematically continue to prepare for war, fear, distrust and selfish ambitions will again lead to war.

My fifth point: We cannot afford to wait until the governing classes in the various countries decide voluntarily to accept interference with the sovereign power of their nation. Their lust for power will prevent them from doing so.

My sixth point: Public declarations by prominent personalities, who enjoy the respect of the man in the street, to the effect that their country should not engage in any warlike or even military action, will constitute an effective weapon against the war spirit.

My seventh point: To wage war means both to kill the innocent and to allow oneself to be innocently killed. . . . How can any decent and self-respecting person participate in such a tragic affair? Would you perjure yourself if your government asked you to do so? Certainly not. How much worse, then, to slaughter innocent men?

To tell the truth, this last argument is, in my opinion, the strongest; at least, this is the way it affects me. As far as I am concerned, the welfare of humanity must take precedence over loyalty to one's own country – in fact, over anything and everything.

Rebutting Hadamard's point that 'the very possibility of a country's gaining a victory without firing a shot would merely serve to advance despotism' he wrote:

But my views have not changed. If in the event of war, it is possible to declare the government of a given country 'guilty', certainly those who are not guilty must risk their lives. I remain as convinced as ever that the only hope lies in rejecting the concept of war as a means of settling disputes.<sup>16</sup>

When, in May 1930, the No More War Movement of Great Britain asked Einstein for a contribution for their Journal, *The New World*, he wrote:

I feel about the relationship between science and war. Science is a powerful instrument. How it is used, whether it is a blessing or a curse to man, depends on man himself and

not on the instrument. A knife is useful to the lives of human beings but it can also be used to kill.

The solution of our problems cannot come from science, it can only come from man himself. As long as human beings are systematically trained to commit crimes against mankind, the mentality thus created can only lead to catastrophe again and again. Our only hope lies in refusing any action that may serve the preparation or the purpose of war.<sup>17</sup>

Following the ratification of the Kellogg–Briand Pact<sup>18</sup> outlawing war as an instrument of national policy, a manifesto for world disarmament was published. Signatories on this manifesto included Bertrand Russell, Thomas Mann, Jane Adams and Ivan Pavlov. Einstein was one of the first to sign. The manifesto started with several questions which emphasised the destructive capability of a future war if it takes place:

Scientists and technicians throughout the world have brought evidence:

That Scientific methods of warfare have rendered national defense and protection of civilian populations illusory; and

That a new war would mean simultaneous annihilation of a large part of the population by fire, poison gas and chemicals.

Whole nations are in peril!

Do you know the meaning of a new war which would use the means of destruction science is ceaselessly perfecting?

Do you know that in the future war will no longer be profitable to anyone, since not only arms, munitions and food depots but all important industrial centers would be targets of attack? This would bring about total destruction of industries.

Do you know that bombing squadrons could simultaneously destroy cities like London, Paris, New York and Berlin?

Do you know that poison gas can destroy not only the human organism, instantly or after unspeakable suffering, but that it can penetrate the depths of the earth, poisoning soil and water for long periods of time?

Do you know that fire bombs, by means of chemical processes, can achieve temperatures of 3,000° C., thus destroying all life that might have escaped before the effects of poison gas? . . .

That the present armament policies . . . lead all nations to economic disaster . . . makes a new war inevitable . . . every war will be a war of total extermination;<sup>19</sup>

In 1933 Hitler had come to power in Germany and the persecution of Jews had intensified. The arming of Germany, which was going on secretly for quite some time, suddenly became more open and defiant. Einstein, while still emphasising how important it was to refuse participation in military service, began to question his belief that force was never justified to bring peace. He began to advocate the establishment of an international army to restrain aggression. He went as far as to say that since countries like Belgium and France were threatened by Hitler's Germany, under the present circumstances they could be saved only by using force, and therefore it was the duty of their citizens to undertake military service. His anxiety was so great and the situation so frightening that he gave up his pacifist idealism completely.

Lord Ponsonby, who had taken over the chairmanship of the WRI from Fenner Brockway, wrote to Einstein on August 21, 1933:

I am sure you will not take it amiss if I express deep disappointment over the change in your attitude on war resistance. I understand only too well your distress and despair at the events in Germany. However, no matter how provocative a government may be, this fact is not, in my view, a sufficient justification for denying the reasonableness and effectiveness of refusing military service . . . Should your views be made known, you can be sure that every chauvinist, militarist and arms merchant would delight in ridiculing our pacifist position.

There were numerous statements previously made by Einstein, which had moved thousands of men and women with their sincerity and faith in nonviolence. For instance for the Third International Conference of the WRI held in Lyon, France, which he could not attend personally, he had sent a long message addressing the delegates. He had said that if the WRI delegates attending the Conference acted wisely and courageously they could become the most effective body of men and women in the greatest of all human endeavours. The representatives of 50 countries had a potential power far mightier than the sword. He wanted them to lead the people in taking the matter out of the hands of statesmen and diplomats and grip it in their own hands. Those who thought that the danger of war was past were living in a fool's paradise. We had to face a militarism far more powerful and destructive than the militarism which had brought the disasters of the Great War. He appealed to all men and women, eminent or humble, all intellectuals, preachers, all newspapers, in fact everybody, not to wait for anyone else to put down their weapons before they themselves put them down, and hold out the hand of friendship.

Given his previous unswerving advocacy of pacifism it was shocking that a personality like Albert Einstein could suddenly not only change his convictions but also become critical of pacifists. For the majority of his pacifist colleagues it was inconceivable that he would do that at the cost of his ideals and the dictates of his conscience. Although he had stated that his pacifism came from an instinctive feeling and he acted on it, as a scientist he was more of an intellectual than a man acting on the dictates of his instincts. The emergence of Hitler and the persecution of Jews convinced Einstein that he must set aside his instinctive dislike of killing in favour of rationality in opposing Hitler's evil. For him and many others it was a logical step to take.

It is also not difficult to imagine someone with a basically *political* approach changing his or her position along with changes in the objective situation. One should not be surprised at Fenner Brockway giving up his pacifism on account of the situation created by the Spanish crisis. He was a socialist first and then a pacifist.

It is not uncommon that changes take place in the perspective and attitude of individuals towards certain happenings that matter so much to them personally. It is natural for anyone to change his or her mind on account of new elements playing a situation. New experiences can and do change one's life-perspective. Moreover, even the strongest of all convictions and idealism can be altered in the context of deeply rooted personal objectives, experiences and relationships. Nonetheless, I must say that many devoted pacifists found and still find the step taken by people like Albert Einstein hard to accept.

Einstein received letters from pacifists accusing him of deserting the pacifist cause. He had become a mentor and guide for the young, who put their full trust in him as a pacifist visionary. Some of them did not know that his position in regard to war resistance had taken a 'U-turn'. In the summer of 1941 a student from Missouri University wrote to him explaining that he was facing prison because of his refusal to bear arms. And because he was not religious in the

conventional sense his conscience would not permit the claim of conscientious objection. The young man ended his letter with the following words: 'Please write me and let me know that I have one friend in the world!' Einstein replied:

My abhorrence of militarism and war is as great as yours. Until about 1933 I advocated conscientious objection. But with the rise of Fascism I recognised that one could not maintain such a point of view except at the risk of allowing the whole world to fall into the hands of the most terrible enemies of mankind. Organised power can be opposed only by organised power. Much as I regret this, there is no other way.

If all the young people in America were to share your beliefs and act as you intend to act, the country would be defenseless against attack and easily delivered into slavery. That is why today every honest man and woman must fight against Fascist tyranny and must temporarily sacrifice a degree of individual liberty.

There are two kinds of pacifism: sound and unsound. Sound pacifism tries to prevent wars through a world order based on power, not through a purely passive attitude towards international problems. Unsound, irresponsible pacifism contributed in large measure to the defeat of France as well as to the difficult situation in which England finds herself today. I urge you to do your share, lest this country make the same mistake!

This is not to imply that militant pacifism is not as important today as ever before. What is important is to make people aware of the fact that peace can be secured only on the basis of a world organization to which the special interests of one's own country are subordinated. The goal must be: security through sacrifice. Had America, after the last war, adopted the policies of Woodrow Wilson, who fought so vigorously for this goal, we would not be facing such terrible problems today. We must learn from the mistakes of the past!<sup>20</sup>

Einstein's leaving the pacifist movement created a feeling of great loss, especially to the War Resisters' International. Runham Brown expressed his shock at the shifting of Einstein's position and the disappointment of many a war resister which can be seen in the pages of *The War Resister*. But the fully convinced and dedicated amongst pacifists accepted the step taken by the great scientist as one of the casualties that could be expected at such a time of world crisis. In the USA at a meeting called by the War Resisters League (WRL) on September 12, 1933 to discuss Einstein's resignation, Rabbi Goldstein put it as follows:

Professor Einstein's letter in no way weakens our faith in the cause of war resistance. The war resisters rejoiced in his association and acceptance of leadership for the cause of war resistance. His temporary lapse from loyalty to the cause, in our judgment is due to stress and confusion.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, despite the shock and sadness felt by many at the 'loss' of Einstein to the movement, the leaving of Fenner Brockway was a greater loss for the WRI. Einstein's pacifism hardly had any political dimension whereas for Brockway his socialism and earlier pacifism sprang from the same well in his heart. Though he ceased to be a member he remained sympathetic and occasionally supported actions.

## Dick Sheppard's Pledge

*I renounce War and never again will I support or sanction another*

In 1936 Dick Sheppard, the Canon of St. Paul's in London, wrote in the Preface of his book, *We say 'No'*:

There has never been a time in history when the desire for Peace has been so strong or so widespread as it is today. . . . But, paradoxically, we live in imminent danger of a new and more terrible death-struggle of the nations. The thing we hate and seek to avoid may yet overwhelm us.

That is because, while we are perfectly sincere in wanting Peace, we don't feel quite so sure of the other fellow's sincerity when he says he wants it too. So we are trying to build up a Peace system on the foundations of force, and hedging it round with military sanctions.

I do not believe that Peace can be established on such a basis. I am afraid that collective security may, in the end, prove a short cut to universal war. . . .

In order to test this feeling, and to give Pacifist opinion a chance to crystallize, I launched my Peace Pledge [in October, 1934] and invited individual men to sign an undertaking that they would have no part or lot in any future war.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of 1935 Dick Sheppard received more than 100,000 postcards with the Pledge and signatures. Nearly 500 groups and branches had been formed in the whole country. For some time about 100 new members were being added every day. Dick Sheppard's 'test' proved more than successful. He wrote *We Say "No"* to explain his philosophy and to explain the Peace Pledge, and to put before his countrymen the reasons why he considered it necessary. He wanted to show why, in his opinion, those people were mistaken who earnestly desired Peace and wrongly believed that it can be secured by systems of collective security.

He wrote this book in order to explain the Pledge:

I have also tried . . . to describe what I believe to be the better way – the only way which the Christian can conscientiously take. I am writing it to express not only my own views, but also the views of the thousands who have signed the Peace Pledge with me. . . . I am writing it also for those who, without being attached to any religious organisation . . . for all who believe in 'Something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,' for all whom right and wrong are living forces and not dead abstractions of metaphysics. I am writing it for all men and women of good will.<sup>23</sup>

The immediate result of Sheppard's campaign was the formation of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) in December 1935, which became, almost immediately, the British section of the War Resisters' International. George Lansbury launched it with more than 100,000 signatures. Among a formidable array of sponsors the PPU had a retired military general, who said "a lifetime of professional soldiering has brought me, by painful ways, to the realisation that all war is wrong, is senseless".<sup>24</sup>

*The War Resister* 37 of spring 1935 reported that in some countries Dick Sheppard's letter campaign had almost an immediate effect. For instance in Canada an eminent minister of the United Church of Canada made an identical declaration. The appeal was published through



the weekly journal of the Church and although its circulation was not large, nearly 1,200 signatures were received in eight weeks. The journal advised those who wished to identify themselves with the movement to send in their signed pledge to their local address and also notify the WRI headquarters that they had done so.<sup>25</sup>

The first few years of the PPU belong to the period just before the Second World War, a period of challenges and crises for the pacifist movement. With war becoming more and more imminent, a large number of the 140,000 members who had signed the Pledge were finding themselves more and more out of tune with the pacifist position. They started to believe that a war against Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism was justified. Eventually a large number of them gave up their membership of the PPU.

The withdrawal of those thousands who had responded to Sheppard's postcard campaign cannot be taken generally as a serious commentary or rejection of pacifist philosophy. Although it seemed to be an event parallel to the abandonment of pacifism by people like Fenner Brockway and Albert Einstein, it was, in reality, quite different in character. The spontaneously positive response from most of the 140,000 signatories of the Peace Pledge reflected a feature of the mental outlook of the people of Britain at that time. The response to the letter was more emotional than intellectual or even moral. In most cases its basis was not in the pacifist belief and ideology. The vast majority, living on a piece of land separated from the mainland of Europe, could not think that war was actually coming; at the same time they were afraid of it and honestly hoped and wished that it would not happen. Most of them were unable to put themselves in a war situation. So in a way it was a disapproval of war as such, but not with any foresight. Not many among them thought about the contingencies in case of war actually taking place on such a large scale.

But when they saw the clouds approaching their shores they were taken aback and forced to take decisions suited to their ideology and/or situation.

According to David Martin, the situation was intensely difficult for both the Sheppard Pledge supporters and more long-standing pacifists:

The position of the pacifists in wartime was one of peculiar difficulty. For one thing the varieties, nuances and degrees of pacifism made any unified policy beyond the common denominator of peace almost impossible. Moreover, it was not easy to find the 'moral equivalent of war' while fighting was actually going on. Some pacifists resolved the problem by taking up work on the land, by becoming medical orderlies, firemen, and firewatchers, and by submitting themselves to medical experiment. The absolutist objectors sometimes found the problem resolved for them by imprisonment. Others . . . were able to join the Non-Combatant Corps.<sup>26</sup>

## The pacifist attitude to Nazi Germany

Pacifists were accused of 'apologist tendencies . . . widespread among the PPU's [Peace Pledge Union, the British Section of the WRI] leading intellectuals and writers'. To explain this theory Mark Gilbert published an article entitled "Pacifists Attitude to Nazi Germany, 1936-45".

Gradually, however, the more clear-sighted pacifists came to realise that pacifism of the 'turn the other cheek variety' – to borrow Orwell's term – could not prevent a major war between the great powers. Despite the PPU's rapid growth in membership . . . there

were still far fewer pacifist activities in Germany, and Italy was of negligible importance. Events, too, were pressing. The German invasions of the Rhineland, the Italian conquest of Abyssinia and the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain all appeared strong indicators that the post-Versailles order in Europe was breaking down. The PPU consequently became more concerned with elaborating a solution to the immediate problems raised by German and Italian militancy than with stating the general case for adopting a pacifist attitude towards international politics.<sup>27</sup>

George Lansbury had meetings in person with Hitler and Mussolini in 1937. Gilbert described these meetings as ‘personal diplomacy’, but he fails completely to understand the dynamics of nonviolence which Lansbury was guided by. This dynamic requires certain steps to be taken. Without personally interviewing the dictators, George Lansbury could not have felt that his moral authority to oppose them as a pacifist leader could be upheld. Some pacifists were unhappy with the meeting but I see it as a necessary stage in deciding the next action in the anti-militarist struggle in Europe.

One important point to make here is that when an armed battle does not succeed in a war, the fault is attributed to the armies. But when a nonviolent struggle does not succeed, the fault is attributed to *nonviolence* itself. Nonviolence, an idea, a philosophy and a technique still in its early stages of development, is rejected without being given a proper trial, whereas armed struggle, despite its claim as a peace maker, has not succeeded in establishing a single society which feels secure and peaceful, over hundreds of centuries.

Towards the end of his article Gilbert stated:

This account of the origin of the PPU’s pro-German apologetics was fiercely denied by several pacifist writers at the time, but it has an unmistakable ring of truth to anyone who has read through the files of *Peace News*. The PPU was ignorant of what was happening in nazi-occupied Europe. . . . The strongest evidence in favour . . . is the date from which pro-fascist articles began appearing in the paper, and the date from which they stopped. Until the *Anschluss*, it was arguably possible for a very determined opponent of British imperialism to make a case that British rule in India and Africa was the moral equal of the system being established in Germany. After the tortures and humiliation heaped upon the anti-nazis of Vienna, it was not. Paradoxically, therefore, it was from that date that pacifists, who continued to believe that the differences between capitalism and fascism were too slight to justify a war, felt compelled to add lustre to Germany’s name. Similarly, the immense moral fact of the holocaust put an end to the PPU’s pro-German apologetics.<sup>28</sup>

I believe that some pacifists in the PPU were naive and lacked clarity of vision during this episode, but this does not invalidate the pacifist position as such.

## Relief work in war-torn Spain and with refugees

The vacuum created due to the ‘crisis of conscience’ by the Spanish Civil War, discussed above, posed probably the most crucial question to the pacifists, particularly in Europe.

Hardly anyone in the WRI had ever thought that under certain conditions relief work could and possibly should have to be taken up by them as part of their efforts to sow the seeds of real

pacifism in the minds of the general public, who had no opportunity to realise that apart from saying 'no' to war the pacifist outlook also contained the elements of the constructive side of life. The hardships experienced by the Spanish public forced the pacifists to ask themselves: 'do we have any social responsibility in situations such as we are facing at this time?'

Later in 1945 Grace Beaton, the General Secretary of the WRI, said in one of her reports, *Twenty Years' Work in the War Resister' International*, at a conference between the WRI and members of the Peace Pledge Union in Great Britain, held at St Christopher School, Letchworth, England, that the WRI had never thought that relief work could ever be one of its activities. In that report she also gave an account of the work done by the International. Some extracts from it would help to show what kind of relief work was actually done by pacifists connected with the International.

The International has never felt that general relief activities are its main function, but it has felt called upon to carry out extensive relief work. This work began during the Spanish war, . . . with the very able co-operation of José Brocca, our Spanish Council member, and of our Spanish movement, the International opened Relief Centers in several of the largest towns in Spain, for the purpose of the distribution of food and clothing; it facilitated the evacuation of the civilian population from bombarded areas, and had its own home for Spanish children Prats-de-Mollo in the Pyrenees in the South of France.

The Prats-de-Mollo home was closed in the early days of the Second World War. But before winding up its work there, all the 'children were provided for and united with one or both parents'. What was important about Prats-de-Mollo was that 'the children . . . were kept in their natural surroundings of sun and warm climate. They were all remarkably healthy, and Dr Brass . . . examined them from time to time.' Moreover, the cost per head was less than half what it would have been if they had been kept in England.

Later, when the Spanish war was over, our home was used to shelter refugees coming over the Pyrenees, and Professor Brocca and others at the home did a valuable work in seeking out relatives who had come to France earlier, and who had been detained in concentration camps. The company at the WRI Home in Prats-de-Mollo constantly had the satisfaction of seeing families united and departing over the mountains again, for Spain and their old home. This work has been extended on behalf of refugees from Europe under a working arrangement with the British Home Office, known as the War Resisters' International Pool Scheme.<sup>29</sup>

The WRI Pool Scheme was a unique arrangement. The WRI Chairman George Lansbury and Runham Brown met Geoffrey Lloyd, who was then Under-Secretary to the Home Office to discuss the question of help the WRI could and should give to its members, especially those on the Continent who were being persecuted. The next step was for Runham Brown to meet the head of the Aliens Department, E. N. Cooper. He agreed to the International's plan. He submitted it to the Home Secretary, who in turn also approved it. It allowed the WRI, *as a movement*, to act as guarantors for the refugees it wished to bring over; the International itself being guaranteed for a specified sum by a panel of eight people whose names and standing were accepted by the Home Office.

A house in the country was taken over for some of our refugees where private homes were not provided, and work was found for many. Those brought over in this way came from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy and Spain. Others were enabled to travel direct to the U.S.A. We also co-operated with the International Christian Council in the work of the South American Settlement for Refugees in Colombia, of which the Bishop of Chichester was President, and which later was formed into a Limited Company of which Runham Brown was chairman of the Board of Management. The International twice sent its special representative, Rudolph Messel, to Colombia to assist the settlers in establishing themselves and in installing machinery. During this time it was no uncommon thing for my bedside telephone to awaken me at three or four in the morning with "Colombia calling" or some such message.

When in 1940 general internment carried away most of our refugee friends to camps the International immediately set to work, first to provide for those left behind, then to mitigate the suffering of those who had been taken. Within a few weeks the International had its representative with a permit to visit in every big camp. A little later representations were started for the release of our interned friends, and in this we were highly successful, for all our refugees were out of internment long before those in the care of the larger refugee organisations. One man was brought back from Canada, and others were searched for and found in Australia. A very important part of our relief work has been the caring for and educating of the children. We have endeavoured, so far as it has been in our power to do so, to give the children in our care the opportunities we knew their parents would have given them in normal circumstances, particularly where a child has either lost his or her parents or is separated from them. Not only have we provided education for those of school age, but in certain cases where a child or young person has shown talent in the arts or professions we have provided the opportunity for specialised training.

During all this time arrangements have been going forward for re-emigration. Many refugees were emigrated to, and settled in the U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia, Paraguay, Colombia, Palestine, Cuba, Mexico, Chile and Ireland.<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that the WRI did not confine its help to pacifists alone. However, its first responsibility was to reduce the sufferings of the victims of air warfare. Large quantities of clothing were collected and distributed in the East End of London, to a maternity and casualty hospital in the nearby region and to casualty clearing stations. It was also able to provide clothing for many French, Belgian and Czech refugees, brought over by the British authorities and billeted in the area near the WRI headquarters. Goods which were thus distributed, came not only from its British friends but groups in many parts of the world. The Board of Trade had given the WRI the permission to import these free of customs duty.

A major problem turned on securing a focus of identification. Once confronted by fellow pacifists these conscientious objectors sometimes found themselves without a vehicle of group identity. It is distressingly easy to become analogous to those Marxists who transferred their patriotism to the Soviet Union . . . A pacifist might suddenly renounce his status and take up combatant work involving the maximum danger.<sup>31</sup>

## **WRI faces the challenge**

A few years before the war broke out, Runham Brown had written in *The War Resister*:

1933 marks the peak of activity within the War Resisters' International. From every part of the world news of actual resistance and active propaganda pours into our office. We have again doubled the pages of our bulletin so that it is now nearly three times its normal size, but still we leave unprinted more than we can afford to print.

Our French-speaking comrades are putting up a great resistance, and the French and Belgian Governments are thoroughly alarmed.

Our German members are suffering intensely. Our Movements are broken and our leading members are – or have been – in concentration camps or driven over the frontiers. The International is steadily linking up again with them. Several times we have sent envoys into Germany to find them. The Executive and other workers have met at Enfield to prepare plans for assistance. We are in direct touch with most of our fugitives; some help is being provided and we are, of course, co-operating with the Relief Committees. Representations are being made to many Governments in order to remove restrictions on the right of asylum. Pacifists, Socialists, Jews, and all men and women of liberal outlook fall under the ban of the Nazis. While we succour them, we must not forget the millions of Germans who are *our* victims – victims of the Peace Treaty of Versailles and the oppression which has followed “victory”. Had the defeated been helped to their feet and life not been made all but impossible, their misery and desperation could not have been exploited by unscrupulous tyrants. Their sufferings will last longer; the end is not in sight.

We share the guilt of the Nazi Government. If not quite so madly, yet just as wickedly, does the British Government order the bombing of peaceful villages on the North-West Frontier of India, and the United States Government shoot down strikers.

International conferences fail for lack of sincerity, but the last word is – and must be – with the people. Our youth, some of whom are meeting in International Conferences as we write, will yet deliver us. Refuse to co-operate in that which is evil, not in order to keep your hands clean but because the chariots of war cannot move without you. Not even from the air can war be carried on for long if the great majority of the workers of the world refuse to make and handle munitions.<sup>32</sup>

## **Special need to emphasise adherence to the declaration**

The Council of the WRI at a meeting held on December 30, 1933, attended by delegates from seven countries, unanimously declared that in the present disturbed state of the world there was special need to emphasise once again its adherence to the original declaration of policy.

As Chairman, I am directed by the Council to send our comrades in all parts of the world our cordial fraternal greetings and to assure them of our sympathy and understanding in the difficult circumstances in which many find themselves.

The rise of militarist nationalism in so many countries, the scares engineered by the armament firms to increase the tension between nations, and the failure of the Disarmament conference are prevailing conditions which should only serve to stimulate increased activity on the part of war resisters. More than ever is it clear that security and

equality of status between nations can only be achieved by Total Disarmament.

We must condemn with all the power at our command the use of armed force and violence, which during the war and since the war has wrought irreparable damage, not only physically, but economically and morally, in all countries. No desirable object can be achieved permanently by this method. It is merely the attempted short cut of impetuous and short-sighted impatience.

We would remind those of our members who are victims of persecution, or subject to the menace of personal violence, that although a change from such a situation may be wrought by armed revolt, such action involves the upholding of a new order by the same methods of violence. Relief from such a situation can often be hastened by our exercising all possible influence against meeting violence with violence, and against initiating or encouraging movements dependent on force for bringing about the change.

Membership should be increased; public bodies and workers' organisations should be urged to adopt our policy, and it should unceasingly be declared that the elimination of violence alone can bring about the establishment of a new social order in which the present injustice to, and degradation of so large a section of, the workers can be finally brought to an end.

While some may feel that inactivity is for the time being forced upon them, they may rest assured that what may appear now to be a defeat of their purpose is only the temporary phase of passing conditions. Present apparent failure in certain countries is balanced by encouraging success elsewhere. All our comrades by the strength of their convictions should continue undismayed to proclaim an ideal, the eventual success of which is inevitable if our civilisation is to survive.

Few or many, depressed or encouraged, ignored or opposed, free or persecuted, we can all use what capacity we have to continue our work in certain confidence that the future is ours. – Ponsonby.<sup>33</sup>

## The state of the movement and the approaching world war

The same Council meeting (December 1933) heard about the situation in various parts of the world. Grace Beaton gave a detailed account of the work, with greater attention to **Europe**. Most of the accounts given in the following few pages are based on the WRI archives, especially Grace Beaton's reports.

In **Spain** there was a possibility of a Section being formed in Madrid. The work in **Poland** centred mainly upon action on behalf of imprisoned war resisters, but the propaganda for war resistance had considerably increased. Contacts with **Russia** had been well maintained and the WRI literature was reaching into the country, with many resisters still in prison.

Regarding the plight of Nazarenes in **Yugoslavia**, who were serving long terms of imprisonment, the Council members were asked to help the headquarters with whatever information they could about these men. In **Bulgaria** the possible re-introduction of conscription and its consequences brought increasing difficulties to WRI members, specially because some of them refused military training which was being enforced illegally under the guise of labour service.

There were several war resisters in prison in Belgium, France, Poland, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Latvia, Russia, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and French Guyana.

The work among the Canadian groups was being carried out regularly. The International

had been making every effort on behalf of the persecuted Doukhobors in the far west.

There were most encouraging reports about war resistance activities in the **USA** particularly among students who had revealed in no uncertain manner their attitude towards war and militarism. Nofrontier News Service, which was a section of the bulletin called *World Events*, had been giving the information about the progress of the international peace movement. Some members had been engaging in the picketing of munitions factories, which also helped in the publicity for the movement.

There was a remarkable growth of the movement in **Central and South America**, particularly in **Mexico** and **Argentina**, where a war resistance conference had been held. And a manifesto, almost identical with the declaration of the War Resisters' International, signed by a large number of eminent people, was published throughout the country. In **Brazil**, war resisters were being linked together in groups and a possible WRI Section was being formed in Rio de Janeiro.

There was a likelihood of opening up for war resistance work in **Cuba**. An International Peace Committee had been working for absolute pacifism in **Uruguay**. In **Colombia** they were reprinting war resistance news in their paper. Students in **Chile** were co-operating in a campaign for the repeal of the conscription law of the country.

It was encouraging to note that in **Venezuela**, one Dr Luis Pelissier, an ex-convict from French Guyana, was carrying on vigorous war resistance propaganda and distributing War Resisters' International literature. He was also writing regular articles on war resistance and anti-militarism in the Venezuelan press. He had also translated Runham Brown's *Cutting Ice* into Spanish.

In **New Zealand** and **Australia** militaristic propaganda had increased during the last year; the No More War Movement of New Zealand had also made some headway. It had conducted valuable propaganda by initiating discussion in the press and circulating it among the headmasters of the most important schools of the country, drawing their attention to the importance of war resistance principles. In Australia, of course, the WRI had a good standing.

In spite of the difficulties faced by the movement in **Japan**, on account of the police and military pressure, WRI members had been steadily working and some progress had also been made. In China, the question of resistance to military service was becoming a living one, and many young men facing this problem for the first time had been encouraged and strengthened in their stand by the example of pacifists in some of the Western countries.

A section of the WRI was in course of formation in Togoland, French **West Africa**. There was hope of a WRI Section being formed also in **Algeria**, especially through their contacts with the Spanish Section.

It had also been learnt that the ground was being prepared for the organisation of a definite war resistance movement in **India**, and of wide publicity being obtained in some new papers of northern, north-western and central India.

### **Re-affirmation of principles**

The Digswell Conference (July 1934) had assembled to take stock, to help the movement to know itself, to gauge its power and to enable the International to become more effective in its work. Its delegates therefore listened, learned, and found the greatest measure of agreement and only needed to pass one resolution, unanimously re-affirming in specific terms the principles upon which the International was originally founded. The following resolution was unanimously passed:

This Conference of the War Resisters' International, having carefully considered the growing power of Fascism and dictatorship, the increasing terrorism in many countries and the danger of another world war springing from the armaments race, rejects the principle of dictatorship and declares its unshaken confidence in the ability of the peoples of each nation to govern themselves through their own appointed representatives without the suppression of liberty or the resort to violent means, and pledges those it represents to work for the establishment of such a new order in Society that class distinction shall become unknown, poverty shall disappear and unemployment shall cease to be the auxiliary of industry.

It further declares its belief in the essential unity of all peoples, of whatever race, colour or creed. It denounces all forces which make for their division, exploitation and enmity, and especially the evils of armaments, militarism and war; and sends its greetings to all anti-militarists in prison; and again pledges those whom it represents to work according to their opportunities unceasingly for a new relationship between nations, based on fraternity instead of force, and service instead of subjection, and, recognising the danger of war under existing conditions, re-affirms the determination of its members to refuse military and war service under all circumstances and whatever the consequences; and invites all anti-militarists to co-operate with the WRI in resistance to war.<sup>34</sup>

## The Fifth and the last pre-war Triennial Conference

The war clouds were getting thicker, the world climate becoming more and more tense and an increasing number of people who thought themselves to be pacifists were giving up their faith in it, because they saw no hope for a pacifist way of stopping war. On the other hand an increasing number of people, specially the young, were becoming war resisters and were undergoing severe punishments, including imprisonment. More anti-war groups came into existence in many parts of the world.

The fifth and the last pre-war WRI International Conference was held in Copenhagen from July 23 to 26, 1937. The period between the last Conference at Digswell and this one was that of struggle, testing and much experiencing, presenting unprecedented challenge to war resisters all over the world, particularly the Europeans. Grace Beaton in presenting her comprehensive report of the three years' work said:

Throughout the last few years, difficult as they have been, there has been no faltering in the policy pursued by the International, with the result that the movement has made considerable progress throughout the world. The International has penetrated into the most unlikely places; it has been instrumental in opening the prison doors to set many war resisters free; it has secured the support of eminent men and women and has taken its share in rendering help to the innocent victims of war.

The purpose of the International, however, goes far beyond this objective. Our great task at Headquarters is to endeavour to apply our principles to each new situation as it arises, and in being ready to give a lead to the movement in the vital decisions which have to be made.<sup>35</sup>

After reporting on the situation in non-European countries Grace Beaton discussed the special situation in Europe:



... it is not possible to give such hopeful reports, for it is in Europe that the struggle is so intense, and the 423 war resisters now lying in the prisons of conscript countries may expect to see their ranks swelled as the net of militarism and conscription is extended.<sup>36</sup>

Then she went on to give detailed accounts of the situation in different countries, on which the following summary is based.

In France many war resisters were continually suffering imprisonment. Eugène Lagot had worked relentlessly to obtain the release of these comrades. His own private business was ruined because of his activities for the cause. He was also charged with 'inciting soldiers to disobedience' and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, and so was forced into exile. A number of French members had banded themselves together and they intended on a particular day to notify the Minister of War by concerted action that he could no longer count upon them for any kind of service needed for war or its preparation.

In Belgium the WRI Section had initiated an absolute pacifist movement known as the "Rassemblement contre la Guerre". Its aim was to build up a united front of the various peace groups in their country. In Denmark practically all who refuse military service had agreed to undertake the civil work available, but although only about one-third of those taking the civil service were called upon, the whole question was causing considerable embarrassment to the authorities. It was, however, a matter of disappointment to the Danish friends that many socialists, on coming to power, had changed their attitude to disarmament, and that compulsory military training was still the law in Denmark. In Sweden also the number of men accepting civil service was growing. The WRI Section was publishing an excellent bulletin, *Good Will*, that gave much publicity about the International.

A new WRI group had been formed in Norway, with Olaf Kullman as its very active leader. With comrades in USSR, the International had maintained its contacts and was able to send its literature, though only by taking very special precautions. The Lithuanian section, though small, had also been active and from Latvia, Janis Mikelsons, who was the first war resister in his country, and who had already served a one-year prison sentence, had visited the WRI headquarters. Since his stand on war resistance several others had witnessed to their pacifist belief by their refusal of military training.

The Finnish Section published *The War Resister* which reached 74 towns of Finland. Tauno Tapaneinen, although as yet only 30 years old, had been released from prison after serving his sixth sentence. The WRI Section printed 20,000 leaflets calling for his release. One of the Polish workers who had attended two WRI conferences was working fearlessly on behalf of the imprisoned men, and had recently received a summons which accused her, together with 12 others, of being legally responsible for the dissemination of Bolshevism. Members in Bulgaria were also faced with increasing difficulties. The military authorities were all-powerful and any open activity was punished severely.

The plight of the Nazarenes in Yugoslavia still serving long terms of imprisonment had been WRI's chief concern. There were some 345 known to be serving long sentences; the WRI had full particulars concerning 251 of them. The majority of the sentences were from seven to eleven years. Signatures had been obtained on appeals on their behalf from eminent people including five members of the British House of Lords and 42 of the House of Commons. Such actions had been repeated again and again, and a representative was sent to intervene personally with the Yugoslavian military authorities, but they remain adamant.

The happiest news received was from Roumania and that too at an unexpected time. Over 70 of the imprisoned war resisters had been released, leaving only seven, who also were ex-

pected to be released soon. Roumanian friends said that it was due to the representations which the WRI had made that these releases had been secured. In Switzerland and Czechoslovakia war resisters continued serving prison sentences. In Switzerland propaganda was being enthusiastically carried out, but there was a likelihood of a new law being passed which would make the anti-militarist work much more difficult. It was good that representatives of both the countries were attending the Conference. It would help them in drawing further plans.

In Holland there had been a practice, for the last 20 years, of sending resisters to military service for 10 months. A short time ago the length of imprisonment had been increased to 15 months. Each year about 20 to 30 war resisters were imprisoned. There was provision for alternative service. Austria had openly introduced conscription. It was encouraging that those whose faith remained firm were going to prison rather than accepting military service.

The movement in Germany was once strong and prosperous, but any open work now was absolutely impossible. The International had, from time to time, sent its own representatives to Germany and also took the opportunity when friends visited there to make investigations on the spot concerning those who could not communicate with the headquarters, and to inquire whether it was possible to render some service to those still in prison or concentration camps. In most cases financial aid was the only practical help the International could give. The WRI had responded to as many as it could, but the claims were so many and heavy that the WRI could not handle all of them.

The WRI had also been instrumental in arranging for the legal defence of two German comrades. One was in Germany and the other had escaped and settled in the island of Palma. Through private channels, the interest of high British officials had been secured in connection with some cases. Although the International was responsible for the major part of the expenditure of that kind, even in such difficult circumstances the German friends had raised a considerable amount.

From time to time reports of refusals of military training came through, but the WRI was given to understand that these were more numerous than was known. This fact was believed to cause some hesitation among those who wished to refuse but thought they were alone. They could never experience the feeling of solidarity with other comrades in their own country and abroad, because these cases remained unmentioned and unknown. This gave rise to the question, 'Is there any purpose in refusing?' It was much more difficult to answer this question than in countries where each refusal was a challenge to the whole population.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conscientious objectors speak**

At the beginning of the Copenhagen Conference (July 1937) Marcel Pichon, a young French man of 19, who was the Secretary of the Ligue Scolaire Internationale pour la Paix, addressed the gathering. I quote a part of what he said at the end of his speech:

... in spite of the alarming international situation, we must not despair of seeing Peace reign at the end of the present nightmare. I can assure you that everywhere there are young people who are following the road traced by the War Resisters' International.

Let us have confidence, let us take courage; we are defending an incomparably beautiful idea; that is why sooner or later the future will be ours.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the Copenhagen Conference a young German spoke as an emigrant:

I feel it my duty for a particular reason to address the Conference before its close. According to the programme representatives of Italian and Russian war resisters should be speaking now. Both comrades were prevented from coming. I feel that it is imperative to bring to this Conference a message from those who are giving their service under conditions fundamentally different from ours, and who are standing by our common cause. And so I speak to you as a German war resister who, indeed, lives no longer in Germany, but who feels the situation of our German comrades from the bottom of his heart, and, as I think, that of all our comrades who are living under dictatorships. The point at which we have now arrived in our programme seems to me personally of the greatest importance, and I would like to ask everyone not to allow weariness and exhaustion to overcome them at this moment, but once more to concentrate all our spiritual forces so that our Conference shall be concluded in a worthy and serious manner, I should like to translate the phrase in the English programme, which indicates what our business has been up to now, into my own language, in a particular way: 'Rückbesinnung auf unsere Grundlage' (Re-affirmation of our fundamental principle).

In our International we have two tasks which, existing side by side, have each their independent authority and urgency. One, which to my mind is secondary, is, by common action, to discover the means to prevent war. That is the task which, so far, has been the chief subject of discussion during the Conference. But the International has another equally important task, which we must not forget. It is the task which we, as war resisters agreed upon together, in order to be mutually helpful one to another in this grievous situation; it is to create within our International a community, a personal, human fellowship; in order that our International may give an example within itself of a confraternity to which we devote our whole work and all our aspirations; a community which the world must perceive and feel.

A German thinker once said: 'The way to the deepest fellowship goes through the deepest loneliness.' For me the unique strength of the International lies in the fact that it is being built up on precisely this foundation, that the way to complete solidarity goes through the deepest loneliness. This absolute loneliness of the individual, the personal decision of the conscience, is that which cannot be taken away from us. Our unity lies finally in this last loneliness.<sup>39</sup>

In the Foreword to the Report of the Copenhagen Conference Runham Brown wrote: "At the close of the Conference we found that the International was as resolute in its rejection of all forms of armed violence as it had ever been and unanimously reaffirmed our Declaration."

There was the usual desire for a plan of action in which all could participate alike and the inevitable realisation that each must work according to the opportunities which presented themselves in their differing circumstances. A few had lost their faith in the effectiveness of non-violent resistance, but even those believed in its ultimate rightness. A few thought that some kind of economic pressure could be used to restrain aggression. We rejected sanctions imposed by imperialist governments, but recognise the right and duty to withhold our co-operation in the wrong-doing of tyrants and oppressors.

We frankly recognised that a warless world was not realisable within the capitalist and imperialist system, and when we sought to emphasise, as an immediate part of our programme, the effort to prevent the next war, there were not lacking those who warned

us to beware that Governments, all of which were maintained by force of arms, could not dispense with armed violence and retain their power.

We desired an end of Authority, the end of the power or right to demand, and that Governments should exercise purely administrative functions.

With that tolerance which has always characterised our International, we granted the right of each to place the emphasis upon the immediate objective of stopping the next war or upon the long distance view of a new social order, as seemed to him best.<sup>40</sup>

In the following two years after the Copenhagen Conference the situation further worsened. Four weeks before the war broke out the International Council had a meeting in Basle, Switzerland with George Lansbury as the Chairman of the International. In spite of the extremely tense and, presumably, confused situation the Council felt that they knew then that the outbreak of war would not destroy the worldwide family of war resisters, yet they were well aware that it would raise new barriers and destroy many avenues of communication.

#### Notes Chapter 10

- 1 *Don Milani's Self-Defence*, WRI, London, p.23. On the ninth anniversary of the Concordat between the church and the Italian State (1965) some retired military chaplains met and approved an 'order of the day', in which they said that conscientious objection to military service was foreign to the Christian command of love and was an expression of cowardice. At that time Don Lorenzo Milani was a parish priest who lived in Barbiana, near Florence. He sent a long *open letter* to the chaplains, the press and to thousands of people – priests, politicians and bishops. The sentences quoted are the last few words from that letter.
- 2 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Zurich, August 30–September 2, 1929, 'The Political Situation in Austria', p.4
- 3 *Ibid.* p.4
- 4 *Ibid.* pp.5–7
- 5 H. Runham Brown, *Principle, Policy and Practice*, WRI, London, 1935, pp.5–6
- 6 *The War Resister* XI, March 1926, pp.8–9
- 7 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 2–5, 1932, 'Manchuria, Emergency Resolutions', p.6
- 8 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Enfield, London, January 2–5, 1932, item 28, pp.14–15
- 9 *Ibid.* item 27, p.14
- 10 H. Runham Brown, *Spain – A Challenge to Pacifism*, WRI, London, pp.5–6
- 11 *Ibid.* pp.6–10. (The Statement from which the extracts have been taken was written in response to the demand from WRI members in many parts of the world to define the position of the International particularly in connection with the Spanish war. Runham Brown wrote a note saying: 'As I have no opportunity at the present time to ascertain the views of the International as a whole, I give here my own personal attitude, which I have reason to believe is shared by many.'
- 12 Laurence Housman, Lord Ponsonby and Runham Brown, *Autocracy, Internationalism and Common Sense*, WRI, London, pp.3–4
- 13 'Fenner Brockway's Resignation', *The War Resister* 41, Winter 1936, p.3
- 14 *Ibid.* pp.3–4
- 15 Otto Nathan and Heinz Russell (eds.), *Einstein on Peace*, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, p.98
- 16 *Ibid.* pp.99–100
- 17 *Ibid.* p.104
- 18 The Kellogg Pact, also known as the Kellogg–Briand Pact, was inspired by the American 'outlawry of war' movement and originated in a proposal of June 20, 1927, by Aristide Briand, French

- Minister of Foreign Affairs. It asked the USA and France to conclude a bilateral treaty renouncing war as an instrument of national policy and agreeing not to seek the settlement of any dispute or conflict except by peaceful means. In reply the US secretary of state, Frank Kellogg, suggested a multilateral pact to the same effect, open to ratification by all nations. The Treaty was formally proclaimed on July 24, 1929 and subsequently ratified by 63 nations.
- 19 Otto Nathan and Heinz Russell (eds.), *Einstein on Peace*, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, pp.105–6
  - 20 Ibid. p.319
  - 21 Quoted by Michael David Young in *Wars Will Cease When Men Refuse to Fight, the WRL– 1925–1950*, (MSS), WRL, New York, p.44
  - 22 H. R. L. Sheppard, *We Say 'No'*, John Murray, London, 1936. p.ix–x
  - 23 Ibid. p.8
  - 24 Quoted by Peter Brock, *Twentieth Century Pacifism*, p.140
  - 25 'A First Response', *The War Resister* 37, Spring 1935, p.10
  - 26 David A. Martin, *Pacifism – An Historical and Sociological Study*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.143
  - 27 Mark Gilbert, *Journal of Contemporary History*, SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi, vol. 27, 1992, p.493–511
  - 28 Ibid. p.508
  - 29 Grace M. Beaton, *Twenty Years' Work in the War Resisters' International*, WRI, London, September 1945, pp.15–16
  - 30 Ibid. pp.16–17
  - 31 David A. Martin, *Pacifism – An Historical and Sociological Study*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.141
  - 32 H. Runham Brown, Foreword, *The War Resister* XXXIV, Summer 1933, p.3
  - 33 Arthur Ponsonby, 'War Resistance Reaffirmed', *The War Resister* 35, Spring 1934, pp.2–3
  - 34 Resolution passed at the Digswell Triennial Conference held in 1934, 'Re-affirmation of principles', *The War Resister* 36, September, 1934, p.8
  - 35 Grace Beaton, *Review of the International Movement – July 1934 to July 1937*, WRI, London, p.8
  - 36 Ibid. p.16
  - 37 Grace Beaton, *Review of the International Movement – July 1934 to July 1937*, WRI, London
  - 38 *The War Resister* 43, Winter 1937, p.8
  - 39 'Four Days in Denmark, the 5th Triennial Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark', *The War Resister* 43, pp.46–7
  - 40 Ibid. pp.3, (Runham Brown, *Foreword* to the Report of the Copenhagen Conference)

## CHAPTER 11

*When Hitler's hordes invaded Austria, and turned the beautiful town of "Wine, Women and Song" into a torture chamber, I crossed with my family into Holland. Soon some Dutch members of the WRI arrived and put the question "Comrades, what can we do for you!" Oh, to describe that warm glow which filled my heart in that moment. I realised that the brotherhood of man was not an idle illusion, but that it existed already, and that it was, in miniature, in the WRI a reality.*  
The War Resister 1958<sup>1</sup>

### The Second World War

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The Second World War and its aftermath were the most catastrophic chapters of twentieth-century history. Yet, it had something to offer to pacifists. It created challenges and opportunities, or, should I say it forced pacifists, especially those who had been engaged in the processes of peace-making and human unity, to undertake: (1) serious introspection, personal as well as collective; (2) an objective analysis of events; and (3) planning for the future as to how and where to go from here.

After the sense of humiliation which Germany had felt due to its defeat in the First World War and its treatment by the 'victors', Adolf Hitler's Nazi recreation of Germany as a 'Nation' powerfully touched a popular nerve. Germany's aspirations, its sense of dignity and despair, found a figurehead in Hitler's sinister personality, making him a central world figure despite the Nazis' loathsome crimes, cruelties and persecution.

### Adolf Hitler – the Nazi Messiah

The myths Hitler created were so attractive that he became the idol for a large number of ordinary people, not only in Germany but in many parts of the world. I have some very graphic memories of that period as someone still in his teens, seeing groups of people in Indian towns sitting on the roadside and chatting about what was happening during the war. For many people, Hitler or his like would have been most welcome to help liberate the country from British domination. Most of these people were apolitical and not belonging to any movement for social change, but they were aware of their disgrace in being citizens of a slave country. Many looked forward to the arrival of the armies of Subhash Chandra Bose from the north-eastern border, guided and supported by the Fascist Japanese.

I remember the case of a family which was living in Germany and had to return to India on account of the war situation. They had a child studying in a German school. After they returned to India, for some time they continued receiving letters from the school asking about the child and his educational growth. The parents were very impressed by the 'concern' showed by the German educational authorities for a student who, in all likelihood, would never return to Germany. 'It could happen only in Germany and nowhere else,' was what they often said. In many countries *Mein Kampf*, the autobiography of Hitler, became a bestseller.

The First World War had ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Runham Brown

quoted the following warning given by E. D. Morel and published by the Union of Democratic Control:

The public in this country [Britain] does not fully realise the consequences which will follow if the terms of the Treaty of Versailles are carried onto effect. It fails, in particular, to understand the terrible engines of destruction elaborated in the economic and financial clauses. . . .

A foundation of injustice will be laid upon which no permanent edifice can be reared, however massive the masonry, however imposing the façade.

The Treaty is built on sand. It cannot last. But in the process of its overthrow the world will be again convulsed. Wrongs such as these have often been committed in the intoxication of victory, and they may be committed now. But they are not committed with impunity.

Sometimes indeed – as after the South African War – a chance is presented to the victor to atone for them in part and to escape, by the signal and complete reversal of policy, from their fatal consequences. It is well if he takes that chance and takes it at the earliest moment. If the chance does not come, or he fails to seize it, events will revolve in the old vicious circle, and his madness will be expiated at last in the blood and tears of another armed conflict.

For us who realise the nature and effects of the proposed terms of peace with Germany, there is one clear course to pursue. We must make it plain to all that for terms so conceived and so framed we can accept no responsibility whatever. For us they possess no moral validity.

The Governments which have made them do not speak for us and cannot bind us. We shall work unceasingly for the revision of the Treaty.<sup>2</sup>

Under conditions created by the Allies after the First World War the rise of Fascism was quite likely, in any case, in certain parts of the world. Germany had become a democratic republic after the breaking out of revolution in Germany and Austria, and the Kaiser had fled the country. It was this German republic under the threat of starvation and ruin and not the Germany under the Kaiser's dictatorship that had to deal with the Allies and which resulted in its accepting the Treaty of Versailles. The new republic was doomed from its beginning. The Allies not only weakened the German armies but also undermined the morale of the German people. For one whole year after the Treaty eighty million people were starved.

Runham Brown wrote:

#### *Why Hitler?*

Hitler did not drop from the clouds to enslave Germany and to menace the world. For some reason there was in Germany an overwhelming sense of frustration of all her national aspirations. Germany felt humiliated. She had been presented with huge – even fantastic – claims for reparations, some of which she had struggled to pay, while much she could not pay. She had been defeated. Her working people were feeling the pinch and were dissatisfied. Her big industrialists found their markets restricted and were dissatisfied. Her imperialists had lost their colonies and opportunity to expand and they too were dissatisfied. I am not arguing that all their motives were worthy ones, or that the cause of all Germany's troubles came from her defeat in 1918; she was dissatisfied before that – German Empire was the youngest Empire in the world, only

dating from 1871. Germany therefore had missed the opportunity to exploit the ‘undeveloped’ countries of the world as the older empires had done. She believed that she had a right to have ‘a place in the sun’ which had been denied her. Whether she could, by her culture, inventive genius and industry, have gained all that she could ultimately desire or not, is not the question – the fact remains that she believed that she was denied her rights by the other great nations. When a ‘great nation’ desires one thing more than any other, and is determined to achieve it, even at the cost of all else, its national aspirations usually become focused in some prominent figure. Hence Hitler. . . . He did not drop from the clouds.

Great Britain desires today more than anything else in the world and at whatever expense to win this war and to destroy Hitlerism. Hence another prominent figure – Mr. Winston Churchill, the one-time arch-enemy of the Russian Republic and the man who said while the blockade of Germany was still in force months after the armistice, ‘We are holding all our means of coercion in full operation or in immediate readiness to use. Germany is very near starvation. Now is therefore the moment to settle.’ With the blockade still in force, with an allied army of occupation on German soil, and with representatives of the German Republic denied a hearing, the ‘settlement’ took place at Versailles.

Shall we win the war and lose the peace? We shall, if we have another Versailles.<sup>3</sup>

Another important point about the Versailles Treaty was that the powerful parties which formulated Versailles tried to fix a settlement for all time, an approach doomed to disaster. A fixed and final settlement for all time which cannot be altered – even if arrived at by free negotiated peace – is the one thing above all others that must be avoided. Provision for occasional revision of all agreements is essential for peaceful relations; otherwise it leaves no chance for adjustment in a changing world save by armed intervention.

President Wilson, hero of the ordinary people of Europe, hailed as the man who had delivered them from the danger of ever-recurring wars by a just and honourable peace, left Versailles where he had been out-manoeuvred by the vengeful politicians, pledged to secure the participation of the United States in a League of Nations, a League created to secure to the victorious Allies the fruits of their conquest and to maintain the *status quo*.

. . . It is fair to state that provision was made in the Treaty for revision, but it was so hedged in that it was difficult to operate and was never taken advantage of.

The Versailles Treaty, like the violation of pledges which followed it aroused many indignant protests.

J. L. Garvin, the Editor of the *Sunday Observer* (May 11th, 1919) wrote:

These terms give no fundamental solution to any European problem. They raise more dangers than they lay. . . . They repeat the fatal precedents, which have always led back to war and made the end of one struggle the direct cause of another. . . .

The Treaty scatters dragons’ teeth across the soil of Europe. They will spring up as armed men unless other eradicates the mischief and better labours. . . .

And in 1931 the Labour Party at its Annual Conference at Scarborough unanimously adopted a resolution to the effect that ‘this conference declares that the Peace Treaties between the



Allied nations and those with which they have been at war grossly violate not only the professed objects for which the Allied nations entered upon the war but also the terms upon which the Armistice was agreed to, to which the Allied Governments solemnly pledged their faith.'

The German Economic Conference, reporting upon the effects of the peace conditions upon the German population, declared in May 1919:

We do not know . . . whether the Delegates of the Allied and Associated Powers realise the inevitable consequences which will take place if Germany, an industrial State, very thickly populated, closely bound up with the economic system of the world, and under the necessity of importing enormous quantities of raw materials and foodstuffs, suddenly finds herself pushed back to the phase of her development which corresponds to her economic condition and the numbers of her population as they were half a century ago.

Runham Brown followed:

Whether or not the delegates of the Allied Powers knew or cared what they were doing, they did not, of course, realise what would inevitably happen as the result of the internal situation in Germany caused by the Treaty. What did happen must not happen again. There must not be another Versailles.

In less than a year insignificant little groups of German Nationalists, demobilised soldiers and officers, embittered men, were meeting in beer-halls and basements denouncing and plotting not only against the Treaty, but against the German Republic that had accepted it; seething with hate, not only for the Allied nations, but also for the German Liberals, Social Democrats and Jews.

To one of these little groups in Munich, led by a man named Strasser, came an Austrian ex-corporal named Hitler. He became Number 7 of the group which was to become the "German Nationalist Socialist Workers Party".<sup>4</sup>

The Allied nations did not only betray Germany and Austria, they also betrayed the idealism of an entire generation in the whole of Europe and America. The so-called settlement blighted the political and economic development of the whole continent for the coming 25 years, and led to an even more disastrous world war. Germany was disarmed, but five years after the Locarno Pact was signed, which was supposed to inaugurate a new era of peace, armies of occupation were still on the Rhine and every proposal for armament limitation had come to nothing.

The German Republic, before Germany became a really Nazi State, proposed a pact with France and other European powers not to wage war for 30 years, without first holding a referendum of the respective nations, but France rejected the offer.

Germany was finding it almost impossible to pay the reparation demands. German and French workers agreed upon a plan whereby German workers with German material should begin to rebuild the devastated regions of France, but the French refused this practical kind of reparation.

Poland occupied Upper Silesia, the region rich in coal, iron and zinc mines, at which, it seems, British opinion was outraged, but France supported the Poles and induced the British government to overlook the invasion. By 1922 inflation reached a very high level, leading Germany to bankruptcy, which also resulted in her incapacity to deliver her quota of 25,000,000 tons of coal to France. This gave France and Belgium a further excuse to humiliate Germany

by marching their armies into the Ruhr in January 1923. French and Belgian forces seized the German mines, banks and customs and arrested many of her leading citizens. In February, France extended its occupation, forbade the export of any goods into Germany without permit, replaced Rhineland customs officials with French and Belgian officials and imprisoned the burgomasters.

Although this action by the French and Belgians was resented by the British people and led to severely strained Anglo–French relations, officially the British simply expressed their regrets at ‘the unnecessary precipitance of the French and Belgian Governments’. The Düsseldorf correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* wrote on April 10, 1923: “The French and Belgian policy of expulsion and eviction has now developed into a veritable terror throughout the occupied areas ... 106 railwaymen’s families were turned out of their homes onto the streets by African troops.”<sup>5</sup>

In February 1934 a reactionary clerico-fascist movement arose. Led by Dollfuß and supported by Mussolini it staged a brutal attack upon the Viennese administration, bombarded the model working class dwellings of the city, murdered or imprisoned those who resisted and seized control of the city. Until Hitler marched into Austria with another and more powerful brand of Fascism, Austria was ruled by a clerico-fascist dictatorship, first led by Dollfuß and then by Schuschnigg.<sup>6</sup>

The Allied victory of 1918 and the Versailles peace of 1919 established international economic anarchy. The world situation became desperate. The war descended upon Europe and enveloped the peoples of nearly the whole world, inflicting suffering and destruction, something which could not have been imagined before.

The Allies could truly be said to have ‘won’ the war but lost the peace.

## What did The League of Nations achieve?

One of the outcomes of the Armistice of 1918 had been the formation of the League of Nations, something that was expected to look after the balance between nations and solve any conflict between them. The concept was of *collective security*. The term “collective security” originated from the Covenant of the League of Nations of which Article 16 provided that:

in the event of a Member State being deemed to have gone to war contrary to its obligations under the Covenant, it should be the duty of all other Member States to undertake financial and economic, and in certain circumstances even military measures, against the aggressor.

Collective Security therefore meant:

Joint action by a group of States using economic or military pressure against one or more States which the group deemed to be the offender.<sup>7</sup>

While not many of the points embodied in the Armistice came into effect, the League of Nations was established in 1919. This was the conception upon which the authors of the points, in the words of a WRI pamphlet

set most store and upon which the highest hopes were founded among people of good-

will – was carried into effect. . . . There was a vast amount of popular goodwill behind its activities. In most countries special organisations, like the League of Nations Union, were created to explain and support its principles. . . . in the heyday of the League of Nations there was a similar widespread support over the greater part of the world.

Despite this general support the League of Nations was unable to prevent a new world war. It was equally unable to prevent the lesser wars that were the harbingers of the new World War. . . . As a matter of fact, an examination of its work shows that it was not able to achieve a single one of its lesser important objectives: it failed, for instance, to secure any revision of the Peace Treaties; it failed to make any necessary change in its own machinery of settlement; and it failed to bring about any effective measure of agreed disarmament.<sup>8</sup>

There was a maximum amount of support and goodwill among the common people, and its aims were formally endorsed by the majority of the world's professional politicians. Yet it failed. How can that be explained? The WRI pamphlet proposed this answer:

In any consideration of the principles upon which a just and enduring peace can be founded it must be recognised in the first place that it is futile to try to consider the problems of peace and war in isolation from the social and economic structure of society. There was probably more organised goodwill in the world expressed in relation to the League of Nations than in regard to any issue in the world's history. Most of this goodwill, however, was too limited in its objective. Goodwill is wasted if it seeks to concern itself with the problem of peace and war as an abstraction. The proper concern of people of goodwill should be all forms of human oppression, degradation, and unnecessary suffering. War is only one aspect of these evils and it will be found that when those are dealt with the problem of war and peace will be largely dealt with in the process. . . .

We can lay down four fundamental propositions, therefore, that are requisite in society: requisite in the first place because the conception of a "good society" demands their application; in the second place because upon their acceptance depends the possibility of building a peaceful world.

These four fundamental propositions of the Good Society are:

- (a) Economic justice;
- (b) Liberty;
- (c) Good Order and Planning;
- (d) The conditions requisite for the full creative development of the individual.

Now it can be admitted that these four fundamental propositions baldly stated are just phrases that, taken by themselves, are devoid of clear significance. They are submitted as crystallisations of the basic social requirements of the Good Society . . .

The Good Society then must combine all these four principles. It must in the first place be democratic so that liberty shall not be destroyed in the name of order. Democracy is here understood to mean public order based upon a conception of corporate freedom which assumes that there must be popular consent in regard to common action, and which preserves to the maximum personal freedom – that is to say, the greatest freedom for each individual consistent with the equal freedom of other individuals.<sup>9</sup>

## On the eve of the Second World War

One of the major problems before the WRI Secretariat now was of keeping in touch with its Sections, a large number of individual members and some other important movements spread over many parts of the world. Maintaining communication became difficult, the more so with people who could not be contacted openly and directly. To obtain news of war resisters who were suffering persecution either in prisons or in some kind of exile in a foreign land became even more difficult.

Another problem that had to be faced related to the functioning of the Secretariat in consultation with the International Council, given that more than three-quarters of the members of the Council lived in countries other than Britain. At the Council meeting held from July 26 to 28, 1938 members expressed their concern over the political situation in Europe, e.g. Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany, and made proposals such as a revision of the frontiers, the formation of a Danubian federation or the securing of cultural autonomy for the various minorities within a corporate state. However, Eugène Lagot, summing up the general feeling within the Council, said that they must not allow themselves to be sidetracked from their main purpose; their task was to devote themselves to the resistance to war.

George Lansbury identified himself with the above statement and added that "he wished to emphasise the fact that being war resisters – whatever the circumstances that brought about war – we should be against that war and secondly that we should beware of becoming immersed in the hate propaganda which was rampant; We must keep our faith that violence will settle nothing."<sup>10</sup> The International Council received from the members' reports of the work that was being done in their areas and also the problems they were facing.

Nevin Sayre presented the report of his recent visit to a number of European countries including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Germany and Austria. His feeling was that the chances for peace were, on the whole, better than when he visited some of those countries two years earlier. He also reported on the work of the War Resisters League in the USA. There were also reports of new Sections in South Africa and New Zealand.

Overwhelmed by the storm, caught in a wave of reaction, it is difficult to keep on an even keel. In the hope of a safe anchorage in life's stormy seas, many a war resister turns to the International.

We try to keep the lights burning. They shall not go out. Through the dark night its beacon light shall be kept trimmed and in the morning we shall meet our comrades battered and torn, maybe, but not broken. There will be a morning. The night may be long and very dark, but the dawn is certain.

Runham Brown had written in the foreword of *The War Resister* of July 1938 – anticipating the dark nights and determined to go on working hard towards the ultimate goal. He continued:

Right in the midst of the storm our General Secretary [Grace Beaton] went to Austria. There she met many of our comrades; some were in prison, some have escaped. The leader of one of our Austrian Sections quietly waits with her husband, expecting to be arrested at any time. They have grown stronger and even more heroic. They are perfectly calm whatever happens to them. We know that their ship will not founder. R- G- is in Paris. He was in great danger, but is now safe. Others we are seeking to help. Our General Secretary has re-established our connections and prepared measures for help-

ing our Austrian friends in the future. Austria is an armed camp. The people lie under an iron heel. Some are glad to find work; others, particularly our Jewish friends, have lost all, but Austria may yet be a dictator's undoing.

Grace travelled back through Berlin. All she did cannot be reported here. She undertook a very difficult task and has done it well. I know no one else who would have done it so well. She is indomitable.<sup>11</sup>

## War breaks out

Four years before the Second World War broke out the International Council of the WRI had a meeting in Zurich, Switzerland. The Council was confident that the War would not be able to destroy the worldwide family of war resisters. Nevertheless, they were well aware that it would raise new problems, such as the destruction of the various ways of communication the International had built up. Grace Beaton wrote a long report on the work of the International during the *Four Years of War*, which she presented at a special meeting held towards the end of August 1943 in a room in Westminster, London. Five members of the WRI International Council met with some invited friends, some of whom had come to England in 'strange ways treading stony paths'.

For nearly two hours Grace Beaton read her report giving an account of situations in various parts of Europe. She said:

All through the long years of war which have followed our last meeting, we at the International centre have felt the strength which comes from an inner assurance that our friends are standing with us, that we are still one big International family, separated maybe in body, cut off from each other even by means of correspondence, but nevertheless a family, inseparably united in spirit, and in the name of those high ideals and principles for which our movement stands.

. . . After that last Council meeting in Basle, and since that time it has not of course been possible to hold the usual Triennial conference due in 1940 and again this year; neither has the International Council been able to meet. Several times we have tried to arrange a meeting of the Council members living in Britain, but until to-day that, too, has been impossible.

The desire uppermost in the minds of many will doubtless be to know what has been happening to all the old friends – what has become of the movement in the countries of Europe now in the grip of war – what are the movements in other countries doing, countries where it is still possible to work openly.<sup>12</sup>

Grace Beaton then gave information regarding the situation in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Baltic States and Russia, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Malta, Bulgaria, Roumania, Spain and Portugal, Germany and Austria, Poland, the USA, Canada, Mexico, South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, North Africa and Palestine, Papua and Fiji, and Great Britain. She described the work of the WRI Lansbury Gate Farm and the relief work as part of practical pacifism and spoke about the publications of the International. She also paid homage to those who had passed away during the period. The late Chairman, George Lansbury, 'laid down his task' on May 7, 1940; James Saunders of New Zealand, who had attended the Sonntagsberg conference in 1928 and who became a member of the Council; Helene Stöcker of Germany, with long active association with the International and

its German Section, who had managed to escape from Hitler's Germany and eventually reached the USA, where "she died in New York a few months ago".

*Pierre Ramus of Austria . . . Hunted by the Gestapo in Vienna; sleeping in a different place each night; swimming across the river which was the frontier between Austria and Switzerland; chased by the frontier guards; Freedom for a few days, and then imprisonment in a Swiss prison because he was in the country without papers. WRI intervention brought about his release, and he was put over the frontier into France, living with his married daughter in Paris. He longed to come to England and join his wife and other daughter whom we had brought over, but England would not have him, and as France would not have his wife, the two had to be separated. War broke out and the hunted life began again – prison – freedom – internment camp – and at last freedom again. Then came the collapse of France, and escape from the Nazis again became his urgent need. He got to Bordeaux only to hear that the last refugee ship had gone. He raced from Bordeaux as the Germans entered the other end of the town, reached the WRI Home at Prats-de-Mollo, and José Brocca got him over the frontier into Spain. ... Uncertainty again, so he escaped ... to Morocco ... in and out of internment camps. In the mean time the WRI had emigrated his wife and daughter to the USA ... visa ... refusal came again ... eventually the Mexican visa was granted, and the wife, longing for her husband, was ready to leave the USA to meet him in Mexico. The great day came when Pierre Ramus boarded the boat at Casablanca, which was to take him to freedom and happiness again. On the seventh day out he died at sea.<sup>13</sup>*

Olaf Kullman of Norway, captain in the Norwegian Navy in the First World War, afterwards a passionate believer in the principles of war resistance and a fearless fighter for the cause, an eloquent speaker, a pillar of the Norwegian movement, fearless to the last, was finally killed in a concentration camp by the Germans. Aaron Selinheimo, a faithful WRI member from Finland, was secretary of the movement; and Arndt Pekurinen, who was the president of the Section also, passed away. Grace also mentioned Dr Brass, a very dear friend and colleague, one who had made it possible for her to keep working even in the midst of much ill health. He gave of his time and strength travelling all over Europe with Grace Beaton so that her work of the WRI could be done without a break.

To end the report, *Four Years of War*, Grace Beaton wrote:

We miss these friends – miss them sadly – but remember them with thankfulness for their lives of service and example.<sup>14</sup>

## Work in various countries of Europe

Grace Beaton began with Denmark.

Of all countries I think perhaps our minds first turn to Denmark, a country from which all the world will doubtless find they have much to learn, and where our Section, Aldrig mere Krig, is not only, in proportion to the small population, the largest Section in the International, but the one most highly developed in the technique of war resistance. The day came when our comrades and the whole Danish nation were put to the test. Denmark was

invaded and the Danish Army ordered not to fight. The uninvited and unwelcome guest arrived and this is the spirit in which our Danish friends met that time:

If an uninvited guest enters your home, receive him and look after him; mere politeness demands this. If his views are different from yours, listen to him and speak with him, but do not alter your own views if they are right. If he comes to you singing, and you are in sorrow, ask him to cease his song, for he is to understand that the home is yours and not his. If he asks if he may help you, say thank you, if you need help. And you should teach your children and your household to respect the requirements of hospitality but to understand at the same time that hospitality and friendship are not the same. And the food you place before him shall be the same as you eat yourself. You ask if you are to give him wine. Yes, if you drink wine yourself. If you do not, it would be inappropriate to offer it to him and for him to drink it.

Much is said in these times about dignity. This is a quality which is not particularly prominent with us Danes. Laughter and inquisitiveness are more in our line. And neither laughter nor inquisitiveness are really signs of unworthiness. Laugh away, if you can, in these times, and be inquisitive, but do not let the laugh be a grin, or the inquisitiveness impertinence. For then you lose the last of the dignity which, even if you do not know it and do not understand it, characterises you as a good Danish man or woman.

And when you go to bed at night fold your hands and pray God to look after your friends, your guest and yourself.<sup>15</sup>

Hagbard Jonassen, the leader of the Danish movement and for a long time the Danish member of the WRI International Council, and for a period its vice-chair wrote:

The 9th April, 1940, was a day pregnant with destiny for Denmark, but, ... there is no excuse whatever for pacifists to lose their heads and abandon hope and belief in a way out of the impasse; a way out, even for our own country. Should it be difficult for us to keep up our courage – and it certainly is – then it is work that is needed.

Hagbard Jonassen wrote of

demonstrating that the pacifist movement is not knocked out, but is here, and intends to remain here. ...

Local groups ... kept together, ... study circles have been organised and the monthly paper, *Aldrig mere Krig* (No More War) is still being regularly published. ... we received a message saying that the whole Danish Movement met for its Annual Conference. ... sending a special message to ... the International. Ever since the occupation of Denmark we have been able to keep in regular, even if not very frequent, touch with our Section there. We are confident that, when the time comes, they will have a special contribution to make to the future of the movement because of the experience of these years.<sup>16</sup>

### **Denmark – the King defies Adolf Hitler**

Writing about the power of nonviolence Richard Gregg described the situation in Denmark when the Nazis invaded the country having assumed direct rule following a general strike. They gave the Danish King and Prime Minister only one hour to choose between admitting German troops without fighting or having the Danish cities bombed like Rotterdam:

The King and Prime Minister, within an hour, issued a proclamation calling on the army and Danish people not to fight. The Nazis, eager to win converts to the New Order . . . pledged that they would not in any way interfere with Denmark's constitutional guarantees of civil liberties or with the workers' or farmers' organisations.

. . . From the first of the invasion the King, in order to encourage the people, rode on horseback every day through the streets of the capital city. Though at the first the Nazis interfered relatively little with Danish domestic policy, gradually they began to put pressure on the Danes to conform with the Nazi programme.

Late in 1940 the Nazis displayed the swastika emblem from a Danish public building. . . . The monarch protested . . . and demanded that the flag be removed. The German military officials refused. 'I will send a soldier to remove it,' the King replied. He was told 'the soldier would be shot'. 'I am the soldier'. . . . The Nazi flag was lowered.

. . . When the Germans ordered that all Danish Jews should wear a yellow star and that a Jewish ghetto should be established, King Christian announced that 'if this were done he would be pleased to move from his palace to such a ghetto and . . . If the Germans want to put the yellow Jewish star in Denmark, I and my whole family will wear it as a sign of the highest distinction.' He attended in full uniform a special celebration in a Copenhagen synagogue. All over Denmark opposition to the German plans of repression arose. Pastoral letters were issued by the Bishop of Zealand and others, protesting in the name of Christianity against the introduction of humiliating anti-Jewish measures.

In a Danish parliamentary by-election held in March 1943, the vote was 95 percent against the Nazis.

A Danish refugee quoted the King having requested Bishop Fugelsang Damgaard to 'tell everyone that peace is on its way. . . . Let everyone know that so long as the Germans are in the country I will sign no decree forming a new Danish government.'<sup>17</sup>

The King fell ill, but the Germans placed him and his family under house arrest and poured German troops into the country. Several thousands of Danes were killed. During this period the Danes had been sheltering Jews and smuggling them to Sweden.

The Danes, without previous preparations or training in nonviolent resistance, nevertheless used it, not perfectly, yet effectively, against the ruthless Nazis whose cruelty and iron discipline was a byword. The Danes resisted nonviolently and successfully for two and a half years.

### **Norway – teachers defy the Quisling government**

The Norwegian movement, although only young, was doing good work and regularly publishing its monthly paper. Groups were springing up in all parts of the country, but with the German occupation these organisations had to stop, the paper could no longer be published and the movement was made illegal. The Oslo group, which was the largest WRI group in the country, was able to keep in touch with the other Scandinavian countries through the occasional visits of their chairman to Denmark and by writing occasional articles for the Danish paper. Many prominent Norwegian pacifists were called upon to face great dangers for the sake of their principles, some being held as hostages and others sentenced to long periods in German concentration camps.



Diderich Lund, a Norwegian master builder and contractor, and an active member of the WRI, wrote a pamphlet in 1945 entitled *Resistance in Norway*. For four years he had been active in the resistance movement inside Norway. Later he took charge of the rebuilding of the shattered homes in the Russian occupied area. Before he went to do this work he was asked to give the address of the place where he could be contacted. The address he gave was *Latitude 70, Sleeping bag 8*. Before going there he spent a few days in London with the WRI, where he wrote *Resistance in Norway*. A few extracts from it are of relevance here.

There were already before the war a number of us Norwegian pacifists who tried to break through the spiritual isolation of Germany and to reach the German people. We had a little influence on the Norwegian Parliament's decision in 1938 to award half the Nobel Peace Prize to Ossietzky. If this did more than irritate Hitler it is not possible to say. If the Parliament (Nobel Prize Committee) had followed the line which some of us worked for, the result might have been better. We suggested that the other half should be given to Gandhi. In this way it would have been clearly shown that it was not a demonstration against the German people, but that we wished to protest against the rule of force in every country, that we would express our sympathy with, and if possible help, those who by peaceful means lead the struggle against the oppressors, wherever they were found. It was not possible to get anyone to listen to such a suggestion; our leading men felt that, on the whole, England fought for peace and freedom and that nothing must be done which would weaken England's position. This meant, however, that the complement to Ossietzky did not have the effect in Germany which it ought to have had. On the other hand it made some contribution to uniting the world to struggle against Hitler's terror. ... our real task was to educate our people and ourselves to meet the Nazi ideals by a clearly conscious struggle for the rights of man and for a humane view of life.<sup>18</sup>

When the tide of destruction flowed over the Norwegian pacifists their stand was positive. Many took up the struggle for justice. Olaf Kullman, the Chairman of the WRI Section, was imprisoned and sent to Grini concentration camp near Oslo. He never lost courage and helped other prisoners with his sure and flaming faith. He was then sent to the concentration camp near Berlin, Oranienburg, where, according to the official reports, he "died" in 1942.

At the time of writing this article, Diderich Lund wrote that there were many Norwegian prisoners in both Norway and Germany. Some of them faced severe torture. Quite a large number of unknown people were influenced by pacifist teaching and had courageously taken to the struggle which they believed was the only way to lasting victory. Many underwent imprisonment and much suffering. None of the WRI members went into the Quisling's service. But it cannot be denied that very many people reinterpreted pacifism as a lazy and passive acceptance of evil power without active resistance. Some gave up pacifism and took to armed struggle.

One of the most encouraging experiences during the war of the power of nonviolence came from the Norwegian teachers who rejected the changes the Nazi Quisling tried to enforce on them.

The Quisling regime had been feeling its way. There had been small attempts at introducing the Nazi ideology in the schools. In 1941 it decreed that Quisling's portrait be hung in each school. Such attempts by the Nazi-dominated government aroused strong opposition among the pupils and teachers. In several such situations the government, realising that the opposition

was quite strong, either gave in or allowed their decree to lapse.

The 'teachers own organisation' was abolished in June 1941, following mass resignations when the Nazis sought to take it over. They formed an 'illegal' group and formulated the following four points around which they were to organise resistance. (1) Any demand for them to become members of Nasjonal Samling; (2) Any attempt to promote Nasjonal Samling in the schools; (3) Orders from anybody outside the school authorities; and (4) Any collaboration with the Nasjonal Samling youth movement. In the months of January and December the teachers decided that every teacher in the country must keep these points in mind, not to be discussed even if they were imprisoned for their resistance activities.

Gene Sharp described the successful nonviolent struggle of the teachers in his booklet *Tyranny Could Not Quell Them*:

In February, 1942, however, Quisling sought to institute a Corporate State on Mussolini's model. He began with the teaching profession. The former teachers' organisation had been abolished the previous June. Now a new one was established with the head of the Hird as Leader. A decree was issued declaring that all teachers were automatically members of the new organisation. At the same time a new *Nasjonal Samling* Youth Front modelled on the Hitler Youth movement in Germany was set up with compulsory membership for all young people between the ages of 10 and 18. The moment for active resistance had come.<sup>19</sup>

On February 11 and 12 a secret meeting of the leaders of their resistance movement was held in Oslo. The meeting drafted a statement – short, simple and easy to remember – and asked all the teachers of the country that they should refuse to become members of the new organisation. The statement was to be used by every teacher.

Mr. Holmboe described the kind of methods used to spread these orders. "A friend telephoned me one afternoon," he said, "and asked me to meet him at the railway station. There he gave me a box of matches. He told me we teachers were to follow the lead of those who had met in Oslo, and that all the possible consequences had been discussed." Then his friend caught the train and was gone.

"The box of matches contained the statement. My job was to circulate it secretly among the teachers in my district. That was all I knew. I didn't know who the 'leaders' were who met in Oslo." . . . Mr. Holmboe told me that there was an inarticulate feeling among the teachers that "this type of passive reaction is of course dangerous and 'they' have their ways of stopping us, but it is the only way we have to express our opposition and we must do it."

. . . Of the 12,000 teachers in Norway, between 8,000 and 10,000 responded to the call and wrote to Quisling's Education Department dissociating themselves from the new teachers' organisation. "If there had been even as many as 4,000 or 5,000," said Mr. Holmboe, "we should have regarded the action as a success . . . it [the success] gave us a pleasant feeling that so many people had the courage to stand up . . . a feeling of not being alone, a feeling of strength."

"It was a matter of conscience," he continued. "We just could not do those things. We could not have looked into the faces of family and friends if we had not made this protest."<sup>20</sup>

The Norwegian government's education department announced that all schools would be closed on account of lack of fuel. Holmboe explained that the Quisling government was panic-stricken. By closing the schools and thus dispersing the teachers it hoped to weaken their solidarity and break their resistance. But offers of fuel came from all over the country.

Actually the "fuel holiday" proved to be the means of spreading the news of what had happened, for the official newspapers had published nothing about the teachers' resistance. People began asking why the schools had really closed. The facts got around.

The Leader of Quisling's new teachers organisation then announced that in such and such districts 100 per cent of the teachers had become members. But many knew these were isolated school districts which had only one or two teachers. On March 7 the official newspapers announced that 300 teachers would be called to do "some kind of social work in the North of Norway." March 15 was set as the deadline for compliance, and resisting teachers were threatened with loss of jobs, pay and pensions. . . .

Heavily burdened, but smiling, postmen carried bag after bag of protest letters to Quisling's Education Department. By signing their own names, . . . the parents made a personal contribution and became "committed to resistance."

March 15 – the deadline for compliance – came and went. The teachers remained defiant.<sup>21</sup>

Mass arrests of teachers followed. Many were sent to prisons and then to concentration camps. It is amazing that throughout their detention the teachers' families received the equivalent of their former salaries. From 'somewhere', implying the sympathetic public.

There is much more to say about the Norwegian teachers' resistance, but the purpose here is only to point out that wherever there was nonviolent resistance against the Nazis in countries like Norway and Denmark, the resisters experienced a considerable degree of success.

The nonviolent resistance by Norway's churchmen is another great story of the success of nonviolent resisters. The Bishops of the State church resigned their official posts on February 24, 1942, but retained their spiritual duties. On the same day 150 university professors protested against the Nasjonal Samling. The authorities announced that their protest would be regarded as resignation of their appointments and if they protested they would be fined.

In his pamphlet *Resistance in Norway* Diderich Lund asked the key question: What attitude a pacifist would take up and what might have happened if, from the beginning, a somewhat larger number had been equally willing to work in a weapon-less resistance against an oppressor or an invader?

## Sweden

In Sweden the danger of war had led to the stiffening up of the military conscription laws of the country, which actually brought the question of refusal to military service more vitally before the Swedish members of the movement, resulting in its strengthening. Hundreds of war resisters were sent to prisons, serving sentences varying from one to five months. There was a general desire among the pacifists to work more closely together and to consolidate their efforts. This resulted in the amalgamation of the two movements associated with the WRI: the Swedish War Resisters Movement and the Swedish World Peace Mission. At the same time the group of absolute war resisters renewed its affiliation to the International. They were also able to keep in good contact with the WRI headquarters.

## **Finland**

There were two WRI affiliates in Finland: the Finnish War Resisters' Movement and Finland's Unconditional Friends of Peace. The majority of the WRI members remained faithful to their pacifist convictions. Their fate had been very diverse. Many of them, although they had done nothing to contribute to the war efforts, had been left in peace; others suffered long terms of imprisonment for their convictions. One well-known friend, the chairman of the movement, Arndt Pekurinen, remained faithful to the end. He was killed after two years in prison; the official statement was that he had "fallen".

One of the two papers published by the pacifist movement was banned, but the other, *Peace on Earth* still appeared. The Finnish Section of the WRI remained very actively engaged in relief work among those who had suffered through war in their own country. They informed WRI headquarters that practically everyone in Finland was starving. The Swedish Section at one time was able to offer splendid co-operation in this work, but eventually had to stop owing to more severe restrictions being placed upon food parcels from Sweden.

## **The Baltic States and Russia**

Earlier in the war the WRI friends in Lithuania were co-operating with the International in tracing refugees who had fled to their country from Poland and Russia, but there had been no further news from Latvia or Estonia. Messages from the USSR too had been stopped. The last one they got was that the time had come for comrades to manifest their convictions, not only in words but also in their deeds.

## **Czechoslovakia**

The WRI had no communication with the activists in Czechoslovakia. It was not safe even via the Red Cross message service. At one time a message came to the WRI from friends in Prague saying that all were well and continuing their work in the two children's homes. The home in the country had been a scene of happiness and joy when children from Prague had been there for their summer holidays. Some of the German and Jewish refugee children were still there. There in the midst of Europe at war they had a happy family of children enjoying the freedom and gifts of nature in the spirit of brotherhood, knowing no difference of race and nationality – a miniature picture of the better world for which the homes were striving.

## **Switzerland**

Remaining neutral for Switzerland made it possible to keep valuable links with other lands.

Our friends there have been able to step in and help when it was no longer possible to continue the work ourselves. Much of this has been done by Swiss members of the staff of the WRI who worked in Enfield before the war. There has, however, been a constant tightening of regulations in regard to pacifist work and to military service, so that little actual work for war resistance is possible now, although there are always some war resisters who go to prison for refusal of military training. ... Pierre Cérésolle, founder of the IVS, [Service Civil International] has not missed any opportunity to witness for our ideals. He has undergone several terms of imprisonment. One of the main activities of

our Swiss friends, in which other peace societies have joined, is the organisation of relief work for children from France. There is a continual flow of children from France – children who are starving and ill – for three months' holiday in Switzerland. The children stay in the homes of Swiss friends and quickly respond to the care they receive there. ...

Our Swiss pacifist friends are also doing their utmost to keep together, and in June last held a joint conference at which representatives of sixteen nations attended.<sup>22</sup>

### **Belgium**

Conditions in Belgium were extremely rigorous following the German occupation. The WRI had received a couple of messages from friends there which were very disturbing. Marcel, leader of the Brussels Section, had been in great difficulty with the German authorities. There was no news about him. Some Belgian friends had reached London and were being helpful in the work. Magda, her husband and her little girl had suffered much. They came to England through the horrors of Dunkirk. There were a large number of such cases. The WRI did its utmost to help those who were left behind. There had been a few war resisters among those who were called up by the Free Belgian Government in England. The WRI gave every kind of help and advice they could. Some of the WRI Belgian friends risked their lives crossing the frontier into Germany to meet and help refugee friends from Austria and Germany who were trying to escape from the Nazi terror.

### **Holland**

The WRI received a message from Holland; *Here tremendous difficulties, but still going strong.* Until the German occupation the Dutch maintained their work, greatly developing the youth side of their activities, and continued their meetings. There was also a continual flow of young men who persistently refused military service. There were nearly 40 by April 1940 and they were receiving very harsh treatment. Imprisonment for refusing military service was increased from 11 to 30 months. Until the outbreak of war WRI friends were able to assist those in other countries on the International's behalf. The Dutch Section was financially very generous to the International. And when it was not practical to send money outside Britain the Dutch friends did so on WRI's behalf. Many of them suffered sorely during those few years. Gerrit, an old WRI friend, was in a concentration camp for nine months, but there was no news about him at the WRI office.

### **France**

With the complete occupation of France in 1942 the International was completely cut off from its friends, but before that happened it was able to maintain constant contact with those in Vichy (France). The best contact was José Brocca of Spain, but the group in Lyon, which had been keeping close contact with the WRI headquarters, was able to keep itself together continuing its work quietly and received the WRI literature regularly.

At the time of the collapse of France in 1940 many WRI friends were sent to prisons for refusing to do military service. When the Germans entered Paris, the prisons were opened and most of them escaped and went to the unoccupied zone. The WRI was then able to contact many of them and rendered to them whatever help it could. Marcel Pichon, who was the

secretary for WRI youth work and founder of the International School League for Peace, drew up a confidential circular which was sent out to key people in each locality in the country. It called upon them to organise a discreet inquiry with a view to compiling a record of all pacifist friends who were in trouble through prosecution or imprisonment. A relief fund was created and all those in need were cared for.

The State banned the journal *Le Voie Nouvelle*, confiscated all the copies from post offices and seized all the money addressed to the League. At this time Marcel visited as many groups as possible all over France. He wrote that in each place he found sincere and loyal friends sticking together. They were doing valuable work. But as time went on all the pacifist papers were banned and his movement was made illegal. Writing to the WRI in February 1940 he said that on account of the prevailing circumstances and the internal situation in France their work must be prudent and discreet, but it was being done and in an organised way. He assured the International that they were happy to see that all that was possible to do in England was being done. 'Sometimes we envy you, because you are still a *democracy*.'

In April 1940 Marcel was arrested, but even then his letters came regularly from prison, and amazingly he was able to send information about many other French war resisters with whom he was able to keep in touch even from the prison. Christian, leader of a large youth peace movement in France, was killed because of his stand on militarism. Marcel was released in September 1941, but from June that year the WRI ceased to receive any news from or about him. The WRI had made a rule not to communicate with its friends in that kind of situation, even through the Red Cross, unless they themselves got in touch with the WRI. The WRI knew that they would surely contact the International when it was safe.

### **Italy**

Contact with Italy had to be extremely discreet. A message was sent to the WRI: 'John, if the world does not change, has to pass years and years away. His health and morale are high notwithstanding.' A little later another message arrived from the same source, Leghorn: 'Here all well. John patiently waiting his time to come home. Pass on love to my father.' The father was in the USA. The WRI had become a living link between many separated families.

The wishes and love to the father and the family were meant to be conveyed far beyond Enfield. These were greetings for war resisters living all over the world. Grace Beaton expressed her feelings, actually of the whole movement, local as well as international, by saying that 'we can be sure that our friends in Italy, doing the sowing and the spade work so loyally, are counting on us'.

### **Malta**

One of the very few contacts in Malta kept regular touch with the WRI. Living in Valetta he was experiencing all the terror which that little island was suffering. He was strengthened and encouraged since he was put in touch with friends in various countries. He reported that he was writing the story of Malta during the war – and it would be an unusual record for it would have a clearly pacifist angle. He was also seeking help for his project from friends in regard to its publication.

### **Bulgaria**

The WRI had maintained the link with the Bulgarian friends, but here again messages had to be couched in cautious terms. Jordan, a member of the International Council, was safe and Boris, the leader of the Bulgarian movement, wrote that most friends were well.

### **Hungary, Yugoslavia and Greece**

There was no news whatsoever from Hungary, Yugoslavia or Greece. It was not possible for the International to have contact with anyone in that part of Europe.

### **Roumania**

In Roumania the death penalty had recently been decreed for war resisters refusing military service on religious or other grounds. The last message from Eugen Relgis was:

There is no need to tell you of our sufferings. We live from day to day. No work and therefore nothing sure of our daily bread. Our house, like that of others, has been confiscated, and who knows how long we shall be able to stay on in our only room. But I do not complain, I am steadfast and I believe in a better future, if not for ourselves, at least for our sons. We must persevere and continue the struggle. I leave you, dear friends, with the consolation that friendship remains the only treasure of the human mind, and that fraternity is not a vain word, even in these tragic upheavals through which humanity is passing.<sup>23</sup>

### **Spain and Portugal**

Most of the WRI friends in Spain were living on the 'republican side' and at the end of the Spanish Civil War the majority were forced to leave the country. Some, however, were left behind in Valencia. There was news from them, but José Brocca's family had returned to Spain and thought that writing letters was not safe. The few WRI friends in Portugal had not been able to continue to co-operate in propaganda work, but some of them had rendered valuable assistance to refugee friends and others escaping from Europe, who were passing through Lisbon on their way.

### **Germany and Austria**

Grace Beaton wrote in her report that there was every reason to believe that many German war resisters had stood firmly by their pacifist faith and that they were suffering the extreme penalty. Just before the war one of them wrote to the WRI:

In a few weeks I am to be called up for service. I have decided to have nothing to do with it, and will declare my objection. I hear that those objecting are severely punished. But, I am prepared to undergo that. I shall certainly try and persuade as many friends as I can to my way of thinking.

It would please me much to receive a word of encouragement as it will not be easy if I have only myself to rely upon. What shall I do if in the concentration camp I am

compelled, by force, to undertake military duties? Shall I act against my better self, or if they use force, shall I resist? I do not think I am strong enough to resist bad treatment for any length of time. Please write to me.

Then a little later he wrote again:

I have already received the personal order. I cannot leave the country, for as one liable for service I should need a special warrant, and that I shall not get. A law says that those liable to service who leave or attempt to leave the country without permission will be punished. I do not know how my mental state has changed, but I am now calmer, and the fear is passing away; perhaps I shall be quite calm on the fateful day. My decision is absolutely unwavering. Further, I can no longer keep silence; I say what I think, as I needs must. So, still fourteen days, and then . . . I greet you all very heartily and send greetings wherever there is an interest in my case.<sup>24</sup>

This young man was sent to a concentration camp, then lost sight of – probably shot.

### **Poland**

While writing her report on the tragic situation in Poland, Grace Beaton was reminded of Amelya, the brave and fearless leader of the group there. Being Jewish, she suffered terribly through the war. However the WRI had kept in touch with her. Friends had been sending food and money whenever possible. She and someone on her behalf had been sending messages occasionally. A few of these will suffice to give a picture of her plight

January 1940. Am out of work – not likely to find any. If possible send money. Love to our family.

April 1940. From a friend. Amelya has received the money I sent. She will receive another remittance next month. She writes that the amount is very helpful to her and that she is doing what she can in order to earn her living, but that, at present, is a very heavy task, and wants much patience.

February 1941. Amelya and her mother are in good health, which she says is the most important. Their situation continues the same, which we fear means very, very difficult. She says she feels very lonely sometimes, and sends greetings to you all.

October 1941. Amelya sends greetings to you all. Notwithstanding all her own troubles, she was very anxious concerning you and all the family. She is rather depressed, comparing the present time with twenty-five years ago, and she feels to have become old and discouraged to see things repeat themselves without mankind achieving any progress. . . . though . . . they are only the surface, at the bottom the old courage and faith remain.

The WRI made exhaustive inquiries as to any possibility of sending more substantial help, but all without success.

April 1943. Amelya has been very ill for a long time, but better now. She is getting older, and of course these years do count. We have translated for her and other friends there an English poem which says:



I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,  
'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'.  
And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness,  
And put your hand into God's hand.  
That shall be to you better than light  
And safer than a known way'.

Amelya says that this message was a great comfort to her, for often she feels very alone.

The last message from Amelya herself was:

We are apt to think of all in terms of our short individual life, and we often take the end of a civilisation for the end of mankind. We have to look beyond.

If she [Amelya] can maintain that spirit there is surely some hope for this sad world. Is it not the highest inspiration coming from a scene of darkest tragedy?<sup>25</sup>

## Countries outside Europe

### USA

The entry of the USA into the war seems to have acted as a great stimulus to pacifist work in the States. The position of COs in the Second World War compared to that during the First World War had somewhat improved. While the Government recognised objection to war, it did not recognise objection to conscription. Objectors had to do alternative service. There was no provision for the 'absolutists'. Those who took the absolutist position in any form received sentences varying from 30 days to five years. Those securing exemption from all military service were mostly allocated to what were called Civilian Public Service camps (CPS). Each of these camps was being run under the direction of one or more of the listed religious bodies. The work of the camps included soil conservation, forestry, national park service, public health service etc.

The WRI Section, the War Resisters League (WRL) refused to approve the scheme from its very beginning. On the face of things, the CPS camps looked plausible, but on closer examination it appeared that the whole thing was working out as a clever way of avoiding a mass demonstration of resistance to war, and of easing pressure on the authorities by making it appear that some real recognition of the COs' position was made, while all the time demanding surrender to compulsion. Gradually the truth of the situation was becoming evident, and an increasing number of men were taking a stand against it. The whole issue reached a climax through the cases of two members of the WRL, Louis Taylor and Stanley Murphy, who, after spending 16 months in a CPS camp, became convinced that they could no longer take part in such a scheme. They applied for other more useful work, but were refused, so they walked out of the camp, informing the competent authority of the reason for their action. They were arrested and sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment. They refused to work in the prison and started a hunger strike, which they continued for 80 days. Their protest was four-fold: against war, conscription, the punitive prison system, and the CPS camps as now operated.

The action had aroused much resentment both among the public and in the camps. Their demand was for genuine recognition of the right of conscience and an opportunity to do work

of real use to the country and the world. Their case had not yet been settled.

The American Fellowship of Reconciliation, another affiliate of the International, had also been responding generously to the WRI appeals for funds. They reported that their work was developing rapidly throughout the States. Both the WRI Sections were in close touch with each other.

### **WRL on Dumbarton Oaks Proposal**

A meeting of diplomatic experts of the “big four” powers (UK, USA, USSR and China) was held during the Second World War in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, an estate in Washington DC, USA. It was called to draw up basic proposals for a post-war security organisation to succeed the League of Nations. In November 1944, after studying the proposals, the Executive Committee of the War Resisters League, the US Section of the WRI, adopted the following statement:

The War Resisters League deplores the reactionary character of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. We see them as representing no true international arrangement, but the domination of the world by the five most heavily armed powers. It is a step back to the Triple Alliance, with special privilege for certain nations based on the old and dangerous principle that might makes right. We are glad the opportunity is given for discussion and criticism and would point out the inherent defects which disturb us.

It is our conviction that the specific proposals made at Dumbarton Oaks are inadequate and a menace to the development of a peaceful and just world order.

*First.* The most serious defects of the old League of Nations, long recognised, are not remedied but at times even exaggerated.

- (a) Imperialism, against which the Mandate System offered a weak gesture, is here completely disregarded.
- (b) No specific instruments are proposed to do away with the underlying causes of war in race tensions, economic inequalities and territorial irredentas, except that economic and social welfare is handed over to a council without power.
- (c) Armament regulation is entrusted to the Military Staff Committee of the five Powers.
- (d) All possibility of progress is blocked as effectually as in 1919 by the requirements that amendments to the Constitution must be ratified by the Powers possessing permanent seats on the Council.

*Second.* A significant change from the League of Nations is the abolition of the inefficient unanimity requirement in the Assembly, but even more important is the provision for the immediate coercion of aggressors by the Security Council, substituting for loose sanctions a definite obligation of members to carry out the decisions of the Council. This obligation is to be enforced through a permanent Military Staff Committee of the five Great Powers, equipped with an immediately available air force. This proviso is a step back in the building of international co-operation for it merely strengthens the system of alliances and dependence on military power which is basic in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals and has already produced two wars.

*Third.* The obligations stated in the Atlantic Charter are completely ignored. There are water-tight provisions which secure for all time the control of the all-powerful Council to the five nations which are expected to emerge as military victors in the present war. They have exclusive control of the Military Staff Committee and the air-force quotas,

possess the right of veto over all amendments, and hold the only permanent seats in the Security Council. The six non-permanent members of the Council are to be elected for two-year terms, and to be ineligible for immediate re-election. In the General Assembly the smaller 'peace loving' nations may make recommendations upon all matters except matters 'relating to the maintenance of international peace and security which is being dealt with by the Security Council'.

*Fourth.* Not only do these proposals appear to the War Resisters League as a bartering of freedom, equality and justice in return for security from aggression, but this very security cannot be counted upon. If it should be finally determined, as one of the Great Powers has urged, that because any Council member may be allowed a vote upon disputes involving itself, no small nation can be relieved from the fear of aggression by any permanent member. Moreover, as two of the five permanent members are still without stable government, and the three Great Powers are known to differ on crucial matters, the Security Council itself can give no guarantee of continued co-operation after the war emergency is over.

The War Resisters League cannot place confidence in any attempt to bring peace through armed coercion rather than through justice, friendship and the removal of the underlying causes of war. We urge the American people to assert all possible effort towards the modification of the proposals for international organisation along the following lines:

- (a) To build international political machinery – based on the consent of the governed – capable of handling world problems vital to the economic and political freedom and the security of people everywhere.
- (b) To advocate democratic, federal structure, with membership open to all and enforcement of world law on individuals, rather than military coercion of nations in any international organisation proposed.
- (c) To recognise the universal abolition of conscription as the acid test of good faith in any world organisation designed to prevent wars and create justice.<sup>26</sup>

The WRL received wide support on their stand on the proposals.

At the time of the end of the war, in 1945, the International Secretariat of the WRI suggested that the WRL statement might be discussed by the proposed Regional Alternative Conferences and if approved might also be adopted by the International's next Triennial Conference.

## **Canada**

As elsewhere, the war proved to be an impetus to the growth of the pacifist movement in Canada. Under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act all male inhabitants between the ages of 18 and 60 were liable for military service, except persons covered by certain exempted classes, which included 'persons who, from the doctrine of their religion, were averse to bearing arms or rendering personal military service under the conditions prescribed'. There was no provision for legal exemption of any objector other than the religious war resister.

The difficulty for the sincere war resister in Canada had arisen because his claim was not looked upon as a claim for exemption from military service or training, but of 'postponement'. Although this 'postponement' might in effect prove to be equivalent to exemption, the application was objectionable to those who claimed exemption as a matter of principle. Such men had

two choices: (1) to claim postponement with its implication that they accept an obligation which in fact they repudiate, or (2) to ignore the notice calling them for medical examination and face the consequences. Those granted postponement were directed to do alternative service, which was also not acceptable to many war resisters.

For the first time in Canada a pacifist journal titled *Canadian CO* was started by a pacifist group. The WRI established close contact with them. Articles on the International and its work had already appeared in its pages. As a result of the publicity given to the whole question of war resistance in Canada, there seemed to be some liberalising of the State's attitude toward COs. In regard to the general work, a Canadian Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation was set up. A staunch WRI supporter, Rev. J. Lavell Smith, was made its chairman. An organising secretary was appointed with the hope that this development would lead to a considerable advance in the work of war resistance in Canada.

### **Mexico**

The WRI Section was active, but was finding it difficult to make much headway. They had welcomed and enthusiastically accepted José Brocca in their midst. Jorge Rio de la Loza, the leader of the Section, also asked José to be the Section's president.

### **South America**

Although the WRI had good contacts with most of the South American countries, there was only one group, which was founded by a number of young people in Argentina, all under 35, which became an affiliated section of the International. Every member of the group signed the WRI Declaration. The WRI office had linked them with the US Section. The WRI had maintained its link with all the South American friends, who had also been most helpful to the International in its refugee work.

Carlos Clement, whose journey to Colombia with five other members of his family was arranged by the International, wrote:

There is only one gap in our lives. While there are so many people suffering, we are here feeling the benefits of a great peace which perhaps we do not deserve. But we hold ourselves ready at your disposition, and the very moment when you, the guardians of the unfortunate ones, have need of us, either for your own work or the work of others, you may count upon us.<sup>27</sup>

### **Australia**

The work in Australia had steadily developed and progressed since the outbreak of war and the International had the opportunity of co-operating very closely with the rapidly growing movements in that country. The Christian Pacifist Movement of Victoria had joined the International as its affiliated Section. With a view to co-ordinate the work of several organisations, State Councils were set up in most States and the Australian Federal Council was formed, with Joan Chadwick as its travelling secretary. The Council was contemplating affiliation with the WRI.

In Tasmania the small FOR branch had lapsed, but with Joan Chadwick's efforts a Tasmanian Pacifist Fellowship was formed which was affiliated to the Australian Federal Council.

They published a monthly journal called *The Peacemaker*.

At first COs were allowed exemption from combatant service only. After a struggle they were able to get a new regulation issued, which, in effect, brought the Australian law into line with the British. This provided for absolute exemption from combatant duties only. These regulations were made retrospective. There had been a considerable number of COs who had to face imprisonment because they were unable to accept the decisions of the court.

Food relief for war victims was regarded as a very urgent task. The people of Australia were so indifferent that a campaign had to be organised in order to exert pressure on the government, for, even several of the friends of the WRI believed that, during war, relief must be a government measure. Groups were being formed, including of non-pacifists, working all over Australia to create a public conscience for government action.

### **New Zealand**

The situation in New Zealand was not very different from that in Australia. Cases of absolute exemption from military service were rare. To avoid imprisonment of COs who refused to accept the conditions imposed, the government set up 'Defaulters Camps' where these men were detained. In fact these were *prisons*. Pacifist opinion in the country was divided as to whether this was an honest attempt by the government to save COs from the military authorities, or a clever move to isolate COs from the community and prevent their witness being publicised, while claiming that they were living a life of security and comparative well-being. A section of the pacifist movement was strongly opposed to the camps.

As in several other countries, the war had brought about increasing activity on the part of the pacifist movement, and this applied to the Christian Pacifist Society, which had its headquarters in Wellington, and local groups in many parts of the country. The chairman of the movement and the editor of their news-sheet, O. E. Burton, were expelled from the Methodist church on account of continued pacifist activities. Burton received a very harsh prison sentence of two and a half years for reporting the trial of his colleague Barrington, who also was sentenced for publishing an edition of the duplicated bulletin of the movement which was termed 'subversive', but which was only an appeal for the right of the freedom of speech. When Burton was sent to prison in Napier, two hundred miles from his home town, he was not even allowed to inform his wife. This was the fourth imprisonment for Burton during the period of the Second World War, even though New Zealand had a Labour government.

One interesting point regarding New Zealand was that Lincoln Efford, a member of the WRI, had contested a constituency in Christchurch as a pacifist candidate. He was not elected, but his election campaign provided an excellent opportunity for propaganda for the cause of war resistance.

### **South Africa**

The WRI had two affiliated bodies in South Africa; one in Durban and the other in Pietermaritzburg – both small but active and co-operative with the International. They had regular discussions and had organised protests against the proposal to make cadet training compulsory in the schools. They organised visits to the Italian prisoner of war camps, where they were warmly welcomed. Their working party for war victims collected bales of clothing to be sent to England as well as to the Far East.

The International had splendid help from these Sections, specially when conscription was

extended to Dutch nationals, called Hollanders, living in South Africa. During the war when the Dutch had set up the Free Dutch Government in London, the Hollanders had begun to be conscripted with the help of the South African government. Many of them did not consider it their own government hence did not co-operate in the process of conscription. They had been forced to leave Holland due to bad economic conditions. Some of them were convinced war resisters. Upon refusing, they were imprisoned in South Africa, and subsequently sent over to England with contingents of conscript soldiers who had been brought to South Africa.

When the first contingent arrived in London the Dutch government did not know what to do with them. They were kept in a kind of barracks. They were not under detention but at the same time neither were they free men. The WRI contacted them and drew the attention of the Dutch government in London to the fact that the WRI was interested in them and was anxious to see that they received their full rights under the Dutch law. The WRI legal advisers also took up the matter with the legal department of the Dutch government. One by one the first COs had their cases heard. Those who were recognised as sincere were given work in one or other of the Netherlands government departments not concerned with the war. Those refusing were henceforth detained in prison until such time as the authorities decided to look into their cases. The WRI sought out these men and approached the Dutch authorities in each case, and each time succeeded, eventually, in securing their release from prison.

Then another group arrived in London and was kept there for only a night. Next day they were sent to a secret location. The WRI discovered them a couple or so days later on a depot ship anchored off the north-west coast of England. The WRI approached the Dutch government on their behalf, for it was feared they might be sent, as many had been sent before, to Dutch Guinea. Assurance was given that they would not be sent away. But, when the WRI tried to contact them there was no response. Eventually the WRI representative, a Presbyterian minister, was able to get on board the ship and was taken round. Coming into the kitchen he became particularly interested. He saw five men in civilian clothes peeling potatoes. He thought that they must be the men, and asked if he could speak to them. 'No!' was the answer. Somehow, he was able to communicate with one of them and said that their friends in London had not forgotten them.

Much was done to make active contact with them, but without success. They had not been allowed even one night of liberty, despite assurances given by their authorities. The WRI, therefore, drew up a memorandum on behalf of all the eight men, addressed to the Netherlands prime minister. Members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons signed it. Within two days two of the men were released and after three days the other five were also free. There is every reason to believe that it was only this last effort that brought success.

There were others who, instead of being brought to England, were deported to Surinam. The International was greatly concerned about these men for it was learnt that they had been subjected to extreme pressure and rigorous treatment. It had been impossible to obtain any news about them.

Grace Beaton asserted in her report:

We shall seek out these men and champion their cases as we have those of the Hollander friends brought to this country.

She also said:

This particular piece of work has been dealt with rather fully here, for it is of great

interest; but it is just one of those ordinary jobs which are part of the day-to-day work of the International.<sup>28</sup>

## Lansbury Gate Farm – Great Britain

Talking about Great Britain Grace Beaton said:

During the twenty years of working together in the International those of us living in England have always felt ourselves to be in a rather favoured position. We have tried to stand by our fellow members in the conscript countries, and we have always looked upon them with great respect and admiration, knowing that they have had to make sacrifices far greater than have fallen to our lot. In these more favourable conditions it has been possible to build up a big movement, numerically much larger than has been possible in other parts of the world. The outbreak of war and the introduction of conscription in England, whilst in many ways increasing difficulties for our work, has undoubtedly drawn us much closer together. The provision made for COs by the British authorities must indeed have seemed magnanimous to war resisters in other countries, and we cannot but recognise that in no other country of the world is such toleration shown to the CO as in Great Britain. This we frankly recognise and are thankful for it. No obstacles have been deliberately put in the way of the International's work by the British authorities. Rather we have benefited by a number of special facilities: e.g. our "Recognition" by the Home Office; our permit to send literature abroad, from the War Office; our "Import Duty Free" permit from the Customs and Excise; our special permit, again from the Home Office, to make financial appeals abroad; recognition by the Essex War Agricultural Committee of our Land Scheme; and the Foreign Office has rendered us valuable assistance in contacting friends and assisting in their difficulties abroad.<sup>29</sup>

The war resisters movement in Britain was strong, hence it was not necessary for the International to put in as much work here as was required for movements in other parts of the world. The WRI Section in Britain, the Peace Pledge Union, had been co-operating with the International in several areas of its work.

Whilst, therefore, the International has not felt the need to undertake extensive work on behalf of war resisters in England, we rejoice to assist wherever we are needed. Quite a considerable number of British COs have turned to the International not merely for advice but for practical help, and we have extended to a number legal assistance where required, more particularly, of course, to those who have been associated with the International's work. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Charles Hill, the International's Hon. Legal Adviser, for the consistent and valuable help he has given.

In addition to finding work for many COs on the land, and assisting some financially, the International purchased its own freehold farm at Clavering, Essex, which is known as the Lansbury Gate Farm. ... It was started in the hope that it would be the means of helping some of our British COs to find a useful constructive career even in war time, and that the farm itself might become a centre from which would radiate the spirit of George Lansbury and of our movement. It was a hazardous venture, but after

two and a half years of hard and at times disappointing work, the scheme is now beginning to make good. Under the devoted guidance of Eric and Nancy Dixon, instead of a neglected and derelict farm, we now see a bright and happy home, beautifully kept, where one instantly feels “at home”. . . .

I should like to add that Eric and Nancy have created not only a successful farm but a home which does indeed radiate the spirit of the International, where other COs, as well as refugees and others from abroad, are always welcome. . . . This part of our work is now a source of much gratification, but it has been an uphill struggle.<sup>30</sup>

### “Practical pacifism”

The International was aware of the difficult times they would be in, sooner rather than later. Hence it had to think about the continuity of its work, especially maintaining its links and keeping them strong even if war came. As soon as the war started, the International knew they would be deprived of the privilege of helping directly, or even communicating with, friends in European countries. The number of these countries was increasing as one by one the German occupations spread. There were friends in Germany and Austria who still needed help. In Czechoslovakia friends much depended on the continuation of support from the WRI. Parents who had sent their children to safety in England would still be anxious to have news of them. In Italy some of the friends were in dire straits and needed aid, and the French too depended upon the International.

Plans prepared by the International were set in motion – friends in other countries began to undertake work which the International could no longer do directly. For instance, the Danish friends, under the leadership of Hagbard Jonassen, set up the *second headquarters in Copenhagen*. Grace Beaton wrote:

The WRI will be for ever indebted to Hagbard and our Danish comrades for their ability and devotion . . . and so ably augmenting our organisation until their country came under Nazi control. The breach was then partially filled by our friends in Sweden and Switzerland, as well as by those in the USA and Canada.<sup>31</sup>

It was due to the ‘recognition’ by the British Home Office that the International was able to bring a large number of refugees away from the Nazi oppression in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy and Spain. The outbreak of war threw upon the International added responsibility on behalf of these friends.

One of the most important pieces of our refugee relief work has been caring for and educating the children, and this responsibility is becoming increasingly heavy as the children in our midst are growing up and need our help. During all this time arrangements have been carried through for re-emigration. Some eighty of our refugee friends have left us for the USA, New Zealand, Australia, Paraguay, Colombia, Palastines, Cuba, Mexico, Chile and Ireland. This work is being continued even now.

So our efforts have not slackened even in war – instead we have been called upon very greatly to increase our relief work.<sup>32</sup>

The Spanish war having ended, and with war all over Europe, the International decided



that the home at Prats-de-Mollo should be closed as soon as every child and the family each child represented had in some way been provided for. José Brocca skilfully accomplished this difficult task. When war broke out the WRI had placed the records of the home before the British Home Office, which immediately granted permission for Brocca to come to England. For two years Prats-de-Mollo had been the junction through which all the WRI contacts with Spain had been maintained. When the Spanish war was over some people, in two groups, who had escaped from the Spanish concentration camps and were passing through Prats-de-Mollo were put in prison by the French authorities until orders were received from a superior authority to send them to a refugee camp. José Brocca obtained permission to shelter as many as possible in the WRI home instead of their being sent to prison.

When the war started spreading over Europe José Brocca wrote:

Do not be disturbed about me. I am perfectly calm and full of courage to face the future without fear, whatever may happen. I foresaw that the outbreak of war could deprive me of the opportunity of coming to England. I had time to go, but I could not abandon our Home without first finding safety for everyone in it. I reckon that my duty was that of the captain of a ship; to remain on board until the last, and to provide every means of safety to the rest.<sup>33</sup>

And that is what José Brocca did. Instead of finding refuge in England, he was several times detained in one concentration camp or another – hungry, cold and ill, and his life was in great danger. For a long time the WRI had no news of him, but at last when he was free the WRI could make contact with him. The WRI then felt that the time had come when an effort to get him away should no longer be delayed. Eventually, a Mexican visa was granted and he was rescued from Vichy France just as the German troops completed the occupation. He arrived safely in Mexico in October 1942 having left his wife and family behind, as they expected to return to Spain. All his belongings were stolen from him in transit from Perpignan to Marseilles, and he arrived in Mexico with nothing but 70 French francs and the clothes he stood up in. It was not possible to send money to him, as the WRI would have done in ordinary circumstances, but his needs were provided for.

Many of the refugee friends were still with the International. Some had found work and were able to manage for themselves and their families. But there was the question of illness and unemployment. There were some that unfortunately were not able to provide for themselves, but the International was still in a position to assist such friends financially from week to week. The International considered it to be a part of its work which needed especial care – to give graciously, to offer material help in such a way as not to hurt the fine spirit of independence. As a WRI friend put it: “The WRI saves not only the body but the soul.” Grace Beaton put it as follows: “It is a rare privilege to do such work as this. We have endeavoured to preserve an individual and personal touch in it all; we do not wish to be thought as a charitable institution making grants, but as members of a family giving mutual help in time of need.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Hope for the future**

The above is a very brief account of the International’s work during the four troubled and difficult years of war. At the end of the report Grace Beaton wrote:

In spite of the shattering impact of war, our lifeline of contacts running round the world

has held. We can look forward into the future with confidence. When peace returns, and the barriers upraised by war break down, all over the world our friends will rise up to join hands with us again. We shall go forward, with new strength born of our present anguish, with richer experiences won through our present difficulties, to play our part in the rebuilding of our stricken world. There will be work for us all to do. We know that the problems of peace will be no less than those of war. We will face them, as we have sought to overcome the difficulties of these years of strife, in the spirit of faith, and of confidence in the rightness of our cause and of humility at being numbered among those entrusted with it.<sup>35</sup>

## Opposition by the Danes against Nazi occupation

As seen above, the Danes and the Norwegians used pacifist methods more than other nations of Europe did. The experience was that active and determined opposition often breaks down the over-confident invading party. And a well-planned and mature nonviolent confrontation can do better than an armed retaliation. Gene Sharp wrote that in Denmark, the Nazis were unable to destroy a single Danish resistance organisation of any importance, although they were able to arrest, deport and execute members of those organisations. Gene Sharp then quoted the Danish occupation historian de J. Hastrup:

It seems that suppression only gave birth to more vigorous resistance. The view might be different in other countries where conditions were more cruel, but the Danish conclusion must be that suppression is a two-edged sword.<sup>36</sup>

I am not, in any way, stating this as a comparison between armed defence and nonviolent resistance. However, experience of the Second World War provides the opportunity to know that both kinds of responses to invasion work successfully, at least for the time being. The Nazi armies went on marching over nearly the whole of the European continent until they faced the Russian armies at their borders. When the USA also entered the war, it started becoming clear that Hitler's dream was not as easily realisable as he must have thought at the beginning. In the end Nazis and Fascists of Germany, Italy and Japan surrendered. The Allies "won" the war, but at what cost?

It is difficult to visualise the number of human casualties of the Second World War. Fifty-seven nations, Allied and Axis, were belligerent in the Second World War. The total number of military personnel alone of the major Allied powers and of the Axis powers, killed or missing during the Second World War, exceeded 15,000,000. The very considerable costs to the smaller countries, particularly Poland and the nations in south-eastern Europe, added hundreds of thousands more to the total. These figures do not include the casualties of the military personnel in the Far Eastern part of the war. For instance Japan alone had lost 1,506,000 military personnel, killed or missing since 1937; and China suffered the battle loss of 2,200,000 military personnel. None of the figures given above include the deaths of several millions of innocent civilians.

Although the Japanese had already announced their plans of surrender, the US dropped two atom bombs, one on Hiroshima and the other on Nagasaki. This act will never be forgiven or forgotten by those who believe in human ethics. But that is the dynamics of modern warfare and the character of its victors. The atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945

killed more than 200,000 and the one on Nagasaki, three days later on August 9, killed 164,000 people – mostly innocent civilians. Both the cities were nearly totally destroyed.

The story of the pacifists during the Second World War, although minute in its physical effect, is in complete contrast to the stories from the theatres of war. Take for example the war as experienced by nonviolent resisters in circumstances such as that of the Danish activists. In the pamphlet *Resistance in Denmark*, published by the WRI, Hagbard Jonassen, who had been active in the Danish WRI for over 20 years, and had lived and worked in Denmark during the whole of the occupation years, wrote:

In Denmark, since the war with Germany in 1864, the significance of having Germany for our neighbour has been widely recognised not only by pacifists but by nearly all, and it has been realised that our existence as a nation depended upon a general respect for international law and order.

Therefore from the first we have seen a great danger in Nazism and its lack of respect for given promises. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why a Nazi movement has never obtained any foothold in Denmark. We have always supported Germans who fought for democracy, and have seen with regret how little support they got from the great democratic powers. We saw with anxiety that a great part of the German nation supported Hitler. From emigrants living in Denmark we heard about the brutality with which the people who were against Nazism were treated. We knew about the conditions in concentration camps, and will never forget that these camps were originally built for Germans.

On 9th April, 1940, we in the Danish Section of the WRI thought that our organisation would be hit, and we therefore burned all the correspondence we had had with the families of Jews and emigrants from Germany, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, so as not to betray them to the Nazis. Only a list with names and addresses was carefully hidden. We knew too well that it was useless to try to hide ourselves; by searching in German homes our names and addresses had already been found by the Gestapo. However nothing happened.

The Danish Government did not want to expose the country to the consequences of war with Germany, and all military resistance was stopped. We pacifists approved the Government's decision not to fight, but we deplored that the reason was not resistance to all war but the opinion that war in the circumstances (with no support from outside) was useless. We expressed this view in public.

Work during the occupation

Nothing happened to us or the other peace movements except an abortive raid on the head office. Our monthly paper with the broken gun sign was issued regularly during the whole war. It included among other things an article against the German treatment of Danish Jews, and about the fight in Norway in the Church and schools, which was translated from prohibited Swedish papers. . . . Every spring we had our annual conference and every summer our camp, where many subjects were discussed: democracy and dictatorship and Nazism, peace treaties . . . fight in Germany against Nazism . . .

Very soon after the Occupation a Government was formed . . . and it was agreed that all discussions about controversial questions should be dropped. But soon Danish officers and militarists started working to militarize youth, and we found it necessary to work against them. The most important thing we did was to start . . . "The Peace Committee for Youth", which published books and arranged courses for young people.

. . . We have always been of the opinion that we did not really feel the war, and that it was therefore our special duty to prepare for relief work after the war. We started in 1943 with some meetings with the Society of Friends, and in 1944 founded the "Fredsvenners Hjaelparbejde". Later on the other peace organisations joined with us. . . . During the winter of 1944–45 we arranged two courses for them in Copenhagen, two evenings every week and educated them for such work. Of course it was necessary that the Germans should not get any knowledge of it.<sup>37</sup>

Hagbard Jonassen continued:

Hitler was a very clever liar, and the German soldiers believed when they came to Denmark that we had asked them to come and save us from the English. There were no good opportunities for conversation with them; you could not tell whether a soldier was a Nazi or not, and so could not know what the consequences of a conversation might be. On the other hand the Germans should have known that they were encroaching where they were absolutely not wanted, . . . We showed them this by ignoring them, as if they were air . . .

. . . The German Nazi party tried to force its way into elements of our life. The Danish Government had a very hard time trying to limit their influence . . . Discontent therefore was growing. Sabotage increased and a secret military organisation was set up. This was followed by growing German terrorism. The Germans tried to mobilise Danes for their army and for terrorist groups, and they found men ready to do this for money.<sup>38</sup>

In August 1943 the Germans started persecuting the Danish Jews. They could find only about a thousand men and women. The Danes did a good job and quietly shifted nearly seven thousand of them to Sweden. Amazingly the Danes got support from some members of the German army in accomplishing this task. The Danish Government protested against the treatment of Jews by the Germans and went on strike. It never functioned again during the period of occupation.

The Germans persuaded some of the Danish military officers to work for them and fight against Communism. A Danish officer with the name of Schalburg formed a military corps. In the spring of 1944 Schalburg's corps returned to Copenhagen from Russia. It instigated terrorism, which resulted in growing discontent in the town. In the last days of June the Germans instituted a curfew after 8 o'clock, and the Schalburg troops blew up many large buildings of the town. This was too much to bear. The Danes spontaneously declared a general strike, which quickly spread all over the country, and found the Germans completely unprepared. In the course of few hours all activities were stopped except water, gas and electricity supplies. Immediately the German troops occupied these, stopped the supplies and surrounded Copenhagen completely. But the population of the city did not give in. During this period the Germans must have killed a hundred or so people on the streets of Copenhagen. Owing to the lack of water and food it would have been impossible for the city to hold out for more than one or two days longer.

The leaders of the underground movement called The Council of Freedom had obtained greater and greater influence. Sabotage of railway lines and factories which were working for Germany started growing with the help of explosives obtained from England, and at the same time a new military organisation was built up with English weapons. The Germans, in response, took a more violent course. They wanted the underground movement out into daylight, for which they gave money to local informers, whom the members of the illegal armed group killed. The Danish police did not wish to help the Germans, hence the police force was disbanded in September 1944 and its members sent to concentration camps in Germany.

The Germans formed a new 'police force' and called it *Hilfspolizei* or *Hipo*. It was manned by criminals and their job was to murder innocent but well known members of the public at the command of the Gestapo. In April they killed eight to ten people every day. Their usual way was to enter a house at night and murder people in their beds. This was in addition to the killings on streets. Ordinarily it was not possible to know whether the person killed by them was a member of the resistance movement or an informer.

Whereas sabotage and other forms of violent resistance were growing, sections of the public supported the Germans. After all the farmers could not stop the production of their crops. Most of the produce of farmers was taken away by the Germans. Very many factories worked for Germany, and it was easy for them to buy people to work for them on fortifications and aerodromes etc.

Towards the end of his pamphlet *Hagabard* Jonassen wrote:

#### *Our Attitude*

How could a pacifist find his place in this situation? We could work on the illegal press and some did so. But it was a very militaristic press and it often made quite unreasonable attacks on Danish officials, most of whom did good work in extremely difficult circumstances.

Some took part in sabotage against such things as railway lines etc., but most found that this was not the right way for them. When the Germans started to take hostages and kill them, and to blow up over-crowded trains as revenge for railway sabotage, nearly all found that they could not take responsibility for the consequences of sabotage. We came to know that our opponent used methods so inhuman that we did not want to give him any excuse to use them. And we saw how the fight produced hatred and the spirit of revenge, and in that way poisoned Danish minds with the Nazi outlook.

In a few respects conditions in Denmark were like those in Norway, but in most ways they were very different. As in Norway, in the economic field there were not any serious struggles against the Germans. In Norway they tried to influence all sides of cultural life, church, school, press, theater, etc., and they found in Quisling and his supporters people ready to work for them. In Denmark they never found a "Quisling" they could use, and with few exceptions they never tried to influence cultural life. The exceptions were the press and the cinemas.

It may be difficult to find reasons for this different course of events in Norway and Denmark, but the result was that it opened out quite different possibilities for pacifist work in the two countries. We found that we could not take part in this violent fight against the Germans, and decided to keep our organisation intact, to go on with our work as far as possible, and be ready to expand.

#### *After Liberation*

The violent fight which took place in Denmark made clear the connection between means and ends. Many of the people from the resistance movement have learned only too easily the Nazi methods. During the fight they had to kill informers. Now they have no great respect for human beings. They have arrested thousands suspected of co-operation with the Germans; these people were brought through the streets in open cars with hands up, just as the Jews were treated in Germany. In prison some of them have been maltreated. A member of Parliament mentioned some of these cases in Parlia-

ment, and another member, belonging to the resistance movement, has demanded that the first member should leave public life! Members of the resistance movement have killed or maltreated persons released from prison and are trying by menace to force the Judges to sentence all arrested by the movement. They have also refused to give up their weapons before going home. This means there is serious danger of civil war in Denmark.

We have from the first spoken against these encroachments, and on 5th June [1945] we sent the following resolution to the Government and Parliament: Among the Danish population there is a growing feeling of insecurity due to the special authority taken by the resistance movement towards the police and Courts of Justice, and it looks as if political life is prevented from free expression as a true democracy because the resistance movement is still held in readiness, or is sent home with weapons. We therefore ask the Government to disarm and disband these forces before their merits under the occupation are over-shadowed by encroachments after liberation by single groups.

We regret that a law of death penalty has been adopted, even with retroactive effect, under the influence of strong feelings. We ask the government to secure that the administration may be carried through with justice and fairness, in accordance with our old-time accepted administration of justice.

This resolution was distributed by our most important press office, and to-day nearly all in Denmark agree with us as to the resistance movement. It was very popular in May, but now in August it is quite another thing.

The Danish pacifist movement was quite positive about their work in the post-war period. They did not think that there was a great chance of militarism in their country. But they were also aware of the fact that the five years of Nazi occupation had been a period of bad education of the youth of the country. They seemed to be convinced that the younger generation will also realise the truth of the matter. Hagbard Jonassen ended his pamphlet with the following words:

We shall have to show them that peace also can be exciting. We are preparing a new pamphlet called *Create Peace*, and we have started Relief Work. At the beginning of June we sent twenty nurses to the northern part of Norway, and are preparing to send fifty men and six women to the same part of Norway about the 20th August. We are getting great support from the Danish Government, and I feel sure it will be a very valuable way in which to show young people that peace work may also be of interest to them.

We do not believe it is enough to say "NO MORE WAR", we must also say "CREATE PEACE".<sup>39</sup>

## Peace Now – proposals for a sensible peace settlement

The WRI International Council could not meet during the war period, nor could any of its Triennial Conferences be held. However those Council members who were available occasionally met unofficially. All were concerned about the war situation and the hopelessness created by the absence of any sensible solution coming out either from any government or any political party. In 1943 the WRI had arranged an informal consultation among the available members. After considerable discussion the group put forward the following proposals to be considered by political organisations and governments all over the world. The WRI published

the proposals in the form of a pamphlet entitled *Peace Now*.

Runham Brown wrote in the Preface, which he dedicated To Those Who Have Suffered Terrible Persecution, Many Of Whom Are Lying In Foreign Countries As Refugees:

Some of you will read these pages with dismay; you will ask if we are really prepared to make peace now? Now, with the dictatorship still unbroken, with your loved ones still existing under the yoke of oppression. You will think of your own hard fate, and perhaps within the secret place of your own heart wish that the war might be carried on a little longer until it brings liberty to those who are suffering.

You have a right to blame us. We bow our heads in shame before you for our part in allowing the tragedy in your life, and in the lives of so many millions, ever to have taken place. It is so hard to look at the events in Europe objectively. What are we thinking? We would bring down totalitarianism by force of arms – perhaps in a year – perhaps in two or even three years? I think we could do it, although even that is not certain. We must increase our stranglehold. Every boy on the threshold of manhood must be flung into the combat, whether he understands what he is doing or not. Each day we must read in our paper, “Another U-boat has gone down,” and think, “Another four and twenty boys gone to their doom like rats in a trap”. If we refrain from bombing babies until the struggle gets fiercer, we will starve them. They will grow pale and weak and stagger. The weakest will go first – your loved ones among them. Forgive me, comrade, it must be faced.

We must put down oppression. We must win the war and then – Liberty, Fraternity, Equality? No, a dictated peace – the seeds of the next war and where shall we look for liberty? To the victor? No. Totalitarian war by its very nature must progressively destroy all liberty. What a spectacle! Europe in ruins – victor and vanquished alike overwhelmed and then a struggle for a bare existence!

Peace Now! An agreed peace – the outstretched hand – the opening of the frontiers – dropping the tariff walls. Some access to raw material. Something left to build upon. Some hope that imperialism has been shaken – that autarchy will give place to co-operation. The dictator’s stronghold not quite so strong. It all depends upon the peace. The sooner the peace the better the peace.– H. Runham Brown<sup>40</sup>

#### **Statement by the authors of the proposal:**

The War Resisters’ International recognises that personal refusal to participate in warfare is not enough. As the International Council members are not, of course, able to meet in war-time, as they would, in any case, not desire to put forward on behalf of the Movement as a whole, a dogmatic statement as to how the world can be put right. The following pages have been written by a group within the International, in the belief that they do at least suggest a possible approach to the beginning of a peace settlement which might be attempted now. Whilst all signatories agree to the broad principles set out in the document, no one is committed to every detail. [Signed by nineteen prominent members of the International Council]<sup>41</sup>

**Introduction:** We all want peace. For years before the war and even since it began every belligerent government has emphasised its peaceable intentions. Hitler has published peace aims, which include independence for India; the surrender of the Palestine

Mandate, with self-determination for the Arabs; plebiscites in Cyprus and the West Indies. . . . The British and French hint at big changes in Europe, but so far the Allied Governments have avoided any very specific statement. Each side is anxious to right the wrongs done by the “Enemy”. But peace, like charity, begins at home.

This is where a real policy for peace must begin, and such a policy is urgent: urgent at all times, and especially now, when our failure to find it may mean years of death and suffering with a patch-up peace at the end of it. Why not admit now, what history will record, that we have **all** been at fault, that **all** must share the blame and that our task is to repair the damage before its repercussions overwhelm us? The alternative is a war of exhaustion followed by another “Versailles” or another “Munich” – the diplomatic war being continued as in the past between powers fully armed, the vanquished wasting their chance to renew the conflict on terms more favourable to themselves.

In the past the seeds of future wars have always been sown in the imposition of an unjust peace. To-day even leading statesmen of Britain and France have admitted that the aggression of recent years arose in part from the Versailles Treaty and the subsequent policies pursued by the British and French governments. That aggression continues to-day as a threat to national freedom which the method of war has done little to stop and cannot permanently eradicate. Only a just settlement can remove the fear and resentment and the economic disabilities which commonly lie behind national aggressiveness.

Just as war is rapidly destroying liberty in the “democratic” countries, that liberty for which those nations believe themselves to be fighting, so a just and lasting peace is the only condition in which that liberty can be restored. To continue this war for a period of years may mean the destruction of liberty for generations. In place of a war which is being fought, on one side at least, without any stated aims, we offer a conception of peace based upon a common aim in which all can share: the emancipation of man from war and from the seeds of war in human society.

### **Basis of the proposals**

The proposals made here are given in order of practicability – that is to say, not necessarily in order of **importance** in any fundamental sense but of **immediacy** in view of the present situation and the relative likelihood of any particular step being taken.

The more fundamental reforms are therefore only indicated at the end, being more remote from probability; though the signatories recognise that without the **full** programme being carried out there is no **permanent basis** either for peace or for justice. They nevertheless urge the following steps in the order given for purely practical reasons and in the hope that humanity may take courage from smaller victories and so pass on to greater.

### **The Proposals**

The whole proposals being too long for our present purpose, the following are only the main titles of structure, composition, terms and suchlike:

#### **Step I. An immediate armistice**

Terms to be arranged by a committee of neutral and relatively disinterested Powers. Immediate exchange of prisoners. ...



**Step II.** Immediate arrangement for a peace conference.

Composition: Belligerent and neutral powers

Terms of reference

1. Immediate economic relief of privation arising from the war, ...
2. Examination of economic claims of belligerents and others respecting access to raw materials, over-population etc.
3. Provisional fixing of disputed frontiers, etc. ... The ultimate aim being the removal of frontiers, the immediate objective should be to minimise their importance. ...
4. Immediate demilitarisation ...
5. Progressive Disarmament. Disarmament by agreement has so far proved impossible at the various conferences. An analysis of the reasons show that they were, in the main:
  - (a) Failure to link the problem with the economic demands, grievances, etc., which express themselves in war preparation.
  - (b) Impossibility of equating armaments of a totally different character, and insistence of each government on retaining its superiority in a particular sphere of action, whilst deprecating the same claim as made by its rivals.Progressive disarmament must therefore be directly related to the subjects giving rise to fear. ... Where this cause is the military preparation of the other country it can be eliminated by reciprocal agreement. ... Immediate aerial disarmament should be advocated as a definite and probably popular proposal.
6. Colonies

**Step III.** A people's conference.

It will be recognised that governments are unlikely to carry out even a small part of the necessary programme unless an effort is made to mobilise public opinion on the broadest possible international scale. Such a mobilisation of opinion can be made most effective through a People's Conference sitting at the same time as the Conference of Governments. This conference would be the unofficial means of creating public opinion and should be the focus on all the discussions and creative thinking without which "peace" may be so easily become a fiasco.

Among the bodies which might be asked to assist in organising such a People's Conference are: Federations of Trade Unions; Co-operative movements; organised movements such as the Indian National Congress, i.e. organisations not represented by governments; organised Religious bodies, Christian, Moslem, Hindu, Jew etc.; the Women's International League and organised Movements for social service; the Great and Growing Pacifist Movement. Avoid political parties except in cases such as the Indian National Congress, where the "party" is synonymous with a national demand that is unrepresented in the Conference of Governments.

**Specific Proposals**

It would be dangerous to push any specific proposal too hard at the Government's conference. At the same time there it is our duty to lay before it through the People's conference and to try to direct public attention towards issues such as the Settlement of Europe and the future of Colonies.

### **The Settlement of Europe**

European insecurity arises from the rival claims of powers passionately concerned with security and economic sufficiency. The most far-reaching aggression or imperialism, even if prompted by genuine economic need, is regarded from the point of view of national self-defence. There is no possibility of European peace unless it is realised that war arises from the obsession with national security. Civilisation is the self-discipline by which men and nations subject these obsessions to common interests and achieve the security they desire by increasing the security of others. Of the European neurosis this general explanation is particularly true and its acceptance demands perpetual insistence on a fundamental principle, viz. that peace will be possible in Europe only when Europeans ask themselves, "What are we prepared – in our country – to give up for the sake of Peace?"

*European Frontiers.* As already indicated, we regard the correct direction of progress as being towards the elimination of frontiers through the progressive minimisation of their importance. So long as frontiers exist, however, and importance of any kind is attached to them, we regard the only just and reasonable method of determining them to be the free plebiscite.

*European Federation.* It may be the first step towards the elimination of European rivalries. Federation does not mean super-states, whose members are national states, checked and punished by an International Police Force. It means an organisation of individuals on a far greater scale than any existing state in Europe, progressively taking over many of the functions hitherto regarded as matters for the 'sovereign' national state.

The danger of federation is that it may become the instrument of more dangerous rivalries between a smaller number of contestants, or that it may prove the means of a better-organised and more intensive colonial exploitation. Actually federation is what one chooses to make it. But whatever it is, the success of European Federation means the end of European war and the ultimate liquidation of European frontiers.

*Pooling of economic resources.* Its related problems and implications in all the fields of economic relations.

*European Federation and the future of Federalism.* European Federation will fail to achieve the results hoped from it unless it is conceived as a step to World Federation. European problems are admittedly the most disturbing factors in World Politics, and we have already indicated that they may continue to be unless European Federation is tackled in the right spirit. But what can be achieved within European limits should suggest the application of the same principles on to a wider scale, and the very limitations of European Federation should point to their own solution the extension of the federal idea.

1. Federalism should be advanced by example, i.e. by progressive National States accepting federal suzerainty and responsibilities voluntarily and demonstrating that they are better off and not worse off thereby.
2. Nothing should be urged at this stage in furtherance of Federalism that would give unnecessary alarm to the more nationally minded. If we want federation now we must ask only what we can reasonably hope to obtain from existing States and leave the growth of federal authority to the force of experience and example. Over ambitious programmes in this direction will only lead to the false assumption that federation is an attempt to set up coercive machinery repugnant to deeply-rooted sentiment.

### **The Future of the Colonies**

The Colonial problem may be considered from two principle angles: firstly, the conflict of interest between rival imperial ambitions and secondly, the conflict between all such ambitions and the interests of the colonial people. In refusing Germany's claim to colonies two doctrines have been widely popularised outside that country, the significance of which must now be made clear. The first is the idea of Trusteeship, the second, which is an entirely new idea among Europeans that the future of the colonial peoples must be a matter of 'Consent'. It is true that the insistence on 'Consent' has so far been confined, in Britain, to proposals from transferring colonies to Germany. Nevertheless this sudden realisation of the fundamental importance of colonial opinion contains logical implications that must be immediately stressed.

#### *Implications of New Colonial Conception*

Because the colonial problem is two-fold there is always the danger that European and other conflicts may be solved at the expense of the colonial people. The basis of Colonial Settlement must be found along the following lines:

1. In the abandonment of imperialism profits rather than in a new 'share out'.
2. In sacrifice of colonial profits rather than in their re-division.
3. In the increase of self-government rather than in proposals for international administration. Self-government should be the goal. Internationalism, if resorted to at all, should be regarded only as a temporary expedient.
4. In the abolition of all-preferential tariffs and other measures which give a special economic advantage to the 'Mother country'.
5. In free access to all essential raw materials.
6. In international guarantees to respect the independence and integrity of all colonies when and as they achieve their status as independent States.

Thus the assumption of 'Trusteeship' in relation to the colonies demands the acceptance of minimum capitalist morality as practiced in commerce.

With regard to colonial possessions the following recommendations might be put forward as steps in the right direction:

1. India, including the French and Portuguese possessions and Cyprus be given complete independence.
2. Palestine, Transjordan and Syria to be given complete independence, with or without federation in a combined Arab State. It is ridiculous to pretend that the Arabs of these countries are less capable of self-government. Still more absurd is it for the British to object, in the case of Palestine, on the grounds of 'communal' problem, which they themselves created and continue to complicate.

The Jewish problem is fraught with great difficulty. It must not be allied to British Imperialism. Britain is already committed to giving Palestine self-government. The proposed delay will by no means make a peaceful change easier. France may even make substantial concessions to popular demands in the North African colonies, where Italian rivalry can only be met, ultimately, by a policy that will win her goodwill of the Arabs and Moors.

3. The conquest of Abyssinia should not be recognised and reliance should be placed on the progressive abandonment of Imperialism in Africa by other powers, which will place Italy in so difficult and possibly vulnerable a position that she will follow their example. At present, however, no other Great Power is in a position to criticise

Italian imperialism. A turn of the kaleidoscope may well find a conservative Britain or a reactionary France left in an equally difficult and vulnerable position with regard to their over-worn imperialist claims.

4. Immediate Self-government for West Indies and all European Colonies in the American hemisphere.
5. Set up an international commission of which at least one-third members would be representatives of States possessing no colonies and at least one-third known representatives of native opinion in these colonies.

Terms of reference of such a commission should include management and relationships in regard to 1. Land; 2. Taxation; 3. Forced labour; 4. Indenture (contract labour); 5. Conscription; 6. Labour and trades-union rights; 7. Civil liberties; 8. Government employment of Natives; 9. Government expenditure; 10. Profits from the colonies; 11. Native opinion.

The report and recommendations of the Colonial Commission would have to be made, after a reasonable period for the inquiry, to a second World conference, meeting to discuss the future of the colonies.

#### **Other Subjects For Discussion in a World Conference**

Both in the official conference and in the 'People's Conference' there are many other subjects which should come under discussion. These should include:

1. Financial Restrictions on Industry
2. Land Hunger
3. Minorities and Refugees
4. An International Civil Service: a step towards the final solution.

The above version of the proposals gives only some extracts from its Sections and some sub-titles. The purpose here is not to discuss the details of the proposals or their merits and demerits, but only to give an idea about the concern the WRI had about creating enduring peace within a global perspective. Although the World War was at its peak, and the immediate task was to stop it, the WRI was fully aware of the fact that stopping the War was only the first priority of war resisters. Its goal was to eliminate war and militarism altogether from the dynamics of global relationships and to establish human unity based on equality, freedom and mutual respect. The proposals would have been put forward with greater emphasis and confidence if the full International Council could have met officially and discussed them more fully and with wider consultations from all its Sections spread all over the world.

## **The end of the war**

At the end of 1942 Germany's defeat at El Alamein and at Stalingrad brought the turning point in the war. It also began a change in Hitler's character and behaviour. The defeat and failure in materialising his dream served to isolate him from the realities which he could not have imagined and for which he was completely unprepared. Directing operations from his headquarters in the east, he even refused to visit bombed cities or read reports of setbacks. His secretary Martin Bormann took care that only pleasing information reached him, and he became more and more dependent on his physician, Theodor Morell, and the injections he supplied. Hitler's

'misfortune' made him to react to the war situations more and more rashly. But he had not lost the power to react vigorously even in the face of misfortune.

In Italy the Germans set up a 'republican fascist party' with Mussolini as its titular head, but who was then arrested in July 1943. Hitler not only directed the occupation of all important positions held by the Italian army but ordered the kidnapping of Mussolini, with the intention of making him the head of the new Fascist government of Italy.

By April 1945 the general collapse of Germany began and the Allied armies started running over Western Europe and the Russians driving forward into Eastern Germany.

Allied armies also marched towards the foothills of the Italian Alps. The fifth army entered Verona on April 26 and three days later occupied Milan. Part of the fifth army swept westward receiving effective support from the Italian anti-Fascists. In April 1945, Mussolini and his party were apprehended by Italian partisans outside the Italian village of Dongo, near Como, where, after what they called 'trial', they were executed on April 28, 1945.

In Germany an increasing number of soldiers and civilians had, by July 1944, started feeling desperate about the situation created by Hitler. They were ready to remove him and negotiate peace with the Allied forces. They even tried to kill him and made several plans which totally failed. In one, which nearly succeeded, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg exploded a bomb at a conference at Hitler's headquarters, but he and his companions were caught and executed. Hitler managed to escape with minor injuries.

Hitler's obsession not to withdraw from the eastern front led only to greater losses without any possibility of holding up the Soviet advance, which inevitably made Hitler's relations with his army commanders increasingly strained. Despite several efforts on the part of many in the army and some civilians he refused to withdraw, which motivated them to remove him and negotiate a peace. Hitler became increasingly ill and fatigued. In December 1944 he moved his headquarters to the west refusing to surrender, which condemned his armies to death. From January 1945 he never left his chancellery in Berlin and its bunker. But he did not give up his total control over the Nazi party and the army and continued to exercise hypnotic control over his subordinates, who had not the slightest influence on the happenings in the country. By that time the Russians had reached very close to Berlin.

Hitler married Eva Braun and almost immediately dictated his political testament justifying his career and appointed Karl Dönitz as head of the State and Josef Goebbels as chancellor. On April 30 he said farewell to Goebbels and others who were there, went into his suite and shot himself. Eva Braun took poison.

### **Unconditional surrender**

At 2.41 a.m. on May 7, 1945 the act of unconditional surrender was signed to become effective at midnight May 8-9. The war with Japan, on the other hand, still continued. The Allied powers were having some discussion as to what operation could be conducted against Japan; but that became unnecessary. On August 14 Japan accepted the terms of the Potsdam proclamation, which required the unconditional surrender of all its military forces. The ceasefire order was given on August 14 and the occupation by Allied forces began on August 28. Nothing else could have happened, as the 'Americans' had demonstrated that they had the capacity to destroy whole cities in no time.

The Allied powers succeeded in destroying Hitler. But did they succeed in destroying *Hitlerism*, the most dangerous enemy of humankind and which appears in different forms in different situations and at different times?

## Notes Chapter 11

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- 41 Hagbard Jonassen, Denmark; José Brocca, Spain; Christopher Vibe, Lilly Heber, Norway; J. B. Th. Hugenholtz, Holland; J. Nevin Sayre, Elinor Byrns, Jessie Wallace, USA; Laurence Housman, Sybil Thorndike, Alfred Salter, Ruth Fry, Stuart D. Morris, Rudolph P. Messel, Harold Bing, Wilfred Wellock, Reginald A. Reynolds, Grace Beaton and Runham Brown, Great Britain.

## CHAPTER 12

*Evan Thomas and Harold Gray were sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to join the armed forces. After his court-martial Harold Gray said in a letter: 'So far as I am able to learn, Thomas and I are the only men for whom the death sentence has been asked, and since Thomas received twenty-five years' hard labour at Fort Leavenworth, my fate will probably be the same. However, if they should give me the death sentence and it should be approved by Washington, I know of no one who is more ready to die for a great cause than I am, and I certainly know of no greater cause than that of upholding the majesty and freedom of conscience.'*  
John Nevin Sayre 1935<sup>1</sup>

### New challenges in the aftermath of war

The first few post-war years were especially difficult for the WRI. Members were coming out of prisons, concentration camps or from their hiding places. They all needed to rebuild their lives, both socially and economically. One of their needs was to renew their contacts with friends, relatives and other war resisters. Many WRI members had died during the war, some of natural causes but several in concentration camps or by execution at the hands of Nazi armed forces.

Here are a few examples of the stories of their experiences of hardship and mental and physical torture, taken from contemporary issues of *The War Resister*, the official journal of the WRI:

#### **France**

Georges Chevé died in prison in 1943 whilst serving his sentence for 'refusal to obey a military order'. He was an ex-soldier of the war of 1914–18, the first French man to openly declare himself a war resister, which he did in 1927. Before that time many young Frenchmen had avoided service by changing their names and moving to a distant town. Chevé decided that war must be resisted, not avoided. He declared his convictions openly and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Before the court he stated: "it is not with a light heart that I make such a decision. I know that my old father is going to suffer in consequence. I know that my little daughter will suffer through the action of her father. I expect to pass long months in prison. But placed between what you call 'my duty to Society' and my conscience, I cannot hesitate. I shall never be a soldier. I shall always refuse to bear arms."<sup>2</sup>

After serving his sentence Chevé was released and ordered back to the French army. He did not go, but sent the following letter to the Minister of War:

After serving my sentence of six months imprisonment, which I received from the Military Tribunal of Rouen on the 7th October, 1927, on account of my refusal to serve, I have the honour of renewing herewith the declaration which I made to the judges and of advising you of my decision not to become a soldier. As a conscientious objector, I refuse formally to participate ... in anything which concerns the duty of learning how to

kill. At a moment when the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and civilised humanity are outlawing war and declaring it a crime according to the common law, you will find it logical that I refuse to comply with the military duties, with murder punished by the laws of all civilised countries and outlawed by human morals.

Believe me, sir, that it needed strong reasons to compel me to break with everything dearest to me in life, with an old father and old mother, with friends, in order to accept the existence of an outlaw, an existence allotted to all those who dare to oppose military law. However, I preferred an uncertain future and these separations to lying to myself, to counter-acting the very essence of my existence, my ideal of goodness, of fraternity, and of solidarity.

As a young man I experienced all the horrors and miseries of the last war. I suffered profoundly through it, and the fact that it was not capable of solving any problem and obliges the nations again to prepare for war has only consolidated my determination. . . . I am returning to you my papers and the sum of forty-three francs which were handed to me on my release in order to enable me to rejoin the army.

Awaiting your decision about my further fate, I am now with my little girl of four years in order to arrange for her maintenance. Please accept, sir, the assurance of my pacifist convictions.<sup>3</sup>

Phillbert Besson died as a war resister in prison in 19418. Emile V éran, Paris, writes of him: ‘This lovable and picturesque ex-deputy, although representing somewhat different ideas, suffered the sad fate of a war resister and died in prison.’

Sebastion Faure died in prison in 1943, we have no further details. Felix Scheuring was killed in Clairvaux prison in 1940 during the bombing of the prison. They died like men standing for humanity.<sup>4</sup>

Eug ène Lagot, International Council member, died in Panama a few months ago. He undertook many missions for the WRI, the most successful being in 1935 when he went to the Balkans to intervene on behalf of many war resisters, mostly Adventists who were in prisons. In Bucharest he had an interview with the under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, interceding for eight war resisters who had already spent eight to ten years in prison. Ultimately all were released. Eug ène then went to Bulgaria, where one Hristo Ivancev, who was sentenced in 1931 for twelve years. Eug ène succeeded in getting him released, but Hristo was so ill that within a year he died.

Eug ène also managed to get the release of more than 300 Nazarenes in Yugoslavia. He also took the opportunity of meeting many WRI friends in all these countries before proceeding on to Prague and Vienna. In 1939 he undertook a mission at the request of the WRI on behalf of the South American Settlement for Refugees Limited, a company formed jointly by the WRI members there and the Christian Council for Refugees. Eug ène Lagot was on his way to Colombia, where war broke out. He then went to Panama where he died. The WRI could not obtain the precise details of his death.<sup>5</sup>

## **Belgium**

Arrested for the fourth time at Eckeren, near Antwerp, in May 1939, I was locked up in the Antwerp prison. After being sentenced to two years’ imprisonment I was sent to Turnhout and then to Louvain. I was imprisoned at the latter place when the war started



for us. I did not know what was happening, though the bombardment of the town was so heavy that it made me conscious of the tragedy that was to come and had begun. I threw myself on my knees and prayed, 'Lord, I will undertake or undergo anything as Jesus did in the cause of relief, order and peace. Even if it cost my life in the making of a new world, I will be the first casualty'.

They collected together all the prisoners whom they thought were suitable for the army: I was also called, but I refused, and they told me I would be shot for it. I replied, 'That's nothing'. They saw that all their threats could not sway me, so consequently I was immediately locked up again.

Another day I was brought with fifty 'untrustworthy' prisoners to St. Gilles, Brussels. We were crowded into two vehicles, and revolvers were trained on us at front and rear. I did not know what events were occurring and spent a few days in Brussels expecting to be shot at any time. My relations thought me dead for sure. They said to themselves, 'he will certainly not capitulate, and now that war has come he will most surely be finished with a bullet.' For three months I remained locked up. Then they set me free with these words: 'You stay out as long as we hear nothing bad about you'. I thanked God and went happily home.

Soon I expected to be brought up before the Germans for the same thing – since my stand was against Belgian militarism, so it would have to be against all militarism of no matter what country. Every summons I received from the Germans I ignored, rendering myself liable to arrest, so I went off, as for six years before the war, on the tramp. Where they asked for me, and where I knew they were in need, I went and helped. Twice I was arrested by the Germans. At one time nobody without a work permit could go free. I had no permit, and they asked me what I was doing. I pointed to a small lad of three who was with me and answered, 'This little one's father is crippled, and they have asked me to come and look after him.' They were compassionate and let me go.

Incidentally, how unnecessary again was this war! So much injustice and misery has strengthened my belief in the truth of our ideals. More than ever I am ready to stand by them. So help me God!

Hendrik Spiessens<sup>6</sup>

## **Holland**

### *Many were shot helping those who dived*

The Dutch war resisters during the German occupation took a very active part in 'illegal labour', especially in humanitarian underground work, helping those who had to 'dive' and very often helping Jews, providing them with foodstuff, ration cards, money and shelter. From August 1942 my wife and I have lodged five Jews, two or three at a time. We fortunately succeeded and they all got through safely. The anxiety, especially of last winter, was very great.

Though never arrested for work, I once was seized in the street to be deported, as many men were, but I escaped. Many behaved bravely but many had to pay for that with concentration camp and some with death. So died the conscientious objectors Jaap Cornelis, Henk Eikeboom, Jo de Haas, Bram Klein, Ab Manist, Hein Vrind and Piet Zuidendorp. The following friends were able to return to Holland from camp – Bram Storm, Hein van Wijk, Martien Polissen, Wijnand v. de Leeden, Willy Bendeler, and Piet v. D. Zee.

At this moment there is no organised peace movement in Holland. During the war we gathered round illegal papers now printed openly, the greater part round *The Spark*, which has now become *The Flame*.  
Bram Hessels<sup>7</sup>

### **Finland**

I was very pleased to hear from you, and glad that you have not lost faith in our great cause. As you say many have suffered a lot, and many have died for their ideals. But far more have died in vain in battle, fighting for things they don't understand. It is a bad thing that many have not had strength enough to stand for their conviction. And still there were more conscientious objectors than I had hoped, in Finland. When I was in a so-called labour camp during the war I met over a hundred of them . . . and I guess there are about 3,000–4,000 of them in Finland. That would be 0.10 % of our population. We went through quite a great pressure, some were even killed, and most of us were condemned to prison for many years, but thanks to the Allied victory, released in November 1944. Conscientious objectors have been very differently treated, as the laws have been very confused and the military authorities did much as they pleased. . . .

I should be glad to get your bulletin. I am the editor of our Peace paper, called *Fredsposten*, which I would gladly send you if you think it is of any use. It is printed in Swedish. We have also a Finnish paper, *Rauhaa Kohti*.  
Deryck Sivén<sup>8</sup>

### **Austria**

*Prof. Ude – 'A candidate for death'*

Your letter of March 1946 brought me great pleasure . . . I give a short report of how I got through this time.

In 1939 the Gestapo expelled me from Graz and Steiermark for good and I lived in Grundlsee in exile under the constant eye of the Gestapo. I was expelled because I put in a word for the persecuted Jews in letter to the District leader, Dr. Ueberreither of Steiermark, and called the bloodthirsty persecution 'barbarous'. As far back as 1939 I was arrested by the Gestapo the first time on account of a sermon in which I upheld the right of parents to give a Christian education to their children. I was in prison at Linz for two months. When I came out I was later forbidden by the Gestapo to preach. On 1st August, 1944, I was again arrested and spent more than eight months in the prison of Linz and Wels in solitary confinement. The accusation brought against me was one of 'weakening the defence and favouring the enemy', which was punishable by death. As a candidate for death I had to expect every day to be taken to the scaffold. My 'crime' was that in a letter to a friend I explained how one could get world peace without war. This letter got into the hands of the Gestapo. In these eight months I suffered from great hunger and cold, and like all political prisoners was exposed, defenceless, to the attacks of the American and English bombers. It was a horrible time. But through my Christian outlook, and under God's protection, I was able to get through this time safely until the Germans collapsed, and though I am now over 72 years old I am starting up with renewed zeal and full of the joy of work to struggle for world peace and against war.<sup>9</sup>

## Germany

Heinz Kraschutzki was a lieutenant in the German Navy in the war of 1914–18, but after the war he became a war resister, one of the most active and totally dedicated members, and spent nine years in a Spanish prison. He wrote:

Yesterday night I left Spain and arrived here on British soil, where I feel definitely safe, and the first thing I do is to write you and thank you for all you have done for me in the last years. It's you who got me out of prison finally. The certificate I was given begins 'Upon the request of the British Ambassador in Madrid, this office has obtained his liberation from prison in Spain . . .', which means that without that request they would not have done anything to liberate me, which is about what the Americans do with the other foreign prisoners who are still in jail. I know that you obtained British protection for me already in 1937. It was so far that the British Consul then came one morning to the prison and told me to get my things ready, as I should leave for London that very afternoon. About the reasons why that action failed much can be said, and on another occasion I shall tell you some details that might interest you. Later, when I was carried to Borgus to be delivered to the Germans, who would have killed me, it was, as far as I know, the British intervention that saved my life. And it was the Germans who, when they could not catch me, signed an agreement with the Franco authorities that I should not be killed but never be put in liberty. Even Spanish Fascists told me that they had nothing against me and that I was in prison only for the influence of the Germans. My two sentences made that quite clear, I was condemned with a pretext. Therefore I was afraid that they would not allow me to take the sentences out of Spain, and asked the British Embassy at Madrid to send them to you by diplomatic mail, which they did. They show clearly that I was in prison not for any political activities in Spain but for my opposition against the military class in Germany, which may prove to be important for my future in occupied Germany perhaps.

I am glad to say that I am of excellent health, though I have acquired, especially in 1941, a thorough knowledge of what hunger means. . . . I am not a 'broken man'. . . . I remain an optimist and can say that my faith in mankind is stronger now, after what I have gone through, Than ever I tell you this to show that I am fit for future tasks, even heavy ones.<sup>10</sup>

I first met Heinz Kraschutzki at the WRI Council meetings when I joined the WRI as General Secretary in 1962. I regarded him with great admiration for his dedication and the spirit of determination. He had been arrested on August 1, 1936 and incarcerated in the Belners prison at Palma. His wife and children were sent back to Germany. One of his sons had finished his studies in England, and the WRI were able to keep in close touch. Eventually, after much effort, the WRI was able to manage, through the British Consul in Palma and the British Foreign Office to arrange his embarkation on a British war ship going to Marseilles. And again through the efforts of the WRI Heinz Kraschutzki arrived in Gibraltar on November 8, 1943.

Theodor Michaltscheff, a Bulgarian pacifist who lived in England for several years before going to live in Germany, wrote the following letter to Runham Brown:

The German people are undergoing a great spiritual crisis, due to their loss of faith in National Socialism and their not finding their way to democracy as yet. The process of

re-democratisation which had spread in all classes of society especially in the last 2–3 years of the war, stopped dead after the capitulation of Germany. It may sound curious to some people, but it is nevertheless a fact worth knowing that the Military Government and the Allied troops of occupation not only did not further this spirit of re-democratisation but, if anything, they even hindered it. Let nobody be bluffed by the widespread political activity in the different zones of occupation, because this is not due to any encouragement received from the Military Government but (I should almost say) in spite of it. Democratic activities would have been on a much larger scale, and democratisation would have been much more effective, had the Military Government encouraged or, at least, not discouraged them. . . .

Unfortunately the Allies chose . . . to punish indiscriminately the whole German people instead of winning it for the cause of democracy. . . .

Germany paid a high price for the crimes of her government, and in my opinion that is more than enough by way of retaliation. The German people itself were quite prepared to acknowledge the justice of this retaliation, and to put the whole blame on the Nazis. They saw in it the application of the Old Testament principle of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”. This justice, although not a Christian one, has at least the appearance of one. But after having had almost an entire jaw taken for a tooth the German people see no justice in the infliction of any further punishments. The more so because those who are punishing them are the same who razed the German cities to the ground and killed at least one and a quarter million German civilians – for the most part innocent children and women. ...

I remember still the repentant spirit of *The Times* and the greater part of the leading British Press of the years 1937–1939. . . . But the British politicians of 1945 seem to have forgotten all about it, and they are making just the same mistakes (even on a far greater scale) all over again, for which future generations will have to repent once more. But then it will be too late again. . . .

The British people seem to have forgotten, too, that the British Government, of their own free will and accord, concluded several pacts with Hitler and treated him on an equal footing and as their equal in every respect. Was there any sense in expecting the German people to drive away Hitler whilst Chamberlain was going by aeroplane to pay him a visit in Berchtesgaden? It is high time to bring these truths home to the British people, ...

The German people expected the Allies as liberators, but they chose to come as conquerors. The Allied armies did away with the Nazi system, but they did not destroy National Socialism as such. In fact, without knowing it, the Allies are sowing nationalism in Germany again. . . .

I am absolutely convinced that had the Allies left the task of punishing the Nazis to the German people itself it would have been done more radically, effectively, and justly than the Allies could or would ever do. Because it is high time to realise that the great majority of the German people hated National Socialism and the Nazi system in the last few years and awaited eagerly the first opportunity to reckon with it.

I'll even go further and say that the only way of eradicating Nazism consists in letting the German people do it themselves. For, after all, a political system cannot be done away with by simply cutting a few heads off. The overcoming of an ideology is a purely psychological process which can be helped but not enforced from outside.  
Theodor Michaltscheff.

P.S. After I had finished this letter I met a number of pacifists unknown to me before . . . They all felt deeply concerned about the disappointment of the German people in general, and expressed the fear, too, that if the present situation is allowed to go on nationalism of one kind or other may spread in Germany again. . . . They find confirmation in all who care for democracy and want to see peace and freedom established all over the world.<sup>11</sup>

## Other accounts

In the year 1946 the WRI completed 25 years of its existence, and the Secretariat launched its Silver Jubilee Fund. Ruth Fry, the Hon. Treasurer, sent out an appeal, which was published in the form of a pamphlet entitled *Freedom . . . The Price That Was Paid*. The pamphlet gave a few brief descriptions and statements by some war resisters and the courageous manner in which they had borne sufferings. For instance:

Olaf Kullman, President of our W.R.I. movement in Norway, refused the demand of the Gestapo and died at their hands. "He went singing towards the inevitable martyrdom." Writes a Norwegian friend: "They who knew him, loved him; they who did not love him, knew him not."

Gérard Vidal, of France, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for his stand as a war resister. When the prison at Clairvaux was bombed the prisoners escaped, but Gérard Vidal remained behind with an injured friend and was taken by the Nazis.

Pierre Boujut, France:

"In spite of everything I have seen and suffered, I emerge from this war without hatreds. *Mankind is worth loving.*"

Madame Launay, France:

"I was arrested by the Gestapo and interned in Fresnes prison; my husband was arrested, tortured and deported. One brother, twenty-four years old, was denounced and shot by the Germans. Another brother, Charles, was put in prison. My father-in-law was arrested but liberated at the time of the collapse. The yoke we had to bear was insufferable. We would have preferred the freedom of death, but we made sacrifices in the hope that our sons will not have to suffer. We feel less alone now that we have rediscovered old friends in the W.R.I."

Elisee Perrier, France:

"As a lover of freedom . . . I refused to submit. . . . I was condemned to five years' hard labour, ten years of 'restricted residence', ten years' deprivation of civil rights and a fine of 100 francs. I spent the time tossed from prison to prison . . . At last came the day when the doors of the prison were opened before me. I resumed my place among the ranks of those striving for freedom and peace."

Anne van der Plaats ran an underground duplicated press service with reliable news, at great personal risk, during the occupation of Holland. These friends, as much as any,

have suffered through lack of food and clothing. The strain has told heavily on most of them.

The pamphlet also published the following message:

So we hand on to you messages from those who have passed through the grim realities of war and persecution; those who have experienced imprisonment and concentration camp; those who have faced death rather than compromise the things in which they believe. "They do not lose hope." But they do look to us. . . .<sup>12</sup>

## Simultaneous Regional Conferences

In the month of June 1945 the WRI had published a pamphlet, *The War Resisters' Calling*. The International Council invited all war resisters in the pacifist movement and associated with the International throughout the world to unite in simultaneous regional conferences, if possible in the months of January or February 1946. This was to be in order to renew the sense of fellowship and solidarity, to think and work together as one people and prepare the International movement for the first post-war international regional conferences to be called 'at the earliest opportunity'.

In an article published in the journal of the Peace Pledge Union, *The Pacifist*, Harold Bing wrote that the agenda for these conferences would include:

The Declaration of Post-War Policy. This would review the moral effects of the war from a pacifist viewpoint. . . . Let us, therefore, talk less of what is right or wrong in the actions of others. Let us stop talking of 'justice' when we only mean revenge. Vengeance and punishment will not bring back the dead or give to the living the things they seek. We, who are tired of destruction, must forget the old wrong, or destruction will never cease and hatred will sow seeds of hate for the rest of time. We will turn from this way of death to the way of life, which is love. All we will consider must be the needs of the world, and how we can help to meet them. Like the good doctor who is bound to give help to all who suffer, we too will find that we can refuse no one. And surely a world which has endured so much for hatred and the cause of death is brave enough to endure as steadfastly for love and for life. Seeking the good of our fellow men we shall find that peace will come to our own hearts and to mankind; for the 'fruit of the spirit' is still found in love, love and peace; in long suffering, kindness and goodness; in faithfulness, meekness and self-control.<sup>13</sup>

A call was given to all the WRI Sections and associated bodies to organise regional conferences on that basis. The spirit and the tone of the covering letter of invitation conveyed the importance the Secretariat and Council attached to bringing pacifists together, particularly those who had been close to the WRI during the past quarter of a century. The International had been trying to keep in constant touch with as many war resisters as possible during the period of the crisis, which had created all kinds of distances between them around the world.

Dear friends,

It is so long since most of us have had the opportunity of meeting to discuss our prob-

lems that we feel heavily the responsibility that now falls on the secretariat of the WRI and those of the Council with whom it has been able to maintain contact. The Council itself is aware of its limitations – being no longer necessarily representative of those who appointed it. We speak in humility, subject to much criticism and correction from those who have seen what we have not seen and suffered what we have not suffered.

A beginning must be made again in the larger task of the International. All that we have tried to do during the dark and difficult years of the war, the work of which we have given some account. ... We have done what little we could to help the individual war resister, to alleviate the suffering of the world only on a very small scale and to maintain the bonds of friendship across frontiers which the International has always cultivated. But the work of bringing together the men and women of different nationalities, the task of evolving some common policy and of making ourselves familiar with each other's problems – these are things for which we shall need all the advice and help all of you can give us.

To-day we are looking forward again to the moment when another Conference of the International will be possible, when new problems will be discussed in the light of new experience, and a new Council chosen by you to carry on the work of the International along lines which you yourself will determine. In these circumstances we feel that the least you will expect from us are some suggestions as to the best way to prepare for such a Conference, when it is possible. Here we are making certain proposals regarding preparative Conferences, on the broadest possible regional basis, as a first step towards a meeting of representatives from all over the world.

Will you co-operate with us and call such a Conference or Conferences, if not on a national basis, then in regions when possibly smaller numbers may be better able to concentrate on the problems which confront us all?

Reports (resolutions if you prefer it, although the International has always preferred to avoid decisions by majority vote and has favoured the Quaker method of appointing a rapporteur to sum up the findings on each subject and obtain general approval), should then be sent to the secretariat of the International for our guidance.

You will naturally wish to invite representatives from other regions and, where possible, from other countries. In a few cases the International Council may be able to send a member of the council or a close co-operator. We shall be at your service to help in any way, if you will be good enough to keep us informed of your plans. During the Conference greetings (through the International or direct) sent to other Conferences meeting at the same time might give a sense of fellowship.

On behalf of the International Council: Laurence Housman Chairman; Runham Brown Hon. Secretary; Ruth Fry Hon. Treasurer; and Grace Beaton General Secretary.<sup>14</sup>

To explain the purpose of the regional conferences the pamphlet included an address: to 'Ourselves, members of one great human family'. It said:

Never has it been clearer that we cannot, even if we wished to do so, stand aloof from the world. We are closely identified with its past and present sufferings, its future of fear and uncertainty. Nor can we shut our eyes to the implications of power politics, of economic and social injustice, of national rivalry and all its symptoms – such as armaments, tariffs and territorial disputes. Our attitude to imperialism, fascism and aggres-

sion remains unchanged. But many of us are not satisfied with what we have said and done in the past. We have often criticised, and we believe that the tragedy of this war has more than justified our criticism. But instead of feeling justified ourselves, we feel humiliated. True prophets do not merely foretell the future – they declare what the future *should be*, and by their vision are able to change the course of human destiny. Perhaps if we had offered a clearer alternative, if we had been inspired to lead rather than to warn, our warnings would never have been “justified” to our own shame.

Let us consider what happened. We saw all the symptoms very clearly. We saw imperialism, armaments, oppression, exploitation, militarism, conscription, and we tried to tell people what evil things these are. But did we ever really understand the disease of which these things were the signs and the results? Did we seriously consider how it was that other people – people no worse than ourselves (and often much better) in all their personal relationships – could become part of this universal conspiracy of murder and suicides? Or, if we did, what had we to offer – a living example of a better way?

If we believe, as we surely must believe, that the spiritual forces of “faith, hope and charity” should govern the affairs of men, something in our own lives should have made this clearer than all our criticism, however just, and all our protests, however consistent. We should not then have been fighting a long, losing battle against human folly, content to counter each move towards disaster with comments and warnings to which the world did not listen. We might, in some measure, have taken the initiative ourselves. Instead of the long search, so often unrewarding, for those who would hear our messages, *men and women might have come to us. That is the secret of every vital movement.*

A few in all ages, and some in our own time, have achieved this vitality and become magnets to which humanity has been drawn, for good or for evil. Twelve men in an upper room in Jerusalem or six men in a Munich beer cellar – they made history, and the astounding contrast between these two examples, in the history that they made, is the full measure of what individuals can achieve, the measure of personal responsibility. What drew men and women to St. Francis of Assisi? What was the power that made the peasant girl Joan of Arc, the symbol of French nationalism? Why has Mahatma Gandhi, without any of the political power of a fascist or communist dictator, a greater following than any of these dictators has ever possessed? Not one of these three sought for followers; they merely stood out in a way that inspired others.

Perhaps we distrust this sort of leadership. We have seen much of its danger. We know how willing people are to shelve the responsibility for personal judgment and decision. We mistrust above all, it may be, our own capacity to lead. So much the better. If we know the dangers of leadership and lack the arrogant self-confidence of those who claim it as a right, then we have the first thing that is necessary for leading by example, for that is humility. The world needs men who are not afraid to say and do what they believe to be right, but withhold judgment on other people who speak and act otherwise. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, combines with “the courage of his convictions” a deep respect for the convictions of others. And that is why opponents who come into close touch with him learn, in their turn, to respect this great Indian leader. He is “dangerous” because of his power to convert enemies into friends, and so disarm them.

In this agenda<sup>15</sup> we could have said more about the post-war world and its problems, but we see our first responsibility as something deeper, universal and fundamen-



tal – the need for a “new heart”. And this need we do not see simply as something which we should be preaching to others but as something of which we ourselves should be more conscious. The vastness of world problems – national and international, social and economic – seems to us not a challenge to futile declarations of policy in a society that is not interested but to a re-examination of what exactly we have to offer that could *create* that interest. We feel that we should consider ourselves rather as seekers than as “preachers”, and in this search we ask our friends all over the world to join, that we may come to a better understanding of the way that we are to follow and the truth that we see dimly in a world of great darkness. That is our first message at this time to our many friends in all parts of the world who have dedicated themselves to the service of peace, and the first thing we ask them to consider in their Conferences.

But it is not our suggestion that the pacifist movement should become indefinitely a group of men and women concerned only with their own internal problems and unwilling to face the outside world until those problems are solved. The testimony of peace and goodwill cannot be silenced, and some statements from the International should be considered by us all as a basis for our future work. We have therefore, after careful consideration, with the help of many friends . . . drafted such a statement as a basis for discussion.

Our request to you is that you will consider this statement and amend or add to it in the light of your discussions, so that we may be guided by the whole movement in the eventual statement to be published. The publication of such a statement appears to us, however, to be of less importance than the opportunity now to consider its contents, using it as a starting-point of discussion. This may help us in that re-orientation of our work which we believe to be so necessary at the moment.<sup>16</sup>

### **Suggested agenda for the simultaneous conferences**

The Agenda had four sections:

Section 1 Ourselves

Section 2 Administration

Section 3 Principles and Practice of War Resisters

Section 4 World Affairs

#### *Section 1. Proposed statement to be given by the WRI:*

The nightmare of war does not end with the dawn of “peace”. In the sudden stillness when the guns sound no more, men and women look around them, taking stock of the present and the future. It is a world almost without faith, without hope and with very little charity.

These are the most beautiful things in life; above all other things they make life worth living. We talk much of “security” because we have no faith in the future; but, without that faith, real security cannot exist. Real security is only found in a community where men are not afraid of one another. Because we have so little hope we are beginning already to prepare for new wars. Charity has become a luxury that nations feel they cannot afford. Hardened by terrible sufferings, they seek relief in causing suffering to others, and call it justice.

We cannot condemn or blame those whose hearts have been hardened, least of all those whose sufferings have been much greater than our own. But we can consider, and

ask them to consider too, whether we or they have been without blame. The self-righteousness of Britain and France, of Belgium and Holland stands condemned by the voices of many subject peoples. "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone" – that is still the answer to all who judge their fellow men. We can also ask ourselves, when we condemn any nation for the crimes of its government, whom we include in our condemnation? Do the people of the United Nations really wish to inflict punishment on all Germans, including those who have suffered in Hitler's concentration camps? Can we talk of "just retribution" against children as yet unborn?

But charity should teach us more than this. Once in the Middle Ages a man called Gilles de Rais was condemned for the torture and murder of children in Brittany. He was executed, but before he was led to his death he asked the parents of the very children he was said to have killed to pray for him. The miracle is that they did so. Those simple Breton peasants were sorry for any man with the weight of so much guilt on his soul. They forgave him because of their great charity; and our own hearts tell us that they did well. Charity does not mean being kind to our friends, or to people whom we think good. It is a harder thing asked of us – kindness and forgiveness to those whom we believe to have done wrong. The practice of charity brings peace and happiness to our own hearts, which is what we mean when we say that "virtue is its own reward". A world that could practice charity would reap the same reward – peace and happiness.

Kindness is the best wisdom. The more complicated the world becomes, the more ignorant we are, we may find it harder and harder to know the truth, to sort out the rights and wrongs of disputes among politicians. But if we are determined to treat people according to their *needs*, and not to be judges of their "deserts", to consider how we ourselves would *wish* to be treated, and not how other people "ought" to be treated. Our complicated world presents a very different picture. Instead of a series of intellectual problems which we may well feel to be beyond our mental powers or our knowledge, we have a single moral problem which only requires goodwill and a little common sense. "Only" – that is the difficulty. Goodwill is not always easily felt or practiced. 'Common sense' is not always very common. It is still a hard way; but it is not something utterly beyond our power. Learned historians are still arguing about the trial of Gilles de Rais; was he guilty? How far was he guilty? But ignorant peasants settled the main thing that mattered hundreds of years ago. If he was guilty, he had their forgiveness. Guilty or not guilty, the miracle of love replaced learning with a wisdom of its own. If Church and State had known the same wisdom, many a criminal might have lived to repent and make reparation.

And that is the real meaning of "reparation". It is a voluntary action – making amends, so far as one is able – for harm done in the past. "Reparations" wrung by force . . . harden the hearts of those who are forced to yield them. They dry up the tears of repentance. They are . . . a form of punishment . . . vengeance. . . . They can never make any man, woman or child morally better. . . . They will make most people a great deal worse.

We . . . do not say these things because we ourselves can claim to be perfect followers of this way. On the contrary, we know our faults; . . . We say that kindness and forgiveness are the true guides to peace and happiness because we know it to be true, and not because we have always followed those guides. When we look around us to-day we can see . . . that the relief brought by "peace" is mixed with fear, that the old problems remain unsolved. The victors . . . Though they talk of fine plans for international and social "security", their actions continually betray the fear that still governs them. . . .

To those who fear, we have no plan, no ready-made road to offer, mapped and signposted; we are seekers and we only say: "Let us try this lamp of charity, for the road is dark and there is no other light". . . . to those who have no faith in the future we say that they too have much in common with us, because they have seen the folly and hopelessness of building on sand. . . . Here, surely, is the best of all causes, the cause of human brotherhood; and if we fail, those who have done nothing to help will share the responsibility for our failure. . . .

This is not a Utopian paradise beyond all hope of achievement. It is a world which at moments, men approach closely. Every deed of self-sacrifice in peace or war – and they have been countless – shows us the other side of humanity. It is always there. Often it achieves this very miracle we seek, because courage, like fear, is infectious. Once in a burning theater, when panic seized the audience, a man climbed slowly on to the stage and lit a cigarette, waiting for the rest of the audience to leave first. His action saved hundreds of lives. His courage was the symbol of the courage which will save the world, if anything can – the world where we are all afraid of each other, and only the sight of those who show no fear can restore courage in the rest. Perhaps that man was afraid; but if so, he controlled his fear because he cared about other people. He must have known what nations do not yet know – that the stampede for safety is the most certain path to destruction. . . .

Vengeance and punishment will not bring back the dead or give to the living the things they seek. . . . We will turn from this way of death to the way of life, which is love. All we will consider must be the needs of the world, and how we can help to meet them. Like the good doctor, who is bound to give his help to all who suffer, we too will find that we can refuse no one. . . . Seeking the good of our fellow men we shall find that peace will come to our own hearts, and to mankind; for "the fruit of the spirit" is still found in love, joy and peace; in long-suffering, kindness and goodness; in faithfulness, meekness and self-control.

#### *Section 2. Administration*

The International Council: ... the secretariat should continue ... with the Council members with whom it is in touch, until it is possible to call an International Conference. Regional Councils: In the years prior to the war Regional Councils were being formed. The Western Hemisphere Council was the first to be set up; the Scandinavian Council were working well; other regional groups were under consideration when the war intervened. ... it is hoped that Simultaneous Conferences will appoint regional representatives who will co-operate directly with the International council. Matters to be discussed: Finance of the WRI, Contacts and literature.

#### *Section 3. Principles and Practice of War Resisters*

Matters to be discussed: Anti-Conscription; International Rights of Conscience; Alternative Civil Service; Compulsory Labour Service; Relief Service at Home and abroad.

#### *Section 4. World Affairs*

Matters to be discussed: The World League; The Judgment of War Criminals; Reparation; A Police Force; Our Refugees; Whither Europe? Good Europeans; European Union; Security; Europe's New Frontier; Jewry in the Arab World; and Dumbarton Oaks.<sup>17</sup>

### **Additional suggestions for the agenda**

In an informal conference held in June 1945 the WRI discussed the kind of work it might be undertaking in the “immediate future”.<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty that confronts those who are prepared to face all the facts in seeking a way out from a form of social and economic organisation that we know must lead to war is that two essential groups of facts seem to be contradictory:

On the one hand we know that the economic impulse to war can be removed only if those who wield the enormous power that belongs to great possessions in the means of production can be dispossessed of that power;

On the other hand the transfer of power from a possessing class to the community seems to betoken a struggle likely to be waged by all means and inevitably culminating in violence;

Most people who seek a solution close their eyes to the consequence of one or the other of these two groups of facts.

The man who fixes his attention on the necessity for the transfer of power thinks he is being realistic if he accepts the necessity for violent struggle, but refuses to envisage the social consequences of such a struggle in the conditions of today. He fails to see that such a struggle must lead to the destruction of the moral values he seeks to establish and must thus nullify the new social order he seeks to set up. The resort to violence, however brought about, must inevitably enthrone the power-grasping type, and must degrade the moral standards it is necessary to sustain and develop for the creation of the Good Society.

On the other hand the man who fully understands the moral debasement and the stultification of social idealism that is the consequence of violent struggle, is tempted to scale down his view as to the fundamental necessities of social change, and to put essentially ineffectual conceptions of the amelioration of working-class conditions in the place of the radical reorganisation of society that is a necessity if the catastrophe of war is to be prevented. His view thus becomes, for practical purposes, except on the issues of war or armaments, indistinguishable from that of the right-wing labour reformer who is quite content with a capitalist society with a few modifications and trimmings.

An effective policy must have equally in view these two basic considerations – radical change and peaceful method – and must somehow contrive to reconcile objective and means that are in appearance contradictory. Unless we can overcome the pessimistic inertia that adheres to policies that are at variance with the realities and can think our way through to a method of approach to the necessary transformation of society our civilization is doomed, either through its own inherent tendencies leading to catastrophe or through an ill-fated attempt to settle in the field of armed conflict matters that cannot be settled in that field.

In seeking such a new approach at the present time, however, we start with the advantage that it has become more clear than ever before that war is inherent in the present social system, that each successive war threatens to be more catastrophic and more destructive of our moral standards, and unless the economic impulses to war inevitable in our form of social organisation can be dealt with, we will have to face a climax of destruction in which all of us – possessors of power and dispossessed – may

go down together. There is then today a more extensive recognition than there has ever been that something is wrong at the basis of the social system; and in any attempt to achieve the new approach to the problem that is called for we start with that to the good.

This general recognition that there is something basically wrong with the social order fails to be an effective impulse to social change because those with riches and power feel that their immediate interests depend on the maintenance of things as they are; their immediate interests clash with their ultimate interests . . . I suggest that this is the dominant fact that we have to deal with.

Is there in the post-war psychology likely to be any other factor, beyond the general recognition that war is part and parcel of our economic system that may give us an advantageous starting point? I think there is. There is little evidence so far that the present war is likely to be followed, as was the last, by the sentimental emphasis on the virtues of youth as against age. The cry in the 1920's that youth had a special claim to be given a chance led nowhere – except perhaps to the helping of Nazism in Germany – and it was in the nature of things that it would lead nowhere. . . . Youth has a number of advantages over the later periods of life, but a superior wisdom is not one of them. . . . But although there is no special quality of wisdom to be found in youth as against the middle years of life or age, youth has certain qualities that age is less likely to have retained that are very pertinent to the problem we are considering; and the claim that the younger generation has to make a disproportionate contribution in paying for the shortsightedness of the old, and therefore should be given a chance to make a special contribution in deciding what is to be the shape of the future is one that can be very relevant to our problem.

An eager readiness to accept change is much more likely to be found in youth than age. For instance, youth is much less likely to be found to be corrupted by power or possessions. Youth does not suffer under the weariness that age calls disillusionment. And, perhaps the greatest factor of all, youth is educable.

Now is it possible for us to found our policy on the existence of these differences? Can we formulate a socialist policy that will more or less *write off* those of the later period of life as prospective human material for a socialist society, and build all our hopes on the assumptions that the younger generation and its successors can provide the material that is necessary if we can as a nation face this fact in unity and at once? What is envisaged here is the possibility of combining a policy of gradualist social change with the full realisation that such change can only be worth while if it is consciously directed to the radical transformation of society – a time scheme spread over, say a period of thirty years, which would aim at the full establishment by 1975 of the public ownership of the land and industrial capital, combined with such a measure of functional and localised control of the productive instruments that there would be no danger of such a system substituting an oligarchy of political managers for the displaced oligarchy of wealth. We should consciously start from a given date to construct a different order of society conditioned to the needs and aspirations of youth; part of our problem would be the conditioning of youth to that society, but another part of it would be the peaceful liquidation of the interests and prejudices of the old.

Such a plan should have a threefold character:

1. It should reshape the educational system and should so adjust the content of educa-

- tion as to bring it into line with the moral and intellectual needs of the new society.
2. It should progressively bring the workers in a controlling relationship with the industries in which they work; and
  3. It should take such measures for the transfer of land and industrial capital from private to public control in the period stated as would lead to the least dislocation and would arouse the smallest resistance from the interests that would be affected.

If this conception of a new method of approach should appear to provide a promising field for examination. I suggest that it calls for a four-fold agenda:

1. The idea that the most promising approach to the achievement of revolution by consent is through the planned combination over an accepted period of time of the gradualist method with revolutionary intention.
2. The reshaping of the Educational system as an instrument of the conscious social aim:
  - a. The moral conceptions necessary to be inculcated as a means of making the Good Society possible; the theoretical foundation of such moral conception.
  - b. The aesthetic conceptions to be taught as the basis of culture that must provide the justification of life.
  - c. Such technical training as is necessary to lead to vocational instruction; with particular reference to the necessities of 3.
3. The progressive approach to effective democracy:
  - a. The drive to achieve effective democratic control by the workers over their industries; the planning of the educational means to achieve this.
  - b. The progressive regional and local devolution of governmental functions.
  - c. The essentials to be achieved for a real democracy in a Parliamentary system.
  - d. The problem of democracy in relation to world controls.
4. The method of transfer by agreement through the developing consents of the possessing classes of the land and industrial capital from private to public control:
  - a. The transfer through the capital taxation of inheritance.
  - b. The encouragement of the psychology of the voluntary renunciation of capital possessions.
  - c. Type of machinery – voluntary and governmental – required to deal with these developments.
  - d. The international implications of this policy.

## The conferences

All together 33 simultaneous regional conferences were held in 11 countries: Argentina, Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Palestine, Belgium, France, Denmark, Sweden, Mexico and the USA. While reporting on it Stuart Morris said that the purpose of these conferences was to get the movement thinking together, and to enlighten the Council as to the opinions held by the Sections on the many subjects suggested the agenda. The outstanding fact revealed by

these conferences was the complete unanimity with which the Declaration and Statement of Principles of the International had been approved and re-affirmed. There had also been considerable unity of opinion on most of the subjects brought before the conferences, and many valuable suggestions came from the Argentine. The War Resisters League in the USA mounted the greatest effort in response to the call for the simultaneous alternative conferences.

### **Conference in New York**

The War Resisters League formed a WRI Conference committee with representatives from both the WRI and FOR. The committee decided that preference should be given to local and national conferences rather than the regional ones. They also decided to invite other American countries to send representatives. A conference to be held on February 22–24, 1946 would be known as the National WRI Conference to which fraternal representations from Canada and Latin American countries would be invited.

Each of the local conferences, which would have already taken place in January 1946, would be asked to send delegates to the National Conference, in proportion to their participants, fixed by the Conference committee. The committee added a few items to the suggested agenda, e.g. End of the War In the Far East; Atomic Bomb and topics especially related to the situation in the USA.

A report of the simultaneous conferences organised by the War Resisters League stated:

In June of 1945, the WRI courageously sent out a call for simultaneous conferences to be held in early 1946 throughout the world. In the United States of America it resulted in 14 local and area conferences, scattered from Boston to San Francisco, and thereafter, on February 22–23, in a National Conference at the 15th Street Friends' Meeting House in New York.

Between four and five hundred persons attended the preliminary conferences for at least one session. The national gathering was supposed to consist only of members of Executive Committees of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League . . . and representatives from the local conferences. Over forty of these officials were present, most of them staying throughout the five sessions. There were also two dozen visitors, who have been closely associated with the WRL and the FOR.

Phonograph records had been made in England by H. Runham Brown, Vera Brittain, Prof. C. E. M. Joad and Reginald Reynolds, which arrived in time for use at some of the preliminary conferences and by the national gathering. They did much to increase the sense of solidarity with war resisters in the rest of the world.

Greetings went out from the conference to our fellow war resisters in all countries and to our own men serving as conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service or in prison, some of whom even in prison had managed to hold a WRI conference.

The agenda followed in the national conference was worked out by a joint FOR–WRI committee and was followed fairly closely. At each session a different person or persons served as secretary, their report being read to the Conference and approved in place of findings or resolutions. Where the report was written by an individual, it is signed.<sup>19</sup>

Frank Olmstead

### **Arms race and disarmament**

The first session, which was addressed by A. J. Muste, discussed the question: How to stop an arms race and promote disarmament?. The dropping by the USA of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had added a new dimension to the quest for disarmament. A. J. Muste emphasised that even if the atomic bomb was placed in the hands of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) the effort of not using it would be bound to fail. Unless war was totally abolished the temptation of sovereign nations to make their own atomic weapons could not be stopped.

Pacifists who may join with non-pacifists in supporting international control as against national monopoly of the atomic bomb should always seek to guard against causing a sense of false confidence in what can be accomplished by measures short of abolishing war. The USA must immediately stop the manufacturing of the bomb to relieve international tension, especially to create an atmosphere of confidence.

A. J. Muste also said that the atomic scientists had rendered a great service in proclaiming the facts about atomic war, insisting that war must now be abolished if civilisation, or even perhaps the race itself, is to survive. He said that ways should be found to challenge individual atomic scientists and the technologists associated with them to adopt an attitude of conscientious objection to any part in such manufacture, and also to create among scientists a climate of opinion which would deter others from taking any such part. He also asked the Conference to urge that American scientists make vigorous efforts to establish close contact with scientists of all nations for the purpose of enlisting them in a social movement to abolish war.

### **World government – national sovereignty – United Nations**

This session of the Conference discussed the role and character of the UNO. None at the conference was satisfied with the UNO. They felt it was ineffective in preventing war for two reasons: (1) the Security Council was a balance-of-power arrangement dependent upon continued unity between the three most heavily armed nations; and (2) the General Assembly had advisory functions only and no actual power, since all policies adopted had either to be submitted to the Security Council or else referred back for ratification to the national governments. Since the veto power held by members of the Security Council made amendment of UNO's Charter well-nigh an impossibility, some participants felt that the calling of a world constitutional convention would be necessary to secure a world government.

Several participants felt that they must first carry on an educational campaign so that people would recognise that they needed a world government for the whole human race that would provide order under law. Some said that a world convention at that time would not produce results to improve on what had been tried before. They urged striving primarily to achieve disarmament, abolition of conscription, etc. The most effective means of securing world government would be to have two or five or ten per cent of the population of the world signed up as war resisters.

Most of the advocates of world government felt that all of these objectives should be pressed, and they saw no conflict between working for them and at the same time for world government. Most of the people present felt that if the recent trends continued there would be little democracy and government would be at the mercy of scientists unless the idea of individual conscientious objection became more relevant than ever to the prevention of war – possibly the only thing of relevance.



### **Power politics – imperialism**

In this session four definitions of power politics were mentioned: (1) the use of force to obtain undesirable goals; (2) the use of military and economic power to obtain world domination; (3) each group or nation working for its own interests by any method and without regard to ethical standards; and (4) a world system in which the influence of nations is determined by the amount of power they have.

How much pressure may pacifists use? In discussion it was generally agreed that if all force was ruled out, it would not reflect world reality. Should the appeal be to the best in the individual? Or could the individual be asked to over-ride his or her personal convictions to please the constituency he or she represented? It was agreed that the person who stands out for his or her convictions in the long run gives the most significant service. But this could not be the only course of action. Other methods included ballots, letters, visits, questionnaires and the setting of personal example.

### **Atomic energy – the economic factor**

Some opinions in the conference were that no hope could be pinned on scientists, because they were ‘hired people’, not free agents. The productive capacity of atomic energy would have to be under other control before it could benefit people.

The participants generally agreed that there would have to be a fundamental change in the economic base of the society before world peace was attained. However, there was considerable disagreement about the direction of the changes necessary. The idea of a synthesis of socialism and pacifism was also discussed. The mere readjustment of the social order would not be sufficient. It was necessary to appeal to the conscience of the scientist, as well as educate him in new principles of government.

### **Freedoms**

The Conference proposed the following principle: There are only two fundamental freedoms:

- 1 The right to be oneself and grow into oneself and express oneself;
- 2 The right of access to the material things needed to live on this planet.

Out of these fundamental freedoms come:

- 1 The right to organise; and
- 2 The right to struggle, which includes conscientious objection.

The major emphasis at this time should be in pressing for world abolition of military conscription. “While energies should be devoted solely to the opposition to peace time conscription . . . we should all be on the alert for any effort to renew the Selective Service Act.”<sup>20</sup>

The stand taken by both the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the WRI was to refuse to request any programme for alternative service or to support such a programme, should peace time conscription be adopted. The general view registered was expressed thus: “acceptance of alternative service may be taken to imply the recognition of the right of the State to impose military service upon others. We deny this ‘right’ and urge that alternative service should be strongly opposed because all such service becomes part of the war organisation.”

All the participants agreed that they must make clear the validity of conscientious objection. In addition to the value of this stand in maintaining personal integrity, equally important was the need of special attention on educational efforts among the 14–15 age-group both in

school and outside.

The work for restoration of civil rights was recognised as one of the most urgent tasks: “Such a campaign has additional value in creating a better public understanding of the meaning of conscientious objection and of the reasons which lead men to refuse to fight.”<sup>21</sup>

### **What shall we do?**

There were two sessions on this question. At the first session in the opening comments the first speaker said that pacifists had been greatly frustrated by working through existing institutions which were completely opposed to what the pacifists stood for. Reporting on the Atlantic City Conference (ACC: February 12–14, 1946) he spoke of a plan for a follow-up conference on the machinery for implementing the plans suggested by this conference. Representation at the ACC was wider than at any other time. In addition to several pacifist groups and some social action committees there were representatives from three non-pacifist bodies.

The main decisions from this session were, as reported by one of the activists, Eugenia Holdrith:

1. Formation of the Consultative Peace Council, which will hold monthly meetings but make no policy and as an organisation will take no action. It will analyse development, discuss pacifist strategy for the pacifist movement to pursue, and to discuss the question of what various organisations might do together with regard to spending money, use of personnel, etc. Any action taken will be by and in the name of those organisations which want to pursue such courses of action, either individually or jointly.
2. The second piece of machinery (which is only in the planning stage) is for the present known as the Service Agency. A meeting is to be held in April at which time the various organisations will indicate what part they will take in this agency and they will be expected to commit themselves on the basis of a 2 years experimental period.  
... Plan for the Service Agency arose out of the feeling that in addition to needing more constant consultation and co-operative action, there were some activities that the pacifist organisations should undertake jointly. . . . a) information service; b) clip sheet – to go to the editors of rural, trade union, religious, farm presses, etc. rather than to large papers; c) publicity man – to co-ordinate programme of the pacifist movement in the most active way for presentation to the public. Possibility of the more effective use of radio and the setting up of a speakers’ bureau . . . to receive more and careful consideration; search bureau – it was stated that the present Pacifist Research Bureau might be incorporated in this bureau. Its job would be a) research providing background for reports which pacifist organisations might want to make; and b) background information on current problems as they come up, etc.

The conference also discussed publicity for non-pacifists who might come alongside because of certain similarities. On the other hand the discussion group felt that they were not yet prepared for gearing their appeal to the non-pacifist and the non-intellectual section of the general public. At the time of this gathering the Quakers from Washington announced the establishment of the William Penn Press. This group was planning to edit a weekly newspaper with a liberal slant.

Regarding the fundamental purpose of any pacifist organisation, the group had two points of view. On the one hand they said that one of the major functions of the pacifist organisations

was to *make* more pacifists. During the war they had been stressing the need for better quality pacifists at the cost of making new pacifists. They should now seek opportunities for speaking before non-pacifist groups, holding street meetings, and distributing leaflets on a very wide scale. The other opinion was that pacifists should be concerned with the prevention of the next war and direct more attention to this problem by addressing the root causes of war.

In another session discussing the same topic – What shall we do? – The group was concerned about the influence pacifists could and should make on the quality of life of the public in general. The same thing that makes them pacifists makes them oppose war-producing conditions inherent in the ‘peace’ which is merely maintenance of the status quo without violent interruption. Hence the need for action in the political and economic areas. There was a great need for the education of the individual. The individual must endeavour to eliminate those elements in his home life which support war-making activities. It would involve a careful choice of occupation, and refusal to pay taxes.

Wholehearted participation by pacifists in the activities they shared with non-pacifists, while maintaining the integrity of their pacifist position, does more for the pacifist cause than conscious efforts to spread pacifism within such groups. Family training is an extremely important influence for the inculcation of pacifist ideas such as the avoidance of personal violence, respect for the personality of others, and the possibility of standing out against the crowd for the position one believes to be right.

At the end this group made the following two suggestions:

That pacifist groups cut office work in half for a year and use the same money for field workers.

. . . That a questionnaire be prepared early this spring to be presented to all Congressmen, on pacifist issues, and that we undertake to withhold our votes from those whose replies are unsatisfactory.<sup>22</sup>

The summary of the above report ended with the following:

Go search your heart, America,  
Turn from machine to man.  
Build, while there is yet time, a creative peace . . .  
While there is yet time!  
For if you reject great peace,  
As surely a vile living brings disease,  
So surely will your selfishness bring war.

## Other regional conferences

### Conference in Los Angeles

The National WRI Conference held in Los Angeles, California in the third week of February was of a character slightly different from that of the New York Conference. The following account is based upon the report sent by Miriam Lischner on behalf of the WRI Conference Committee of Los Angeles.

The Conference started with four talks: (1) Background of the WRI, by Frank Olmstead;

(2) Some roots in history, by Charles Macintosh; (3) Political motivations, by Herbert Garfinkel; and (4) The new minority, by Henry Geiger. The discussion was mainly based on questions.

The complementary need for both WRL and FOR in the United States was emphasised; the former serving its purpose only if it remained absolutely unsectarian and non-religious. These organisations must be ready to pick up the vast group of persons ‘thrown our way’ by the war and atomic bomb.

War objectors were classified into three categories; (1) Those who believe killing is wrong, regardless of all else; (2) Those who believe killing is stupid and will not achieve any of their aims; and (3) Those who disagree with the aims (not necessarily of all wars).

The first group included those who had no knowledge of the sources of war or why killing was wrong. The root of this objection to killing seemed to be subconscious. It was part of the natural development of forgiveness in history. In early times in history there was a common belief in unlimited revenge. The growth of justice was gradual at first, more rapid later, going through the following steps: limited revenge, ‘eye for an eye’, pardon for accidental crimes, probation for all first offenders. The last was the point we had nearly reached in the actual practice of our courts. It seemed reasonable to carry this curve or trend in history, on to a point of complete forgiveness ahead of us. It was this subconscious trend which was the source for the first group of objectors.

Those in the second group had developed an understanding of their objections and an understanding of the motivations that lead to war. They attracted more sympathy from the rulers, but were treated more roughly because they were thought of as dangerous to the status quo.

In looking for the root of political motivation in pacifism the unstable, peace-time pacifism of socialist groups was pointed out. A week after the French and German ‘comrades’ had met and promised never to fight each other, they were at war. There was a ‘violent’ anti-war feeling. But the roots of pacifism lay in moral outlook, binding together politics and religion.

There was an outlook which was based on (1) the individual’s responsibility to mankind (brotherhood) and a conviction that the way out is not personal purity or salvation; (2) a new conception of social processes, or rather investigation into them. No formula had been developed, but basic questions were being asked and needed to be studied: What is the State? What is Government? What are the differences between State, Government and individuals? Is conscription necessary to the State? Can Government function without conscription? How can we change or replace the conscriptive methods? How can we realise a society of free men?

The delegates thought that as Americans they had no idea of what loss of liberty meant, because they had never experienced it. But COs had, and it was from this contact that a new outlook was developing – a study of the problem of the growing State, of the reasons why men revere the State. It should be noted that people could no longer think other than in terms of the State – that they looked to the State for the solution to all problems.

The trouble with the historic peace groups (as a generalisation) was that they had forgotten their founders. Fox’s aggressive attitude towards injustice was compared to the passive attitude of many modern Quakers. Suddenly faced with the reality of the State, they gained a political awareness and were needed by the new minority – the rulers.

Some of the participants thought that Government and State are identical. Others claimed that the State is an evil in itself, but Government can be made to serve useful purposes and was therefore necessary under existing circumstances. That is, Government was limited to specific practical functions, while the State was overgrown Government – Government for its own end. The most general view seemed to be that Government was necessarily totalitarian in nature,

but that, limited to a minimum, it was a necessary evil.

In an evening session the speaker Frank Olstead chose the topic 'The Inner Resources', through which he proposed that men might release life if they would, wherever they were. He advocated obtaining a citizenship 'in a world beyond this one'. In this session some of the questions were about an international police force in a world federation. Possibly the positive aspects of government, in time, would make world police forces less and less necessary. Pacifists had to work for the kind of government they wanted. They ought to have an attitude of some kind towards world government and should be willing to surrender their own sovereignty.

The unifying of the forces among pacifist groups was considered. The sense of relation among human beings, a conviction of essential unity, was thought to be most important. There was no room some said, for another pacifist organisation. There should be a striving for a unity of aims, purposes and understanding of each organisation – out of that would come unity of action. There was a need for developing an understanding of those who were not members of any pacifist organisation. The question of State power was also a vital issue for discussion among pacifists. Distinguishing between 'the State' and the necessary processes of government was considered essential.

## The WRI Council enlarged

During the War 'years, and in the beginning of the post-war months, it had not been possible for the Secretariat to call any special International or WRI Triennial Conference. Despite all the efforts, to some extent successful, to keep in touch with its Sections, individual members and other friendly organisations, any idea of holding an international conference would have been only wishful thinking. Nonetheless, the need was being strongly felt that some kind of get-together of pacifist activists and sympathisers ought to be organised to take stock of the situation and to enable them to communicate with each other and with the WRI Secretariat after the long period of forced separation. The WRI headquarters decided to take the necessary steps to bring this about.

### **War resisters' hope for the future**

Runham Brown was a visionary and an optimist. He wrote in *The War Resister* in 1946:

The light shines more brightly in the darkest places. Defeat is perhaps less deadly to the soul of man than victory. The world has reached a crisis; it must either begin to recover or it must die. We are optimistic enough to believe that it will recover.

Even the foolish bickering in Paris and the quarrels of a U.N.O. Conference do not unduly depress us. We reflect that this is the first time that the representatives of the nations of the world have sat round a table where all might see and hear them. This crisis surely means a change and it is not the death that is coming. The world will recover its sanity.

Within the War Resisters' International we have to be ready for the great recovery, ready to adapt ourselves in order to take advantage of the greater opportunities that are presenting themselves. From every part of the world evidence of a great renaissance comes to us like a flood. Not only do we learn of the loyalty of old comrades, but young

soldiers, prisoners-of-war and many who have held aloof, are knocking at our door.

The enforced secrecy of our International Council chamber now gives place to more open contact and discussion and to wider representation on our Council.

Deprived at present of the means of meeting in one great International Conference, we have in its place held thirty-three Simultaneous Regional Conferences . . . These conferences have helped us both to think and work together; they have shown sharp differences without the bitterness of a Paris conference. They have shown a mutual respect and confidence. The reports of the Conferences will be considered . . . and I have no doubt that they will influence policy within the International.

As a result of these Conferences, all our sections have been invited to appoint additional council members who will take full responsibility together with the old Council for the policy of the International until our first post-war International Conference. The Secretariat will now be responsible to a Council of thirty-six members in the place of the old wartime cabinet of thirteen.<sup>23</sup>

## The first post-war Council Meeting

The first post-war meeting of the International Council was held in Cambridge, England from December 28 to 31, 1946. Most of the Council members who were present in England at the time and some invitees attended it.<sup>24</sup>

In the absence of the Chairman, Laurence Housman, who could not attend the meeting, Runham Brown took the chair. In his opening remarks he referred to “some of those who had been lost to the movement, by death” mentioning particularly “George Lansbury, Arthur Ponsonby, Eugène Lagot, Bart de Ligt, Olaf Kullman and Arndt Pekurinen”.<sup>25</sup> He also mentioned that in Poland and Hungary almost all WRI members had died, only a few isolated friends remaining in each country.

There was a feeling among several European members of the International that the WRI Council was predominantly British. As a result, the idea was mooted that a small group of people from other countries be invited to become vice-presidents. As an immediate action the Council decided to invite Rajendra Prasad, who had attended the Vienna Conference and the International Council meeting at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi, to accept the appointment.<sup>26</sup> However, later it was realised that to have more than one vice-chairman would be rather unwieldy, therefore they established the tradition of having only one vice-president.

According to the Constitution of the WRI the Council had 12 elected members, an elected chairman and a treasurer who was appointed by the International Council. These members were expected neither to represent their own organisations nor any partisan outlook, national or regional. They were responsible for the overall *pacifist* perspective, policies, and the programmes of the International – each Council member having a wider perspective rather than a regional or national one. However, with the increasing amount of work and worldwide growth of the movement, it was felt necessary to also include in the International Council representatives of the Sections.

An unofficial meeting of the Council had been held early in 1945. It had decided that all the Sections of the International should be invited each to appoint an additional Council member. Consequently the December 1946 Council meeting enlarged the old Council to 37. The old Council had been elected at the 1937 Conference, which had 13 elected members instead of 12, because of a tie between the twelfth and the thirteenth positions, to 37. At the suggestion

of Runham Brown three more members were added: Samar R. Sen, (India); Olga Fiers, (a Swiss living in Czechoslovakia); and Reginald Reynolds, (Britain).<sup>27</sup>

The above decision was effected also because of the recommendations from the simultaneous conferences, early in the year. However, the December 1946 Council meeting “expressed the view that while approving the idea of a rather larger Council, it was most desirable to keep the spirit which had prompted the former method of electing Council members, and so it was decided to recommend to the next International Conference that we should revert to the original method of electing members from the whole movement rather than the appointment of *delegate* representatives. We have hitherto considered ourselves as one world-wide family to be governed by the best and most able people we can elect, irrespective of nationality.”

At the same time, though, the Council did not minimise the importance of participation of regional representatives. Some of the regional conferences had actually recommended having regional councils. The Cambridge Council meeting supported the idea but clearly defined the character and role of such councils if formed. “So far as *Regional Councils* were concerned, the idea was adopted in principle as desirable, and it was agreed that any opportunity which should present itself should be taken to encourage the right people in the various areas to form Regional Councils, but that no attempt should be made by Headquarters to map out these regions and impose the ideas upon the Movement.”<sup>28</sup> The proposal for regional councils, however, did not come to fruition.

## Right of Conscience, and Alternative Service

Whereas the experience of the First World War had created something of an anti-war climate, enhancing the growth of the anti-conscription movement, and had encouraged a substantial number of young men to demand the status of conscientious objectors, the post-Second World War climate did nothing much of that kind. Many people, including those who had been attracted by the pacifist approach had lost their faith in it. Many of them looked for solutions in organisations like the O.

Although there was an impressive number of men refusing or somehow escaping military conscription during the Second World War, the WRI, indeed the pacifist movement on the whole, naturally realised that their campaigns against conscription had not brought the results they had hoped for. While referring to the success achieved in 1926 when the first manifesto against conscription was launched, the Cambridge Council meeting knew that the time then had been psychologically suitable and so a very good list of signatories was obtained. However, they decided to set up a commission to draft a new manifesto to be circulated to Council members and to be brought up to date. There would be a list of possible signatories at the next Council meeting, which would decide when it should be issued. Until then they wanted it to be kept strictly confidential. The commission consisted of Harold Bing, Reginald Reynolds, Samar Sen and Hein van Wijk.

The 1946 Cambridge meeting of the International Council reiterated its faith in organising the campaign:

There was a general desire that the International should urge all its Sections to intensify their work against conscription, according to the conditions prevailing in the various countries, and that any campaign should take two forms:

- a. In countries like Gt. Britain and the USA where peace-time conscription is contem-

- plated for the first time, the campaign should be directed towards the overthrow of the permanent maintenance of conscription;
- b. In countries where conscription is firmly established, a rather different campaign is needed.<sup>29</sup>

At the next Council meeting, held in Basle, Switzerland (July 26–29, 1947) the following draft of the manifesto was presented:

The victor powers of 1919 forbade the defeated States to retain conscription in order to prevent them making war again. They thus recognised conscription as a cause of war, and the hope existed that before long conscription would be abolished in all countries. This, unfortunately, did not happen, and after the failure of the World Disarmament Conference conscription was re-introduced in those countries in which it had been forbidden. This was a contributory cause of World War II.

If we are to learn from experience and not allow a Third World War to occur, we must this time abolish conscription everywhere. The total warfare of today involves the compulsory mobilisation for military or industrial purposes of the whole manpower of the belligerents. At the same time the atom bomb makes nonsense of conscription as a means of defence. Small countries, as the recent war has shown, are in any case incapable of self-protection against Great Powers.

It is evident, however, that under the pretext of security, conscription is being maintained for quite other purposes; to prolong the occupation of defeated countries, to suppress movement for colonial independence, or to maintain inequitable social systems – purposes for which voluntary recruits would not be forthcoming in sufficient numbers.

Conscription undermines democracy and civil liberty. It inculcates into the mind of youth, an impressionable age, the principle of unquestioned obedience to authority, thus destroying the sense of individual responsibility for action and of the duty of obedience to conscience in matters of right and wrong.

Compulsory military service not only exposes young people to moral dangers; it also conditions them to accept war as a legitimate method of social behaviour and is thus a psychological cause of war as well as a technical preparation for it.

The present state of the world is a further argument against conscription. At a time when there is urgent need for the service of all in rebuilding our shattered civilisation, some of the best years of youth are being taken from constructive service and devoted to what is at best a negative activity. This is exceedingly serious so far as material reconstruction is concerned; it is even more vital when it involves the interruption of the professional and academic training of those who are being equipped for positions of special responsibility and leadership.

The growing number of those in all countries who are expressing radical opposition to war, and to conscription as part of the war system, including the large number of young men who are refusing on grounds of conscience to perform military service, is evidence of a social awakening on this matter and an indication that the enforcement of conscription will involve increasing persecution and suppression contrary to the principles of human rights proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations.

We therefore, on behalf of a great number of men and women in many countries, appeal to the conscience of mankind, to organised public opinion everywhere and to



the governments of the world, to press for an early abolition of every form of conscription.

We recognise that to be effective and durable, the abolition of conscription needs to be universal. At the same time, a lead given by one or more countries without waiting for general agreement may well be the quickest way to the desired end. We appeal finally to the members of the United Nations upon whom rests at the present time so great a responsibility for the welfare of mankind, to take immediate steps to bring about everywhere the complete abolition of military conscription in all its forms.<sup>30</sup>

Anti-conscription campaigns were being conducted in some countries. For instance the Peace Pledge Union was organising one in Great Britain, though it was experiencing some difficulties. The Council had a long discussion on the issue of the campaign, but found itself going into many important questions of principle and fundamental issues such as “What is the WRI?”, “What are the functions of the International Council?” and above all “What is pacifism?”.

Commenting upon the discussion the chairman said that the issues covered a very wide field of thought, which cleared some points in the minds of Council members and provided the opportunity for exchange of ideas, a very valuable outcome of the discussions. As far as the publishing of the manifesto went, the Council was not prepared to take that step immediately. They were not all agreed on the wording of the draft. A sub-committee was formed to revise the draft in the light of views expressed in the meeting and to draw up a new text for the manifesto, which would be circulated to the Council members for their final approval. The sub-committee consisted of Harold Bing as Convenor, Samar Sen, Anthony Bishop and Hagbard Jonassen.

### **Statement On Alternative Service**

The Basle Council meeting held in 1947 formulated a Statement on Alternative Service, mindful that some war resisters were not ready to take the position of total refusal of conscription.

One of the initial purposes of the War Resisters' International is to support all those who resist war and compulsory training for war. It has always regarded the problem presented by 'alternative service' as one on which each person must make an individual decision. The respect for individual liberty and conscience which is fundamental to our common outlook makes it impossible for the WRI to lay down any ruling as to what conditions, if any, are acceptable to the conscientious objectors to military service.

As in the past, we welcome alternative service legislation in so far as it denotes an advance in the recognition of the right of conscience. But we give no general recommendation as to whether, or in what circumstances, such alternative service should be considered acceptable.

We have, however, pointed out in the past that the acceptance of alternative service may be taken as a recognition of the right of the State to impose military service upon others, that the intention of alternative service legislation may be to destroy the effectiveness of war resistance, and that such legislation may be used by Governments as an excuse for imposing more service penalties upon those who resist all forms of compulsory service.

The WRI Council, in placing on record its re-affirmation of these views, desires to

draw attention to a further difficulty that has arisen in cases where organisations of a pacifist character have gone so far as to become the administrative agents of alternative service schemes. The effect of such a policy can only be that those whose consciences do not allow them to co-operate in such schemes are penalised with exceptional severity on the grounds that they refuse to accept service recognised and administered by the 'official' pacifist organisations.

We therefore urge our sections to consider such proposals not only from the point of view of the personal convictions of the majority, or the leaders, but from the broader standpoint of pacifist interests as a whole. We are convinced that those who can themselves accept certain forms of alternative service in particular circumstances have no wish to make the way harder for those who feel unable to follow the same course, and that they will not deliberately take action of such a kind as to strengthen the hands of any Government in persecuting their fellow pacifists.

A distinction should be made between individual or independent group action, on the one hand, and (on the other hand) organised co-optation of pacifist bodies with official schemes of alternative service. When that distinction is made clear, we believe that mutual tolerance and latitude in interpreting pacifist obligations will be found to imply a recognition of the right of any individual to accept alternative service; but that the same principles will preclude the administration of alternative service schemes by pacifist organisations.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the fact that the International had always preferred that more and more people should come out with total refusal to conscription, an increasing number of conscientious objectors began asking for alternative service.

Much energy and resources of the WRI and its Sections were spent in struggling to obtain legal status for conscientious objectors. With this the demand for alternative service too increased. The hope that the demand for alternative service should remain within certain limits, referred to in the draft of the manifesto, hardly made any impact on most of the young men facing the call-up. Although the approach of total resistance to conscription had a good following among the youth, it was now alternative service which was sought by the majority of men called up for military service.

## New Headquarters for WRI

In accordance with the decision of the 1946 Council Meeting of the WRI, a house in Enfield, 12 miles from the centre of London, had been purchased with the balance left in the Lansbury Memorial Fund and with special donations raised for the purpose. The house was named *Lansbury House* after George Lansbury, and the office of the International moved into it on June 3, 1947.

The International had been finding its financial situation quite difficult. Its Secretariat, with the co-operation of the War Resisters League, followed the suggestions that a joint treasurer should be appointed in the United States of America. The Basle meeting (1947) announced the appointment of Edward C. M. Richards as co-treasurer. Edward Richards was a member of the executive committee of the WRL, the US Section of the WRI. He had a long association with the League and the pacifist movement in the States. The Council hoped that this appointment would be helpful in improving the financial situation of the International.

A new phase in the life of the War Resisters' International began with fresh ideas and new tasks to be faced in the context of the challenges emerging from the changing world situation in regard to the growth of militarism.

#### Notes Chapter 12

- 1 John Nevin Sayre, *The Fellowship of Reconciliation – 1915–1935*, FOR, 1935, p.4
- 2 Georges Chev , *The War Resister* 50, pp.18–19
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Emile V ran, *The War Resister* 50, p.19
- 5 *The War Resister* 50, p.18
- 6 *The War Resister* 51, p.10
- 7 Ibid. p.15
- 8 Ibid. p.32
- 9 Ibid. p.40
- 10 Ibid. p.17
- 11 Theodor Michaltscheff, *Germany – Democracy in Peril*, WRI, London, 1945, pp.3–8
- 12 *Freedom . . . The Price That Was Paid*, WRI, London, 1946
- 13 Harold Bing, 'The Story of the War Resisters' International', part 17, *The Pacifist*, Peace Pledge Union
- 14 *Simultaneous Regional Conferences*, WRI, London, 1945, p.4
- 15 A detailed outline of the suggested agenda was sent along with the appeal for holding the Alternative Regional Conferences. A brief summary of it is also given in the text.
- 16 *Simultaneous Regional Conferences*, WRI, London, 1945, pp.5–6
- 17 Dumbarton Oaks Proposals. A statement opposing the Proposals had been adopted by the Executive Committee of the War Resisters League, USA, in November 1944. The WRI Secretariat suggested that the Statement might be discussed and if approved also be adopted by the Alternative Regional Conferences. We have already discussed the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals in Chapter 11.
- 18 Allen Skinner, *Peace Pledge Union*, June 1945, WRI Archives
- 19 Report of the Simultaneous Conference organised by the WRL, February 22–23, New York, the WRI archives with the Swarthmore College, USA, 1946
- 20 'The Selective Training and Service Act of 16 September, 1940 was passed more than one year before the entry of the US into WW II . . . In this regard, there is a distinction between a course of reasoning resulting in a conviction that a particular war is inexpedient or disastrous and conscientious objection to participation in any war under any circumstances. The later, and not the former, may be the basis of exemption under the act. The former is usually a political objection, while the latter may justly be regarded as a response of the individual to an inward mentor, call it conscience or God, that is for many persons at the present time the equivalent of what has always been thought a religious impulse. . . . The 1940 act was due to expire in 1947 and 15 million out of 16 million men in the services had been demobilised following the end of hostilities with Japan'. Prasad and Smythe, *Conscription – a World Survey*, WRI, London, 1968 pp.140–43
- 21 Stephen Siteman, Report of the Alternative Conference, February 22–23, 1946, session on Atomic Energy – Economic Field, WRL, New York; WRI archives at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Penn. USA
- 22 Ibid.; pp.10–11, The report of this group was prepared by Frances Rose Ransom
- 23 H. Runham Brown, 'I Am an Optimist', *The War Resister* 52, Autumn 1946, p.3
- 24 Council members: H. Runham Brown, Chair; Hagbard Jonnasen, Denmark; Arne Jorgensen, Denmark; Hein van Wijk, Holland; Jannie van Wijk, Holland; Hem Day, Belgium; Suzanne Girard, Switzerland; Stuart Morris, Britain; Harold Bing, Britain; Frank Dawtry, Britain; John P. Fletcher, Britain; Monica and Sydney Townend, New Zealand (substitute for Lincoln Efford); Ernest Roberts, Australia (substitute for Tony Bishop); G rard Vidal, France (substitute for Gouttenoire de Toury);

- Samar Sen, India and Reginald Reynolds, Britain, both by invitation; and Grace Beaton, Secretary; Catharine Cooper, Translator. Gordon West, Britain, was also present.
- 25 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Cambridge, England, December 28–31, 1946, p.3
- 26 Ibid. item 6, p.6
- 27 Ibid. items 6 and 7, pp.6–8. The new International Council consisted of: Laurence Housman, President; Ruth Fry, Vice-President; John Fletcher, Treasurer; Runham Brown, Chairman; Grace Beaton, Secretary; José Brocca, Spain; Jordan Kovadev, Bulgaria; Jessie Wallace Hughan, USA; Haggard Joanne, Denmark; Premysl Pitter, Czechoslovakia; Harold Bing, Britain; Stuart Morris, Britain; Jorge Rio de la Loza, Mexico; Eugen Relgis, Roumania; Jacques Savasy, Argentine; Theodore Walser, USA; Gouttenoire de Tourey, France; Arne Jorgensen, Denmark; Jannie & Hein van Wijk, Holland; Regine Hesse, Germany; Heinz Kraschutzki, Germany; Frank Dawtry, Britain; Hem Day, Belgium; Suzanne Girard, Switzerland; Erland Sindstrom, Sweden; Stanley Halliday, Ireland; Lincoln Efford, New Zealand; Lavell Smith, Canada; Minko Mihor, Bulgaria; Avraham Lisavoder, Palestine; Nathan Chofschi, Palestine; Eduard Damm, Germany; Marjorie Fleming, South Africa; Reinhold Duschka, Australia; Helge Heiberg, Norway; Samar R. Sen, India; Olga Fiers, Swiss living in Czchoslovakia; and Reginald Reynolds, Britain.
- 28 Ibid. item 13, p.9
- 29 Ibid. item 13, p.9 and pp.15–16
- 30 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Basle, Switzerland, July 26–29, 1947, item 11, pp.6–7
- 31 Ibid. item 12, pp.8–10

## CHAPTER 13

*In every war the enemy has been charged, usually without foundation, with placing women and children in front of the guns as a screen for his own protection.*

*We conscript our boys at eighteen years and often much younger.*

*We are all against war! We know that if we prepare for war we shall get war, but if we disarm someone might attack us and we lack courage.*

*Pacifism is not an absolute assurance against war, neither is the atom bomb.*

*The end of the race in armament is certain – war.*

*To disarm is a risk, the psychological effect of which is unknown. We prefer to tread the unknown road with all its risks, than the certain road to destruction.*

*There is one thing we do know. Our manhood forbids that we shelter behind our children. We will not put our boys in front of the guns.*

*To resist war involves a great deal more than this. We must strive for the removal of all the causes of war, but this is the first step, and it needs courage. Our boys have courage; they will risk all danger.*

*Where is our courage?*

Runham Brown<sup>1</sup>

### Post-Second World War pacifism and the WRI

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#### **An unfavourable climate**

The post-Second World War situation was different from that which had developed after the First World War. For a decade after the First World War pacifism had grown in size and in its theoretical approach to world peace and social change. As we have seen, despite the non-sectarian character of the WRI a good proportion of its membership, individual as well as Sections, belonged to groups which based their pacifism on the classical concepts such as *Thou shalt not kill*, *War is a crime against humanity* and *All men are brothers*. Not many of these groups, including the socialist-anarchists, had a clear vision of a viable socio-political order they would like to help in building – an order without any hierarchical structure and militarism.

Even Tolstoy's pacifism, despite its profound anti-authoritarian and anti-state position, was premised on individuals offering personal resistance. His call was heeded by many: 'you are a soldier, you have been brought to pacify. It has been instilled in you that you are not responsible for the consequences of your shots. But you know that the man who falls bleeding from your shot is killed by you and by no one else. What are you to do?'

Generally speaking pacifists at that time believed that if *everyone* rejected military service peace would dawn upon the world as its consequence. This was a powerful concept if rather too romantic. Many active and thoughtful pacifists were its 'victims' almost from the very

foundation of the WRI, as is evident from the fact that this concept was included as the second part of the WRI Declaration.

The League of Nations, formed to operate as the peace-maker and arbitrator between nations and to keep control of the unreasonable and self-righteous behaviour of the winning governments towards the defeated nations after the First World War, had disappointed the hopes placed in it. It proved helpless in a climate of distrust towards power centres created by the winning nations. The promise that *this war was going to end all wars*, proved to be utterly empty. In fact the war had paved the way to the next one.

The failure of the League of Nations and other experiences gained from the First World War had encouraged the people, particularly the youth, to reiterate their faith in pacifism and seek solutions in the total abolition of militarism and war. As has been related in previous chapters, the pacifist approach for building a peaceful world became attractive and drew people towards anti-militarism, and a number of new peace organisations came into being during the decade after the First World War.

However the Second World War caused a very large number of people to believe that forces like Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism were the real enemies of humanity rather than the institutions of war and militarism. These forces had to be defeated by whatever means available or conceivable. So militarism itself could be accepted as an essential tool for building peace in a world dominated by "evil people". The result, putting it symbolically, was the atom bomb, and the destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>2</sup>

Fascism and Nazism embodied an intense racism, the greatest divisive force that ever existed in the world, deriving from the lust for power on the part of those who considered themselves belonging to superior races. They indeed thought it their right to dominate the world. Greed for power and dictatorships had been commonplace in history, but the Nazi-Fascist dictatorship was the worst kind of dictatorship the world had ever experienced.

Many people, even some of the staunchest pacifists, including a few key members of the War Resisters' International, abandoned their faith in pacifism and nonviolence. They had supported, directly or indirectly, the Allied powers against the rising strength of Fascism in Europe and the Far East.

This climate was a serious setback to the WRI, at least temporarily. In another perspective, it forced the International not only to reiterate its faith and determination to fight against militarism but also to look for further developments of the theory and practice of the pacifist approach to finding more effective ways to combat militarism, imperialism and Fascism.

### **Options for the WRI?**

Runham Brown had written in *The War Resister* in 1946 that the WRI had to be ready for the great recovery, ready to adapt itself, not only to learn of the loyalty of old comrades, but also to young soldiers, prisoners-of-war and many who had held aloof, but were now knocking at its door.<sup>3</sup>

Their own experience had convinced activists that only a workable plan of action would lead to real changes in social relationships supportive of the establishment of peace. They were fully aware of the fact that they had not yet been able to work out such a practical programme of action. This was despite proposals such as the de Ligt Plan (discussed in Chapter 9) and the direct contact with Gandhi and admiration for his nonviolent struggle for Indian independence. Why? This question, in different forms and ways, has been asked time and again, for example in the form of A. J. Muste's ideas about a "Third Camp", which will be described in Chapter 14.

## India's nonviolent struggle for freedom and its impact on pacifists

### **Rajendra Prasad's visit**

A small but significant example of a nonviolent response to a violent situation was given by Runham Brown in *The War Resister* in 1948, with the above title, connected with the visit of Dr Rajendra Prasad in Vienna for the Sonntagsberg Conference 20 years earlier:

It was in the summer of 1928. We climbed in great heat to the summit of a high mountain in Upper Austria. Here on the Sonntagsberg we were to hold the second annual International Conference of the WRI. A tall slender figure entered and shyly presented himself as Mahatma Gandhi's special envoy. He delivered Mr. Gandhi's message to the Conference and on behalf of the WRI addressed a great mass meeting in Vienna at it close. This was Dr. Rajendra Prasad. I travelled with him the next day in a crowded third-class train to Graz in Styria, Southern Austria, and listened as he told of India's struggle for freedom. We parted for a few hours at the station and then made our way separately to the Arbeitersaal where we went to address another great meeting. As we entered the Hall we could hear the howls of a Fascist mob that had taken position. Pushing our way through the crowd towards the platform we were stopped, it was safer to stand unidentified in the crowd, Prasad went on; quietly and unhesitatingly he mounted the platform and took his seat. He was quickly pounced upon and fell bleeding to the floor. Friends carried him half-conscious from the hall, he never lifted a hand.

In constant touch with Grace Beaton, Rajendra Prasad has remained a member of the WRI, and his co-operation never slackened. And now in December 1946 Dr. Prasad has been elected permanent President of the Indian Constituent Assembly. . . .

It is a source of gratification that so old and trusted a member of the WRI should enjoy the confidence of the Indians and it augurs well for the constitution-making Assembly that its first act should be to elect as President one who has been described as "a living proof of the invincibility of gentleness."

H. R. B.<sup>4</sup>

India attained her independence in 1947. A talk by Samar Sen, entitled *India Gets Her Freedom*, given at the annual meeting of the WRI Council held in the summer of 1947 had impressed the audience so much that the WRI decided to print it as a pamphlet to be distributed as widely as possible. Reginald Reynolds wrote the preface for it. The following is the first paragraph:

In the days, still very recent, when the advocates of Indian freedom in other parts of the world were very few in number, I believe that the War Resisters' International was among the first organizations to associate itself with that demand. It was certainly the first international body to identify itself whole-heartedly with Mahatma Gandhi in his programme of non-violent resistance; and it was through that welcome support in a world that was not very friendly to India or to Gandhi that I first came myself into close personal contact with the International and its work.<sup>5</sup>

The contact between the WRI, Gandhi and the India freedom struggle continued and remained active until and after the people of India got rid of colonial rule in 1947.

Reginald Reynolds wrote in the preface:

The demand for an independent and united India was, in fact, an advance on European nationalism in every way, not only because it envisaged federal and democratic unity rather than division, but because Indian nationalism was entirely uncorrupted by the imperialist ambitions which have been shown by all the greater countries of Europe. . . [India has] found a heroism that is nobler than the heroism of the battlefield.<sup>6</sup>

In our present context, i.e. nonviolent revolution, I shall quote only the following from Samar Sen's talk:

there is one thing even more important than the fact of India's getting freedom, and that is the manner in which she has earned it. Never in the history of the world has a transfer of political power on such a large scale been made so peacefully and with so much goodwill. And this has been largely due to the fact that for the last twenty-five years a great political party in India led by a great leader eschewed violence and decided to give the method of nonviolence resistance a trial as a political weapon to achieve purely political ends. Nonviolent action on the part of the Indian National Congress has at last induced the British Government to seek the path of co-operation instead of war, and that has ennobled both the contending parties by mutual reaction.<sup>7</sup>

## Shrewsbury Conference – 1948

The WRI had not been able to hold any of its regular international conferences for 11 years. The Shrewsbury Conference was the first one after the Second World War. Here are a few extracts from Runham Brown's note of the proceedings:

You may think that if the most remarkable thing that happens in a movement is a conference, it can't be a very remarkable movement; but it is! Why, I know a man who once came to one of these conferences who used to break up every conference he went to; he used to talk all the time, get very hot and red in the face, have to mop his brow, and wouldn't leave off talking; but at the WRI Conference the Chairman told him to sit down not once but many, many times, and he quietly obeyed every time. At the end of the Conference the Chairman asked him to talk more and he made the best speech in his life!

Some of the people who come to the War Resisters' Conference do not belong to the Movement and have no right to be there; there are some who don't know whether they belong to it or not; but at the end of the Conference they want to belong, but are not sure whether they can; have they got the courage, they ask.

Once there came a general, fresh out of the army. He wasn't a war resister and he talked off the mark; he said he had been a good soldier because he didn't know there was any better way. Then he went away and preached that there *was* a better way to right wrongs than by fighting; that he intended to go on fighting but in that better way. They put him in a concentration camp, but he is still fighting!

No resolutions are passed at these conferences; really nothing is completed, it is only begun. The best time is when the Conference isn't on at all; when delegates walk in the gardens or eat together. It's the fellowship which counts so much, trying to build



one big family, for surely the world should be like that.

These people don't even want a World Government, but they do want order in the family and they believe that if each one thought first of the well-being of all the others, everyone would be so much happier – safer, too, even if they have not got any guns to protect them!

“It's so negative to be a war resister”, that's what so many people say. Some who are not war resisters prefer “good works”, that is, doing something which you are not paid to do, or paid very little for, and getting thanked for it. “It's more constructive.” Some would like to build a new world but don't know how to.

The war resisters who gathered in Albrighton Hall near Shrewsbury all said that to resist war was not enough. If you stopped at that, it would be very negative indeed, so they invited all the constructive people to gather at the gateway and to declare that they would no longer take part in war or do any of those things which destroy the world and will soon destroy all the people in it. They proposed to go in at that gateway, to travel upon a road they knew would be hard and long, but all the time making a track on the way to a better world.

The delegates attending the Shrewsbury Conference represented only a few hundred thousand war resisters, but they all knew that there were many more war resisters spread all over the world. They had heard of – some had even experienced:

the terrible dictatorship and the police state of Russia. [They] felt that they would like to join in a great crusade and go and stop it once for all, and make everybody free, but they remembered that they had felt just like that when Hitler was a great dictator and had a police state, and some of them even fought for democracy and all that kind of thing. Some of them had even fought in an earlier war, a “war to end war”, and they knew it did not work. Besides, all the bad people were not on one side. They wondered whether some of the potential dictators were not in the USA. Or perhaps a few in the crumbling British Empire!

But at Shrewsbury they did not talk much about war at all. These people came from the ends of the earth . . . they all said they were at home! They had all come in at the gateway, where they declared that war was a crime against humanity and that they would never take part in another. . . . There were some at the Albrighton Conference who said that it was quite as bad to starve people to death by not growing food for them to eat, as it was to bomb them, and that war resisters had a positive responsibility about this. . . .

Then all went away home to the ends of the earth, stronger in their convictions and a little wiser; and with a lot to tell all those that could not be at Shrewsbury.

No one clung to delusions; no one thought that he or she was going to put all the world right. Each one just thought that they were a little part, and a very important part, of one great urge, the life force of the universe which is even now building that New World. All the time these war resisters are trying to find out where that great life force is making for and to put themselves in line with it, so that they may help and not hinder on the way. These people are optimists, because they have great faith.

H. Runham Brown<sup>8</sup>

## **Bread and Peace**

The phrase *War Resistance Is Not Enough* expresses a genuine concern of the WRI which it considered deeply over a period of more than two decades. This is evident from the response to a call from Aldous Huxley, who had sent a document to the WRI in July 1947 asking them to give it serious consideration, particularly keeping in view ‘the coming crisis when the present food production would be a long way short of world requirements, as indicated by the present increase of population’.

Huxley called it ‘The Demographic Crisis’. The WRI Council meeting held in Basle had referred it to its sister organisation, the Pacifist Research Bureau, to act as a commission of inquiry, with people having special knowledge and talent to be able to help and prepare a report on the question of food production and population, which then could be circulated by their Secretariat to all the WRI Sections for consideration and discussion at a special session during the Conference to be held in 1948.<sup>9</sup>

The Pacifist Research Bureau had discussed the document at a conference during January 31–February 1, 1948 at Hayward Heath, UK. The discussions were based on the responses of many concerned and knowledgeable people to whom the Huxley document had been circulated in advance. The WRI representative at the meetings of the research council was Reginald Reynolds, who presented a memorandum to the Shrewsbury Conference. The Conference accepted the memorandum in principle and the Bureau was requested to further implement the proposals.

The Conference also expressed the view that the WRI British Section and the Pacifist Research Bureau ought to be represented on the committee being formed by the British Government with Sir John Boyd Orr as its head. Stuart Morris of the PPU promised to be alert to the possibility of this being done.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of being well aware and concerned about the close relationship between war and hunger the WRI had not yet discussed this question openly with awareness of its full implications. Huxley’s document, and very likely the presence of the Gandhian element, created the opportunity to deal with the issue in some detail at this stage in the life of the International.

## **The Memorandum**

It will be generally agreed by all who are concerned with human life and welfare that the positive obligation to feed the hungry is at least as important as the negative commandment which forbids us to kill. Both obligations are assumed in a respect for human personality.

While the spectacular destruction caused by war naturally receives most attention from pacifists (the more so because they stand alone in unequivocal opposition to it), the less dramatised, but no less deadly, effects of a world food shortage therefore have an equal claim on our conscience. The estimated increase of the world’s population by the end of this century indicates that, should we succeed in avoiding an atomic war – itself a grim remedy for the population problem – we shall have to face the alternative fate of famine, unless steps are taken to meet this threat. Such steps cannot be taken too soon by those who are not resigned to the inevitability of another war.

In the avoidance of war, we believe that a concentration of thought and energy on world food production and distribution may itself prove helpful, though it is important

not to exaggerate this aspect of our problem, or to isolate it from the greater task of establishing new values in place of the cravings for power, for money or for mere release from frustration which may be considered among the primary causes of armed conflict. It may well be urged that, just as war may delay the food crisis by cutting down the population, so famine may delay war by creating internal political crisis and a poor quality of cannon fodder.

Since, however, we cannot be satisfied by gaining a temporary reprieve war upon such terms, any more than we are content with a war that might give us a moratorium from famine, we have to consider the conditions in which both these scourges may be effectively banished. These conditions clearly presume a healthy society, morally and physically. An aggressive government may delay in making war until a certain level of physical fitness has been attained, and food supplies secured, but a government or nation which merely hesitates for such reason is spiritually unhealthy, a menace to itself and its neighbours. The very efforts by which men seek for personal or national security, in a world shortage of food or other essential commodities, are directly contrary to the spirit of peace caused by a national exhaustion is always accompanied by intense preparation for future war.

### **War and Famine – The Twin Evils**

We, therefore, believe that these two evils of war and famine are best considered together, and that we should concern ourselves primarily with that spirit of individual responsibility and voluntary co-operation which we believe to be the first necessity for a better world. Since famine will, in time, menace people in all parts of the world, without respect to frontiers, education on this subject may lead to an understanding of the vital necessity for co-operation and in the practice of such co-operation a beginning may be found for a new conception of human unity – the essential pre-requisite of peace. We shall see that, in its detail application, the initiation of a sound policy with regard to food, and to production generally, may have deeply beneficial consequences, spiritually and psychologically, and contribute largely to a peaceful way of a life that is not merely the absence of war.

But we are anxious above all that the result of this enquiry shall not be merely the prescription of theories for others, which we regard as one of the causes of our social failure. When we say that society should do this or that, it is important to realise that we are part of the society for which we prescribe. We should therefore concern ourselves above all with the habits and practices of daily life, and try to see in what ways individuals and small groups can begin now. The necessarily generalised terms of this short report must be interpreted and applied by its readers to their own immediate circumstances.

We are also convinced that the question of food production and distribution cannot be isolated from the larger question of how and why men and women are to work. The profit motive (with its emphasis on cheapness, mass-production, competitive salesmanship and advertising, and with human beings regarded as so much 'manpower' having only a wage interest in their work) has long been recognised as an economic incentive to imperialism and war. More recently it has been realised that many aspects of this system are also disastrous psychologically. The chief significance of mass production, for example, is that it produces not merely masses of goods, but the 'mass mind'. Here is the raw material of totalitarianism and war, and perhaps the worst enemy

of creative life. And now, increasingly, it is also realised that the same economy and mentality have proved disastrous to agriculture. Soil exhaustion and erosion in all parts of the world bear witness to the social failure of the profit motive, whereby fortunes were once made for a few at the cost of posterity. At the same time the disappearance of the peasantry in so many parts of the world and their replacement by a class of land-less labourers and /or cash crop farmers, has robbed the earth of that careful, intensive and varied cultivation which ensures the greatest productivity, while depriving millions of land workers of all but a mercenary interest in their work.

### **A New Approach Needed**

It is clear to us that a new approach is needed to the whole problem of production, involving the replacement of the present accepted incentives by the motives of creative activity and provision for the common need. Increased production must be accompanied by efforts to secure better and fairer distribution so that whose needs are greatest receive first consideration. At the same time it is essential for us to recognise that the present world economic crisis is symptomatic of a far deeper spiritual crisis, probably the greatest that civilisation has ever faced, and that only in so far as they are related to, and an expression of, profound spiritual changes, are the practical policies here suggested likely to be ultimately effective.

The present world supply of food is apparently about half what is required to give every human being a diet comparable to that enjoyed in the most favoured countries and regarded by most experts in those countries as necessary to full health and efficiency. (It may be noted, however, that European wartime experience suggests that health and full activity can be maintained on a lower food-intake than that generally regarded as necessary in pre-war days.)

The outlook for the future is also serious. Possibilities of increased production (by maximum utilisation of land and improved agricultural methods) are offset by anticipated increases in population. The position at the end of the twentieth century is unlikely to be better and may be far worse than at present.

Under the economic system which has developed since the Industrial Revolution, the industrialised countries have acquired very dense populations largely dependent upon food imported from the primary producing countries. Populations in those countries are increasing. They are therefore consuming more of the food they produce. At the same time food production capacity is declining as a result of soil exhaustion and erosion (a process of deterioration not incompatible with temporally increased output in some producing countries). The incentive to grow food for export declines with increasing industrialisation of primary producing countries. In these circumstances, in addition to the obvious need for an overall increase in world food production, the old industrial countries must restore their agriculture, move towards a more balanced economy and possibly at the same time encourage the emigration of part of their population to less densely peopled regions of the earth.

This whole situation points to the necessity of obtaining the maximum food supply from the cultivable areas everywhere. Sufficient research has now been undertaken to show that arable farming produces a much greater yield of human food per acre than land used for the production of meat or even of dairy products. Grain fed to animals, for example, produces in edible meat about one-tenth of the food value which would be given by the direct human consumption of that grain. For dairy produce the proportion

is approximately one-fifth. It has also been proved beyond question that all man's nutritional needs can be adequately supplied from a non-meat diet. Therefore apart from aesthetic or ethical considerations which must be matters of individual taste or conviction, there are overwhelming arguments for a much more vegetarian diet than that in use in most countries, particularly European countries or those of Europeanised character. We have already reached a position in which there is competition between the human and the livestock population for a supply of food, which is inadequate for both. The 1946 League of Nations Report, 'Food, Famine and Relief', states categorically that a further liquidation of livestock is 'the only means of averting famine'. Fish may provide an additional source of human food supply which has no economic disadvantages but, even in the countries which are the biggest consumers of fish, it represents only a very small proportion of the average calorie intake (e.g. pre-war Norway 65 calories per day; 10 calories per day for Europe generally).

. . . We also recognise that man is a psycho-physical organism, requiring food suited to his mental and spiritual as well as his physical capacities, if his total welfare is to be rightly served. On the religious, philosophical and ethical questions we, as a body, make no pronouncement. But we regard responsible decision on these questions by individuals and communities as a primary necessity and consider that – except in times of absolute scarcity – such decisions, and not merely economic factors, should govern the planning of world food production which is a fundamental and intimate part of true civilisation.

While arable farming is more productive of human food than meat or dairy farming, the more intensive methods of market gardening and of allotment and garden cultivation show a still higher return per acre. It is therefore highly desirable to encourage as far as possible this type of cultivation, particularly among town-dwelling populations.

### **Soil Conservation and Enrichment**

. . . The evil of over-urbanisation on health, culture and individuality are widely recognised. Decentralisation is clearly needed and in planning it the settlement of sufficient land workers must be a primary consideration. . . . The coming of electricity and other modern forms of power removes one main past cause of industrial concentration – the need to be near coal fields . . . The Tennessee Valley Authority is an example of what can be achieved in rehabilitating an eroded and derelict district. Its task was a very different one from that of centralising and re-ruralising an urbanised and industrialised community. Two lessons, however, may be learned from it:

One: The importance of recognising our dependence on natural resources and the necessity of conserving them and of a satisfactory integration of town and country;

Two: The importance of securing from the beginning the co-operation of the people concerned.

### **The Need for Planning**

All real growth must be organic. This is a truth we must never forget. There is some danger in such schemes as the British new towns of just setting down a preconceived town and putting into it people who do not feel any vital relation with it or with one another. The principle of new towns is sound as compared with the old suburban spread with its adverse effects on the surrounding agricultural belts, but decisions in regard to proposed new towns must be taken in the interests of the community as a whole and

with the approval of the local populations rather than for the relief of urban congestion or the convenience of particular industries. The planner is essential to interpret the people's vision or inarticulate wishes in terms of modern technical possibilities, but he must work among them and through them and not from a distant capital city. . . .

This consideration of town planning may seem at first sight remote from our main theme but we believe that it is vital to any proper redistribution of population and revival of agricultural interests and activities in the older industrial countries. . . .

Those who see the necessity for these changes of occupation and of residential arrangements must be ready to pioneer. In this there are five levels of development:

- 1 The work of individual pioneers, e.g. Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Pierre Ceresole.
- 2 The work of village revival, experimental communities and co-operative groups – e.g. Scandinavian Folk High Schools and the Indian village work centering on Sevagram.
- 3 Development of new towns.
- 4 National regional planning schemes, e.g. T.V.A.
- 5 Supranational planning schemes of similar general character e.g. for the Danube Valley area.

We recognise that the voluntary endeavour of individuals and small groups, although indispensable, is not in itself enough. We therefore welcome the activities of Allotment Associations, Agricultural Committees, Ministries and Departments, and, indeed, all local and national agencies working disinterestedly to educate public and official opinion in the need for greater and more discriminating food production and planning to meet the demographic crisis. We recognise, too, the importance of the formation of international producers' unions and of the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, frustrated though it is by the rivalries and tensions of national selfishness and regional power politics. . . . Indeed we consider that the development of an increasing number of international functional agencies may be the most effective means of breaking down national barriers and leading towards that federal organization of the world which is essential both for the prevention of war and for the success of the fight against famine. . . .

In the fight against famine, while certain areas of Europe are at the moment attracting most attention on account of the great contrast between their present and their pre-war standards of life, yet the chronic under-nourishment of the vast population of Asia is the biggest aspect of our task. The effect of more adequate feeding of the Asiatic masses and direct utilisation of primary crop resources of this purpose will be to lower global reserves, now hoarded at the cost of famine, and probably stimulate 'population explosion' which will speedily outstrip maximum foreseeable food resources. (Such 'population explosions' will probably be due more to lowered infant mortality and to greater longevity than to, say, increase in the actual birth-rate.) We are therefore agreed that while population trends can never justify deliberate denial of adequate food to any human being, world civilisation will have to face and accept means, other than limitation of food supply, of adjusting if necessary the growth of population to the food resources available.<sup>11</sup>

### **Anti-militarism and Gandhian economics**

Another important input in the WRI perspective came from J. C. Kumarappa, the well-known

authority on Gandhian economic philosophy. J. C. Kumarappa attended the Shrewsbury Conference as an Indian delegate and also addressed the conference on Gandhi's philosophy, explaining its practical side. In his typical style Kumarappa classified economics into five categories.

The first and the second he called '*tiger economy*' and '*monkey economy*'. Both were parasitic; there was consumption but not contribution in these. The third, he called '*bird economy*', which involved enterprise and hard work; the fourth was '*honey bee economy*'. The honeybee does not produce for its own benefit; it does it for the whole group. The fifth and the final kind he likened to the mother bird picking up food and taking it to the baby birds in the nest – giving without expecting any return.

We all function in these five stages at different times. The moment we begin to develop the people towards the service stage, we are reducing the need for and chances of war. The nearer we get to the service stage the less and less violence we shall find in society

As you begin to balance rights and duties civilisation comes in. With the tiger and the monkey there are only rights and no duties, but as man grows higher and higher duty begins to enlarge. Unfortunately labour unions, etc. are all rights-centred and therefore their efforts lead to general conflict. We have yet to come to the duty-centred economy

Our ideal must be to reach that stage where there would be no wars at all. To this end we must educate the people into the service stage. War has to be abolished by taking away the motives for war. So long as there are tigers in society there will be wars. We may be intensifying wars if we don't approach them from the right end, and the right end is your life and mine. It is in our everyday life, in our private life, that our mission has to begin. . . .

. . . Every country has to be self-sufficient in food, clothing and other primary need. Unless you are self-sufficient you cannot maintain your independence. I am not against international trade, but the natural foods and things of that kind, which you need, must be grown or produced in our homeland, otherwise it is not possible to remain nonviolent. . . . International trade can be there, but not on the food line or the clothing line or prime necessities line, but only in surplus and luxuries.

. . . By a process of education we can bring the nations together. We should take up that constructive part of the work of educating the public and of bringing them to a service economy. We have got to isolate the cause and deal with it. You cannot have peace without attacking the cause of war.

. . . The real thing is to isolate the factor that produces violence, which is our method of living today and our present type of economic organisation. We shall have to shift from a right-centred economy to a duty-motivated economy, from self-centredness to love for our fellow men.

. . . Gandhiji was not interested in the economic side of things for its own sake. He was interested in only one thing, that is truth, and all things that lead to untruth, all things that lead to violence he wanted to remove from society.<sup>12</sup>

J. C. Kumarappa made a practical suggestion to the International. He proposed that they should not meet only once a year or once in so many years, but must get together and agree on a clear line of action to be taken. He felt that a constant mutual consultation among peace workers was required for a programme if it has to be a living struggle for peace.

Runham Brown, summing up the discussions on 'Bread and Peace' and Gandhian economics, as presented by J. C. Kumarappa at the Shrewsbury Conference, said that he felt the Conference as a whole took the view that it was not prepared to 'swallow whole' the document on 'Bread and Peace' any more than it was prepared to 'swallow whole' all that Dr Kumarappa had said. It was, however, earnestly felt that the discussions had led the Conference to a very constructive and important starting-point for further action. It was the desire of the conference that the new International Council should take from the Conference a request that they should study both the suggestions on the 'World Economic Crisis' and the 'Practice of Nonviolence as used in India'. Furthermore, it was urgent that both suggestions should be studied very closely and earnestly and as rapidly as possible, consistent with efficiency. At the same time the Council should put before Sections for their consideration some tangible suggestions which they could begin to study in a similar way.

At the end J. C. Kumarappa said:

Finally I would urge that you form yourselves into definite groups of active workers in your own countries and thus bring about an organisation which will work towards self-sufficiency. I feel that this Conference will have 'missed the bus' if we do not confirm a definite resolution that we will go back to our countries and work out a programme of active war-resistance. Everything, however, will depend upon vigour with which we shall work out our war resistance eliminating violence from our everyday lives. If this Conference decides nothing but that I shall feel highly pleased that I have had the privilege of coming here and placing these ideas before you.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the Conference it was suggested that Sections be encouraged to set up study groups for the purpose of considering matters arising from the two important questions.

## Pacifism and liberation

### **Gandhi's call for a World Pacifist Meeting**

Some of the key figures closely connected with the WRI, e.g. Reginald Reynolds, Horace Alexander, Wilfred Wellock and Agatha Harrison, had kept in constant touch with Gandhi. Samar Sen, Council member, had kept the International duly informed about the developments in the Indian freedom struggle. So had Horace Alexander. The overall world response to the victory of the nonviolent freedom struggle of the Indians had been of much enthusiasm and optimism. For the pacifist movement it was like its own victory. It also strengthened the conviction of many that anti-militarism and nonviolent social change were two sides of the same coin.

Despite his total preoccupation with India's freedom struggle and the movement for non-violent social revolution Gandhi himself kept in constant touch with the WRI and some Quakers, through people like Horace Alexander and Fenner Brockway. And now that India had attained her freedom from colonial rule he was willing to give some attention to the movements against violence and social and economic exploitation going on in various parts of the world.

Horace Alexander took the main initiative in working out with Gandhi the idea of bringing together a selected number of people from the pacifist circles to spend some time with him exchanging and discussing ideas related with the power and strategies of nonviolence. The



basic purpose was to get guidance from someone who had succeeded in applying nonviolence on a scale never tried before. This suggestion was discussed at the Basle meeting of the International Council. It had already been suggested in 1946 to hold such a meeting, but Gandhi was of the opinion that such a meeting should be held in a free India. It was therefore postponed until after June 1948.

The WRI Secretariat wrote to Horace Alexander confirming their interest in the conference, also expressing their desire that it should be open to all pacifists whether religious or not and representing various fields of thought. The WRI Secretariat asked Samar Sen that at his return to India he should tell Gandhi and Horace Alexander of WRI's interest in the meeting

A preparatory meeting was held at the Quaker Rural Centre at Hoshangabad in January 1948. A few days later Gandhi was assassinated. It created doubt in the minds of the organisers, the executive committee formed for the purpose, about the relevance of having the meeting without Gandhi. In February 1948 the executive committee decided that though the foreign visitors would no longer be able to meet Gandhi face to face, the plan should nevertheless go ahead. The meeting was fixed for December 1949.

## The World Pacifist Meeting

The following note dated December 1, 1949 was sent out on behalf of Dr Rajendra Prasad, Vice-Chairman of the War Resisters' International, explaining the character of the meeting:

It is planned to bring together in India some fifty carefully selected men and women from all over the world, men and women who have proved themselves '100 per cent reliable', to use Gandhiji's phrase, *in meeting violence and aggression with spiritual and moral weapons*. These fifty will meet with some twenty-five of Gandhi's close associates and other Indians who are convinced of the truth of his teaching. They will meet in unhurried conference in Santiniketan for a week beginning 1st. December 1949. Then they will travel in small groups to various ashrams and centres of constructive work and meet again for an adjourned session in Sevagram, in the last week of the month.

It is not expected to achieve immediate dramatic results in the political world. Gandhiji himself was emphatic about that. But some practical results should follow.

1. It may lead to the formation of a world union of men and women who are trying to practice nonviolence and to apply it to social and political problems.
2. It may find fresh ways of influencing human thought towards peace, by such methods as an increasing use of wireless and other educational media for the propagation of the moral teachings of all the world's great prophets.
3. It may take steps towards building a social order in the world built on co-operation, not on exploitation.
4. It may help to promote the ideas of world brotherhood and world government and of racial equality. . . .

One main purpose of the Santiniketan and Sevagram meetings will be to find the best means for convincing the peoples of the world of the truth of Gandhiji's teachings and of the applicability in world politics.

The War Resisters' International will be well represented.<sup>14</sup>

### Some personal impressions

Reginald Reynolds, who was also a member of the publicity committee of the World Pacifist Meeting, and who drew up the daily bulletins on its deliberations, wrote:

Though for lack of another name, those attending the conference were referred to as “delegates”, it must be clearly understood that this Conference was convened by invitations to individuals, these invitations being issued by an *ad hoc* Committee in India. Some of us had, in fact, some sort of mandate – I myself and Samar Sen (who was unfortunately unable to attend) had both been nominated by the War Resisters’ International Council in 1947 and our names accepted by the Committee in India. Others were members of national or international councils of pacifist organisations, and could speak with some representative capacity – these included Heinz Kraschutzki, another member of the WRI Council. But when I use the term “delegate”, it must be clearly understood that I am not implying any representative authority in referring to those who attended the Conference.

Sixty-three of us came from outside India, twenty-eight from India, three from Pakistan. (Two of these last were Hindus from East Pakistan, and much as we appreciated their valuable contributions we were very glad when Prof. Hossein, a Moslem from Dacca University, joined us during the latter part of the Conference.) Thirty-four different countries were represented, and all the five Continents. The largest single delegation came from India, with USA second and Great Britain third. All the major religions had representatives and it was particularly valuable to have the contributions (for example) of Moslems from Egypt and Iraq when discussing the Hindu-Moslem relations involved in the tension between India and Pakistan.

The Conference met first at Santiniketan, in West Bengal, once the home of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore, and long a centre of cultural unity where there has been an effort to bring together the best of the Eastern and the Western heritage. Most of the delegates had already found time to visit many parts of India before the Santiniketan sessions, which lasted from Dec. 1st-8th. We then set out on our travels again, re-assembling on or before Christmas Eve at Sevagram, the ashram which was Gandhi’s home during the last years of his life, right in the very heart of the Central Provinces. . . .

. . . We had come to India because those who initiated and sponsored the Conference were concerned to give us an opportunity of seeing the work of Mahatma Gandhi. Originally, when the idea was first suggested in Gandhi’s lifetime, it had been intended that we should meet under his chairmanship and personal guidance. But even if that had been possible it is quite certain that he would have suggested such tours as we made. The great contribution of Gandhi was made through small centres and through the work of inspired, but often isolated, individuals who followed his example and worked in the Indian villages. To understand his unique contribution to peace it was therefore insufficient that we should discuss it in our sessions – it was necessary to see the work in progress on “Gandhian” lines.

. . . Here I saw for the first time the system of “Basic Education” of which I had heard so much. It aims at the production of integrated individuals and the full development of man’s natural aptitude for co-operation. In place of the over-weighted, unbalanced academic education that has ruined the middle-class spiritually and physically in India, “Basic” emphasises the dignity of manual labour. The life is extremely simple,

and (thanks to this simplicity and the principle of maximum self-sufficiency in the production of food, clothes, etc., by the children) the cost has been reduced to an incredibly low figure . . . In the “Post-Basic” stage (from 14 years onwards) the students, already trained in many useful crafts, are able to support themselves entirely in food, clothes and all educational costs, so that their further education in a *residential school* is no charge on their parents, the State or any charitable organisation.

What has this to do with peace or our Conference? The answer of the Conference itself was overwhelmingly decisive. We came to the conclusion, from what we saw and heard, that “Basic Education” was a revolutionary step in the history of man’s search for peace. Here at last was an attempt to tackle the problem of right relationships with our neighbours at the very source, and it was being worked out in a way which made it independent of State aid and State dictation. At the same time, unlike so many good schemes, it was unlikely to incur the hostility of the State, unless the authorities had completely lost their wits. The effect of “Basic Education”, unlike that of orthodox education (as practiced in most countries) must be a rapid improvement in the life of the masses through their children, *whose training is concentrated upon the actual problems which they will confront as men and women*. They are learning, for example, not merely to read and write, but to till the soil, and to do so better than their parents. And beyond that, again, they are learning to do so, not in isolation or in competition, but in co-operation. They are learning to serve a community and to rely upon that community for whatever “security” this world can offer anybody. And, not least important, they learn that the object of knowledge should be to make you a better and a more useful member of your own community – not, as has commonly been the case with past systems, to remove you from your community into one that is “higher” in the social scale, offering larger rewards for less work.

I am by no means the only delegate to the Conference who therefore saw new hope in this system. Much as it may have to be altered and adapted before it can be made applicable to other countries, it does contain the germ of constructive peace. . . .

At Santiniketan we began, quite naturally, with a consideration of Gandhi’s life and work. Much of the usual sentimental nonsense about Gandhi was dispelled at the outset by one of his followers, Acharya Kripalani, who gave us a vivid picture of the Mahatma, reminding us that in Gandhi’s view fear, rather than violence, was the greatest evil and that violence could not be uprooted until we had rid ourselves of this fear. It would be impossible in a short space to detail the many subjects discussed at Santiniketan. They included many of the great practical problems of the political world to-day, but I doubt if anything very original or new (to most of us) was said until we turned our attention to the practical application of Gandhi’s teaching, with special reference to his last great venture – the initiation of the system of education briefly described above.

When we met later at Sevagram much of our time was spent in separate commissions. . . . One . . . [commission] concerned itself with measures to be taken in order to create foundations of peace. . . . I was on the second commission, which rapidly dug into the question of Basic Education, and I happen to think that it came nearest to ploughing new ground. Or, to put it another way, I felt that there wasn’t much said in the commission reports on any other subject that I hadn’t heard before, sometimes said better and sometimes worse. My own commission included among its members J. C. Kumarappa, whose speech at the WRI Conference will be long remembered by those present. We also had the assistance of Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the Negro President of

Howard University . . . whose personality, as a brilliant speaker and an original thinker, left the deepest impression on my mind . . .

Many of the delegates present were closely associated with the WRI, either directly with the Secretariat or through our many Sections. It was my own painful duty to inform them, on Christmas morning, of Runham Brown's death – news which had been sent by cable from WRI headquarters and which had been waiting for me on my arrival the previous night. It was a heavy blow – to many of us the loss of a personal friend and to all the loss of a great leader, who had done more than any single person to make such an international conference of pacifists possible, by his long years of work, fostering the small pacifist movements in so many countries. But, as I looked round at the lasting achievements of Gandhi and the continuation of his work by his successors, I felt that I need have no fear for the future of the International. Much as I had looked forward to giving Runham my own account of this great Conference, I feel now that it took place at the right time. It should provide just the kind of new impetus that we now need to carry us forward; and I even think that it has helped us to discover new leaders – men and women who are worthy to follow where Gandhi himself led the way.<sup>15</sup>

This World Pacifist Meeting provided meaningful and important inputs into the thinking of the WRI leadership and a clear direction for the pacifist movement.

## The struggle against military service

Until the Second World War most of the conscientious objectors to military service had been from religious groups. The war influenced many of them. They started becoming aware of the fact that the pacifist approach to militarism need not and should not be limited to the religious side of humanity. It was something that was related to human relationships in many aspects of life as a whole. Opposition to military service was value-related; it was not related to any particular religion or even religion as such, but to values that concern the whole of humankind.

After the Second World War more young people came out to oppose military service. Among them there were religious, humanist, anarchist, atheist, agnostic, in fact men from all schools of thought. Men in large numbers from various parts of the European continent and North America refused to be conscripted in military forces. They preferred to be in prisons rather than spend time in the barracks and be trained "to kill fellow human beings". Many of them did not even ask for alternatives to military duties, e.g. social work etc. One of the major sources of inspiration for this development was the non-*sectarian* anti-militarist work of bodies like the WRI and its Sections, which they had been doing for nearly 25 years.

The increasing number of COs was so encouraging that the WRI could do nothing but support the movement to its maximum capacity. There were two ways: first to help the COs who were determined to non-co-operate with the State in regard to military service – 'absolutists', as they are called. The other category of COs wanted legal recognition of conscientious objection to military service. These included COs who were opposed to conscription on humanitarian or religious grounds but were willing to do social service instead of military service. Among them there were also two categories: the first were men who were not prepared to do any service which was connected to war or any preparation for war and weaponry and were not prepared to wear military uniform. The second category was of those who chose alternative service with the feeling that social service was more useful to the community even if

performed in military uniform.

Members of sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Nazarenes, and others, in any case, continued refusing military service, even though they were not pacifists as such. They suffered the consequences of the law of the land. Some of those chose non-combatant service to avoid the hard and boring life of soldiering.

The major strength the WRI derived was from the *total refusers* and to a considerable extent from the *refusers* who were not prepared to do any combatant service, direct or indirect. The category of total refusers was closest to the WRI position and they were its "real soldiers"; hence concern for them was the first duty of the International. Many of them repeatedly went through great sufferings in prisons, isolation cells, black holes and the like.

Most of the WRI Sections in European countries and North America concentrated on building campaigns to get legal recognition for COs. Each had their leaders and styles of campaigns. At the beginning there was very little inter-communication between them. The WRI did most of their publicity and gathered support for them internationally. It published stories and experiences of COs, which undoubtedly encouraged and inspired many young men of call-up age. The total number of such young men who were inspired by the concept of total rejection of military service is not known precisely, but was in the thousands. Here it might be useful to tell stories of a few, who became examples for their own as well as the next generation, pioneering the cause of total refusers. A few outstanding examples from these pioneers here gives an idea of the climate within the pacifist world of the first decade after the Second World War.

### **Some pioneer objectors who inspired the young:**

#### **Pietro Pinna from Italy**

The time was post-Second World War, the place Ferrara in Italy and the young man Pietro Pinna. *The War Resister* 56, of Winter 1949, announced on page 25 that the case of Pietro Pinna:

is of peculiar importance [because] it is the first case of a war resister coming before the courts since the new Government was formed and the law enacted [after World War [ ended]. Pinna was brought before the military court at Turin on the 30th August, after being held in prison for several months. He was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment with the concession that the sentence was "conditionally suspended" and that there was to be no statement of his case in the "criminal records".

Pietro Pinna's background in his own words:

Since childhood I've felt the need to base my life on essentially religious principles. In the first years of my youth, much of this aspiration of mine was consociated within traditional Catholicism, with assiduous observance of the cult and a striving to live its ideals. Above all, I was inspired by the word of the Gospels.

As the years went by, I reached maturity and I gained decisive experience. Primarily, experienced a growing conflict with and detachment from traditional Catholicism. My principle reasons were the following:

The Church's betrayal of her own spiritual interests and her deficient faith in and

love of those principles that alone justify her *raison d'être*. Church life was reduced to an empty formalism rather than being that vivifying concept which is the essence of religion. For example, in the relationship with Jesus Christ, people would prefer to worship his image in an almost idolatrous manner, disregarding the essential faith which – as He taught us – is to be experienced in our life and applied to our ideals. This is the essential meaning of His whole being.

Another reason was my critical vision of how the Church acted in concrete human relationships. I increasingly realised how the Church supported conservative forces. By doing that, she was no longer able to lead the people and enrich their social life, she was rather influenced and dragged along by the status quo.

Extremely important historical events had occurred in the meantime, such as the Second World War, the fall of Fascism, the invasion of our national territory by German troops and the allies, the rebirth of the nation as a democracy. All of this had deep repercussions in my soul. By then I was about 18–20 years old. In approaching adulthood I was becoming aware of the fact that I was leaving the irresponsible years of youth behind and entering the responsible years of maturity. As I saw the feelings and values of my youth getting spoiled, I felt the need to save those supreme spiritual and human interests from worldliness and insincerity. I still wanted to reach for compromise for the noblest values – not sublimate them and let my religious conscience down.

That is how my present attitude towards conscientious objection was born. I am going to briefly explain those principles which illuminated my choice.

Human life gains value from religious tension, which is love and truth, present and effective

Inspired by religion, we act. The value of the religious act comes down essentially to the inner moral value and is judged – by the human conscience, (that is, outside any institution). If religious values illuminate and direct the conscience, if it is true that man finds redemption in them and frees himself from his limitations, then man must spend his life and death first and foremost being loyal to these ideals.

This means that life needs to be conceived in moral terms and that there must be a total identification of religion and life. Our persuasion must be that if all our energy were spent being loyal to the ideals we profess, they would triumph automatically. This is the essence of faith and the constant miracle that it represents: the miracle that, as Jesus says, moves mountains.

The experience of seeing religious value vanishing in the everyday lack of persuasion and sincerity and in optimism brought me to develop the inner structure of my religious vision and its principles of nonviolence and fruitfulness.

*Truthfulness*: If we lie, we are then compelled to mistrust everybody else freezing our souls and forgetting the respect for the conscience of others that is the basis of religiosity. It is in the lack of loyalty to truth and one's own dignity that we can discover the real reasons for us becoming estranged from what we really are and want to be. Thus the essence and the independent will that constitute the most sacred features of human personality risk diminishing.

*Nonviolence*: What perturbs religious conscience the most is the presence of evil in the world. Violence, which expresses in the form of war its most tragic aspects, is the worst evil. I want to make two comments on this:

According to logic, the basic justification for militarism, i.e., that a nation is drafted is to a war of pure sincerity, with the noble motive of defending the national territory, is

false. Where a war breaks out, one of the two opponents, who still justifies his militarism for reasons of defence, becomes the oppressor. This, however, does not allow the people of notion to betray their rulers and to avoid murder and slaughter.

Despite objection and heroism springs from love for one's country, war really comes down to a denigration of the whole moral code, to violation of any enmity civil law, because it does not recognise in any way the supreme value of human life. The pride and the insolence of the winner and the hatred and desire for revenge of the loser – which will lead to more conflicts in the future – are the results of that indescribable disgrace and disaster.

The lessons of history, the teachings of the best religious spirits and all our experiences have shown that evil will never be overthrown by the solutions attempted so far. We have experienced that every time we have wanted to fight evil with evil. An example is all the enormous unjustifiable crimes committed 'with the best intentions'.

Violence is also stupid because it kills itself. The one who has suffered violence no longer distinguishes right from wrong. He will only wait for the occasion to retaliate with violence.

If I want to free that man from evil, I must show him how can he liberate himself by making the best of myself.

It is impossible to teach love with hatred in your heart, to realise truth via lies, to establish peace fighting with violence.

I am told that the first duty of every citizen is to serve his country. I do not even dream of refusing to do that. I am only asking for the country to establish a service in which her sons are not forced to betray the principles of their human conscience. Only then will they (myself first) be happy and honoured to serve and give themselves to her. August, 1949

After the liberation of Italy, when the Second World War had ended, Pietro Pinna was tried in April 1947 by a Turin military court, and was released under an amnesty. After finishing his 10 months' imprisonment, he was retried by the Naples military court, which sentenced him in October for another eight months. Pietro refused the Holy Year pardon but was released from prison all the same.

The Turin court which tried him was

presided over by General Achille Ratti, a former partisan, who was extremely courteous and almost friendly towards the accused and his defence, Dr. Bruno Segre of Turin, who was assisted by Signor Agostino Buda, a lawyer from Ferrara, (Pietro's home town). As witnesses to testify to Pietro's high moral and social motives, Dr. Segre called Signor Umberto Coloso (Social Democrat Member of the Senate), Professor Aldo Capitini and Professor Edmondo Marcucci. Each witness was given time to speak fully, and they took the opportunity to put before the court and public information regarding the problem of militarism and war resistance.

Pietro's Counsel, Dr. Bruno Segre, himself described the legislation provided for war resisters by the British and American military service laws, and referred to similar laws in other parts of the world, information having been provided by the WRI.

After the verdict, Dr. Segre asked leave to appeal to the Supreme Military Court in Rome for the complete release of Pietro Pinna. The Public Prosecutor, however, is also making an appeal to the same military court, since he considers the sentence too lenient.

Before the judges retired to consider their verdict, Pietro Pinna once again solemnly declared that he would never perform military service and that he is convinced that by his action he has violated neither the moral law nor the actual law of the Italian Republic, and claimed that he had acted according to his own deeply held pacifist convictions. Throughout the trial Pietro set so remarkable an example of firmness and consistency that his personality won the utmost admiration and regard and the judges themselves acknowledged his sincerity and good faith.

The Public Prosecutor, however, having urged that Pinna should be returned to the barracks to undertake his military service, has been successful, for on the 11th September, only 12 days after Pietro Pinna's conditional release, he was arrested, and transferred to 10a C.A.R. di Avellino, 6a Compagnia, 4a Squadra.

The case of Pietro Pinna has aroused unprecedented attention, not only in the Italian Press, where it has been reported at great length, but in several big dailies in France and in the British *Manchester Guardian*, with brief statements in other British dailies. Pietro could scarcely have estimated the consequences of his refusal to undertake military service when he made his decision alone some months ago. The whole question has already been raised in the Italian Senate by four Social Democrats. During his trial the military court actually invited one of the interested deputies, Signor Umberto Calosso, to put forward a draft law recognising the right to refuse military service ... Umberto Calosso has gladly accepted this task, and the whole issue will be raised again in the Senate. Italian friends are collecting 50,000 signatures in Italy in favour of the proposed new law to recognise war resistance. There are other young men in Italy who are prepared to follow Pietro's example. ...

We have since learnt that Pietro Pinna has been transferred again, this time to the St. Elmo prison of the Military Judiciary in Naples. On the night of 30th September, 1949, an announcement was made in the late news bulletin broadcast by the Italian radio that having refused to take the oath, Pietro Pinna had been further charged and that a new trial would take place on 5th October. This news took Pietro's family and friends completely by surprise – even Dr. Segre, his defending counsel, had no knowledge of the fact; neither had Pietro Pinna himself.

It seems that the military authorities, bearing in mind the extensive publicity given to Pinna's previous trial, and especially the favourable impression he and his advocates made upon his military judges, wished to avoid any such repetition, and no time was allowed for any action to be taken on his behalf. The trial evidently took place on 5th October, for on the 6th October the Italian radio broadcast the news that Pietro Pinna had been sentenced to eight months' imprisonment, the remainder of the "suspended sentence" being added to this term, which will be served in a military prison.<sup>16</sup>

Pietro Pinna was released from prison under general amnesty, which was accorded in connection with the Holy Year celebrations in Italy. Release on this occasion included those sentenced for military disobedience and Pietro was included in this category. At the time of his release being announced to him, Pietro wrote in the prison register that he had no wish to take advantage of the amnesty because no recognition of his status as a war resister had been made. The military authorities disregarded this, for the gesture of clemency provided by amnesty was compulsory. Pietro was sent to Bari where the regiment to which he had been attached had its headquarters, and where he was again expected to undertake military training. He was therefore immediately sent back to the same prison in Naples which he had so recently left. Here he



reaffirmed his attitude. The prison authorities in Naples were, however, not willing to accept him as a prisoner. They suggested, therefore, that he should remain at liberty in Naples on a 'provisional basis' – free to come and go as he pleased in the city. He stayed with an Italian friend, Giustiniano Incarnati, who had demonstrated on behalf of Pietro and the cause of war resistance at the second trial in Naples. There he waited for further action from the military authorities. He was subsequently called up again but was medically examined, with the result that a 'cardiac neurosis' was discovered and he was relieved of all further military obligations. Whether this method had been used to get rid of Pietro Pinna, because he had made his intention clear that he intended to continue his refusal, cannot be ascertained. But Pietro was back home with his family.<sup>17</sup>

There is no doubt that without such a brave and determined action against military conscription on the part of Pietro Pinna and the wide publicity it received in Italy as well as some other European countries, the question of recognition of conscientious objection might not have been discussed in the Italian parliament.

### **Jean van Lierde from Belgium**

The Belgian objector Jean van Lierde who had been appointed as secretary of the Belgian Section of the WRI wrote on October 8, 1950 saying that he had just received a new call-up notice and was due to report at the barracks on November 28, 1950. He wrote to the WRI:

Needless to say, I shall gird myself with more conviction than ever against this military tyranny which claims the right to compel youth into apprenticeship for crime. I shall go on saying NO to war and to military service and do my utmost to upset the indifference of the men who, five years after the shameful slaughter, are allowing themselves once more to be led to new destruction.<sup>18</sup>

*The War Resister* 58 reported:

We heard on 8th December that he had duly reported and after refusing to take notice of any military instructions, was roughly handled by the Military Police. Next day he was escorted handcuffed to two policemen, to the prison of Liege where he is awaiting trial on charges of "Insubordination" and "Insulting Behaviour to Superiors". The insult was of course the refusal to acknowledge that military officers were his superiors. Jean van Lierde is making a splendid stand and is wonderfully encouraged in this by Claire Audenaerde, who has stepped into the breach and taken over for him the secretaryship of the Brussels Section.

Jean van Lierde made the following statement before the Brussels War Council on October 3, 1951:

### **Why I am refusing to become a Soldier**

I should first like to recall certain facts which are at the bottom of your decision to have me appear before you once again. I wish to repeat that if in your eyes I belong to the militia; if I am legally considered to belong to it, this is due to a fallacy. I have never signed the military decrees. They were read to me by an officer and I thus automatically became a soldier. Actually, it is essential to point out that this was done, at the Namur

barracks, by means of physical constraints (similar to fascist methods). In order to avoid any confusion you must know, therefore, that you have no authority whatsoever over me. I am a civilian and I do not recognise the military hierarchy. I deny you any right to judge me as a soldier.

However, as I cannot ignore the existence of the War Council, I am going to play the game, but with the following Kantian distinction: Respect is as always given to people never to object. This means that I am going to talk to you as men and not as officers. Actually, I should be sinning against the human personality if I were to ask of a human being to identify himself with one of his functions. I am interested in your conscience, not in your uniforms or your ranks. This is an elementary condition for our dialogue, for it must go beyond the restricted ethics of the Penal Code.

Gentlemen: I harbour no ill feelings against anyone; all human beings are my brothers. If my words are hard please put it down only to the fervour of my convictions. There was a time when, like you, I believed in armed resistance and its heroic acts. Now I have come to realise that I can no longer join in the violence, the reprisals and the squaring of accounts, which go with it. Allow me to explain to you frankly my ideas and the reasons for my attitude.

But, like I did before the War Council of Liege, I am first of all going to reverse the roles, even if this should seem strange to you; I am going to substitute accusation for defence and openly denounce the degrading procedures used by the War Councils against the conscientious objectors. Gabriel Marcel wrote: 'By degrading procedures I mean all those methods used intentionally with a view to attacking and destroying in certain individuals belonging to a particular group of people the respect they may have for themselves and their opinions.' You, members of the War Council, representing the State, are acting as prosecutors 'endeavouring to destroy the consciousness (illusory or otherwise) which at the outset the pacifist has of his own worth'. By means of repeated repression and successive stays in prison you want him to become an exhausted wreck. And why this? First of all because it is the only way in which the State can have him at its mercy. Is it necessary to recall the trials in Eastern Europe, in Franco Spain, in the Axis countries or those in royalist Greece where until just recently objectors were being shot to death? Secondly, the persecuting State (i.e. each one of you) 'feels his own superiority with increasing strength' when he sees how his debased victim is giving up his individuality, 'for he thus feels he has done right in treating him with severity'. Such is the 'hideous vicious circle' denounced by philosophers and by intransigent Christian or free-thinking objectors.

Your only aim is to make me give in at the end of long stays in prison and to have me accept the uniform of the legalised killers. It is in your power to keep me in your prisons, amidst incredible human misery, but you are only putting my body in chains; you cannot wrench my ideals from me. For us conscientious objectors, provided we retain our personalities, your laws stipulate twenty years of imprisonment, (more than for war criminals who, actually, have already been set free). That you should have this power is one of the tragic aspects of the increasing totalitarianism of our day.

Free men alone can stop this fatal slipping into robotism and collective stagnation. Bernanos says: 'This State fears but one rival – man'. I say freeman, i.e. not the hair-splitter or unthinking man, but he who gives or withholds but never lends himself. Following Socrates, Proudhon, Bakunine, Bloy, Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, Huxley this free man will say: I prefer to see the world risk its soul than deny its existence. This

admirable phrase sums up the challenge to the spirit which is implicit in nonviolence, the basis of militant pacifism. I am a Catholic, son of the universal (i.e. super-national) Church, and member of the War Resisters' International whose statement of principles I have signed, which reads '*War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war*'.

It is not out of a fondness for paradox that I quote the following text of F. Nietzsche: 'armed peace is a state of inhumanity as dreadful as, and worse even than war. . . . The belief in an army as a means of defence must be abjured. . . . And perhaps the day will come, the magnificent day, when the people of a nation which has distinguished itself in war by the most advanced kind of discipline and military intelligence, will of their own accord exclaim: We are going to break our swords and will thus destroy their military organisation down to its very foundations. To let one be guided by lofty feelings and render oneself harmless when one is more fearsome than anybody, is the best way of achieving true peace. Armed peace, on the other hand, makes it impossible to disarm, be it from fear or from hatred. It is better to die than to hate and fear, and better to die twice over than to make oneself hated and feared. Sooner or later this must become the maxim of any established society! The tree of military power can only be destroyed in one go, by a single stroke of lightning; but lightning, as you know, comes from the heights.' This moving appeal implies that people will henceforth have to show more strength and courage to run the risk of peace than used to be necessary for trying one's luck at war.

To overcome war from above is what the pacifist attitude is about.. Mobilisation is to cut into it from below. Bleating pacifism it is sometimes called. We revolutionary pacifists are not concerned with romanticism. For 'nonviolence is no more like cowardice than chastity is like impotence' (Thibon).

The 'heights' of which Nietzsche spoke signify for us the fire of God's love, the abandonment of the sword in favour of the Cross.

A professor of Louvain University, the great psychiatrist Etienne de Greeff has written pages on the beast-like behaviour of the patriotic herds. In 1939 he said, 'The war, at the end of which people will inevitably find themselves somewhat more enslaved, somewhat poorer too . . . is not seen by the masses in its real dimensions. Everyone thinks that the enemy has to be killed. But who is this enemy? . . . the enemy is the willing abandonment by millions of people of fighting like heroes, have nothing to defend in the higher spheres of thought and will remain blind to the agony of the human personality. The enemy is within oneself; it has been there since the beginning of man and will survive Nazism.

And like all humanists who are conscious of our contemporary tragedy Prof. Greeff turns to St. Francis of Assisi and to Gandhi where he finds the only possible moral salvation of mankind from complete degradation and total regimentation.

Jean van Lierde then moved to *sociological realities*:

Pacifism means choice of Truth and putting one's faith in the Spirit, but with an indispensable complement, the fight for Social Revolution. I am a militant supporter of personalistic and distributory socialism, and I fight against capitalist and totalitarian structures. Trade unionism . . . is for me a prime lever for overthrowing an economy of

profit and scarcity. When the production of such an economy has outstripped the capacity of the market and when the dreadful crisis comes with its thousands of unemployed, there is but one solution for stemming the breakdown, the arms race. Capitalism needs war to save itself by mobilising innumerable citizens for consumption and distribution in order that others may work. This delirium is a fact which only these conceited cynics, the 'distinguished and orthodox' economists deny. Over-armament provides freedom from purchasing power thanks to the fantastic production of war material, which is destined never to enter the consumption circuit. . . .

Everyone knows that if tomorrow peace 'broke out', bringing disarmament in its wake, we would experience the most fantastic economic crisis imaginable where unemployment would rise parallel to the fall in production, putting us face to face with the crucial problem of spare-time activities and workers' education.

The crime of the capitalist regime is its ability to distribute free of charge billions of dollars to destroy our cities and massacre people while refusing to put the wealth of this prodigious productive capacity in industry and agriculture at the disposal of the poor black, yellow and white populations for their development. Divided Korea (over shadowing perhaps the Europe of tomorrow) is a good example. Half of the money wasted stupidly on her destruction would have been sufficient to wipe out her poverty and social injustice and 'thus to deprive Communism of its pretext' (Martain). Look at Europe, Africa, Asia and the starving masses and draw your own conclusions.

Stalinism hides our failure and our politico-social cowardice. For the exploited the USSR remains a symbol of liberation because the West lacked the courage to fulfil its revolutionary mission. War will not change anything; on the contrary, it will only intensify the proletarianisation of the masses. The military power of the Axis was crushed, but Nazism has corrupted the civilised world. In the same way, if Stalinism were militarily defeated Leninism would kill people's soul in the most horrible of civil wars.

The only field in which we can right now hold up the communist advance is that of economic and social justice. Communist propaganda will be deprived of its only triumph card when we make our own totalitarianism collapse. This totalitarianism has entered our institutions because the Cold War alone is a fatalistic acceptance of violent means for the maintenance of peace as well as an obstacle to human advancement. If we want to defeat Communism we must deprive it of its justifications and not, by means of over armaments, continue the crime of ruining Europe and the world, which has been going on for the past forty years.

I oppose a moral and social veto to the madness of collective suicide. War is the grave of freedom, the refusal of socialist revolution, the denial of the spirits and of life, the betrayal of the Catholic character of the Church and a profound insult to the Cross of Love. This is why I say NO to war. And for the same reasons I refuse military service, which is a preparation for war. In addition to this I consider the army a school for servility and degrading automatism, an apprenticeship of murder, a centre of intellectual and moral prostitution, a laboratory which puts conscience to sleep by working for the loss of man's sense of guilt, thus permitting the slaying of millions of people.

Error will only be removed from man's soul if the fight is carried out at the level of the spirit. Perhaps for the third time our country will shout the horrible command: 'Kill each other!' And paradoxically it will do so in the name of justice: 'the basic attitude remains which in former times, when witch-hunting was going on, caused the possessed person, whom nobody wished to persecute, to be burned (accidentally) together

with the demon'. (Et. de Greeff).

The atomic idol, the napalm litanies are at present accepted means of killing evil and working for peace! Revolutionary nonviolence alone can prevent the collective suicide of mankind. You may call us utopians, but utopia is the name given to those ideas which tomorrow will be reality. You can accuse me of being in the wrong. Well, even so, I prefer to be wrong regarding this utopia and not kill anyone rather than to be right in the middle of cemeteries of ruins.

I consider myself at one with those thousands of revolutionaries who everywhere rebel against the tyranny of the State (this side or the other side of the Iron Curtain), at one with those millions of oppressed people who fight against colonial, capitalist and totalitarian exploitation. 'Conscientious objectors are social beings, communing with all the poor of this globe and trying, within the limits of their human frailties, to work for the moral improvement of mankind.'

### **Jean-Bernard Moreau of France**

Jean-Bernard Moreau was first called up in November 1948, but wrote to the Minister of National Defence saying that as a Christian he could not undertake military training. Receiving no reply, he presented himself at Duplix Barracks, but refused to put on uniform. Eventually he was brought before the Paris military tribunal on May 5, 1949, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. He was sent to the Centre Penitentier of Pithiviers. The judges at his tribunal were so impressed by the sincerity of Jean-Bernard Moreau's defence that they declared themselves in favour of a law regarding conscientious objection to military service. The WRI, supported by the similar actions of its Sections throughout the world, appealed to the President of the French Republic on behalf of Moreau and other war resisters. On the order of M. Vincent Auriol, Jean-Bernard Moreau was released from prison on the occasion of an amnesty in connection with the French national fete of July 16. Immediately after his release Moreau put into practice his statement to the military tribunal by joining a work scheme at Vercheny (Drome) being carried out by the International Voluntary Service for Peace.

Before his release from prison, Moreau received orders instructing him to present himself at Versailles for military training on 13th January, 1950. He thought it right, therefore, to warn the Minister of Defence once more that he had no intention of responding to this call-up, at the same time indicating the occupation he was actually performing. The police arrived at Vercheny and arrested Moreau again, and conducted him to the corps to which he had been posted. Subsequently, Jean Moreau was taken to the Cherche-Midi prison in Paris.<sup>19</sup>

Jean Moreau was first tried in 1949 charged with desertion in time of peace. The President of the Court was not very understanding and questioned Moreau in an aggressive tone, telling him that he ought to have gone back to his unit immediately after his release from prison. Moreau replied very simply and with a pleasant smile that he did not feel he was obliged to rejoin until he had received the order from the military authority. If he had received such an order he would then have decided what was his duty; but until he did receive it, he was acting in a perfectly regular manner and felt he could not be considered as a deserter.

Four witnesses spoke in favour of Moreau. Then the government representative spoke and demanded a sentence of two years' imprisonment. Maître Mark Nez, the Government repre-

sentative, then spoke and asked for the acquittal of Moreau, as he could not be counted as a deserter. The court was hostile to Moreau and after consideration condemned him to one year's imprisonment.

Most of the press reported the trial favourably; only two used unworthy expressions and reported inaccurately. They were *Liberation*, a Communist newspaper, and *Aurore*, a paper of the extreme right.

A reporter, Bernard Salmon, wrote:

[Jean Moreau] was condemned to 12 months' imprisonment; a scandalous, shameful verdict in which justice was dishonoured by producing false statements to try to confuse our friend [Moreau]. He has appealed and I think there will be a new trial. He was accused of "desertion" because within a fortnight of his early liberation in July he did not report at the barracks. That is a pretext to condemn him, for he should not have been called up till his normal date for liberation in January next.

At time of the publication of this note in *The War Resister* (57, Spring 1950) Moreau was still in prison.<sup>20</sup>

The above three cases, from Italy, Belgium and France illustrate the spiritual and intellectual preparedness typical of hundreds of conscientious objectors during and after the Second World War. There are many such statements, perhaps hundreds if not thousands available in the archives of organisations like the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters' International and their national branches all over the world. Not all the statements from objectors reached the level of those quoted above, but those that did so had a profound impact on the thinking of a large proportion of COs preparing themselves to face the draft. In other words, pacifists were becoming more and more clear and sophisticated in their response to war, even with its modern complexities and its social, political and ethical aspects.

## The death of Runham Brown

Runham Brown, who was expected to attend the World Pacifist Meeting, died on December 19, 1949 after some weeks of illness in London.<sup>21</sup>

Announcing the news of Runham's death in *The War Resister* 57 the Editorial began with the following words:

In countries where they have a king, the succession never breaks – there is always a sovereign. When the King dies, the cry goes out "The King is dead – Long live the King".

In the great loss sustained by the War Resisters' International – surely the greatest individual loss it ever had – the messages have poured in, and they speak one thought repeatedly – that there must be no break. "Runham is dead – Long live the W.R.I." We grieved at the thought of his passing, but we cannot mourn, for his life outshines his death.<sup>22</sup>

On Sunday, February 26, 1950 a memorial meeting was held in St Ermin's Hall, Westminster, London. Tributes were paid by many who had worked with him for years. They talked about his work that had opened many prison doors and saved many from death. A man and an

organiser they probably never knew had saved members of peasant groups and religious objectors in isolated parts of the world the worst penalties resulting from refusal of military service.

Runham Brown combined organisational ability of a high order with an unswerving adherence to the basic principles of War Resistance which he was able to express with polemical precision:

The task of the war resister is to break the power of Molochs which demand of their subjects, sacrifice. Abraham shall no longer offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to his God. Too many fathers have given their sons for their country. The Moloch of Patriotism has to be broken and sons taught that they need no longer, either by compulsion or cudgely surrender themselves at their country's call, provided they have the courage to face odium, persecution, and sometimes martyrdom as war resisters. The war resister teaches a higher allegiance, a cosmopolitan consciousness, and in seeking to serve the whole human race, he serves his country best.<sup>23</sup>

When Runham Brown wrote the above in 1930, the number of war resisters had increased considerably, which was very encouraging for the efforts of the WRI to become the vanguard of pacifism. It was also time to 'speak truth to power'. When the war resister spoke of obstructing a government in the carrying out or preparation of war, the critics shouted for the war resister to be 'constructive' and not be an 'obstinate opponent' of war. But probably these critics did not realise that the goal of the war resister is not just to end war. War resistance is a gateway to the road which leads to the 'golden city'. Runham Brown said that too many efforts had been made to climb the wall to get onto the road without going in at the gate:

No real progress can be made until risks are taken. Disarmament by example is not without risk. The man who refuses military service may have to suffer for his boldness, and the nation which leads the way in disarmament by example faces the rather remote possibility of temporary suffering for its intrepidity; but the world has taken risks, tremendous risks to gain security through war, and failed. The risk of entering by the strait gate is small in comparison.<sup>24</sup>

At the Council meeting held at the end of July, 1950, Harold Bing, member of the International Council, was asked to be the Acting Chairman of the International until the next Triennial to be held in 1951.

### **Proposals for changes of structure and priorities**

It is quite natural that some of the Sections of an organisation of the size and kind of the WRI should not agree with some of the activities and items on the agenda. However, it seemed a bit strange that the War Resisters League, the US Section of the WRI, had to wait for Runham Brown's death to be able to express their difference of approach on some topics.

The Turin (Italy) Council Meeting (July 28–31, 1950), received a letter from the American section, the War Resisters League, suggesting that "the death of Runham Brown provided an opportunity to reconsider the administration of the WRI, and raised the desirability of having an executive and other committees. The League had also expressed the hope that the WRI would be less concerned with relief work and more with the broader base of educating public

opinion, moving forward to 'conscientious disobedience'.<sup>25</sup>

The War Resisters League had already sent the letter to all WRI Council members and Sections. Instead of the Secretariat sending a reply to the WRL the Council considered it desirable to send a reply drafted by a specially set up sub-committee. Copies were to be sent to WRI friends in USA. George Reeves, deputising for Frances Ransom, who was in an important position in the WRL, was sure the WRL would appreciate the views of the Council and continue to give wholehearted support to the WRI.

Letter to Edward C. M. Richards and Frances Ransom, WRL:

Dear friends,

. . . We much appreciate the fact that the Executive Committee of the WRL has given so much time and thought to the work of the International and have formulated a number of suggestions for our consideration. To these we have given careful thought and indeed some Council members were able, through the copies which you sent to them direct, to think about your suggestions beforehand.

The letter also suggested to the League that in future any suggestion directed to the Council should be sent to the Council and not to Sections. Otherwise the problem of language could make things difficult. As the proposals were meant for the consideration of the Council, Sections should be informed about them along with the decisions taken by the Council. The reply continued with the results of Council discussions on the WRL suggestions:

In the first place, while we all realise how much the WRI has lost in the passing of Runham Brown, the position is not quite so critical as you suggest. Runham is, of course, irreplaceable but Grace Beaton, our Secretary, has been working with him as a partner for 25 years, and during the long months – even years – of Runham's illness, has carried the main responsibility of the work. So there will be no break of continuity. We have asked Harold Bing, who has been a member of the International Council since our first Conference in 1925, who has attended every International Conference and every Council meeting (even presiding at our Council meeting at Basle in 1947 which, owing to illness, Runham Brown was unable to attend) and who has visited our Sections in many European countries (as well as in the USA and Canada) to act as Chairman until the next International Conference in 1951.

On the question of relief work, we feel you are under a misapprehension and cannot understand how you have come to hold the view expressed. Relief work is not and never has been a major concern of the WRI. We have always made a particular point of emphasising that the relief work we have done is second to the main aims and purpose of the WRI, which are clearly set out in our Declaration and Statement of Principles. Last year only 550 pounds out of a total expenditure of 4,500 pounds was for relief, and this year we have allowed in our budget only 350 pounds for this purpose. Moreover this work is not relief in the ordinary sense. It is mainly devoted to the assistance and support of conscientious objectors and their relatives who would not be eligible for help from the general relief organisations you mention. Sometimes it is a case of saving the lives of young men by enabling them to escape from countries in which death would otherwise be a certainty. This we regard as an essential part of our work.

Your suggestion for the establishment of various committees seems to us more suited to a national Section than to the WRI itself. From a practical point of view such com-



mittees would have to consist of English members if they were to meet in person. Such domination of the movement by one national group we have always sought to avoid. Through our International Council communications, the Secretariat has been continually in contact with and advised by all the members of the Council in the interval between the annual Council meetings. This system developed by Runham Brown, has worked very well, and we see no reason for changing it at present. At the same time we are always ready to consider any way of making our work more effective.

So far as our property, Lansbury House, is concerned, we have at this meeting appointed a body of trustees to hold it on our behalf. So far as day-to-day payments are concerned, the nature of our work is such that emergency payments must be made from time to time and discretion must therefore be left to the Secretariat, acting within the general lines of policy laid down by the Council.

. . . the WRI is primarily a liaison organisation, the function of which is to link together and to encourage the work of our sections throughout the world . . . to help individuals in the formation of new Sections and to give moral and material support to individual pacifists. We consider it undesirable to set up any kind of centralisation which will control or direct the work of our members. We must also remember the very different political conditions prevailing in various countries, which make impossible a uniform plan of organisation or activity for our Sections. Those of us who come from countries where there is little political liberty have appreciated very deeply the great understanding which the headquarters has always shown for our peculiar difficulties. Signed on behalf of the International Council, Grace Beaton – Aug. 2, 1950<sup>26</sup>

Again, the Oxfordshire meeting of the WRI Council (1952) received a note from the War Resisters League, USA: 'Instructions to WRI Council Delegates' based on a resolution passed unanimously by the WRL, held on June 9, 1952.<sup>27</sup>

### **An American proposal for future strategies**

The proposal was that the WRI make a careful study of the world situation confronting the war resistance movement and of the role of the WRI in this context. The questions raised were in regard to the period ahead, on educational work for recruitment and development of pacifists; instilling greater pacifist content into anti-militarist movements springing up; care for individual COs suffering persecution, with more emphasis on education and action than CO care; establishing an international action committee and a literature committee, subject to and reporting to the WRI Council; and taking up among specifics how the WRI bulletin might more effectively serve these functions.

The Oxfordshire discussion started with an introduction by Bayard Rustin. Due to their inability to attend the meeting A. J. Muste, W. J. Jong and Premysl Pitter had sent their comments in writing. The Council agreed that the suggestions put forward by the American Section were to be put into effect. It was not reasonable to expect headquarters staff to carry the responsibility between the yearly meetings of the Council, and suggested that an 'Advisory' or 'Thinking' Committee should be set up in association with headquarters. The Council nevertheless recognised that since the WRI was the only international body dealing with the welfare of war resisters the world over, that part of its work must be maintained and indeed extended.

Although there was general agreement on the suggestion, some Council members were opposed to setting up an Advisory Committee. It was also recognised that it would involve

much travelling, which would mean that a committee meeting often would have to be mainly British. However, it was decided to set up an Advisory Committee to meet monthly if possible for the purpose of framing pacifist policy in relation to contemporary situations as well as considering the long-term problem of constructing a society free from the causes of war. All recommendations for special propaganda or action by WRI or its Sections were to be submitted to the International Council. Stuart Morris, John Fletcher, Pierre Hovelaque, Hagbard Jonassen and Bayard Rustin were asked to serve as members on this ad hoc Committee.

### Notes Chapter 13

- 1 Runham Brown, Foreword, *The War Resister* 52, Autumn 1946, p.2
- 2 It might help to be reminded that the US atom bombs were dropped over these two cities, even after Japan had announced its intention of unconditionally surrendering. It shows once again that the militarist has no consideration for human life as long as his 'mission' is completed. They had to 'test' the results of their research in creating the most powerful weapon.
- 3 See Chapter 13, Runham Brown, 'War Resister's Hope For The Future'.
- 4 Runham Brown, 'A Living Proof of the Invincibility of Gentleness', *The War Resister* 52, 1948, p.32
- 5 Samar Ranjan Sen, 'India Gets Her Freedom', *The War Resister* 53, Summer 1948, p.2
- 6 Samar Ranjan Sen, 'India Gets Her Freedom', *The War Resister* 53, Summer 1948, p.2-3
- 7 Samar Ranjan Sen, 'India Gets Her Freedom', *The War Resister* 53, Summer 1948, p.6
- 8 Runham Brown, 'War Resistance Is Not Enough', *The War Resister* 54, Autumn 1948, pp.4-5
- 9 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Basle, Switzerland, July 26-9, 1947, Item 55, 'The Demographic Crisis', p.39
- 10 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Shrewsbury, England, August 9, 1948, item 4, p.2
- 11 'Bread and Peace', *The War Resister* 54, pp.18-22
- 12 J. C. Kumarappa, *Banishing War, A Nonviolent Way of Life*, All India Village Industries Association, Wardha, India, 1948, pp.12-16
- 13 Ibid. pp.16-17
- 14 *The War Resister* 56, Winter 1949, p.10-11
- 15 'A Third Camp', *The War Resister* 57, Spring 1950, pp.12-16
- 16 'Pietro Pinna, Italy', *The War Resister* 56, Winter 1949, pp.25-7
- 17 *The War Resister* 57, Spring 1950, p.21
- 18 'Jean van Lierde, Belgium', *The War Resister* 58, Winter 1950, p.17
- 19 'Events are moving quickly in France', *The War Resister* 56, Winter 1949, p.28
- 20 *The War Resister* 57, Spring 1950, p.20
- 21 Harold Bing wrote a series of articles on the history of the WRI in the Peace Pledge Union journal *The Pacifist*, 1972/73. In the twentieth part of the series he wrote the following about Runham Brown's death:  
 "He had been the heart and soul of the WRI and had worked for it indefatigably since its establishment in London early in 1923. Few men can have given so long and so devoted voluntary service to any movement. He was by profession a master builder and an excellent craftsman, but the building to which he devoted most thought was that of the worldwide pacifist movement. With no language but English, he yet had a capacity for meeting and establishing understanding with people of all kinds with whom he could communicate only through an interpreter. He had a capacity for finding the right people and involving them in the work. He gathered together a devoted team of voluntary translators without whom the day-to-day correspondence would have been impossible. He was a beloved father figure to young war resisters around the globe and a valued friend and councillor to pacifists of his own generation. He himself had spent two-and-a-half years in prison as a CO during the First World War. Members of the WRI had presented to Edith and Runham Brown on the occasion of their golden wedding a marvellous album of photographs of members throughout the world. Many of them had enjoyed their hospitality when they had come to England as visitors or as refugees. The letters that poured in to the WRI Office showed how widely he was loved and appreciated. The memorial meeting at St. Ermin's Hall, Westminster

- ster, on Sunday February 26th, 1950 in his honour was a most moving occasion attended by war resisters of many nationalities.”
- 22 Editorial, *The War Resister* 57, Spring 1950, p.2. Please also see Appendices.
  - 23 Runham Brown, Chapter 3, ‘War Resistance as War Preventative’, *Cutting Ice*, WRI, London, 1930, p.16
  - 24 Ibid. Chapter 4, ‘War Resistance the Gateway’, p.21
  - 25 ‘Letter from War Resisters League (USA)’, Report of the International Council Meeting, Turin, Italy, July 28–31, 1950, p.2
  - 26 Copy of letter to Edward C. M. Richards and Frances Ransom from the Council of the WRI in reply to their letter circulated on behalf of the War Resisters League (USA) to WRI Sections, dated August 2, 1950 (3 pages), WRI archives at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Netherlands
  - 27 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Oxfordshire, July 25–8, 1952, item 7A, pp.7–8

## CHAPTER 14

*The world pacifist movement [should] abandon any hope that the governments of the world would – or even could – establish world peace . . . that the responsibility must be accepted by those who are willing to translate their nonviolent theories into dynamic action. . . . I think nationalism and what are called national states have become largely menaces to the human spirit and to human society. . . . I do not believe that these powerful national states and their governments will ever make the peace of the world. By their very structure and competition, by the very inner law of their own being, I think they are incapable of making world peace.*  
G. Ramchandran<sup>1</sup>

### The fifties

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#### WRI and the Cold War

When the war had started in 1939, and even during its course, nobody could have predicted that the world would get divided into two powerful blocks, each trying to dominate the world. To understand this event it is necessary to relate briefly the major part played by the Soviet Union in defeating the Axis powers.

The first five months of the war and the German invasion of Stalingrad were almost fatal to the Russians. German forces were within a few miles of Moscow and had virtually encircled Leningrad. So began a siege that was to take a heavy toll through famine and rob Russia of many historic buildings. In 15 months it is reckoned that the Red Army sustained 5,000,000 casualties. The defence of Stalingrad the next year turned the tide. The winter rescued the Russians whose counter-offensive cut off a huge German army outside Stalingrad, where it surrendered in February 1943.

A new offensive begun in January 1945 led to Germany's collapse. In May that year the Red Army was deep into the heart of the Third Reich, with Warsaw, Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and Prague taken.

As the war had progressed Soviet influence had increased tremendously. Communist parties outside Russia, which at the beginning had been attacking the "imperialist war" against Germany, were ordered to take a patriotic line in all countries fighting the Axis and devoted themselves to trying to influence Allied strategy in such a way that the maximum burden should be lifted from Soviet shoulders. This was the origin of the "second front", and Soviet diplomacy was largely directed to the same end.

Poland, which had a government in exile operating from London, remained the main source of difference between the Allies and the Russians, who were determined to have a new Poland, governed by a regime chosen to the same end.

The treatment of the defeated countries was another divisive issue. Russia favoured the partition of Germany, but at the Potsdam Conference this was not accepted and a decision was taken to treat Germany as a single economic unit despite the quadripartite nature of the occu-

pation. However, Eastern Germany, being under Russian occupation, was rapidly Sovietised and became a part of the Eastern Block. The same thing happened to the whole of Eastern Europe, which was liberated by the Russians from the Nazi forces.

So began the cold war, which divided the 'developed' world into two blocks, the Western Block and the Communist Block, making the rest of the world into what later came to be called the 'third world'. Divided by the Iron Curtain, as Winston Churchill named it, the Eastern Block was virtually closed to outsiders, except for those who were sympathetic to Soviet policies in one way or another. This naturally raised the question as to what would be the mechanism to peacefully resolve any conflict in the new and unprecedentedly dangerous world context.

In this context it is important to understand the role of those nations and individuals that did not belong to either of the power blocks. Rightly or wrongly, a majority of the nations outside the two blocks were considered 'under-developed' countries; industrialisation had not reached them. Leaving aside the causes of this state of affairs the fact remains that they became targets for the powerful countries of the two blocks to win support in their own favour. At that time, except for a few, e.g. Australia, New Zealand and Canada, countries outside the blocks were more or less under colonial powers. Many were struggling for freedom from colonialism. Many of them had been impoverished to the extent that they looked for support from the rich nations. But only an insignificant number of the people of those nations could benefit from it, namely the comparatively better off, socially and/or intellectually.

The Soviet Union developed a different approach towards the 'poor' countries. In many "third world" nations, with the support, moral as well as monetary, of the public-relations machinery of the Soviet Union, communist parties were formed to spread the message of Leninist Marxism. However, most of these did not grow powerful enough to be able to strengthen their struggles for liberation on communist lines. One reason was that the Western Block, compared to the Eastern Block, had an easier reach into the lives of the ordinary population of those countries through the media and consumer culture.

### **Russian influence and its impact**

The emergence of Russian power made an impact on all people with a socialist orientation virtually all over the world.

Taking a cue from the peace movement, but not from pacifism, the USSR built a peace movement of its own, which they called the World Council of Peace (WCP), and established its branches in each of its satellite nations and also in many of the non-Western countries. The headquarters of the WCP were established in Vienna, from where it could reach every corner of the globe without restrictions. In a short time it became a worldwide organisation with the USSR as its major patron. Many a peace worker supported and even joined the WCP.

The above factors had a deep neutralising impact on individual pacifists as well as pacifist bodies, diluting their anti-militarist element, especially in the Western part of Germany. However, those who believed in the abolition of military conscription remained firm in their faith.

One destructive result the cold war had was the closing of all channels of communication between the anti-militarists of the West and the thousands of war opponents – members of pacifist organisations, many of them belonging to the WRI Sections – in the countries of the Eastern Block. Before the War most of the East European countries had active pacifist organisations. With the communist regimes becoming all-powerful, the pacifist activities of individuals as well as groups died down. In due course only a few individuals, either isolated or in underground groups, survived as war resisters.

## **United Nations Organization**

The term United Nations was adopted during the Second World War to denote the nations allied in opposition to the Axis powers – Germany, Italy and Japan. After the end of the war some powers felt the need for a platform on which the nations of the world could come together for dialogues relating to the maintenance of peace and freedom. Based on a proposal put forward by China, the USSR, the USA and Great Britain a conference was held in San Francisco from April 25 to June 26 1945, where a charter was drafted and signed by them along with France and many other nations, to come into force on October 24, 1945.

That was the beginning of the United Nations Organization (UN). Its primary objective was the maintenance of international peace and security. The UN resolved to develop friendly relations, based on the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and achievement of international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. It was to serve as a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in the attainment of these ends.

The formation of the United Nations Organization and its subsidiary bodies, e.g. the Human Rights Commission, the United Nations Scientific, Educational, Cultural Organization and the like did create hope in people that the UN would bring about some relief and might help in the processes of reconciliation. Huge resources were used in running these bodies. The crucial question however remained: would these bodies ever be able to create an atmosphere of reconciliation and could they bring world peace closer to human expectations? In other words, could any organisation like the United Nations Organization, maintained and dominated by the most powerful governments, have done much that went against the wishes and interests of the ‘victorious’ powers that controlled it?

It would be erroneous to say that the UN failed entirely. It achieved some small but significant successes. It provided a platform for the nations concerned for some kind of dialogue, which often postponed crises for short periods and sometime solved minor international issues. However, experience indicated its nearly total ineffectiveness in the case of major crises – for the simple reason that governments have to be extra careful in vindicating or opposing the position of any other government or governments unless their own population and usually international opinion is wholeheartedly behind it. Moreover the interests and aspirations of the two blocks were so opposed to each other that there was very little scope for reconciliation on crucial matters.

In a nutshell, the UN failed to create situations where military force would have been proved redundant, and lasting solutions of national or international conflicts could be found possible. The simple proof of this fact has been the occurrence of hundreds of local and regional wars around the world during the last 60 years or so, despite the existence of the UN.

The factor behind the ‘failure’ of the UN was mainly that it had neither a sophisticated enough perspective nor the power or mandate or even imagination to try non-military methods to eradicate militarism altogether. The reality had always been that wars would go on taking place unless their socio-political causes were eradicated from society.

## **The alternative to militarist blocks**

Many radical thinkers and activists had already been looking for an alternative revolutionary approach to social change. The cold war confirmed the sterility of both the communist and

capitalist models. As has been already discussed, concepts such as nonviolent revolution for social change, and movements against the use of military force for social and political change and for world unity and world government, began in these post-world-war years to look realistic. At the same time the Indian struggle for independence gave some hope to the peoples fighting for freedom from colonial rule.

A significant proportion of people in some countries did not want to associate with either of the blocks. In Holland representatives of people who believed in that approach formed a new movement. It was because they were convinced that “pacifists were not interested in the creation of a third *power block*. They felt it possible to build up a conception of neutrality and to provide factual information endeavouring to bring a new morality into public and political life.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Third Way**

With all this in view a long-range plan was under consideration in order to meet the need for world co-operation on peace. A. J. Muste<sup>3</sup> had sent to the Council a suggestion along those lines. He thought that it would be more fruitful if the meagre personnel and resources of western pacifist movements were used in negotiations between the War Resisters’ International and western pacifists on the one hand, and on the other with such groups as the Gandhian movement in India, the socialist parties of India and other Asian countries, the nonviolent movement in South Africa, and neutralist groups such as the Bourdet group in France. The aim would be to create a ‘third camp’ believing in nonviolence which, representing mass support, would be able to stand between the major power blocks.<sup>4</sup>

The Council Meeting which took place from July 23 to 26, 1953, at Holte in Denmark, took up A. J. Muste’s suggestion and decided to explore the possibilities of a conference being held similar to the World Pacifist Meeting. However, it was felt that this Conference should be working on the specific task of creating such a third camp.

The Muste proposal, *The Third Camp*, as it came to be known, was receiving increasing attention from various groups and individuals, which motivated the WRI Council to make it the main theme of their International Conference due to be held in 1954.

The proposal was as follows:

I shall try to deal with the problems which arise the moment we pass beyond generalities in discussing the philosophy and programme of a Third Camp and the practical difficulties in the way of its emergence and growth. I mention this at the outset lest the present brief sketch gives the impression that I am unaware of such problems and obstacles. A Third Camp Conference held in New York, November 27–29, 1953, and attended by radical socialists and radical pacifists, was in my opinion quite correct in stating: “The Third Camp cannot at present be conceived as a united world-wide organisation or movement with a single ideology, strategy and goal. There is no single movement in any country of the world to-day which has been able to achieve such a degree of authority and prestige as to win the allegiance of masses everywhere, and thus to put its unique ideological stamp on the Third Camp movement.” The Conference accordingly indicated that its own programmatic statement was a tentative one since “it would be ridiculous for the small socialist, pacifist and other groups which have come together in this conference to lay down an ideology or a detailed programme” for such Third Camp forces as exist or which “must come into existence if the world is to be saved from social disintegration and the ultimate horror of atomic war”.

### **Colossus No. 3**

Another preliminary observation is necessary. By the term Third Camp we do not mean a Third Force consisting of power-states grouping together alongside or over against the two power-blocs which now dominate the world. For one thing, the situation does not permit the emergence of such a third power-bloc of the conventional type. A few years ago there were those who hoped that "Europe" would constitute or form a major part of such a counter-force. With the split between East and West still running down the middle of Europe, the near-collapse of the European Defence Community project, and the fact that if it does come through it will signify Western Europe's dependence on the American power-bloc, the precarious condition of the present régimes in Italy and France, and the rapid falling apart of the colonial empires, it is probably now clear to all that the time has passed when Europe can enter the lists as Colossus No. 3.

It is occasionally suggested that the Asian-Arab bloc could fill this rôle. Even if the Asian-Arab nations were firmly united the chance that they could fill such a rôle would, in my opinion, be remote in view of the tremendous power the two presently dominating blocs possess, thus enabling them to exercise a terrific centripetal force upon all lesser centres of power. But such current phenomena as the strong Communist influence in Indo-China, Indonesia and Malaya, the deep-going cleavage between Pakistan and India over the projected US military aid to the former, the unlikelihood that the Moslem world will accept Indian leadership and vice versa, and the Israeli-Arab clash, seem to me completely to rule out any possibility that Colossus No. 3 will, at least in our day and before the show-down – or reconciliation – between Russia and the United States, develop in this part of the planet.

In the second place, were such a third power grouping to emerge, it would not solve our problem. It would simply give us a slightly different pattern of power, struggle and war. It would in fact be the pattern which George Orwell pictures in *1984* where, as readers will recall, he described three powers engaged in perpetual war, for variety sometimes A and B against C, sometimes C and A against B, and so on. It is a new political, economic and social pattern, a new spiritual basis, a new vision, the world needs – not a variant on the old pattern. Hence, the usefulness of the term Third Camp.

### **Coexistence and Third Camp**

At this point another comment on the contemporary political situation may appropriately be made. The emphasis of much peace work – and this holds good of a considerable number of pacifists also – is on negotiations between the two Leviathans of our day looking towards their "peaceful co-existence". This is an implicit, when not explicit, recognition of the fact that the two power-blocs do to a frightening degree dominate the world-scene and can largely make life and death decisions for other nations. To this extent the activity in question is based on realism. But the idea that negotiation from strength, which is the kind of negotiation in which the powers engage, leads to anything like durable peace is an illusion based on what seems to me a superficial analysis of the forces at work and their accumulated momentum.

[In the second place, were such a third power grouping to emerge, it would not solve our problem.] This is not to say that tensions may not temporarily be relaxed and relations between the two blocs relatively stabilised. Nor do we for an instant prefer overt war to such "relaxation" in the form of covert war. But if the two régimes remain essentially as they are, the negotiation and stabilisation will simply register the power relationships.



Furthermore, as suggested a moment ago, power now tends to flow towards these huge power-centres or, to change the figure, one nation after another is forced to incline towards one or other of them, with the result that tension keeps mounting. There has to be another centre toward or into which power may flow. But this depends upon whether, e.g., the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin-America which have not yet irrevocably taken sides and do not want ever to do so, have a *genuine alternative* to the American régime of capitalism or “free enterprise” on the one hand and Stalinist or totalitarian Communism on the other hand. The peasants of India, e.g., must have another way of overcoming landlordism than the communist way, another means of utilising technology in ways appropriate to their country than the path of subjection to American or native centralised capitalism. Otherwise, India must eventually take one or other of the ways now open. If a Third Way is open, they will take it. Furthermore, the peoples in Russia and the United States and their respective satellites will then also recognise that they are not limited to the régimes now in control of their countries. Along such lines, possibilities of relaxation of tension which go deeper than the surface appearance open up.

To put the matter in psychological terms, in a situation in which, as one of our brilliant young chemists put it a year or two ago, two powers have become irrational, each “meeting paranoia with counter-paranoia”, therapy is obviously required. This means either that one of them must come to his senses and risk meeting paranoia with sanity or there must be a third party which does not itself yield to the madness of militarism, an atomic armaments race, exploitation and lust for power and thus can serve as therapist. This is the rôle of a Third Camp.

### **Where look for third camp forces?**

If next we ask ourselves where potential or emerging Third Camp Forces may be found, the answer from one point of view might be that the masses of people everywhere, including those under the rival power blocs, are Third Campers, in that they are fed up with war and long for peace and freedom. No régime anywhere in the world dares to announce any other objectives for its policy! But as Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick once observed: “All of us want peace, we also want the things that make for war”. If we ask, then, where in a more effective sense potential Third Camp Forces – whether or not they are fully conscious of being such – are to be found, the answer would include the following:

1. Those movements and organisations in the colonial or so-called under-developed countries which are struggling for their freedom from foreign domination, “white supremacy”, and social and economic exploitation, but which have not fallen into the trap of totalitarian communism.
2. The Praja Socialist Party in India which has in considerable measure adopted Gandhian ideas of “decentralism” in defining its socialist goals, which has renounced violence as a means for achieving social change though it seems not yet prepared to depend unequivocally on non-violence for defence against a possible external foe, and which has in strong terms condemned the philosophy that the end justifies the means. A characteristic statement of one of its leaders says that man in our age “has become victim to ideologies of remote success, so that the chain of acts of horror lengthens and the last link of the good act is never forged”. The Third Camp, he goes on to suggest, will therefore not seek ‘to justify a present lie by a future truth,

an immediate bureaucratisation by a remote democracy, a present sacrifice of national freedom by a remote one-world, an immediate murder by future health’.

Along side the P.S.P. in India are those Gandhians like Vinoba Bhave – and Jayaprakash Narayan who, significantly, is also head of the P.S.P., who are following in Gandhi’s footsteps and carrying forward his great experiment by seeking to make non-violence a force for revolutionary change, as well as a medium of inner purification and peace.

3. Forces in such countries as Germany and Japan which are opposed to the re-arming of their nation and want it to work out an internal economy and a foreign policy based on permanent disarmament and, if need be, non-violent resistance. In Japan this includes the very powerful Left Wing Socialist Party.
4. The nonviolent resistance movements in South and Central Africa.
5. Those groups and individuals in the socialist and labour movements of Europe who genuinely resist Stalinism and at the same time oppose the subordination of their movements to American control and to the war aims of their own countries; who struggle for a domestic and foreign policy free from capitalist exploitation and from military and political regimentation; who reject all policies which seek to win or preserve national privilege for people living in industrially developed countries at the expense of their brothers in the under-developed part of the world; and who see the folly of a socialism *nationally* based and therefore seek to revive and to embody in forms suitable to present conditions the *anti-militarist, democratic and internationalist* emphasis of the socialist and labour movements in the days when they were marked by *élan* and vision and had the deep loyalty and affection of masses who believed that they were the agency of their economic, political and spiritual liberation.
6. In western countries, pacifists and war resisters to whom pacifism is not only an individual witness or way of life, but as in the case of Gandhi a form of socio-economic organisation and a distinctive means for resisting tyranny and oppression and for the transformation of human society. Likewise, those social radicals who once espoused concepts of dictatorship and terror and who are now prepared, as were former Trotskyists and radical socialist youths in the New York Conference already mentioned, to declare that “the revolutionary movement must adhere firmly to democracy both within its own ranks and for society at large”, must not seek an “easy” way to power by the action of a narrow *élite*, must be “sensible of the moral and political restraints which always need to be placed on power”, are potential members of the Third Camp.<sup>5</sup>

After describing the background and approach of the concept of the Third Camp, A. J. gave a brief summary of the programme on which Third Camp elements would tend to unite:

1. Opposition to both the capitalist and the Stalinist social systems.
2. Natural and productive resources and key instruments of distribution and communication belong to all and should be socially owned and democratically administered through the people’s own community, co-operative and other instrumentalities. Technology must be the servant and not the master of man.
3. Refusal to give support – “critical” or otherwise – to the war preparations of either side in the cold war or to those aspects of their foreign policy which are a part of

such war preparations.

4. Unequivocal recognition of the right of all peoples to independence from foreign control, whether military, political, economic or cultural.
5. Vigorous and unremitting defence of civil liberties including those of Communists or others who might not extend civil liberties to those who disagreed with them.
6. Deep-seated concern for and belief in democracy, i.e. the essential dignity of the human being. For the pacifist, non-violence of spirit and method is, of course, integral to the conception of democracy. Democracy ceases to be democracy when it seeks to base itself on coercion and violence rather than upon consent.<sup>6</sup>

Having taken the decision to make the Third Camp proposal the main theme for their Triennial Conference held in 1954 in Paris, the WRI invited A. J. Muste to deliver the opening speech. A. J. began his speech by paying tribute to the WRI's work for conscientious objection and explained that nothing that he had to say was intended to minimise or weaken that work. He also said that many Sections of the movement were, however, concerned with the use of Gandhian nonviolence as a socio-political instrument for the transition to a nonviolent society. He also said that he had been reading Bart de Ligt and realised how closely linked the idea of nonviolent revolution was with European pacifist thought and with the tradition of the WRI. Following are some extracts from the summary of A. J.'s talk published in *The War Resister* of autumn 1954:

The political problem of our time was the polarisation of power in the hands of U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., but to neither could we look for a solution because both believed in power-politics. Americans and Russians were not particularly evil but collectively they were acting as Power-States had always acted and war would result unless a new and creative element entered into the situation.

#### **No Third Power Bloc**

... All who belonged to the Third Camp were opposed to the military preparations of both blocs and to their foreign policies which were integrally related to their military activities. They disapproved of the atom bomb whether in the hands of the Pentagon or the Kremlin. But the opposition extended to the socio-economic régimes and the cultures of totalitarian Communism and of American Capitalism, which both stimulated war preparation.

#### **Positive Programme**

The Third Camp stood for a new way of life with an emphasis on spiritual values and the subjection of technology to the service of man. It was more than neutralism. It stood for a more genuine and co-operative democracy.

In almost all countries were individuals and small groups spiritually and politically of the Third Camp. Certain nations seemed forced by their situation to look in a Third Camp direction, though they might never arrive there. Among such were those of Western Europe, of Southern and South East Asia and Japan – particularly liable to be annihilated in the event of a conflict between the two blocs. For slightly different reasons the newly independent countries of Africa were tending in this direction and might be followed by Latin America. All these peoples had either suffered the ravages of war or were technically under-developed.

### **The Price of Independence**

. . . While discussing the Third Camp in England, France, Germany and Holland he had often been asked two questions. One was whether Western Europe could survive without American economic aid. His reply was that it might involve austerity but he believed it possible. Disarmament, an essential aspect of Third Camp policy, would greatly relieve the economic problem. The vision of a new order would release new energies and make people willing to endure sacrifices.

### **The Use of Non-violence**

The second question was whether the adoption of Nonviolence would expose Western Europe to attack. This implied the illusion that Western Europe at present enjoyed security. As a military entity it would be coveted both by Russia and the United States and each would use any means to prevent it falling into the hands of the other. The Third Camp must be based on the rejection of military power.

If the peoples of Western Europe adopted a new way of life this might provide them with a security they did not have now because of its profound effect on the two blocs. Any attempt to undermine Communism by military means would make the régime more rigid. The situation of Eastern v. Western Germany and of Germany v. France, showed the impossibility of a military solution.

### **Influence on the United States**

What effect would a new Europe, a new Asia and a new Africa, have on the U.S.A.? Those from America present at the Conference realised the responsibility of their country. There were those in U.S.A. who were doing all in their power to combat military tendencies. It must however be remembered that there was no politically "left" party in U.S.A. and that in defence matters there was no difference between Republicans and Democrats. The Trade Union Movement favoured armaments and would support the government in destroying the industries of Western Europe to prevent them falling into Russian hands. If Western Europe made itself independent both of Russian and the United States and made it clear that it was seeking to build a genuinely democratic life based upon giving up the old concept of military power, no American régime could induce its workers to attack it because such a development would revive the idealistic and truly democratic elements in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Concluding his speech A. J. Muste warned against looking to the USA for leadership. He stressed the need for all the countries to be prepared to accept the responsibility of independence and of the creation of a new order in which the spiritual and the political were creatively integrated. Movements which were tending in the Third Camp direction must become corporately what Gandhi was, believing in nonviolence at all cost, and through that belief generating the dynamism which would achieve practical results.

At the end A. J. Muste stated that the WRI had rendered a great service by selecting the concept of the Third Camp as the major theme for their Triennial Conference. It was now necessary for it to work with other international organisations, particularly those which were working in the field of world peace. It was equally, if not more, important to clarify the thought process as well as to formulate the philosophy and a programme of action with a view to exploring concrete possibilities of co-operation in the struggle against war, militarism, tyranny, and physical and mental insecurity. These issues could no longer be left in the hands of

politicians; the average man and woman had to activate himself or herself, had to bear the responsibility for bringing about the social and political changes necessary to make this world peaceful.

### Comments on the Third Camp

The concept and the practicability of the Third Camp generated a wide-ranging discussion at the Conference. In his speech Fenner Brockway emphasised the need to relate the concept of Third Force with the liberation of colonial countries. There were three dangers, he said, which the pacifist movement ought to take note of: (1) Unless the imperial governments, and particularly the labour and socialist parties in the imperialist countries, adopted a much bolder policy for the liberation of the colonies the support now given to the Third Camp would go to Russia; (2) Political leaders in the colonies might desert the Third Camp and bargain with one block or the other to secure their personal position to gain some concession, and (3) The hostile attitude of the Western powers on the UN Trusteeship Council towards the petition of the Marshall Islanders against the use of their territories for hydrogen bomb tests was likely to turn them towards Russia. An anti-American and anti-West feeling was at present sweeping Japan for the same reason.

Fenner Brockway's conclusion was that if the

. . . [Third Camp] was to influence our time and generation, the Third Camp must be associated with the social revolution of this century which was the social revolution of the colonial peoples. Two-thirds of the human race was engaged in the struggle for political liberty, human equality and education. They were not always adopting methods we could approve but increasingly they were thinking in terms of Gandhi's example, if only because of the overwhelming power opposed to them.<sup>8</sup>

Premysl Pitter, who had managed to escape from behind the Iron Curtain but could not attend the Conference on account of passport difficulties, had sent a message. He said that he was speaking on behalf of millions of oppressed people in the communist-dominated countries. "The Third Camp Movement should therefore avoid political pacifism and follow a more revolutionary aim. It should strive to create a world-wide community of men based on mutual understanding and help. A very important group of potential Third Campers was the oppressed *behind* the Iron Curtain who longed for emancipation but feared that in resisting their own tyrannical régimes they would fall into the hands of Western reaction."<sup>9</sup>

It is significant that many of the participants of the Conference supported the concept of Third Camp and some associated it with the Gandhian struggle for the freedom of India. According to Horace Alexander:

The Third Way must have a positive content. National freedom was a means to something else. When we turn to the economic field we often found that Gandhi did not fit into our western categories. Most of us represented the wealthier third of humanity and were anxious to raise the standard of living of the other two-thirds. Gandhi's emphasis was always on self-help. When touring the villages of Bihar after the earthquake [around 1930], he did not promise help to the villagers but suggested things they could do for themselves. During the chaos of partition [1947], he rejected the suggestion of an appeal to Western Countries for funds to help the refugees. He insisted that this was a

problem they must solve themselves with only such outside help as came in the form of unsolicited gifts.<sup>10</sup>

### **Other movements and the Third Camp**

Jean van Lierde<sup>11</sup> talked about the religious and socialist movements in Europe with a view to discovering what groups there were with a Third Camp tendency with which the WRI might co-operate. He emphasised that the conflict between communism and capitalist-colonialism was not something external but divided each country. Despite the attachment of most Catholics to traditional doctrines of “the just war” and “legitimate defence”, voices in favour of nonviolence and conscientious objection had made themselves heard recently, e.g. the writings of Father Lorson, Pope Pius XII’s recognition of the duty of COs in certain cases, and such journals as *Routes de Paix*. Jean van Lierde pointed out that certain Catholic reviews showed a Third Camp tendency in opposing both capitalist-colonialism and Stalinism.

Jean van Lierde added that although most Catholic political parties were right wing, there were outstanding individuals like Abbé Pierre in France and the group behind the review *Esprit*. A non-political but universalist Catholic movement, Pax Christi, which enjoyed Episcopal patronage, presented the case of nonviolence, conscientious objection and a diminution of tension between the two blocks.

He also mentioned several organisations which were very close to the WRI in several countries of Europe. At the same time he appealed to the WRI members to be active in the political field and to influence such groups as he had instanced towards the WRI ideas.

### **Religious aspects of the Third Camp**

André Trocmé, a French pacifist, declared: the *realm of politics was that of power and that of religion was truth*.<sup>12</sup> He talked about the difficulties in which religious people found themselves, especially when they associated themselves with political movements. Support for the United Nations had involved the World Council of Churches Committee in approval of the Korean action; approval of a European Federation had led sincere Christians into supporting the World Council of Peace, which was associated with the official position of the governments behind the Iron Curtain. If there came into existence a Third Camp group of nations, between the Eastern and Western blocks, could religious forces support it? The answer was no!, because along with the desire to avoid war would be involved the egoistic economic interests, fears, etc., of all those nations. India, after securing independence, had built up armed forces. “God was not the God of the Third Camp only and therefore religion could not be harnessed to one group.”

André Trocmé stressed that for men of goodwill everywhere the Third Camp, in a sense, already existed. He asked: *Could this leaven gradually win the governments to a Third Camp policy?* For 2,000 years the Christian Church had been commanded to be such a Third Camp, but had failed by compromising with the world. Religion had often been a cause of conflict rather than reconciliation. The need was for repentance, but history had shown repentance to be a slow process.

Could religion have any impact on the political realm? Pacifists could not obtain political power except by alliance with non-pacifists and that meant acceptance of the methods of authority. The common ground of religion and politics was very limited. It was mainly that of liberation from capitalism and totalitarianism. This involved no committal to long-term politi-

cal plans. Gandhi's methods of non-co-operation and economic independence showed the way. It involved authority which would not be accepted without religious inspiration. Gandhi's unity with the outcasts must be copied by us in our own communities. We needed training centres for this work.<sup>13</sup>

Following the Triennial Conference not much work could be done to bring to fruition the concept of the Third Camp as far as the WRI and its activities were concerned. But at the government level the idea of a non-aligned block started being discussed and eventually became a reality. It was, however, a different kind of third block – based on governmental and military power. It was called the group of non-aligned States, and it was formed by the coming together of statesmen like Nehru (India), Tito (Yugoslavia) and Nasser (Egypt), all highly ambitious leaders of countries which at that time were considered less important. The non-aligned movement has to be seen in the context of the increasing dangers arising from the cold war. Heinz Kraschutzki wrote about the cold war:

It may be doubted whether a cold war is a war. But it cannot be denied that a cold war can lead us into a "hot" war. In our times it is even difficult to imagine a major war breaking out without having been preceded by a war of propaganda. We members of the WRI are pledged to strive for the removal of all causes of war. We can, therefore, neither take part in the cold war, nor remain indifferent to it.<sup>14</sup>

## Contact with other international organisations

The overall discussion at the Paris Triennial Conference in 1954 had further opened the doors into the future role of the WRI activists. It tried to persuade the WRI to create wider contacts with as many peace forces as it could to convince them that as long as militarism remained the major instrument for resolving international disputes there could not be any hope for world peace.

### **Peace organisations**

The WRI had always made efforts to keep in touch with and, wherever possible, encourage movements oriented to peace and nonviolence to co-operate in their endeavours to oppose militarism. The formation of the Joint Peace Council already as early as 1928 was an example of the WRI's approach to co-operation among peace movements. The Joint Peace Council consisted of seven organisations from the UK, France and Holland (Chapter 9).

The situation created by the Second World War gave birth to several new organisations. The WRI could not have kept aloof from these new developments. It was also felt that considering the status and importance the International had established for itself, some of these organisations might like to accord to it a status they did not readily accord to voluntary associations. Among the new organisations that came into being was the United Nations Organization and its subsidiaries such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

### **UN Economic and Social Council**

The Economic and Social Council of the UN invited the International to apply for consultative status. ECOSOC was concerned with social and economic welfare and the question of human

rights. The WRI decided to explore the pros and cons of the invitation. Abraham Kaufman and Frances Ransom, representatives of the WRI US Section, the War Resisters League, had long discussions with the officials of ECOSOC and sent the following statement to the WRI Basle Council meeting. "This revealed that to pursue this application would involve the WRI in giving information about our members and movement in a number of countries where it would be highly undesirable to do so."<sup>15</sup> In view of this factor, it was decided not to proceed with the application.

### **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

UNESCO was particularly concerned with educational matters. The WRI Council agreed that this might well be a valuable link, especially because it would not involve the International in any political issue. The WRI Secretariat went as far as completing and sending the questionnaire required for associating with the Organization. But the idea was eventually given up.

### **International Bill of Human Rights**

The International Bill of Human Rights was another UN initiative that drew the attention of the WRI Council. A letter was sent to the secretary of the Commission on Human Rights pressing for a specific provision in the Bill of Human Rights recognising the right of conscientious objection to military service. A letter was sent to all the WRI Sections proposing that they too should write to the Commission supporting the WRI demand by sending in similar requests or by arranging for this to be done in the names of eminent people in their own countries. Many of the WRI Sections responded to the request very positively.

However, it was generally felt that it would be extremely difficult to get this question included in the International Charter. There might be some possibility of having it mentioned in the "Preamble". As the Commission was going to meet at the end of August that year, the WRI Council instructed their Secretariat to request all Council members and Sections to approach their own delegates urging them to take this matter up and see that it was given full consideration when the Commission met next.

The pacifist approach to world affairs was never taken seriously by the UN or for that matter by any of the organisations geared to the power of governments. The topic of conscientious objection to military service took a very long time to get on the agenda of the Human Rights Commission, and then it lingered there for decades. However, the WRI kept its doors open to the UN and its associates, particularly the Human Rights Commission, with a view to continue the dialogue on the question of conscientious objection to military service as a basic human right.

### **World Council of Peace**

At the other end of the spectrum was another type of "peace movement" created with the encouragement of the supporters of the Soviet Union: the World Council of Peace (WCP). At the Oxfordshire Council meeting held on July 25–28, 1952 there were long discussions on the question of how much contact the WRI should have with 'non-pacifist peace movements, especially those which might have some alignment with any State power or any power block?' The question arose of the attitude of the WRI and its Sections to the World Council of Peace. It was recognised that the situation varied in different countries, but that many WRI Sections



and other peace organisations had decided that at present they could not enter into co-operation with branches of the World Council of Peace because of fundamental differences of purpose. This, however, did not preclude unofficial contacts.

Hein van Wijk, a Dutch pacifist and a long time WRI member, pointed out that in much of the discussion there seemed to be two schools of thought; not so much of individualistic outlook, but which reflected the historical experience of different countries. Many people on the continent had lived under occupation where governments were hostile to the interests of the individual, and were totalitarian, terrorist and arbitrary. This caused a complete 'break' in their history. In Britain and America there was a different experience. There was also a fundamental difference between the application of nonviolence as practised in India and as it might be carried out in Europe. Several members of the Council appreciated this analysis. It was felt that the new advisory committee might be able to give further consideration to the various points brought forward in it.<sup>16</sup>

The Council meeting held in Holte, Denmark in July 1953, again discussed the question of its relationship with the World Council of Peace and reconfirmed their previous attitude of having no official co-operation with the WCP. The Council had before it a memorandum issued by WRI headquarters with a report from the Vienna Congress of the WCP, which showed that, whilst individual pacifists who attended this Congress were allowed to speak freely, the small number of pacifists present were unable to affect general decisions and subsequent propaganda of the WCP.

Heinz Kraschutzki (Berlin) addressed the WRI Council in Geneva in July, 1955 on policy changes in the WCP, particularly as evidenced by events at and resolutions of their Helsinki meeting. This was attended by a number of pacifists, as individuals, and they were welcomed and able to present their views. Other evidence of the desire of the WCP to include pacifists in the organisation was presented; hence, Heinz suggested that WCP members should not be automatically condemned as insincere, for this was not invariably the case. In spite of Heinz Kraschutzki's unrealistic and romantic understanding of the WCP the Council agreed with him on this specific point.

Some other Council members pointed out the corresponding change in the official Russian policy, and noted that the WCP refused to reveal its source of revenue. Heinz agreed with the implication that the WCP was government-supported, but expressed the wish that non-communist governments would allocate funds for peace propaganda.<sup>17</sup>

After considering all that was said about the WCP the Council agreed that the WRI would not discourage individual pacifists from attending conferences of the WCP if they thought it useful; in particular the possible value of such contacts between Western and Eastern zones of Germany was stressed. But the WRI decided not to send official delegates or observers or establish any official connection with the WCP, although the two organisations, naturally, should continue to exchange literature and keep in touch.

Later on we will discuss the several occasions in the 1960s and 70s when the WRI maintained contacts with the WCP and its national branches in the East European countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Russia. Indeed the WRI invited the WCP to send observers to their Stavanger, Norway Triennial Conference held in 1963 and later took the initiative in calling a special joint meeting of the two organisations, with three or four participants from each side, held in Ostend in 1964. It also organised and co-sponsored with WCP two seminars at the time of Mahatma Gandhi's centenary – one in Budapest and the other in London.

## Formation of Executive Committee

At the meeting of the International Council held in Paris in August 1954, after the Triennial Conference, it was recalled that the Triennial had expressed the feeling that there should be a responsible Executive Committee and decided that it should be composed of the officers of the WRI: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer/s, together with Council members who were living in England. It was also agreed that if any other Council member happened to be in London at the time of an Executive meeting he should be invited to attend. Thus the first Executive Committee was formed with Harold Bing, Grace Beaton, Lionel Penrose, Margaret Penrose, Frank Dawtry, Stuart Morris and Tony Bishop. They were to meet at least three times a year.

The Executive Committee would give ample time to the members of the International Council for them to be able to send written material for consideration by the Executive. Council members would also receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings.

### Grace Beaton's resignation

The mid-1950s, full of new enthusiasm and ideas of expanding the work in a number of ways, brought some unexpected problems in relation to the work of the Secretariat. Grace Beaton, a person who had devoted every bit of her time and energy, became unable to cope with her work through illness. On the advice of her doctor, Grace Beaton went on leave for three months (August–September, 1954). Tony Bishop (Australia) was asked to carry on the work as Acting Secretary. But he had to go back to his country to resume work with the Brotherhood of St Laurence. In the meantime Grace had suggested that Arlo Tatum, who had been editing *The War Resister*, be made Co-Secretary with her.

Grace Beaton's resignation as General Secretary was accepted by the Council to be applicable from Friday July 20, 1956. The Council agreed to appoint Arlo Tatum as General Secretary from that date.<sup>18</sup>

Grace Beaton died after many months of illness on September 19, 1957. The immediate cause of death was injuries sustained when she fell while alone in her home. She was found unconscious and died 11 days later despite two operations performed in an effort to save her life. The simple cremation service, held on September 25, was attended by several WRI officials and staff on behalf of the international movement.<sup>19</sup>

Grace had become General Secretary of the International in 1933, eight years after joining the WRI staff. The news of her death brought a flood of sympathetic messages from all over the world.<sup>20</sup>

## The Roehampton Triennial – 1957

The ninth Triennial Conference of the WRI (July 15–20, 1957) was held in the Froebel Education Institute, Roehampton, a suburb of London. This Triennial was specially important from the point of view of the wide range of discussions showing the growing interest in nonviolence and its application to diverse problems in many parts of the world. This Conference heard most encouraging accounts of the use of nonviolence against oppression and slavery in some countries. The following is an example of a successful struggle of the black Americans in the southern states of the USA as told by Bayard Rustin, who was secretary of the War Resisters League, the US Section of the War Resisters' International:

### **Montgomery, Alabama, USA**

I believe the bus boycott of the American Negroes in Montgomery is a post-Gandhian contribution to the theory and practice of non-violence.

When the British were in India it was often said that they were comparatively gentle in their methods. That may be true to some extent. They are after all a people with Judao-Christian traditions. There were always back-benchers in the House to support Gandhi. There was no pathology on the part of the British in India, as there was on the part of the Nazis against the Jews and against their political opponents.

There is a good deal of pathological behaviour on the part of the Whites in the South. The fact that the Negroes' struggle was brought to a successful conclusion makes it certain that non-violence, no matter what it is up against, no matter how sadistic the opponent, can win through. An oppressor thrives on fear, and cannot function against a people without fear.

Montgomery is a small Southern city of 100,000 inhabitants, half of which are Negroes and half White. . . .

... Negro in the United States is at the bottom of the economic system which rests upon him. If he begins to move the entire edifice must change. ..

It was not the passage of laws, but the acceptance into industry of the Negroes which rendered possible the social changes which followed, and will follow.

**The Beginning:** Let us start with that day in 1955 when a Negro woman refused to surrender her seat on a public bus to a white man, as the law required. She was evicted from the bus, for she had failed to comply with the local law. She appealed against a token sentence imposed upon her for breaking the law and now the famous boycott by the coloured half of Montgomery's population sprang into existence. Fourteen months later the Negroes were victorious.

... the first lesson we learned from the campaign was that success depends on the will of the people to act. For years people of goodwill have bombarded successive U.S.A. Governments on the racial question without appreciable results. It is not necessary to approach governments in matters of this kind. Changes will come when a mass of people desire them enough to act.

Secondly, we learn it is often the oppressors who assure the success of a non-violent struggle. It was the bad behaviour of the whites which antagonised the feelings of all decent people, thereby turning public opinion in favour of the Negroes. Bomb throwing, shooting at innocent persons, setting fire to churches and petrol stations, attacks on the persons – all these things, perpetrated by whites against black, ensured the success of the non-violent action.

The Negroes of Montgomery, with the aid of the better section of the white population, have won their right to travel in unsegregated buses. Much credit has been given publicly to the Rev. Martin Luther King, the Negro leader, and he deserves credit indeed. But success was achieved by a revolt of the people. In particular, the women of Montgomery have made this possible. They have said, in relation to the non-violent campaign, "These are our children; it is better that they should suffer a little now, rather than much later on." For the children, too, were inevitably affected. In addition to all else, it was the women who collected money that was needed.

At one stage of the struggle, Ben Mays and I had occasion to visit Dr. Martin Luther King. We received a message to say that at 11.30 p.m. that night Ku-Klux-Klan would march through the city. The Klan would expect the Negroes to hide, with fear and

trembling, as they had done in the past, or, because of the lateness of the hour, expect them to be in their beds asleep. We considered carefully what should be done by the Negro population. We wondered what Gandhi would have done, and decided it must be something unexpected.

We sent a message to the population, saying, "Turn on every light in your house, and your porch lights. Dress your children in their Sunday best; be outside your houses, and together we shall welcome the Klan's men!" This they did and when the hooded Ku-Klux-Klan procession arrived they were greeted by almost the entire Negro population, singing spiritual after spiritual. The astonished Klansmen paraded for only a short distance. The procession then disintegrated, its members disappearing into various side streets.

**Third Lesson:** . . . Not one of the Negro leaders in Montgomery was a pacifist when the struggle began. In the middle of the fight only one had become a pacifist. At the end a second had become a pacifist. But many of the common people have become pacifists. When we present the total impact of pacifist philosophy to people in a world of force and violence, we may be asking the impossible. It is important for us to create situations within which they can learn by doing. The strategy of non-violence ought to be greatly emphasised. The principle of non-violence will be accepted only when the strategy has been adopted.

It is interesting that the most violent men in Montgomery finally became those who could be most relied upon to act nonviolently. At first many Negroes were fearful, and had collected several arsenals in the city.

We called together the most violent young men, not to tell them it was not nice to have and use guns, but to point out to them the immediate social consequence of having them. It was a strategic discussion. We developed a technique of involving them in the core of the nonviolent struggle. About a thousand bicycles had been collected all over the State and sent to Montgomery, and parked in a large field. We persuaded these young men that for the immediate good of the community there was nothing more important than to protect these bikes without violence. They did so and were finally prepared to dump their guns in the river. I can scarcely imagine what would have ensued, had the police caught us on that drive to the river, in possession of a truck load of weapons.

**Fourth Lesson:** We discovered that the first essential of non-violence is not love but dignity, because where there is no dignity, love or social affection is not possible. The commandment that you should treat others as you would be treated by them does not work without dignity. In dealing with the Negroes who were most violent we found that they were so violent because they did not think themselves men. We taught them an appreciation of their African origin and background and showed them how to face the white community without lying and stealing, as had been their custom. All this took some time, but there was also an immediate response which made it possible for them to begin the struggle.<sup>21</sup>

The question that came to the mind of some of those who were present at the talk was: What of the future of nonviolence for the Negroes in America? Great as this nonviolent struggle had been, the most important question remained. How will the Negroes use the freedom which eventually will be theirs?

## **India's Land Gift Movement**

Donald Groom gave a very encouraging account of the Gramdan Movement (Land Gift Movement) that was initiated in 1951 by Gandhi's colleague Vinoba Bhave, who had been walking from village to village all over the country with his companions asking for gifts of land for the landless. Hundreds of teams all over the country had been carrying on the task of collecting gifts of land from those who owned it. By the beginning of 1957 hundreds of similar teams of young and old Gandhians, spread all over the country, had collected more than half a million acres of land, much of which had been distributed to the villagers whose only means of livelihood had been working as cheap labourers, often as bonded labourers.

The remarkable success of Vinoba and his followers continued and the emphasis was on the giving of entire villages (from land-gift to village-gift). Both the rich and the poor in the scheme of Gramdan were giving up their land to the community and many had done so.

What actually was the Land Gift Movement according to Vinoba Bhave? What did Gramdan really mean? Private ownership in land would come to an end. In other words land would belong to the whole village. The whole village would consider itself as one family. They would devise a method of cultivation with consent of all. All would have employment. There would be no sense of rivalry and no inequality. That means there would be no coercion and bossing in matters of ownership.

Some critics of the Land Gift Movement had been using the argument that the land given as gift was either unfertile or was under litigation. In other words, landowners took this as an opportunity to be relieved of all the implications related to the infertility of the land or other problems. But the fact was that less than a quarter of the gifted land was uncultivable.<sup>22</sup>

Vinoba explained this aspect in a most compassionate manner. He meant that to some extent the Land Gift Movement had made the landlords aware of their *sin* and given them an opportunity to get rid of it in a constructive way, however small it might be. There was no doubt that the Land Gift Movement had created, for a period, a comprehensive opportunity to bring about land reforms in the country. Unfortunately the Movement could not culminate into the revolution that was envisaged by Vinoba Bhave and his companions.

It was a small beginning of a social revolution, which had its own limitations. Moreover, reactionary forces, social and political, felt threatened by the positive results of the experiment. Nevertheless, it was an example of the strength of peoples' willingness for change and freedom to own responsibility of their own lives. The Roehampton Triennial ended with the spirit and attitude for self-examination and renewed action.

## **Further development of the concept of war resistance**

### **Recognition of conscientious objection as a basic human right**

The growth of the movement demanding that the State give legal recognition to the right to refuse military service also put pressure on the WRI to build up mechanisms to assist the young men who were receiving their call-up orders, but did not want to join.

At least two attempts had already been made to secure the inclusion in the United Nations Human Rights Covenant of a provision to protect conscientious objectors. In December 1949 the Service Civil International, the international body that organises work camps for social work, had sent to the general secretary of the UN such a proposal to include a clause that "any

one whose religious beliefs or deep convictions forbid them to participate either directly or indirectly in armed conflict shall, in countries where there is compulsory military service, be guaranteed the right to perform a civilian service in place of service with the armed forces.” In April 1950, the Friends’ World Committee for Consultation submitted a statement concluding with the words: “We believe that the right of conscientious objection to military service should be recognised in the Covenant of Human Rights.”<sup>23</sup> These statements were neither comprehensive nor radical; they had no effect on the UN body.

The WRI, at its Council meeting held in Denmark in 1952, decided to make an appeal to the United Nations, though without much hope of success.

### **Appeal by WRI Council to UN Human Rights Commission**

At the 1952 meeting in Denmark, the Council of the WRI discussed the position of the conscientious objector in relation to the protection of human rights by the United Nations and as a result decided to send to the Human Rights Commission a letter of which the text follows (this letter was dispatched to the secretary-general on August 19, 1953, and was acknowledged by the director of the Division of Human Rights on September 1, 1953):

Under the Charter of the United Nations the protection of human rights has for the first time become an international responsibility. This marks an important step in human progress. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents a first attempt to set forth in comprehensive terms the rights which all human beings should enjoy. The definition of these rights in legally enforceable form is at present occupying your attention; the terms of the Covenants at present being drafted by you are of the greatest importance for securing the rights of individual men and women, throughout the world.

In Article 18 of the Universal Declaration it is stated: ‘Everyone has the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion’. Much will depend on the way this freedom is defined in the Covenant and we particularly urge that freedom of conscience shall be defined in such a way as to include the right of conscientious objection to military and war service.

We are aware that this matter has already twice been brought to the notice of the Economic and Social Council, once by the Service Civil International in December 1949, and again by the Friends’ World Committee for Consultation in April 1950, but we are disturbed to find no evidence of the recognition of this right in the Convention on Social and Political Rights as so far drafted.

It seems to us that this is a very serious omission. Already eighteen countries (at January 1953) with compulsory military service make legal provision for conscientious objectors, and there seems to us to be every reason for extending this right to conscientious objectors in all countries which enforce military service. In view of the fact that one of the primary aims of the United Nations is the elimination of war, it seems only logical that it should give special encouragement and protection to those who have already rejected war individually and who may otherwise be subject to persecution for their adherence to a declared aim of the United Nations.

In including the protection of conscientious objectors to military service in the Convention on Human Rights, we would suggest that provision should be made for three degrees of exemption according to the nature of the objection of the individual concerned, viz.:—

- (a) exemption from combatant service,
- (b) exemption from all military service conditional upon the performance of some civil alternative, and
- (c) absolute and unconditional exemption.

This is in accordance with the practice of the countries having the most advanced legislation in this matter and would therefore seem to be the least that the United Nations should ask of its members.

We ask you, the members of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, to give this matter your most serious consideration.<sup>24</sup>

It was evident that the international recognition of human rights and the gradual elaboration of machinery for its enforcement represented an important step forward and, if effectively operated, would have contributed greatly to the enlargement of freedom and the obstruction of the growth of totalitarianism. Pacifists would have naturally welcomed these advances. Nevertheless, none of the international agreements so far in existence gave any satisfactory basis for recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service. And there was no provision by which individuals or private associations could make effective complaints about the infringement of the rights, which had officially been recognised. The WRI, in face of such a situation, needed to act with greater imagination and organised efforts. But the reality was that not all pacifists believed in obtaining official recognition of the fundamental right of conscientious objectors to refuse military service and at the same time also asking for alternative civilian service. Within the WRI itself there were two opinions; one was to reject conscription altogether and the other was to provide alternative service in place of military service. Those who rejected the idea of having any kind of alternative service believed that a plea or demand of that nature ultimately implied the acceptance of the right of State to impose military service, and thus the continuation of militarism.

### **Would legal recognition be a pacifist victory?**

In countries with military conscription many a youngster started asking for the option of doing civilian service instead of military service either believing that by doing so he would be serving the pacifist cause, or for the simple reason that it would be an escape from the comparatively tough life of a conscripted soldier living in a barracks with limited opportunities for free movement.

There was a contradiction of approach within the International as well as within its Sections. Whereas statement after statement had constantly been given at the Triennial Conferences and Council meetings to say that acceptance of alternative service was another way of recognising the right of the State to enforce conscription, a number of pacifist leaders in their countries disregarded this clear and vital policy and continued putting in increasing efforts for obtaining legal recognition for conscientious objectors to perform civilian instead of military service. In France Louis Lecoin's 40-day fast, which brought some success, was a good example in that regard.

While the demand for State recognition of alternative service as a human right was becoming more time and energy consuming for the pacifists, particularly the War Resisters' International, the feeling against it was becoming more challenging.

An invitation was sent out to some concerned people for a meeting planned for October 19, 1957, organised by the Service Civil International, the International Movement for Reconciliation and the War Resisters' International to discuss various issues related to conscription.

According to Arno Hamers of the WRI Belgian Section, who resigned over the matter, the letter said:

For years the members of our movements have conducted a ceaseless public campaign for the liberation of conscientious objectors and to obtain legal recognition (especially alternative civilian service) guaranteeing respect of their convictions. . . . This Government bill [Belgian] constitutes a valid response to our claims, but it is important, however, that we discuss together certain amendments to be made to it.

The above quotation is from Arno Hamers's letter of resignation, which he had sent to the Committee of the Belgian Section of the War Resisters' International. In his note introducing Arno Hamers's letter in *The War Resister* the Editor said:

The WRI works for legal recognition of conscientious objection where none exists on behalf of the many members who have no scruples against compulsory alternative service. It has, however, never commended or committed itself to any form of conscription, civilian or military. This effort to serve both those members who accept civilian alternative service and those who withhold co-operation is severely criticised in . . . Mr. Hamers's letter of resignation.

Arno Hamers wrote in his letter of resignation that since he had worked within the WRI he had always fought to ensure that the demand for the liberation of COs had to be put forward as a consequence of what, in his opinion, was the first of the WRI's demands, i.e. abolition of compulsory military service. He said that he had been opposed to the International supporting the claims of both the opponents and the supporters of compulsory alternative service.

However, your invitation – signed on behalf of the WRI – gives the impression that the WRI, *as an organisation*, accepts compulsory alternative civilian service, and that it considers that the government bill, save for a few amendments, constitutes a valid response to our claim. This is inadmissible. . . .

Concerning the meeting on the 19th, I would also point out that, had the WRI remained faithful to its original principles, such a meeting – at which it is proposed to discuss amendments to a government bill for compulsory alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors – would actually be inconceivable.

Arno Hamers felt that the H-bomb was a symbol of absolute evil, therefore any compromise with the military system must be absolutely rejected.

... at the moment when the atomic threat hangs over humanity, discussion of the amendments to be made to a government bill for legal recognition seems to me, at the very least, completely divorced from the realities and needs of the hour.

In the present circumstances I think that the only line of action of consequence to war resisters, . . . is progressive and ever-increasing non-co-operation with the State in the sense outlined by Gandhi and ever increasing offensive civil-disobedience, even going as far as total civil disobedience, if the demands of the world situation require it.<sup>25</sup>

At the end of his note introducing the letter from Arno Hamers, the Editor of *The War*



*Resister* had welcomed readers' comments on Arno Hamers's letter (see its full text in Appendix 10).<sup>26</sup>

Ralf Hegnauer from Switzerland, one of the founding leaders of the Service Civil International (SCI), asked:

Why should a non-violent attitude and conception exclude being in favour of an alternative, even compulsory period civilian service for young people provided the work is not connected with any preparation for warfare and is done in favour of the community at large? . . .

Some of see us in the struggle for legal recognition of CO's a practical present day possibility of action. If successful, it not only brings our conception to the knowledge of more people and enriches law and the ethical basis of social life, but also abolishes an injustice.<sup>27</sup>

L. W. Gibson of Britain wrote:

To accept legal recognition is to accept conscription and I consider nothing has so weakened the Pacifist organisation in this country so much as the following of the government's legislation in this matter. "We Say No to War" is a principle that carries with it repudiation of all forms of military assistance and I find I am in complete agreement with every paragraph written by Arno Hamers.

The need for ever increasing non-co-operation with the state is becoming more and more necessary. The modern state is a military state call it by whatever name you will, and part of the work of the War Resister is to expose this for what it is; thus only can the cause of peace be advanced.<sup>28</sup>

From Holland Albert Baas wrote:

I fully agree with Arno Hamers. Some months ago Dr. Th. Michaltscheff of the IdK [a German Section of the WRI] wrote: "War is a crime against humanity, and for crimes there should be no alternatives." On reading this, I wondered how it was that, although a member of the WRI for five years, I heard such an explicit pronouncement for the first time.

No, legal recognition is not a pacifist victory at all. Compulsory alternative service should be refused. It appears to me that advocates of legal recognition are not aware that they want the state, whose immoral endeavours they fight against, to judge the conscience of the individual.

The doctor at one of the prisons where I stayed was a "legalized" CO. Because we few "illegal" COs had been mixed with the other delinquents, the doctor did not even know who we were and lumped us all together as "criminals".

The only attitude the WRI ought to adopt is to strive for the removal of all causes of war and to compel the state to exempt anyone from any service when the person in question says he has objections, no matter which, conscientious, political or economic.<sup>29</sup>

Acknowledging all efforts and exertions which aim at world peace and standing in the ranks of those fighters, W. von der Ley of West Germany preferred

... to use methods similar to Arno Hamers: refusing all kinds of force, explaining that not only war but even military service is shameful for humanity. But it is not fitting for me, an old one, to incite a young man to blind refusal and tranquilly look on at his going into prison.

Let adults in the first place concern ourselves with a change in the laws. In that field let us act tirelessly with Tolstoy and Gandhi as our models.<sup>30</sup>

The above three statements represent the classical WRI position. The first one, i.e. of Ralf Hegnauer, is an interesting one. Ralf, being devoted to the ideals of the SCI, naturally supported the position that civilian service should be made compulsory. According to the SCI social service is an important programme for making world peace. However, even with a pacifist approach he could not separate the two issues. His statement was biased in favour of civilian service even if it had to be made compulsory.

### **Prisoners for Peace Day**

There were hundreds of conscientious objectors in most of the European countries and America. Those who had gone through the experience of being in prison knew how isolated and depressed one can feel on losing contact with the outside world, particularly with like minded people.

The WRI was concerned about the situation of the imprisoned COs, who were isolated from the rest of the world. In response to a proposal put forward at the International Council meeting held in London during July 16 and 20, the following decision was taken:

The WRI Council decided to declare December 1st 1956 to be 'Prisoners for Peace Day' in honour of all those known and unknown who are now in prison as a result of their refusal to participate in the armed forces of their countries.

The minutes of the Council meeting said that success or lack of response to this commemorative day will determine whether or not it should become an annual feature in conjunction with the sending of the Christmas greetings to imprisoned war resisters.<sup>31</sup>

At the next Council meeting held in Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany from December 28 to 30, 1956 the Secretary reported about the "widespread support for Prisoners for Peace Day (December 1)". The lists of imprisoned resisters appeared in publications in six different countries, and mention of the event appeared in dozens of publications. Meetings were held in England, Germany, USA, Eire, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Israel and elsewhere. Individuals in Poland and Russia had co-operated, which was especially encouraging. The Secretary spoke at an afternoon and an evening meeting in London. Numerous newspapers carried 'letters to the editor' or reported specific meetings.

The Council decided to make *Prisoners for Peace Day* an annual event, to take place each December 1, and congratulated the Secretary on the success of the project.<sup>32</sup>

Gradually the observance of Prisoners for Peace Day became more and more satisfying. COs sent thank-you letters from prison in response to the very many Christmas greetings they received from their supporters. The experience of Prisoners for Peace Day supported the spirit of Arno Hamers and of those objectors who had chosen a prison sentence rather than ask for alternative civilian service.<sup>33</sup>

Because of whole-hearted support from many Fellowship of Reconciliation groups, Quaker Meetings, WRI Sections and hundreds of concerned individuals, the second annual Prisoners for Peace Day proved to be a highlight in the WRI's 1957 programme. Thousands of greetings from all over the world were sent to the imprisoned war resisters whose addresses appeared in the honour roll.

## The relationship with the Sections

It must be remembered that the Sections were spread round the world, many of them with different cultural styles and their own situational parameters.

At one level the general notion was that most, if not all, of the Sections agreed with the ideology projected by the International and the programmes that emerged from the headquarters. The Secretariat too believed that it was indeed so. But in reality the situation was somewhat different.

Some of the Sections started questioning the WRI about some of its programmes and activities. For example the War Resisters League of USA challenged the headquarters in regard to the relevance of the relief work the International did during and for some time after the war.

### **How much mutuality between headquarters and Sections?**

The question about the relationship between the WRI and its Sections continued to be raised now and then. Underlying the question was the need for a closer and better-defined pattern of relationship between the two to tackle the task of building a strong and active worldwide movement. The Council had been realising that the relationship between the headquarters and the Sections needed to be substantially improved. It was important that each Section of WRI, along with the headquarters itself, should think of themselves as segments of the same entity rather than as separate organisations, though each could have its own style of work.

An example of the concern the headquarters had been feeling is seen in a note that appeared in *The War Resister* 93, 4th quarter, 1961:

Lately the Staff has been very worried about the apparent lack of direct liaison between Headquarters and Sections. Minutes, documents, memoranda, letters and ultimatums (too many to deal with say some; too few to keep us informed say others) depart from Enfield never to be heard of again. Occasionally a howl of rage can be heard from the low lying lands somewhere between Germany and the North Sea and, it must be admitted, this is better than nothing at all. Council made a list of suggestions which, it hoped, might improve matters.

1. Stationery of Sections should indicate they are affiliated to the WRI.
2. WRI should be on the Agenda of all annual meetings of Sections.
3. Headquarters should be asked to send a representative to their AGMs in Europe.
4. Sections' publications might consider inclusion of a "Letter from Headquarters" each issue.
5. Sections should send Minutes of Meetings to Headquarters and share more fully the Minutes of WRI Executive and Council.
6. Sections should appoint WRI Consultants or Advisers or International Secretaries, responsible for liaison purposes.

7. Sections and members should discuss the matter and send their proposals and views for consideration.<sup>35</sup>

How much of this approach was whole-heartedly accepted by all the Sections, it is hard to tell. However there was constant active contact between the Sections and associated organisations and the WRI headquarters was one of the most important resources for the development of the movement. As far as monetary contributions were concerned, very few of the Sections felt fully committed to their responsibility. Most of them had to struggle for funds for their own activities, but that could not be any excuse for lack of responsibility towards their International organisation. During the later years relationship between the centre and some of its Sections did improve to some extent but this problem never went away. A very large proportion of what the WRI received as contributions came from Great Britain. The issue of the relationship between the headquarters and their affiliated bodies is covered in the next chapters.

### **Direct individual membership**

In the post-Second World War period there arose another important question before the WRI, which the Council had to consider seriously: Whether the International should accept individual members directly or not? There was no problem with cases where individuals, from a country in which there was no WRI Section, wanted to join the International. They were welcomed and even encouraged. But what of those who wanted to join the International directly from a country where there was a WRI Section? The reasons behind their not being able to join the WRI Section, if they had one in their own country, could be either personal or political (ideological). The Partinico (Sicily, 1961) Council meeting, after a thorough discussion on the problem, took the following decision:

1. Headquarters should continue to encourage persons to join the appropriate National Section.
2. Where a person whose pacifism is not in doubt is expelled from a Section he can apply for direct membership and ordinarily be accepted.
3. When a Section is newly formed, direct members should be urged to join it, but not be dropped by WRI if they fail to do so.
4. A person's private life should not be a subject of inquiry in connection with obtaining or retaining WRI membership.
5. As some Sections do not reserve the right to expel members, and the International has no expulsion clause for individuals, Council hoped those Sections which had power to expel members would take alternative measures instead when at all possible.

Upon receiving an application for membership Headquarters should make certain the person is intentionally bypassing the Section, which should then be consulted. The Executive in the light of the information obtained would consider the application.

## Notes Chapter 14

- 1 G. Ramchandran was the Director of Gandhigram, India, where the tenth WRI Triennial Conference was held in 1960. This is a quotation from his welcome address to the Conference.
- 2 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Oxfordshire, UK, July 25–28, item 14/15, 'East/West Tension and Race Relations', p.13
- 3 Though A. J. Muste had been a member of the WRI Council only since 1951, his pacifist conviction dated back to a much earlier time. He was in the ministry of the Reformed Church in 1909 and his first charge was the Fort Washington Collegiate Church of the city of New York. But by 1914 he had started feeling that he could no longer accept strict Calvinist orthodoxy and therefore he contemplated resigning from the ministry, but was called to the Central Congressional Church, Newtownville, in Massachusetts. He remained there until 1918 when he resigned under pressure, refusing to abandon or keep silent about his religious pacifist convictions. He helped in the founding of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which became a Section of the WRI., and joined the Religious Society of Friends.

'A. J.' became active in the American Civil Liberties Union in improving the conditions of war resisters. From 1919 until 1936 he participated in the leadership of many strikes and labour organisation campaigns. In 1936 he visited Trotsky in Norway – a visit that was described by a biographer, Milton Mayer: the American Marxist revolutionary – who had once been a world Christian revolutionary – met the world Marxist revolutionary.

The visit to Trotsky was a turning point in A. J.'s life. He returned to America convinced of the self-defeating character of the resort to violence whether international war or in class struggle. He resigned from the Trotskyist movement and returned to the Fellowship of Reconciliation. After that A. J. took a thoroughgoing religious pacifist position. Believing that only this will enable us to abolish war and build a better social order by means which do not constantly defeat the ends we seek.

After serving as Executive Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the USA since 1940 A. J. became Secretary Emeritus in September 1953.
- 4 *The War Resister* 63, Autumn 1953, p.4
- 5 A. J. Muste, 'The Idea of a Third Camp', *The War Resister* 64, Spring 1954, pp.4–8
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.8
- 7 *The War Resister* 66, Autumn 1954, pp.3–5
- 8 *Ibid.* p.7
- 9 *Ibid.* pp.7–8
- 10 *Ibid.* p.9
- 11 Jean van Lierde, as a conscientious objector, had suffered imprisonment for his convictions, and had played an important part in building up the war resistance movement in Belgium, particularly in Catholic circles. *The War Resister* 66, Autumn 1954, p.11
- 12 A Christian pastor and a leader of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, both in France as well as internationally, he had demonstrated in his own life the possibility of nonviolent resistance during the German occupation of France.

*The War Resister* 66, Autumn 1954, p.14
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp.14–15
- 14 Heinz Kraschutzki, 'War Resistance in the cold war', *The War Resister* 78, 1st quarter 1958, p.3
- 15 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Basle, Switzerland, July 26–29, 1947, item 14, p.11
- 16 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Oxfordshire, England, July 1952, items 14–15, pp.12–13
- 17 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Pont Ceard, Geneva, 1955, item 15, p.9
- 18 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Campbell Hall, London, July 16–20, 1956
- 19 'Grace Beaton Dies', *The War Resister* 77, 4th quarter 1957 p.7
- 20 Appendix 9, Grace Beaton's Resignation
- 21 Bayard Rustin, Montgomery, Alabama, USA, *The War Resister* 77, 4th quarter, 1957, pp.3–5
- 22 I had devoted two years of my time with the Land Gift Movement in 1952/3 and 1957 marching

from village to village in the States of Bengal, UP and Maharashtra. It was a most inspiring experience to see the poor farmers who received the gifts from their fellow villagers with their hard labour transforming some of the previously 'uncultivable' land with crops, much better than that of the nearby fields. It was an experience that would have converted many a pessimist into believers in creative nonviolence of the masses, and which actually did so when the movement was at its most active and creative phase. However, it must be admitted that nearly 10 to 20 per cent of the land given as gift was of hardly any value. The tragedy, however, was that both the vested interests as well as the establishment behaved with very reactionary and destructive attitude towards the movement. (Devi Prasad).

- 23 *The War Resister* 63, Autumn 1953, p.13
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp.15–16
- 25 Arno Hamers, 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?', *The War Resister* 78, 1st quarter 1958, p.10–12
- 26 Arno Hamers's letter of resignation from the Belgian Section of the WRI, with the editor's introduction, has been included in Appendix 10.
- 27 Ralph Hegnauer, 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?', *The War Resister* 79, Second quarter 1958, p.14
- 28 L. W. Gibson, 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?', *The War Resister* 79, Second quarter 1958, p.14
- 29 Albert Baas, 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?', *The War Resister* 79, Second quarter 1958, p.15
- 30 W. von der Ley, 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?', *The War Resister* 79, Second quarter 1958, p.15
- 31 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, London, December 16–20, 1956, item 17 (f.iv), p.12
- 32 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, December 28–30, 1956, item 7 (A), p.5
- 33 Some letters from COs in prison in response to Christmas greetings. See Appendices.
- 34 'News from Council Meeting: 1961 (We've Got a Little List!)', *The War Resister* 93, 1961, p.9–10

## CHAPTER 15

*Come you masters of war  
You that build the big guns  
You that build the death planes  
You that build the big bombs  
You that hide behind walls  
You that hide behind desks  
I just want you to know I can see through your masks  
  
You that never done nothin'  
But build to destroy  
You play with my world  
Like it's your little toy  
You put a gun in my hand  
And you hide from my eyes  
And you turn and run farther when the fast bullets fly  
  
Like Judas of old  
You lie and deceive  
A world war can be won  
You want me to believe  
But I see through your eyes  
And I see through your brain  
Like I see through the water that runs down my drain  
  
You fasten the triggers  
For others to fire  
Then you set back and watch  
When the death count gets higher  
You hide in your mansions  
As young people's blood  
Flows out of their bodies and is buried in the mud*

Bob Dylan, *Masters of War*, 1963<sup>1</sup>

### The Sixties

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#### The Gandhigram Triennial – 1960

For some time it was being suggested that there was now a time to hold another World Pacifist Meeting. However, the Executive Committee, at their meeting held on May 27, 1956, was informed that a message had come from Eric Tucker of the Friends' Peace Committee that

there was no special concern amongst Friends for such a meeting at this time but that specific proposals would always be heard sympathetically.<sup>2</sup>

We have noted the impact the World Pacifist Meeting, held in India in 1948–9, had made on the pacifist movement in general and the WRI in particular. At the same time, the pacifist movement, despite its complete adherence to pacifist philosophy and belief that one day humanity as a whole must come to the conclusion that war must be abandoned for ever, was becoming more and more conscious of its ‘failure’ in achieving this goal.

Arlo Tatum, who was then the assistant secretary of WRI, suggested that consideration be given to holding the WRI Triennial Conference in India in 1960 as an alternative impetus to the pacifist movement. The Executive Committee agreed that this proposal should be discussed at next the Council Meeting, which was to be held in July 1956. In 1956 when the International Council met in London, the minutes recorded that

although this idea might at first seem utterly unrealistic, [Arlo Tatum] felt very strongly that the WRI must produce a dramatic and valid project of some kind upon which attention can be focused to re-create enthusiasm in ourselves and our members.

On closer examination it seemed feasible. We have four years in which to prepare the groundwork including finance. We have people in India who are enthusiastic and have expressed willingness to do the necessary advance work.<sup>3</sup>

At that time there were in particular two movements that were very active in India, and which were attracting the attention of people all over the world, specially those who had been impressed by the success of the nonviolent struggle India had waged to liberate itself of colonial rule. These two movements were the *Shanti Sena* (nonviolent peace brigade) and the *Bhoodan / Gramdan* Movement (Land Gift Movement). It was important for pacifists all over the world to understand these movements and explore them for useful clues to the growth of the pacifists’ anti-war and anti-military struggle.

In the meantime an encouraging message from the pacifist movement of Victoria reached the WRI that there was quite an enthusiastic response in Australia to the idea of a Triennial in India. If it happened they would make every effort to send six delegates. After some discussions amongst Indian members the proposal that came from India was that the Conference should be held in Gandhigram, a newly formed rural university in the State of Tamilnadu. Soundram Ramchandran, a medical doctor, and her husband G. Ramchandran, a student of Rabindranath Tagore and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, had founded the institute in the early 1950s.

The Director of Gandhigram informed the WRI Secretariat that there was all the necessary accommodation on the campus and he hoped that the Conference would be held there. Banwarilal Choudhri, a Council member, hoped that substantial financial help would also be available in addition to the reduction in railway fares for the delegates for travelling within India.

The Executive Committee requested Choudhri to act as WRI’s financial and conference representative in India. The Executive Committee meeting held on September 22, 1957 accepted the suggestion from Donald Groom, an English Quaker who had worked for years with the Gandhian movement in India, to have a conference-organising committee and appointed him a member of that committee.

Choudhri suggested that Arlo Tatum should be in India early in 1960 and meet individuals who were important in that context, address group meetings and help with the final arrangement of the Conference. The Executive Committee agreed that Tatum should be in India for as much of the last half of 1960 as possible.



### Triennial arrangements:

A council of advisors was set up. R. R. Diwkar, Chairman of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, would be invited to welcome conference attendees. The Nidhi had donated Rs. 10,000/- towards fares and hospitality expenses.<sup>4</sup> The Indian conference-organising and reception committee members were:

G. Ramchandran (Chairman), Secretary Gandhi National Memorial Fund; Rev. John Sadiq, Bishop of Nagpur; Marjorie Sykes, an English Quaker associated with the Gandhian movement; Radhakrishna, Secretary Hindustani Talimi Sangh; K Arunachalam, Organiser Gandhi Memorial Trust, Tamilnad; Dr. Soundram Ramchandran (Treasurer), Director Gandhigram; Banwarilal Choudhri (Council Member) and R. Srinivasan, (Gandhigram Co-Secretaries). The first official meeting of the committee was held with Arlo Tatum also in attendance in Gandhigram sometime in October.<sup>5</sup>

The first three or four days would be in closed sessions for WRI members only. The remaining days would be for open sessions for all pacifists as desired by the India committee.

Subjects for the closed sessions suggested to the India committee were: Shanti Sena (peace brigade); the role of the uncommitted nations; Bhoodan Movement (Land Gift Movement); social and economic causes of conflict; Africa and problems of industrialisation of underdeveloped countries; Occidental–Oriental Understanding; pacifist attitude to China; and Basic Education (Mahatma Gandhi's system of education).

Suggested topics for open sessions were: Pacifism in Europe and North America (e.g. work of Abbé Pierre and Danilo Dolci); methods of technical assistance. The subject of China and of nonviolence might usefully be discussed in that part of the Conference, but the exact definition of these topics was left to the India committee.<sup>6</sup>

At the next Council Meeting, which was held in Gandhigram on December 21, 1960, the Conference agenda and arrangement were modified; a steering committee was appointed with Stuart Morris, Radhakrishna, R. Srinivasan, Banwarilal Choudhri, Hagbard Jonassen, and Arlo Tatum. The following tellers were also appointed: Trefor Davies, Elizabeth Richards, Devi Prasad, Hans Konrad Tempel and Tony Smythe.<sup>7</sup>

### The WRI in Gandhigram

Nearly one hundred people from India and 86 persons from outside India took part in the open sessions of the Conference held from December 21 to 27, 1960. The Conference report published in *The War Resister* 90, 1st quarter, 1961 (page 3) stated:

Two characteristics made this Conference quite different from its predecessors. First, never before had a Triennial Conference been held outside Europe. Secondly, for the first time non-members were invited to participate, and [most of them] played a prominent rôle.

G. Ramchandran, Secretary of the India Conference committee and of the Gandhi Memorial Trust, started his welcome address to the delegates with a note which reiterated the convictions of almost all the pacifists. "He called upon the world pacifist movement to abandon any hope that the governments of the world would – or even could – establish world peace. He declared that the responsibility must be accepted by those who are willing to translate their non-violent theories into dynamic action."<sup>8</sup> In his welcome address he went on:

I think nationalism and what are called national states have become largely menaces to the human spirit and to human society. . . . I do not believe that these powerful national states and their Governments will ever make the peace of the world. By their very structure and competition, by the very inner law of their own being, I think they are incapable of making the peace of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan (generally known as 'J. P.')

gave the inaugural address. At the beginning of the address he clarified that he was not a strict pacifist:

I should like at the very outset to make a personal statement so as to avoid any misunderstanding later. It was with considerable reluctance that I agreed to inaugurate this Conference, because I was afraid that I might not be able to go along the whole way with some of you. I agree wholeheartedly that war is a crime against humanity and I am determined, without any qualification, never to participate in any war whatever. But I do visualise a condition in which I would feel compelled by my reason to lend moral support to armed resistance to aggression. I stand with so many other Gandhians in this country for unilateral disarmament of India; and along with many comrades I am endeavouring to prepare the country for non-violent defence. But this does not appear to me to be an easy or a quickly realisable task. That exactly is the source of my difficulty. I feel that in the event of India being attacked before her people are able to defend themselves non-violently, I cannot but lend my moral support, even though refusing to bear arms myself, to the armed defence that the Government of the country would have to undertake.

Let me assure you that this limitation, far from weakening my resolve, or hampering my efforts to work for non-violent defence, impels me onwards so that the shameful moment might not arrive when I would find myself compelled to lend moral support to the killing of human beings, though in self-defence.<sup>10</sup>

Some of the participants and later some others expressed their opinion that J. P. was the wrong choice for giving the inaugural address. Nonetheless, his statements forced the WRI to face the reality felt by the average man and woman. The pacifist movement had known this from its very beginning, but it needed reiterating. J. P.'s statement reminded the WRI that the question required that an adequate answer be found. In his address J. P. gave an overview of the situation in Asian countries in general after they gained freedom from colonial rule. He also talked about the failure of communism and socialism. He said that the history of the communist states had put it beyond all doubt that the means they used had resulted in social violence on a scale unknown before. He also mentioned the India–China border dispute, something that was then very much in the air.

He expressed these thoughts about nonviolent defence:

The relevant question that immediately arises is, while we are endeavouring internally to create the non-violent social order, what should we do if a war were suddenly to overtake us. Our unhesitating answer is and has been: we shall have nothing to do with such a war. Some of us would even oppose it. Thousands of pacifists and peace workers through the centuries have suffered on this account. They will gladly suffer again. But, apart from being a heroic gesture and a limited influence on society, this type of war-resistance has not been very effective, nor is it likely to be so in the future. Are we then

condemned to act as a small fanatic sect, cut off from the main stream of life of human society? I am sure no one present here wants to remain confined to a sect. In that case, we must discover and apply on a social scale the non-violent methods of national defence. As things are today, no people believe that armed defence is a practical possibility. Gandhi said that some nation, preferably India, must martyr itself so that the conviction might be driven home into the human heart that non-violent defence is not only possible, but is also the best defence. Vinoba has launched the Shanti Sena . . . precisely with the view of preparing the people of this country to discard arms and defend themselves non-violently. . . . Discovery and propagation of the non-violent means of settling international disputes, rather than disarmament or non-resistance, are the need of the hour.<sup>11</sup>

J. P. also asked the Conference to seriously think of building a World Peace Brigade. In this context he said:

We have at present no world organization of non-violence. There are no doubt bodies such as the War Resisters' International; but none of these bodies is comprehensive enough to cover and represent all the diverse voluntary forces working for a non-violent social order.

The U.N. is no doubt there, but it is a body made up of the armed states of the world and itself relies for the enforcement of its authority on arms. A few months ago Salvador de Madariga and I had made a joint statement at Berlin that the U.N. should have no armed forces at all at its command and it should deploy only an unarmed force made up of peace-loving volunteers from all parts of the world. It would have been interesting to watch the action of such an unarmed U.N. force in the Congo. I have no doubt that the situation in that unfortunate land would have been quite different and the U.N. might have succeeded by now in its mission of peace.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Gandhigram Statement<sup>13</sup>**

On December 27, 1960 the Conference issued the following Statement:

The general title of the conference was "Peace making" and the subject was dealt with under the following headings: Sarvodaya, Non-violent Direct Action and Shanti Sena.

After discussions in eight groups and subsequently in plenary sessions, the conference reached the following decisions:

Pacifists must actively associate themselves with methods which validly express Truth and Love and must dissociate themselves from what is evil. Therefore those committed to non-violence must never give any moral support to the conventional methods of defence, or any other action in which they would think it wrong to participate as individuals.

The Conference commends the work of the Bhoodan movement as being fundamentally sound in approach and principles, which are also applicable to many situations outside India, such as in Sicily, where the work being undertaken is also commended.

The Conference is convinced that both the capitalist conception of private ownership and the Communist conception of State ownership of the means of production and

distribution are insufficient where the ideal of non-violence is concerned. It emphasised the need for decentralising political and economic power in the achievement of a non-violent society.

It believed that the major means of production and distribution should be owned by the community and that distribution should assure economic justice and social equality. Though some industries require a degree of centralisation and certain services could legitimately be owned by a democratic government, co-operatives unfettered by any political attachment should play an active rôle in the reorganisation of society.

A clear understanding of Truth and Love must determine not only personal conduct but the economic, political and social structure and relationships within the new society.

### **Direct Action**

The Conference endorsed the principles and practice of non-violent direct action, which it agreed should be defined as “any action which does not involve violence undertaken by individuals or groups against a social or international evil or for the purpose of resolving conflicts.”

While creating conflict may be a necessary step in the removal of international or social evil, the final aim will be to develop goodwill and understanding between all concerned. Such action could involve defiance of the law or established custom, non-co-operation and individual protest. Participants in such actions must be prepared for suffering and sacrifice.

Planning and preparation should include the following points among others:

- There should be a special objective for each campaign even though larger issues might be involved.
- There should be careful training of the participants amongst whom should be persons most directly affected whenever possible.
- There should be an appeal to the conscience of the wrong-doers and good will towards them, and also towards any agent of the State involved.
- There should be an attempt to gain public support for the campaign and sympathisers should be encouraged to take supporting action on as wide a scale as possible.

The question of the place of Non-violent Direct Action in a democracy was discussed, and it was generally agreed that there might be circumstances justifying its use under any form of government.

The conference expressed its appreciation of all those at present engaged in such Direct Action and urged that more general practice of Direct Action should be encouraged in every possible way.

### **Human Right**

Inasmuch as Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises that all human beings are endowed with reason and conscience, and Article 14 of the Draft Covenant (Civil and Political Rights Section) states that every one shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the conference recorded its conviction that where reason and conscience lead any individual to a renunciation of war and a refusal of military service of any kind, the right to freedom of conscience and the right to hold opinions without interference (Article 15) involved the necessity for the recognition of the right of conscientious objection to all war and war preparation in every country.

It therefore called upon:

Its Sections and sympathetic organisations in those countries where the right of conscientious objection was recognised to urge such governments to take the initiative in securing the universal recognition of the right of conscientious objection and the necessary amendment to the appropriate article(s) in the Covenant to make that right explicit.

Its Sections in those countries where such rights were not at present recognised to be increasingly active in the endeavour to secure such legal recognition of the right of conscientious objection.

The conference desired that the above resolution should be sent to the United Nations Convention on Human Rights and to the European Court of Human Rights for their information and necessary action.

The conference heard an explanation of the proposed scheme for compulsory National Service in India involving military training and discipline for students entering the Universities. It also took note of the existing programme of military training in schools and colleges. The conference expressed its deep concern and regret at the growth of military tendencies in India. It encouraged its Indian members and their friends in their efforts to persuade people to realise the dangers involved in their programmes and in their endeavours to evolve a system of new education.

The Conference suggested that, if and when the proposed programme of National Service involving military training was brought into operation, steps should be taken to oppose it by non-violent means, and pledged its support for any such steps.

### **World Peace Brigade**

The Conference endorsed the idea of an International Shanti Sena or World Peace Brigade and considered that the establishment of such a body was a matter of urgency. In its judgement the World Peace Brigade should be independent of the United Nations and all governments. The conference envisaged practical constructive work as being an integral part of the activities of the World Peace Brigade. The co-operation of organisations whose members and supporters adhered to non-violence should be sought. It was agreed that persons attending the conference who were willing to volunteer their services should record such willingness so that a nucleus of potential volunteers would be at the disposal of a World Peace Brigade. Conference considered that it would be necessary to require volunteers to accept a form of non-violent discipline. It was recognised that there were serious problems to be solved before the World Peace Brigade could be established; among such problems were the selection and training of volunteers, language barriers, and the financing of activities.

The conference called upon the Council of the War Resisters' International to take the initiative in the matter. It requested the Council to appoint a committee, not necessarily confined to WRI members, to explore the problems involved and to present their findings to an International Conference for the Establishment of a World Peace Brigade to be held as soon as feasible. In the meantime, the WRI was asked to accept responsibility.

The above Statement was unanimously endorsed at a plenary session on Tuesday, December 27, 1960.

The Council Meeting which took place on December 28, soon after the Conference, dis-

cussed the Gandhigram Statement carefully and 'decided to implement the conference decision to set up an International Peace Brigade by permitting Arlo Tatum to devote as much time as necessary to the project. On his return to London he would establish a working committee under the chairmanship of Michael Scott which would organise an international conference sponsored by many of the well-known personalities in the peace movement including Jayaprakash Narayan, A. J. Muste, Danilo Dolci and, it was hoped, Bertrand Russell and Vinoba Bhave. Michael Randle and Stuart Morris were also put forward as possible members of the working committee. Tony Smythe would continue to handle the bulk of the WRI work. As it was expected to involve much expenditure the WRI should call upon its contributors to increase their help to meet the new situation.<sup>14</sup>

General secretary Arlo Tatum ended the Editorial in *The War Resister*, 2nd quarter, 1961 with this paragraph:

Whatever may be its fate, the World Peace Brigade is a worthy effort on the International level to express our pacifist convictions in a dynamic constructive way. As a side effect it may make our pacifism more comprehensible to those who sincerely seek alternatives to organised violence, but reject pacifism as "merely negative".<sup>15</sup>

## WRI sets up the World Peace Brigade

At the Council Meeting held in Partinico, Sicily in 1961, Joseph Abileah rightly pointed out that the country chosen for the founding Conference of the World Peace Brigade should be one in which Israelis would be permitted. Hence Lebanon was suggested. Arlo Tatum, who was working towards the organisation of the Conference, was finding some difficulty in obtaining permission from the Lebanese Government to hold the Conference at Brummana High School, due to the fact that communists would be involved in it. Also because of the sponsorship of Prof. Martin Buber (Israel), with whose country Lebanon was at war. It seemed that an alternative site would have to be found for the Conference. I suggested that they would be most welcome to hold the Conference in India.

The WPB preparatory committee had made a list of sponsors. The WRI Council suggested to the committee that a prominent person from the Service Civil International should also be invited as a sponsor and support should be sought from the All Africa Trade Union, Indian trade unions and individuals from other trade unions. Another important point raised by the Council was regarding the reconciliation aspect of the Brigade's work. It was this element of the Brigade that would differentiate it from other peace corps efforts. The agenda for the Conference needed more careful attention and sufficient reading material to be circulated in advance for preparing the participants for meaningful discussion.<sup>15</sup>

It was a challenge to the WRI as well as to the WPB as, when it came into being, there were many proposals for peace corps being floated by governments (e.g. USA, Norway, France) some of them providing alternative service to conscientious objectors. Pierre Martin informed the Council that the French government's peace corps plan provided alternative service to CO volunteers, who would be given priority, even to those who were in prison. All the implications of these factors needed to be taken into account while making plans for the World Peace Brigade.

## **WPB Conference in Beirut**

The Lebanese Government eventually granted permission and a Conference to establish the World Peace Brigade was held at Brummana High School, near Beirut, from 28 December 1961 to 1 January 1962.

The Conference was very well attended and took place in a friendly and active spirit. Rev. Michael Scott of the UK and Africa, and A. J. Muste of the USA – with a leader of the Gandhian movement from India, to be named later – were elected to serve as chairmen. The organisation would be called World Peace Brigade (WPB) for Nonviolent Action. It would have a governing body, called the Council, with 11 members in addition to the three chairpersons.

After the Conference a meeting of the Council with the two present chairmen and Abbé Pierre, Albert Bigalow, Bayard Rustin, G. Ramchandran, Siddharaj Dhadda, Stuart Morris, Michael Randle, Bill Sutherland and myself was held on 3 January, 1962. The Council decided to set up regional offices of the Brigade in Britain, India and the United States. Until the constitutional structure of the Brigade was formed the working group would function as the Council's executive committee. Provisionally its international office would be at the WRI premises in London with Arlo Tatum as secretary until a permanent appointment was made.

After the discussion on the principles, aims and the possible areas of the work of the WPB the new Council came out with the following statement:

### **The Statement of Principles and Aims**

In virtually all relationships of life men and societies are undergoing a severe crisis and are tempted either to hopelessness or to violent solutions of their problems.

Ours is a world of hunger – hunger for the simple needs of life, hunger for freedom, justice and human dignity, hunger for reconciliation and peace.

Ours is also a world superbly equipped with the means to satisfy these hungers. We have the technical skills, the expanding awareness of the meaning of freedom, and the intellectual and spiritual heritage which can enable us to be free of bondage, want and war.

The tragedy is that our vision is distorted by outworn ideas which prevent us from seeing the world as it really is in the nuclear era. Individuals, governments, peoples are imprisoned in the habits, ideologies and institutions of violence which they themselves have devised and built.

Common sense, political wisdom and profoundest moral imperatives compel us to break out of this condition; the very survival of civilisation, and perhaps of the race, depend upon this emancipation. Men must find, and must be ready to experiment with, an alternative way. This alternative is non-violence. It is, we firmly believe, the way to help free mankind and to release the minds and energies of men for creative achievements.

World Community can replace the institution of war.

Liberty and equality can replace colonialism and other tyrannies.

Human dignity can replace human degradation and destruction.

Non-violence is the way to such goals. We are resolved to devote ourselves to this way, knowing that this will require severe efforts of thought, experimentation, toil, perseverance, dedication. We call on our fellows in all lands to join in this venture.

The World Peace Brigade is constituted to band together those who respond to this call and seek to bring the liberating and transforming power of non-violence to bear more effectively on our world.

**The Aims are:**

1. To organise, train and keep available a Brigade for non-violent action:
  - a. in situations of potential or actual conflict, internal and international;
  - b. against all war, preparations for war; and the continuing development of weapons of mass destruction.
2. To activate people everywhere to become a responsible and positive force to meet the menace of modern war by inspiring and stimulating confidence in non-violent alternatives.
3. To revolutionise the concept of revolution itself by infusing into the methods of resisting injustice the qualities which ensure the preservation of human life and dignity and to create the conditions necessary for peace.
4. To join with people in their non-violent struggle for self-determination and social reconstruction.
5. To establish national units in countries where there are no organisations co-operating with the Brigade.
6. To co-operate to the utmost with existing organisations for peace, liberation and human service and to act where needed as a co-ordinating and information centre for non-violent activities throughout the world.
7. To encourage and undertake research in fields relevant to the work of the Brigade.<sup>17</sup>

Tony Smythe, Secretary of WRI, wrote as follows of the Beirut Conference in his Secretary's Report:

The Conference in Beirut was the first practical manifestation of the ideas put forward at the Gandhigram Conference and the WRI, through various Council Members and other pacifists who were present, made a substantial impact on all decisions taken. It was said that it was a truly 'working' conference and that the degree of mutual understanding and agreement in the practical development of the Brigade was quite exceptional. It was also pointed out that in spite of efforts to bring in non-pacifists, the form given to the Brigade was essentially 'pacifist'. This provided the material for controversy, for, if the Brigade was a new international pacifist organisation, should not immediate attempts be made to co-ordinate its work and even its organisation with the WRI to avoid duplication of effort and competition in fund raising.

Subsequent activity by the Brigade in Africa provided further grounds for disagreement which did not involve the WRI other than by the fact, that any difficulties encountered by the Brigade demand our attention. It was the WRI which gave birth to the new organisation and its success or failure remains very much our concern. I myself have continued to serve on the European Committee of the Brigade – often in WRI time – while remaining skeptical about its ability to continue to function in anything like the form previously envisaged. The Brigade, because it represents the first attempt to make nonviolent action international and because through it pacifists have shown themselves willing and able to make a contribution to an essentially political situation in Northern Rhodesia, has aroused interest everywhere and much of that interest has been directed towards the WRI itself.<sup>18</sup>



## Relations between WPB and WRI

The Council Meeting held in Campbell Hall, London from July 25 to 29, 1962 discussed the question of the relationship between the WRI and WPB. It was generally accepted that the Brigade had a special and important function to play in the general pacifist movement, which function was distinct from the WRI work. It was felt that both should retain their separate identities although working in the closest possible co-operation and friendliness. The Council of the WPB would be meeting immediately after the WRI Council meeting and it was hoped the character of the Brigade's work and its relationship with the WRI would become clearer.

There was some difference of opinion among a few members of the Council, including myself, by now Co-Secretary, who had submitted a memorandum to the Council about the future work of the International and who had also attended the WPB Conference. I believed that the World Peace Brigade, though it would be an independent body, must remain a closely knit part of the WRI movement, especially in view of the second part of the WRI Declaration which commits the International to take genuine steps towards building a war-less nonviolent social order. This implied that the WPB would be the right kind of instrument to do grassroots work necessary for bringing about the nonviolent social change that the WRI was aiming at.

The Chairman of the WRI, Harold Bing, wrote an article entitled 'The WRI and the World Peace Brigade' in *War Resistance* 3 (1962) in which he said

It is not surprising . . . that some people were confused as to the relationship between the two [WRI and WPB], increased by the fact that the World Peace Brigade was unable to adopt a Constitution, defining clearly its membership and organisation, until its Council Meeting in August, 1962. Was the World Peace Brigade just one of the activities of the WRI or was it a separate organisation and, if so, what was its relationship to the WRI? If there were two organisations, did they not overlap considerably in membership, functions and sources of finance? Was not a merger desirable? These questions were widely discussed and produced fairly divergent views, although among WRI Council members a considerable majority was opposed to the idea of a merger, at any rate at that stage.

At its meeting on 17th February, 1962, the WRI Executive discussed the matter at great length in the light of the World Peace Brigade developments to that date and of correspondence which had been exchanged with Council members. Its conclusion was expressed in the following minute:

The Executive Committee of the WRI welcomes the establishment of the World Peace Brigade and is ready to co-operate in its activities. However, it believes that the WRI has its own particular contribution to make and therefore recommends to Council that no steps be taken to amalgamate the WRI and the WPB for at least three years.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, in the same article, Harold Bing warned of "the bewilderment of the man-in-the-street" at the number and variety of pacifist organisations. He asked "Can they not all be more closely associated with one another in some worldwide movement in which each will continue to fulfil its own particular functions within the framework of a common programme? Perhaps this is the problem to which we should now be turning our attention."

The controversy about the WPB showed that the War Resisters' International, despite its unambiguous commitment to work for a nonviolent social revolution, was fighting shy of orientating itself to the kind of grassroots work that alone could fulfil this objective. However, the thought and hope to proceed in that direction had always been a key point for the WRI. For

instance, the Secretaries' yearly report for 1963 said in regard to the Triennial Conference held in Stavanger, Norway: "Significantly the Conference emphasised that for the future of the peace movement an integrated approach to conscientious objection and socio-economic change through nonviolent techniques is of central importance."<sup>20</sup> The Stavanger Triennial also recommended that a comprehensive study of this question should be made on an international level. The WRI Executive Committee then took up this recommendation for further discussion and implementation.

### **The WPB launches its first project<sup>21</sup>**

The World Peace Brigade took concrete form with three regional Sections: Europe, North America, and India. But even before the Brigade took a concrete shape it had a considerable impact on a critical conflict situation in Africa. Northern Rhodesia, composed of three 'colonies', was then a part of the British empire. What later became known as Zambia, was also within the Northern Rhodesian boundary. Its people were already struggling for liberation from British rule. Already at the time of the Beirut Conference it had been decided that the WPB should organise an international march to the capital of Northern Rhodesia to demand the liberation of these nations.

It was planned that the march should consist of a large number of volunteers from as many countries as possible. Bayard Rustin, with other friends who had attended the Beirut Conference, formed an ad hoc committee and took the responsibility of organising the campaign. I remember that soon after returning to India from the Conference I had started talking about it with friends of the WRI Section, the Sarva Seva Sangh and other peace groups in India. We started enrolling volunteers and a couple of our members went to Africa as volunteers for this purpose. Although it was well understood, mainly for practical reasons, that in such a short period the number of volunteers who could actually go to participate in the march would be small, it was felt that we should enrol as many as possible, in case the campaign continued for some time. The information about the project created an impression of a large-scale nonviolent campaign against colonial rule in that part of Africa.

The news of the plan for the international march to Rhodesia quickly spread all over that part of Africa. It created panic within the Rhodesian government circles. The Rhodesian government declared that their country was going to be invaded by a 'Brigade'. As a result, they started negotiating with the leadership of those countries (Tanganyika and Zambia), among them Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere. As a result of these negotiations Zambia and then Tanzania gained their independence. It would be wrong on my part to give an impression that it was the action of the WPB that brought about the freedom of these countries. Nonetheless, it is true that such 'small' happenings can sometimes tip the balance. In the event the march did not have to be actually undertaken.

### **Everyman III, WPB 'Project Leningrad'**

Some of the English peace workers, including Barnaby Martin, who had been chosen to be the Secretary of the WPB (Europe), planned a project for a boat to sail from London to Leningrad to protest against the USSR nuclear tests. Barnaby Martin from UK and Neil Hayworth and Bob Swan from the USA attended the WRI Council Meeting held in London (July 25–29, 1962). They explained the project, which was to fit out a boat to be called *Everyman III* to sail to Leningrad and protest against the resumption of Soviet nuclear tests. The WRI Council

agreed to give its moral support and, if asked, its sponsorship to this project, to inform its Sections and urge them to co-operate where practicable. The WRI provided a part of their offices to the *Everyman III* workers for their organisational work.<sup>22</sup>

*Everyman III* sailed from London to Leningrad by way of Ostend, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Copenhagen and Stockholm in protest against Russian tests and preparation for war by East and West. At the height of the Cuban missile crisis news came from the WRI group in Stockholm that the crew had been interned after they had scuttled the boat as it was being towed out of Leningrad harbour. Although the boat was not allowed to reach the Russian coast, there is no doubt that the message reached the Russians that the peace movements of Western Europe disapproved of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons by any nation.

### **Research on conflict and peace**

Another important contribution of the Gandhigram Triennial was to emphasise the need for peace research. The importance of peace research had first been recognised and presented by Theo. F. Lentz in his book *Towards a Science of Peace – Turning Point in Human Destiny*,<sup>23</sup> published in 1955. In its Foreword Julian Huxley wrote:

Professor Lentz has done a most useful work in pointing out the intimate relationship between science and peace, in the full sense of scientific method, knowledge, attitude, and application on the one hand, and on the other the peaceable realisation of human possibilities through peaceful co-operation, as well as the mere prevention of war. . . .

Further, most thinking men and women are beginning to feel that today a new ideology is needed, a new orientation of thought and action, which on the one hand shall be in harmony with scientific knowledge and method, and on the other hand shall be adapted to the new conditions and necessities of the modern world, notably the prevention of war and mass destruction, the development of a co-operative supranational or transnational system and effort of world development, the control of population growth and the conservation and proper utilisation of world resources.

Many scientists were opposed to the extension of science to human affairs because they feared that by doing so science would lose the accuracy and razor-edged certitude that it had achieved in the physical world. Similarly many humanists were equally opposed to the idea of extending their perspective towards science because they were afraid of human values being denatured by 'the cold and impersonal methods of science'. In this regard Huxley said:

Such fears are, I am sure, groundless: in the long run nothing but good can come from the marriage of scientific method with human values and ideals.

Johan Galtung, who had started the Section of Research on Conflict and Peace in August 1959 at the Institute of Social Research in Oslo, addressed the Gandhigram Triennial and talked about 'Research on Conflict and Peace'. In his address he explained what he meant by peace research:

By peace research then we mean research aimed at clarifying the conditions for non-violent resolution of conflicts – on the individual, group and social levels. If you like, it is research into the conditions of peace, the causes of peace more than into the causes

of war, into the effective peace-waging of our military schools. Although important things have been done by our friends, the successful integration of research for peace within our ordinary academic community, belonging as it does to what some people call the *establishment*, has never taken place. To some in our movement this is a sign of health, as the establishment, or the academic part of it, or the social sciences that by their nature will have to carry most of the burden of peace research, are seen as less than successful. I shall not take up any argument where the “establishment” or the academic world are concerned, only say this about the social sciences. Although they are young, immature, irresponsible and dangerous unless controlled by common sense – still they are already today so many times better in terms of providing us with insight, systematic knowledge, guides for action that we cannot do without. And in addition to this, our peace movement can do a lot of good to the social sciences. We can follow Sorokin in turning some of the attention of the social sciences away from the states of personal or social disorganisation – the study of abnormal personalities or groups in conflict – to the study of the full-blown, healthy individual who does not constantly act out internal conflicts in a way detrimental to his environment – and to the study of peaceful relationships between collectivities.<sup>24</sup>

The Gandhigram Triennial initiated the idea of exploring the potential of peace research to help the anti-war activists to be more analytical and introspective in their outlook. Apart from the foundational contribution made by Theodore Lentz the recognition of peace research as an important part of the peace movement was a real achievement. Johan Galtung’s work on peace research became an important part of the peace movement. Equally important was to be the later work of Gene Sharp, who showed that the use of nonviolence was not a new force in conflict. His book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* was to become a classic in this field.

However, the degree of mutual co-operation between the peace activists and the peace researchers has disappointed expectations. One of the reasons behind this gap may be the personal detachment practised by many peace researchers, who kept aloof from the resistance aspect of the pacifist movement. The activists too have contributed to the widening of this gap. Many of them did not consider the peace researcher as an important partner in their struggle for world peace. The two have yet to find ways and means to help each other in practical terms.

The topic of peace research was again discussed at the Council meeting held after the 1963 Triennial Conference. A considerable number of universities and other organisations were engaged in peace research, but their findings and experiences were not available to most of the peace movements. The Council decided to urge the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace<sup>25</sup> to take appropriate steps for the dissemination of the results of such research and make them available to the worldwide peace movement. The Council believed that the WRI should co-operate with the ICDP as far as possible.

### The Partinico Council meeting and changes in the WRI Secretariat

At the Council meeting held immediately after the Gandhigram Conference, where he was elected a member of the International Council, Danilo Dolci offered to provide hospitality for the 1961 Council meeting at his centre in Partinico, Sicily. With the hope that Council members would have an opportunity to see Danilo’s work it was decided to hold the meeting in the third week of July.

Along with the routine work and planning for the coming year two items for discussion that came up are worth mentioning: (a) submission of a statement by the Secretary, Arlo Tatum along with his resignation, and (b) transfer of WRI headquarters. The Chairman asked Council to “permit the Secretary to make a statement of considerable importance to which the council would return later”.<sup>26</sup>

### **Arlo Tatum’s statement**

February next I shall have completed seven years’ service to the WRI. I consider this time well spent, with truly good people. It has been a fruitful and interesting period of my life. With some regret, therefore, I tender my resignation effective at our mutual convenience on a date between 1st March and 1st June, 1962.

Most resignations from posts in ‘cause’ organisations stem from policy disputes, personality conflicts, ill health, or the call of a new, more attractive, assignment. My reasons fall into none of these categories, and yet I am reasonably certain that my decision is appropriate.

Our differences on policy naturally come to mind, however, and I hope you will permit me the liberty on setting them out. You know that I feel it increasingly imperative for the WRI to shed its European/Anglo-Saxon orientation, with its concentration on refusal of military service. The process of re-orientation would lead naturally to the moving of refusal of military service from its pedestal into a civil disobedience context. I hope it would lead to the development of what might be called a pacifist philosophy from which would spring action on a tremendous variety of issues. This concern is shared by many WRI members, and led to my proposal that Headquarters be transferred to India. I do not say that this is the only, or necessarily even the best, method of going about the task, but I do not consider that the alternative proposal before Council addresses the basic problem. It is true that had my suggestion been accepted I would not now be resigning. I would gladly have accepted the obvious obligation of implementing my own proposal. Yet the adverse decision was anticipated. I would not resign over policy differences which are perhaps more questions of judgement than of principles.

Also, it seems likely within our present context that if refusal of military service is ‘moved from its pedestal’, the new occupant will be nuclear disarmament. Direct assaults on nuclear weapons will doubtless be the major activity of our European, Japanese and North American members for many years to come. Working for nuclear disarmament will never be my own focal point. The possibility of nuclear war cannot be eliminated. Nor do I believe that the best method of reducing the threat of total catastrophe is by campaigning against the weapons of modern warfare. Reduction of armament – nuclear and otherwise – and total disarmament is most likely to come about as a result of efforts to reduce the fear, tension and conflict within and between individuals, groups and nations.

To put it briefly, I am uncomfortable in both the old and the new schools of pacifist thought within the WRI domain: narrow war resistance and nuclear pacifism. As with the other aspect of this policy question, the fact that I hold minority views would not cause me to resign if there were no other factors to consider. On the other hand, my effectiveness is as likely to decrease as to increase.

I have always held certain reservations about pacifism as a profession, and felt in

addition that leaders tended to stay too long in one position, to the detriment of both the organisation and the cause. The WRI's own past experience is a case in point. I am only too well aware of the factors which encourage permanent tenure, both from the individual's and the organisation's point of view. But it would be much better were our movement to use as full-time workers persons willing to lay aside their ordinary tasks for a specific period – say five years – than to support the present system of creating and then relying upon a small band of professional pacifists. Until the present system is abandoned persons in paid positions should much more readily move from one assignment to another.

In my own case I am approaching forty years of age, and any drastic decision must be taken soon or not at all, for the alternate possibilities are declining in number. I am inclined to think that 10 years as a professional pacifist are, for me, sufficient, but should a new post within the movement be offered me it will receive most careful and heart-searching consideration.

Then Tatum wrote about his passion for making music and the wish to give concerts,

which has become almost a hunger . . . and shall even be . . . returning to singing professionally although success is improbable.

We still have ahead of us several months of working together, but I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my profound gratitude to the officers, Council and Executive for having given me such a challenging assignment. To whatever extent I have been able to discharge my duties successfully the credit rests with the Headquarters Staff and you yourselves. It has been a wonderfully rewarding experience. Whatever the future may hold for us I shall always have warm memories of our years of friendship and joint endeavour for the cause of human brotherhood.<sup>27</sup>

The Council placed on record its 'deep appreciation of the services Arlo Tatum had rendered' to the WRI since he joined the staff in February 1955 and particularly since he became General Secretary in 1956. His intellectual and organising abilities and his capacity for establishing friendly relations were recognised as of outstanding value to the WRI. 'It is with the greatest regret that the Council has learned of his desire to terminate this association. It was decided that Tatum be co-opted as a member of the Council from the date of his ceasing to be General Secretary. Regarding the replacement for the position of General Secretary the Council left the matter to the Executive Committee – subject to confirmation by it.

The Council, however, did not discuss the basic point raised by Arlo Tatum in his statement, which it thought of 'considerable importance'. Why? The answer to this question could be that the WRI as a whole, particularly its leadership, was not yet ready to take any concrete step towards shedding, as Tatum put it, 'its European/Anglo-Saxon orientation, with its concentration on refusal of military service'.

Going into that direction would inevitably lead the WRI to the moving of the refusal of military service from its 'pedestal' into the region of civil disobedience. Such a change in the psyche of the WRI would lead it in the direction of formulating a pacifist philosophy based on action for socio-economic change. The main objective of the WRI was precisely to create a world, not only without militarism, but also injustice.

## **Proposal to move the headquarters to India**

Having spent nearly six months in India, in connection with the arrangements for the Gandhigram Triennial, watching and studying the developments in the nonviolent movement in that country, Arlo Tatum got a glimpse of a different world, its strengths and weaknesses. He was able to visualise the potential of the movement inspired by Gandhi and followed by many who had worked with him for decades. He had started dreaming of a revitalised pacifist movement. As he expressed in his statement, he wanted the WRI to widen its span of thinking and to globalise its vision – beyond the limited perspective of the Anglo-European traditions.

Arlo Tatum had suggested in his statement that the WRI headquarters be transferred to India. He himself had doubts, but with hindsight, its potential importance seems crucial. It was evident that most of the then leadership of the WRI would not like to shift the management of the International into a totally uncharted context as far as their own expectations were concerned.

Such a proposal had also come before the Gandhigram Triennial, at which the Council was instructed to investigate the possibilities of the transfer of WRI headquarters to India. It was discussed at the Council meeting held immediately after the Conference. There were counter proposals, such as opening of a branch office in India or appointment of a field worker in Asia. It was then modified in a memorandum presented at the Partinico Council meeting as of 'having short-term travelling agents in Asia, Africa and Latin America'. It was approved 'as a continuing policy to be implemented as and when opportunity occurred'.<sup>27</sup>

It became fairly clear that the people who had the maximum say in such matters were not sympathetic to the idea of moving the WRI headquarters to a *third world country*. Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight it is clear that what eventually happened was more suitable for the International. India was not yet quite prepared to host an organisation like the WRI. At that point in time the Indian political and social climate would not have suited the War Resisters' International, for which freedom of action and keeping worldwide contacts were essential parts of its programme.

At the Partinico meeting the Council had referred to the Executive Committee the question of the arrangements to replace Tatum, who had resigned as the General Secretary, giving it the power to make such appointment as it thought fit, subject to confirmation by Council. They also invited Council members to make appropriate proposals.

## **Change of general secretary**

When Tatum left the office Tony Smythe, who had been a CO and an active member of the Committee of 100, Great Britain, and who had been appointed Assistant Secretary of WRI in January 1960, was asked to function as Acting Secretary until the new appointment of General Secretary was made. At that time the International Council was exploring various possibilities for filling that post.

In that context, along with others, my name had also come up as the possible General Secretary. I had been present at the Partinico Council Meeting as an observer and had spent seven months in Europe, becoming acquainted with peace movements, particularly pacifist organisations, and studying the educational systems of some European countries. I had taken part in the WRI study conference in Blaricum (1961) near Amsterdam and given talks at several places on the Gandhian movement in India. Before returning to India in January 1962, I had taken part in the Beirut Conference on the World Peace Brigade. At the Gandhigram

Triennial, I with some colleagues had set up 'WRI-India', the Indian Section. Previously I had worked for 18 years as a member of the team experimenting with Gandhi's educational principles at Sevagram, in central India.

My name came in for discussion at the Executive Committee meeting held on December 3, 1961. When Tatum had mentioned the idea to me at the time of my London visit in October I was not sure about the proposal as I had different plans for my future work in India. Moreover, before giving a commitment I would have to consult my wife and my close circle of friends and colleagues in India.

At the time of the Beirut World Peace Brigade Conference, Tony Bishop, Stuart Morris, Michael Randle, Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland and Arlo Tatum had a meeting with me and discussed the proposal regarding the appointment as General Secretary of the WRI. Bayard Rustin promised on behalf of the War Resisters League that if I took up the position they would help the WRI towards my and my family's travel expenses from India.<sup>28</sup>

At the next Executive Committee meeting it was

agreed that Devi Prasad should be considered for the vacant post of General Secretary. Nine Council members agreed with the proposal, one Council member suspended judgment and another was against, but no one had doubted that Devi would be an excellent person, and Tony Smythe had stated his willingness that the appointment should be made. Arlo had asked him to cut short his European tour so that he might come to England to work in the office for a few weeks. This would have enabled him to assess conditions and the cost of living in England.<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime I had written to my wife and several friends about this proposal from the WRI. Nearly all the responses received were in favour of my accepting the WRI Secretary's position. About the financial side of living in London my wife Janaki wrote to me saying: 'Our life-style in Sevagram was that of poverty and having practised poverty for eighteen years it must give us the necessary courage and will-power to continue living in the same style.' Many of my colleagues, contemporary as well as senior, had expressed the feeling that they would consider me their representative. For instance Jayaprakash Narayan said that he would consider me as an 'ambassador'. Later Vinoba Bhave too expressed the same kind of feelings.

I accepted the proposal to be appointed General Secretary and with Janaki and our three children reached London on May 27, 1962. I joined the WRI with Tony Smythe as Co-General Secretary on June 1, 1962.

In his Annual Report Tony Smythe wrote:

1962 was a year of change in the WRI. In January Arlo Tatum relinquished his position as Secretary of the WRI. He is now working with the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors in the USA; Tony Smythe remained on Headquarters' staff as Secretary and in May Devi Prasad, formerly Secretary of the WRI Section in India, joined him as Co-Secretary. The presence of a man with such wide experience in the Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movements has helped to extend the area of international activity and was especially important at the time of the Sino/India Border conflict.<sup>30</sup>



## International Council Meeting 1962

This, the third Council meeting after the Gandhigram conference and the first after the World Peace Brigade meeting in Beirut, was held in London from July 25 to 29, 1962. Among topics for discussion were the 1963 Triennial and the study conferences, transfer of headquarters, relationship with UNESCO, the situation related to the tension between the German Sections, and the World Peace Brigade's Leningrad project to mention just a few. Above all the Council had the task of clarifying and reshaping what philosophically and strategically sound policies the WRI should follow. With that view in mind I presented a memorandum entitled 'Future Role of the WRI'.<sup>31</sup>

My memorandum started by recognising that the WRI, as was to be expected from an organisation of such stature and revolutionary perspective, had always responded to the challenge of the day. Its initiative of building an organisation like the World Peace Brigade was just one example. Such actions built confidence and conviction that the International would continue to be 'the nonviolent movement of the *present*' and not of the past and that it would not lag behind in responding to the needs of the time. Yet, the memorandum expressed the feeling that vast areas had remained untouched by the International, e.g. the WRI's presence in communist countries on the one hand and on the other the WRI in the non-western – or, as it was then called the 'developing' – world on the other.

The first question I asked in the memorandum was: As an international movement what did the WRI have to offer to someone in Nigeria or Burma, who is either labouring on a farm or working in an office? What message and programme had the WRI for these millions struggling for their day to day needs? Is the phenomenon of war not related to their lives?

The memorandum continued with the observation that the battle for the official recognition of conscientious objection to military service would hopefully be won sooner rather than later. Most Western countries would either provide alternative service to conscientious objectors, or abandon conscription altogether. What would then remain for the WRI to do in the Western world? There were many groups and organisations working for peace. Could some of them working on a pacifist basis be helped to come together to co-operate with each other?

Shouldn't research, particularly action-research be done in the field of group, national and international tensions? In short, couldn't the WRI take the lead in initiating a much wider nonviolent programme to establish the principle that 'the recognition of the individual's freedom and sanctity of human personality was the basic principle of human relationships'?

In the memorandum I pleaded that the WRI keep in close contact with and support movements such as the anti-nuclear weapons and human rights campaigns. This was important also because of the potential for expanding WRI membership.

It was necessary that the International gave its continuous support to the World Peace Brigade – particularly to see that it developed in the direction originally intended at the time of its foundation. After all it was an organisation founded on the principles of nonviolence and world peace. It should remain as close to WRI as possible.

WRI headquarters could and should become an international peace centre. For that reason its moving to a more accessible place in London was necessary. It should not remain only an office but become a *home* for pacifists and a study centre for all peace workers. It should have an adequate amount of basic literature in English and other languages of the world on the history and principles of peace movements, along with some material for advanced study.

The memorandum raised the question of research into the WRI archives: A simple 'layman's history of the WRI' was important. A peace clearing house was also needed for the WRI

as well as other peace movements to keep them up to date about each other's work.

After some general discussion the Council took up various sections of the memorandum in detail:<sup>33</sup>

(a) WRI in the Non-Western world:

In addition to the memoranda submitted by Pierre Martin and Jean van Lierde . . . a great deal of information about the situation on Africa was given by Bill Sutherland, Bayard Rustin and Jean van Lierde. It was realised that the situation in Africa was so different from that which had been experienced in the countries with European culture and tradition that new methods of operation would have to be discovered. Individual declarations and membership organisations of western style were often unsuited to the conditions in African countries. There was the need for flexibility in approach and action. It was also recognised that much of the work would have to be done through indigenous movements and native leadership rather than attempting to impose upon them European systems and organisations. The same principles of action would apply to the countries of Asia and Latin America. Bill Sutherland was asked to co-operate with the officers in producing a memorandum on this aspect for wider discussion in the movement.

(b) WRI in the Western world.

The Chairman pointed out that, although the WRI had been working in this field for 40 years, the movement was still a very small one. In the view of many, the problem of conscientious objection was less significant today in the struggle against war than it had been in the 1920s. It was generally felt that we had to take note of the rise of many new anti-war organisations using different techniques. Both the International as well as the Sections must consider ways of co-operating with them and in the development of the philosophy and technique of nonviolence in all fields.

(c) WRI and the International Peace Movement

Tony Smythe talked about his experience. New peace forces were developing on the international level which were looking for leadership, which he thought the WRI ought to supply. The desirability of co-ordination of all anti-war forces was recognised by the Council but at the same time it was agreed that the WRI must retain its specific pacifist character.

Bayard Rustin proposed that the WRI should take the initiative in calling a world youth conference to discuss the problem of nonviolence and Socio-economic Change under the leadership of outstanding personalities in this field. . . . The suggestion was favourably received and Devi Prasad, Bayard Rustin and the Chairman were asked to discuss the matter with A. J. Muste and Jayaprakash Narayan during the forthcoming World Peace Brigade Council Meeting and to report to the Executive at its next meeting.

(d) International Centre

The Secretaries suggested that it would be desirable for the WRI to have its headquarters nearer the centre of London which could provide office and residential accommodation, together with a social centre for members and friends to meet and make contact with the WRI. It was recognised that the present location had certain advantages but on the whole the change suggested would increase the efficiency of the work and the development of closer co-operation with existing move-

ments having headquarters in London and with visitors from other countries. The Council authorised the Secretaries, in co-operation with the Executive, to explore the possibilities and make such changes, as they felt desirable.

(e) Literature

The suggestions made in the Memorandum were endorsed and the great need for literature suitable for non-European countries and in languages other than French, German and English was underlined by several members.

(f) Peace Clearing House

It was agreed that a general directory of Peace Movements, nationally and internationally, was the function of other bodies such as the National Peace Council and ILCOP but the office was asked to go ahead with the compilation of a Directory of specifically pacifist organisations.

## International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace

The International Peace Bureau (IPB) was once a major organisation meant to operate as a liaison body for peace organisations. It was evolved from proposals for an international clearing house put forth at the Third International Peace Congress held in Rome in 1891. It called itself a 'service secretariat'. Its first office was in Bern but later it moved to Geneva, Switzerland. The IPB had to be shut down during the Second World War. Later it was given another name and restarted as International Liaison Committee for Peace (ILCOP). It readopted its original name IPB in the early 1960s. The WRI had kept in regular touch with the ILCOP, and later the IPB, but it did not prove of much help as a linking body particularly for active and radical bodies like the WRI. However, despite questions being asked whether it was really of much use to remain an affiliated body of the IPB the WRI continued its association with it as a necessary formality.

The European Federation against Nuclear Arms called an international conference in Oxford, UK, which took place from January 4 to 7, 1963, at which a totally non-aligned organisation was to be formed and called International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP). It represented the culmination of an awareness throughout the peace movement that it must unite and must become international in order to face the challenge of the cold war in particular and of the nuclear age in general.

WRI had an important role in the formation of the ICDP specially as its Co-Secretary Tony Smythe took an active part in the process of the creation of the ICDP. Among the 70 delegates participating in the Oxford conference, the Chairman Harold Bing, Secretaries Tony Smythe and I represented WRI. Other WRI members present were Council members Stuart Morris and Bayard Rustin.

the consensus of opinion about the Conference . . . had been successful and had given a clear indication that there was a general desire in all sections of the peace movement to work together whenever possible.<sup>34</sup>

At the conclusion of the discussions a continuing committee was set up to start work immediately for co-ordination and to call another conference in one year's time to create the ICDP formally. WRI Co-Secretary Tony Smythe was one of the 17 members of the committee.

## Tony Smythe leaves the WRI

Tony Smythe left the WRI on October 23, 1964 to take up the post of Personnel and Training Manager with the Scott-Bader Commonwealth, a co-ownership industrial enterprise near Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, which was seeking to apply pacifist principles in the economic field. In his letter of resignation Smythe said that apart from family reasons for the change, he felt that it was undesirable for a person to remain in employment in one peace organisation for more than about five years, since one tended to become exhausted and stereotyped in one's responses, and to lose touch with the mainstream of life. He said: 'My personal attitude to the WRI is one of immense gratitude. It has enabled me to work in the field which will always be the most important to me – the international peace movement – with so many fine people at the Secretariat, on the Council and wherever I have direct contact. I have been introduced to many organisations, ideas and even places, which perhaps I should not have known otherwise.'

The Council adopted the following resolution, which expressed the feelings of the whole movement:

The Council has learned with great regret Tony Smythe's decision to resign from the position of Joint Secretary of the WRI. The work he has done over the past five years has been invaluable to the whole movement. In a changing situation he, along with Devi Prasad, has done much to give WRI a vision of its place and its importance in the Peace Movement and in the world at large. His contacts and work with new peace groups both in England and elsewhere have been especially valuable. We wish Tony every success in his new work and hope at the same time he will be able to continue to contribute to the development of the WRI.<sup>35</sup>

## War Resisters' International News Service

At the beginning of 1962 WRI started a news service with information related to peace movements. Called the News Release, it developed considerably, widened its scope and was regularly published partly as a service to the International Peace Bureau and the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP). In 1964 the ICDP started its own fortnightly news bulletins, which contained some material from WRI also. The WRI continued its own news service called *WRI Newsletter* to be sent only to its affiliates, a small number of other contacts and those who asked for it.<sup>36</sup>

## Charbonnières Study Conference – 1963

The proposal for holding a youth conference on nonviolence and socio-economic change was put forward by Bayard Rustin and A. J. Muste at the 1962 Council meeting. Initially it was planned to be held in Poland in 1963, but for practical reasons had to be postponed until 1964. In view of the absence of any suggestions which were expected from Bayard Rustin and A. J. Muste, the Council decided to organise the 1963 study conference on the same theme. It was also decided to consider it the preparatory conference for the one suggested at the 1962 Council meeting. The venue chosen was the Chateau de Charbonnières, Chartres in France.

There were about 50 mostly young participants at the Charbonnières study conference. *War Resistance* 7, vol. 2 reported :

One issue which peacemakers face to-day is whether peace can come with disarmament or some basic change in society will also be required. The Study Conference discussed this issue and tried to find out if non-violence could be applied for political, social and economic changes so that permanent peace could be assured. It examined the present political and military trends in Europe, political structure, civil rights and the liberty of conscience. It considered some experiments in community development and decentralisation based on peoples' initiatives and tried to extract principles which could be applied in other situations, especially in developing a community spirit in both rural and urban areas.

The following is a selection from the resolutions passed by the Charbonnières Conference:

- National peace movements should provide an international information service on a much wider scale than previously. Demonstrations and direct action projects should be announced as early as possible. Comments and evaluation of such actions may prove valuable to peace movements in other countries.
- It is necessary that further study be made of the connection between the philosophy of nonviolence and the techniques of community development and basic education, both in highly industrial societies and in developing countries.
- Peace movement should encourage the spreading of ideas of nonviolence more widely, especially into communist countries, and work for the establishment of contacts through exchange visits, work camps, etc. In view of the increasing isolation of the Peoples Republic of China, it should be a special concern of peace movements to make contacts with her. They should intensify the campaign for her admission in the UN.
- Peace movements should try to find more effective ways of spreading their message to the armed forces and encouraging the development of discussion groups on the problems of peace within the army.
- Peace movements feel concerned about the developing restrictions on liberty in Germany. They should work for the recognition of the Communist Party in the Federal Republic of Germany and for the establishment of independent peace organisations in the German Democratic Republic. Every effort should be made against the Emergency Bill now before the Parliament in the FRG.
- French *people* should be encouraged to sign the test ban treaty. The collection of signatures could provide the starting point for a broad peace initiative in France. Peace movements should organise demonstrations outside French Embassies in their own countries to oppose French tests.
- Peace movements are anxious to maximize the international impact of the Eastern marches and demonstrations in the forthcoming year and should consider a special concentration of international forces in one country, like France or Italy, where the movement may make a real break-through. It is suggested that a mass march to NATO Headquarters be organised.
- Peace movements, particularly the World Peace Brigade, should watch and study developments in crisis spots all over the world and choose some of them to concentrate upon.
- Knowledge of chemical and bacteriological warfare is as important as that of nuclear war. It is therefore necessary that a comprehensive study of the subject be made. The WRI is urged to publish a document on bacteriological and chemical warfare as soon as possible.

- Comprehensive bibliography of pacifist literature of all languages must be made available as soon as possible.<sup>37</sup>

Extracts from the Charbonnières study conference statement on the role of the peace movement in Africa:

With the exception of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, the decolonialisation of Africa is almost complete. In certain respects the independent states of Africa are emerging as a major force for peace in the world, and we welcome the resolutions . . . for disarmament, neutralism and an African nuclear-free zone. We also see the growth all over Africa of a massive campaign against illiteracy, sickness and poverty without which progress and social change are impossible.

On the other hand we are aware of certain serious developments which either hold up the development of African countries or even threaten the outbreak of violence and civil war. In every African State, for reasons of prestige for the most part, armies have been introduced. The soldiers are regularly paid, regularly fed and highly organised, thus creating one of few stable structures in the country. Their function is not one of defense but of supporting the power élite, which forms the government. If the government cannot gain the allegiance of the military on the military's terms, it will not be long before the military takes over. Militarism in Africa is increasing daily. Armies and secret police are amongst the main forces resisting political opposition and social change.

Like in other countries, there is little real democracy in Africa. The colonial tradition of government by a small number of highly paid bureaucrats has been continued after independence. The privileged class of civil servants is often totally unconcerned about the development of their country. What is more serious is that, whilst functionaries crowd the towns, the human skills needed to introduce economic and social progress amongst the rural communities, which make 80% of the total population, are sadly lacking. Most of those who have the opportunity through education to escape from ignorance and poverty, prefer to join the civil service in the towns.

. . . We must remember that as long as these nations are economically dependent on richer nations, they cannot be said to be independent. The end of colonialism has not even brought about the end of the economic exploitation of underdeveloped countries. Year by year the gap between the standards of living of rich, industrialised nations and poor, underdeveloped nations increases. In a way we see a class-struggle blown up on to a world scale, with the privileged 'haves' increasing their wealth at the expense of the underprivileged 'have-nots'. With the danger of nuclear war, this problem is the greatest challenge to our generation.

The world peace movement must not concern itself only with opposition to the growth of militarism. Whilst fighting injustice, ignorance and poverty, it must work for basic changes in social and political relationships in society by:

1. Educating the people in order to help them to help themselves;
2. Encouraging the development of autonomous groups for social action and reconciliation;
3. Involving the intellectuals of each country in the problems of their peoples;
4. Introducing to the people the nonviolent alternatives to group conflict.

In practical terms we must:

1. Encourage large numbers of qualified people, in a voluntary or professional capacity, to go out and answer the tremendous needs for community development in Africa. The technicians must search for ways of creating social revolution by integrating the techniques of fundamental education with the philosophy of non-violence.
2. Encourage the formation of an organisation within UNESCO to launch a World Volunteer Peace Corps. Such a Peace Corps would replace the many national peace corps now being formed. This supra-national organisation will send qualified people from any country in the whole world as individual workers for the United Nations.
3. Consciously make contact with students from underdeveloped countries and introduce them to concepts of non-violence and the possibilities of helping the development of their nation.
4. Educate the public in our own countries in the problems of Africa. Attempt to involve the public in the solution of some of these problems:
  - (a) By supporting colonial liberation movements;
  - (b) organising industrial and consumer actions against racial discrimination;
  - (c) bringing pressure on our governments for the reduction of expenditure on armaments and the increase of economic aid to the "*tiers monde*";
  - (d) supporting voluntary organisations that are training and sending qualified technicians to Africa. It would be helpful if WRI could prepare a list of organisations doing this work and sent it to its Sections.
5. Support the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain and elsewhere, and the African nationalist movements in South Africa and the Portuguese colonies, in campaigns against the sale of arms to South Africa, for the implementation of the UN resolution on trade sanctions against South Africa and Portugal, for the boycott by individuals of South African goods and by sportsmen, writers, musicians, actors, etc., of activity in South Africa while Apartheid exists. For example the Danish dock workers, in response to a campaign initiated by youth and pacifist groups, have decided not to unload any goods of South African origin. Limited success has also been achieved in this area in Norway and Sweden. Danish experience serves to stress that it is important, when making a direct approach to dock workers, to indicate practical ways in which strike funds will be augmented, and that it must be stressed repeatedly that the desire for this direct action comes from the African people themselves. Although it is true that the interests of the African workers are adversely affected by such strike action, nevertheless the interests of the white minority oppressing the Africans are hit to a far greater extent. The African people therefore regard their sufferings as part of the price they must pay to win their freedom.
6. Encourage and support trade unionists in every country as in Denmark, to refuse to load or handle both arms for export to South Africa and Portugal; also goods imported from South Africa. This should be done, if possible, through ICFTU and the WFTU.
7. Training centres should be started somewhere in Southern Africa for refugees from Bechuanaland.<sup>38</sup>

At its meeting held on October 5 and 6 the Executive Committee considered the recommendations made by the Charbonnières study conference, which they agreed were in line with

decisions taken at the Triennial Conference. It suggested the WRI should try to make other less radical peace organisations more aware of nonviolent methods and philosophy. It proposed that WRI Sections should hold more schools on nonviolence. It was of the opinion that the exchange of workers could be accomplished through the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace, which already had this item on their agenda. If the financial situation of the WRI were better it could help in arranging meetings of small groups from different countries.

The WRI would ask its Sections to give more help in supplying information for international distribution and the Secretariat would continue to be a clearing house. Work with the armed forces could be encouraged by making service men more welcome to meetings. The WRI should encourage the World Peace Brigade to organise action in the Sahara and Pacific against French nuclear tests. The WRI should also collect information about chemical and bacteriological weapons and distribute it internationally.

The suggestion to compile comprehensive bibliographies of pacifist literature was commended to the WRI Sections. The Executive Committee expressed the feeling that such compilation was important and should be published separately from other recommendations. The role of peace movements in Africa was of particular importance and could be a WRI programme for discussion amongst local groups.<sup>39</sup>

## Moving headquarters to central London

Although the plan of moving the WRI headquarters to India was abandoned, for some time there had been an idea to move the office to a more accessible place in London. There was a general feeling that having the office in a suburb was disadvantageous for the Secretariat as well as people who were interested in making personal contact with the International, especially those coming from outside London. They found it inconvenient to travel to Enfield from any of the main railway stations or airports, especially if they were visiting London only for a short period.

The Secretariat persuaded the Council to take a decision to move the office to a more easily accessible place. The Council asked the Executive and the Secretariat to explore 'the possibility of buying a house nearer London, bearing in mind the WRI's current financial situation'. It was recognised that a large enough house necessary for the purpose would cost not less than 10,000 pounds, which would mean a considerable drain on the WRI's resources. However the Secretaries made inquiries and also visited several premises in central London that could have been suitable for the headquarters. But at that time such a house could not be found within the financial limits of the International, so, for the time being, the office remained in Enfield.

The Secretariat, however, kept its pressure on the Council and the Executive Committee to move to somewhere nearer London, and they did not give up the search for new headquarters.<sup>40</sup>

A bibliography on *Nonviolence, Peacemaking and Peace Education*, which was prepared by me and published in 1961 in the Hindi language journal *Nayee Talim* of Gandhi's Educational Institute in Sevagram, India, was revised and translated into English. It was duplicated and sent to WRI Sections and other contacts.<sup>41</sup>



## Lansbury House Trust Fund

Like that of most radical voluntary organisations which worked for social change, the financial state of the WRI was never satisfactory. However, many members and sympathisers continued making whatever contributions they could. There were some trusts which helped the International generously; others made good contributions. Most of the WRI contributors were from Britain. But during the second half of the 1960s the government insisted that registered trusts and foundations could make donations only to bodies which were registered either as charities or educational institutions.

The implication of this change for organisations such as the WRI was very discouraging. Trusts which had been helping the WRI for quite some time were obliged to follow the government rules. The WRI could not be classified as belonging to the category of a charitable organisation. In fact it would have been a political as well as an ethical blunder if it had asked for the status of a charity. However, it was true that some of the work of the WRI was indeed educational. The question therefore was, should the WRI go for charitable status for its educational work? The Secretariat consulted Mr Braithwaite, a legal specialist on the subject, a Quaker and a friend of the WRI. He worked on the proposal and eventually helped the WRI in establishing the Lansbury House Trust Fund (LHTF), as an independent educational trust founded by War Resisters' International in early 1969–70.

The first task of the LHTF was to take up the responsibility of maintaining the archives related to military conscription and conscientious objection to military service, which the WRI had built up over a long period. At the same time it began providing information on military conscription and subjects related to it to people who asked for it. The LHTF started publishing the quarterly bulletin *Compulsory Military Service and the Objector* which was attached to the WRI quarterly journal *War Resistance*. It was given free to those who received *War Resistance*, but for others it was priced 10 shillings annually. The bulletin continued to be published until the end of 1972.

The second objective of the Trust was education in the peaceful resolution of conflict. In that field it planned a number of projects. One had already been launched. It was to make a survey of the attitudes of the youth towards the question of interference by a country in the affairs of another country. The project began with a sample survey related to the Czechoslovakian events of August 1968.

The founding of the LHTF somewhat reduced the monetary pressure on the WRI and to some extent pressure on staff time as well. Trusts and foundations that helped the WRI previously came out more generously to support the work of the Lansbury House Trust Fund, helping it to grow gradually as a totally independent body, but closely related to the WRI. It employed an office secretary who worked under the guidance of the WRI General Secretary.

### **Publication programme of the International**

From the beginning the International, many people, but especially Runham Brown, the builder of the International, had understood that for the promotion of the work of the organisation publication of literature must become an essential part of its programme. Runham Brown and Grace Beaton never missed an opportunity to publish pamphlets and booklets about the work they had been doing. The publication activity of the International has continued. I should mention here some of the early publications along with a few of the ones published in the later years. A list of almost all the WRI publications is given in Appendix 5.

*War Resisters of the World: an account of the movement in twenty countries* (1925); *War Resisters in Many Lands: an account of the movement in twenty-one countries* (report of the Sonntagsberg Conference, 1928); *Modern Martyrs* (1928?); *Review of the International Movement* by Grace Beaton (1937); Runham Brown's *Why Hitler?* (1940) and *Spain: a Challenge to Pacifism*; Reginald Reynolds's *Why India?* (1940) and Runham Brown's *Cutting Ice*, which described his life in prison and gave a glimpse of the way his thought process developed are some of the most valuable WRI documents. *Down on the Farm: the Lansbury Gate Farm* provides an insight into the relief work for war resisters and refugees the International did during the Second World War. *Letters Coming Through the Barriers* illustrated the feelings and courage of war resisters living – some of them in prisons – in the war-torn regions of Europe. Diderich Lund's *Resistance in Norway* and Hagbard Jonassen's *Resistance in Denmark* documented the nonviolent direct actions taken by pacifists against totalitarian regimes in their countries.

Harold Bing wrote a pamphlet entitled *Pacifists over the World* (1943), an overview of the worldwide pacifist movement, and *The Rainbow in the Clouds* (1951) and *Meeting the Challenge* (1954) showed the optimism and enthusiasm Grace Beaton cherished in her work as the Secretary of the WRI.

A reasonably thorough work on conscription by Tony Smythe and Devi Prasad, entitled *Conscription: A World Survey*, was published in 1968. It gave an up to date detailed description of the situation on conscription laws, their practice and the conditions regarding COs in 101 countries. A few other publications too should also be mentioned here: *Emergency Laws: A bill before the Parliament of the Federal German Republic* (1964); Don Milani's *Self Defence* (1965); F. C. Hunnius's *Students' Revolt: The New Left in Germany*; Howard Sacks's *Manual for Draft-Age Americans in Europe* (1968); *Training in Nonviolence: a full documentation of the WRI Study Conference* (1965); *Support Czechoslovakia* (1968) by Michael Randle and April Carter; *Training for Nonviolent Action* (1970) by Theodore W. Olson and Lynne Shivers; *Liberation and Revolution – Gandhi's Challenge* (1969); *They Love It but Leave It – American deserters* (1971) by Devi Prasad; and at the completion of WRI's first 50 years in 1971, *50 Years of War Resistance: what now?* was published first as a special issue of *War Resistance* and then as a pamphlet.

#### Notes Chapter 15

- 1 'Masters of War', words and music by Bob Dylan, copyright M. Witmark & Sons, 1963
- 2 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, London, May 7, 1956, Matters Arising From Minutes, item 3(d), p.1
- 3 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, London, July 16–20, 1956, item 9 (a–ii), p.8
- 4 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, London, March 27, 1960
- 5 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Brussels, Belgium, July 18–21, 1959, item 4 (i), p.5
- 6 Ibid. item (iv), 'Programme'
- 7 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Gandhigram, India, December 21, 1960, item 4 (b), p.1
- 8 'Tenth Triennial Conference Report', *The War Resister* 90, 1961, p.3
- 9 G. Ramchandran, 'Address of Welcome', *The War Resister* 90, 1961, p.8
- 10 Ibid. pp.12–13
- 11 Ibid. p.16
- 12 Ibid. p.17
- 13 Ibid. pp.26–8
- 14 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Gandhigram, India, December 21, 1960, item 10, p.3

- 15 *The War Resister* 91, 2nd quarter 1961, Editor's page, p.2
- 16 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Partinico, Sicily, July 18–20, 1961
- 17 *The War Resister* 94, 1st quarter 1962, pp.15–16
- 18 Tony Smythe, Secretary's Report, yearly report submitted to the International Council Meeting, London, July 1962
- 19 Harold Bing, 'The WRI and the World Peace Brigade', *The War Resister* 2:3, pages 4 and 16
- 20 Secretaries' Report, WRI, 1963, presented to the Council, p.2
- 21 The story of the Brigade is another fascinating one. It took up some very daring steps and organised projects; some of these are described in this chapter. The WPB remained active for some years, but had to be closed. A few years later it emerged in the form of Peace Brigade International (PBI) and is still active. Except for some informal contacts between the PBI and the WRI there is hardly any co-operation in each others' activities.
- 22 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, London, July 25–29, 1962, item 10, 'Leningrad Project', p.4
- 23 Theo. F. Lentz, *Towards a Science of Peace, Turning Point in Human Destiny*, Bookman Associates Inc., New York, 1955, Foreword by Dr Julian Huxley, p.v–vi
- 24 Johan Galtung, 'Research on Conflict and Peace', a talk given at the International Conference held in Gandhigram, India, in 1960. Johan Galtung, now a leading pioneer in the field of peace research, who was working with the Institute of Social Research, Oslo, Norway; elected a member of the WRI International Council at the Gandhigram Conference. *The War Resister* 90, First Quarter, 1961, p.23
- 25 ICDP was founded at the Oxford Conference called by the European Federation Against Nuclear Arms, to bring together peace organisations which were non-aligned and anti-war. It developed into a platform for all the peace movement totally against war and attached to none of the power blocks nor with the war-oriented policies of their own government. (See Appendix 11)
- 26 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Centro Studie Iniziative, Partinico, Sicily, July 18–20, 1961, item 16, p.4
- 27 *Ibid.* p.4
- 28 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, London, July 25–9, 1962, item 1 (10), p.1
- 29 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 3, February 17, 1962, item 15, p.3
- 30 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, London, December 3, 1961, item 15, p.3
- 31 *Annual Report*, WRI, 1962, p.1
- 32 Devi Prasad, 'Future Role of War Resisters' International', memo presented at the Council meeting, 1962
- 33 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, London, July 25, 1962, item 11, pp.5–6
- 34 *War Resistance* 2:4, 4th quarter 1963, p.2
- 35 'Tony Smythe leaves the WRI office', *War Resistance* 11, 4th quarter 1964, p.19
- 36 'Important Notice' in *WRI News Release* 34, December 29, 1964, p.1
- 37 'WRI Study Conference, Charbonnières, France, August 24–31, 1963', *War Resistance* 2:7, 4th quarter, pp.26–7
- 38 'Charbonnières Statement on the Role of the Peace Movement in Africa', *War Resistance*, 2:7, 4th quarter, 1963, p.28–30
- 39 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, London, October 5–6, 1963, items 8-0, p.7–8
- 40 Although it took quite some time, the office did move (on May 16, 1968) to 3 Caledonian Road, next to the *Peace News* office and only five minutes walk from Kings Cross Terminus, a central place. At the Council Meeting held on August 17, 1968 the Secretary reported that the move to 3 Caledonian Road, London 'has proved very useful indeed. Contacts with the PPU, *Peace News* and other movements have become more active. More voluntary help was forthcoming. The space available was ample.' The Council also endorsed the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting 11, which 'had expressed its warm gratitude to the General Secretary and staff for all the extra work they had carried out in connection with the moving of the office.'
- 41 David Hoggett was the founder of the library called Commonweal Collection, now a part of the Bradford University Library, as its special Section. (Note: Later, in 1968, a larger *A Gandhi Bibliography* was prepared by David Hoggett, produced for and to be distributed by WRI. Later David Hoggett prepared a more comprehensive Directory, which was published by the Commonweal Collection.)

## CHAPTER 16

*The reason I can't follow the old eye-for-an-eye philosophy is that it ends up leaving everybody blind. Somebody must have sense . . . I remember some years ago, my brother and I were driving from Atlanta to Chattanooga, Tennessee. And for some reason the drivers that night were very discourteous or they were forgetting to dim their lights . . . And finally A. D. looked over at me and he said, "I'm tired of this now, and the next car that comes by here and refuses to dim the lights, I'm going to refuse to dim mine." I said, "Wait a minute, don't do that. Somebody has to have some sense on this highway and if somebody doesn't have sense enough to dim the lights, we'll all end up destroyed on this highway." And I'm saying the same thing for us here in Birmingham. We are moving up a mighty highway towards the city of freedom. There will be meandering points. There will be curves and difficult moments, and we will be tempted to retaliate with the same kind of force that the opposition will use. But I am going to say to you, "Wait a minute, Birmingham. Somebody's got to have some sense in Birmingham."*

Martin Luther King<sup>1</sup>

### The WRI widens its concerns

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Within the War Resisters' International it had become fully accepted that pacifists had the responsibility not only for opposing militarism as such, but also to work for finding nonviolent solutions to conflicts related to human rights and independence at all levels, both regional as well as international. For instance the International began to be concerned with the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa; the struggle for independence of the people of Mozambique against Portugal; the crisis of Palestine – Arab/Jewish tension, Biafra's war for liberating itself from Nigerian central rule, and a number of such crises. Although, in the 1930s and 40s, it had not been able to do much about the Indian struggle against British rule, it had kept in constant touch with Gandhi and his colleagues, supporting their nonviolent struggle for independence, which was inspiring many other countries in their freedom struggles.

The crisis between Argentina and Chile in 1958 had not been much noticed by pacifists in general, but now Chilean members of the WRI took the initiative in requesting the International to take whatever steps it could in responding to the crisis. The WRI Secretariat wrote to the embassies of both the countries urging them to negotiate over the problem of disputed territories. Demonstrations had taken place in both the countries and their ambassadors had been withdrawn. The action taken by the WRI resulted in a letter from the Chilean embassy, setting out the agreement, however inadequate, reached by the two governments. The Executive Committee discussed the matter at their meeting and hoped that it could serve as an example to follow.<sup>2</sup> There were other such conflicts, more serious and wider in their consequences. The WRI gave increased attention to these crises and took whatever action it could within its capacity whenever it thought it was warranted.

An important factor at this point in the history of the WRI was that now such international issues were not only discussed at the International Council and Executive Committee meetings

and Conferences but also publicly raised and acted upon. The International also drew the attention of its Sections and affiliated bodies to those issues suggesting appropriate action. Whenever practical it also involved other peace organisations in its projects. This approach was not new for the International. For example it had taken action as early as 1950 in connection with the Korean crisis as described below. But now such an approach was considered to be an integral part of the WRI's activities.

## The Korean crisis

The Korean crisis could have developed into something very menacing for the whole world. The WRI was convinced early on that the situation should be taken seriously and acted upon.

### The background of the crisis

The Second World War had brought an end to Japanese rule in Korea. In December 1943 China, the United Kingdom and the USA issued a declaration, known as the Cairo Declaration, promising Korea independence in due course. At the Potsdam Conference held in 1945, the USSR too committed itself to supporting the Cairo Declaration. However, Soviet troops entered Korea from the north and after a month US troops from the south. This resulted in the partition of the country into North Korea and South Korea. The USA, the UK and the USSR, with China adhering, held a conference and agreed that the USSR and USA form a joint commission which would eventually result in a provisional Korean democratic government.

After holding a few meetings to make efforts to unify the two parts of Korea the joint commission failed and the Koreans continued to live in a situation of perpetual tension. War started with North Korea invading the South on June 25, 1950. This increased the danger of the crisis becoming more severe, involving the big powers and creating global tension.

The situation posed a big question for pacifists and the War Resisters' International. In the meantime The prime minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru had taken the initiative of offering to mediate between the North and South Korean governments. The WRI Council wrote to the president of India, Rajendra Prasad, expressing the Council's appreciation of Jawahar Lal Nehru's initiative to bring about reconciliation between the Koreans, hopefully between the USSR and the USA on this issue.

The Council also made some suggestions so that pacifists from all over the world might be able to help relieve the tension. The message said that, both directly and through any influence WRI may have in the wider peace movement and in liberal circles generally, it should:

- 1) Urge the organisation of broadly based deputations from Western Countries to Russia and at the same time seek to persuade the Russian Embassies of the desirability of admitting such deputations, in order to a) show Russia that the West is not entirely hostile and b) to bring back to Western Countries an impartial report of conditions behind "the iron curtain".
- 2) Oppose the extension of the Korean conflict to China and try to secure declarations from other Governments that they will not support the American Government in any such extension.
- 3) Support Pandit Nehru's offer of mediation both by letters to the Indian Government and by propaganda in support of his initiative.

- 4) Urge the U.N.O. to call an immediate full meeting of the Security Council, including the Chinese People's Republic, to deal with the Korean crisis, by public meetings, letters to the press . . . and to members of governments and personal contact with delegates to the UN.
- 5) Strive for a limitation of national sovereignty . . .
- 6) Advocate the setting up in our respective countries of widely representative Commissions to study all aspects of the East–West tension . . . give publicity to the facts and conclusions so reached.
- 7) Organise relief teams to work in the war-affected areas both to relieve physical suffering and to introduce into those regions persons motivated by a spirit of reconciliation which may thus be brought to bear on both sides.

Finally, we must intensify our personal witness to the pacifist faith in the spirit of love. . . . We must strive to be mediators both individually and collectively.

We ask our Sections to give urgent and serious consideration to this letter and to advise us at Headquarters of any action taken.

Grace Beaton, Secretary<sup>3</sup>

#### **Action by Sections<sup>4</sup>**

The Danish Section sent a letter to Pandit Nehru expressing sympathy with his work for mediation in the Korean conflict; sent a statement to the Soviet Embassy expressing their view on Korea; and to the United Nations regretting that the Mao-tse Tung government was not represented at the UN although the Danish government had recognised it. They put pressure on their own government to raise this question with the UN.

The War Resisters League issued the following statement:

The League supports any proposal for peace if sincerely made and not intended as a part of the military strategy of either belligerent. It commends the efforts of Nehru to mediate the Korean war and looks to the people of India or of any other country which can rise above the conflict to maintain neutrality and serve as a common ground for both sides. It warns against misleading peace plans such as the Stockholm Peace Pledge or other such plans designed as instruments of war policy.

The British Peace Pledge Union had gathered signatures for a petition urging the British government to press for the admission of the Peking government to the Security Council. The Canadian Section had also issued a statement to that effect.

As far as the question of giving a political statement was concerned the matter was referred to the WRI consultative committee, which had been recently formed, for consideration. They came to the conclusion “that there was no particular political analysis of judgment that fell within their province. There was no special action which they could recommend to the WRI.” Evidently the Council was not satisfied with this answer. “In view of the new situation in Korea the Council referred this question back to the consultative committee for further consideration, particularly with reference to the whole issue of collective security.”<sup>5</sup>

WRI was convinced that some measure of accommodation and mutual toleration between the two power blocks could and must be sought and every effort, however small, should be made to achieve this. This, it was believed, would be, though very small, a positive step taken by the pacifist international movement towards international peace.

## Eleventh Triennial Conference – 1963

The eleventh Triennial Conference was held in Stavanger, a coastal town in the south of Norway. It was organised by Folkereising Mot Krig (FMK), the Norwegian Section of the International. The London meeting (1962) of the International Council planned that the main discussions at this Conference should be on the following topics:

1. War Resistance in the Nuclear Age: What is the relevance of individual refusal of military service?
2. Pacifism and Social Justice
3. Pacifism and Current World Problems

One hundred and twenty people from 16 countries including the USA, Australia and Israel took part in the Conference. Diderich Lund, the Chairman of the FMK, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Norwegian Section which, he said, was hoping both to learn from this encounter with peace workers from other countries and to offer the fruits of its own experience.

Harold Bing, who had been re-elected as WRI Chairman earlier in the year, defined the aim of the Conference in his opening speech as being:

1. To clarify basic principles and their implications, and
2. To formulate plans for future work.

There had been little outward improvement in the world situation since the last Conference in 1960 and in fact the period had been punctuated by several major international crises. Progress would be slow for war was deeply rooted in human society and the peace movement was relatively new. The world was changing rapidly and those who enjoyed privileges under the present system would try to resist change even with violence. Peoples and governments had to be convinced of the value of nonviolence in such circumstances. The increases in the activity and the international character of the peace movement over the last three years pointed the way forward. There was evidence of a thaw in the cold war which offered better opportunities especially for the development of East–West relations between peace organisations.

It had been with this last point in mind that the Council had invited four East European peace committees to send observers to the Conference. On the day before the official opening Council members had frank and rewarding discussion with Dr Tromko of Czechoslovakia and Mr Trepczynski of Poland. Mutual understanding increased and some practical proposals were put forward for consideration by the Conference. The East German Peace Council was only able to participate by letter. The Norwegian government, in spite of vigorous lobbying before and during the Conference, refused to grant entry permits to Dr Frank Loeser and Dr Hans Hinrich Jenssen.

According to the Conference report in *War Resistance* 7, vol. 2, the first general discussion was based on the report published in the last edition of *War Resistance* and prepared by the Secretaries. Attention quickly settled on the problems of the future. Devi Prasad asked that clear guidance be given to the Secretariat concerning its role and scope. Many concrete questions about WRI relationships, internally and externally, were put forward for consideration and answers during the course of the Conference were considered.

Danilo Dolci introduced ‘the Relevance of Individual Refusal in the Nuclear Age’. He explored the role of the individual in the group, the position of the conscientious objector in societies still dominated by underlying currents of violence, and the relationship of small groups to each other. His talk seemed to add a new dimension to a problem which had occupied the minds of pacifists since the advent of nuclear weapons. Pastor Günneberg asserted that while individual refusal was still meaningful it could not be limited to refusal to military service. It

was a starting point but should lead to political action with mass support.

A decision had to be taken on the WRI relationship to the ICDP, which was in the process of being created as a result of the meeting of independent peace organisations at Oxford in January 1963. Many misunderstandings had arisen about the new organisation's policy towards the World Council of Peace. F. C. Hunnius, who opened the discussion . . . was able to dispel some of them, he also rejected the charge made by the World Council of Peace on the ICDP of being anti-Communist. . . .

Hagbard Jonassen reported back to the Conference on the meeting between the Council (WRI) and the Peace Committee Observers. . . . Mr. Trepczynski and Dr. Tromko addressed the Conference outlining the position of their organisations and stressed the need for more contact and co-operation. The large majority of delegates believed that while points of difference concerning conscientious objection, unilateralism and nonviolence existed, co-operation on specific projects was to be welcomed.

Pierre Martin presented a sociological study on the causes of tension in Africa, the militarism of some states and the role of pacifism in this context. He suggested that dramatic nonviolent action for decolonialisation be organised . . .

I tried to create a better understanding of the problems of pacifism in India by describing the historical, social and organisational background of the *Sarvodaya* movement. I agreed that if pacifism could not be developed into a force capable of giving answers to social, political and economic problems in Asian countries, or in the world, it could not become effective.

Heinrich Werner, Klaus Vack and Gottfried Wandersleb spoke of different aspects of the German situation and the introduction of the proposed Emergency Laws and Civil Defence Laws. Joseph Abileah described the tense situation between Arabs and Israelis and the difficulty of discovering means of action capable of breaking through deep-rooted hostility.<sup>6</sup>

Few WRI members can afford the time or the money for such occasions and those who did take part were not necessarily representative. However, amongst them there was a basic measure of agreement and the obvious desire, even when differences occurred, to surmount them and arrive at creative solutions. All seemed willing to learn from experience of others and, if necessary, to change their attitudes towards specific problems. The way in which the whole Conference listened to appeals from the German delegation for help in fighting the Emergency Laws and then responded was a sign of growing identity of interests between national pacifist groups. Everyone was deeply and personally concerned with the problems of Africa and China. This was the spirit which pervaded the Conference and this kind of spirit could provide the real foundations of internationalism if reflected to anything like the same extent throughout the Movement.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Cuban missile crisis**

At the meeting of the WRI Executive Committee held in Enfield on November 4, 1962 measures taken by the headquarters staff during the crisis were reported. Telegrams had been sent to Presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev, later another to Mr Khrushchev expressing appreciation of his decision to withdraw Soviet missile bases from Cuba. A general appeal to action had been sent to all Sections of WRI. It was thought that in such situations the emphasis should always be put on individual responsibility and action and that the pacifist movement should immediately take steps to help prevent such crises.<sup>8</sup>



## The Sino–Indian war

While India was ruled by the British as a colony, questions about her international boundaries never arose. As far as national interests were concerned, and as long as no nation challenged the authority of the British, boundary lines hardly mattered. But when India, after attaining her independence from the British, thought of defining her borders in relation to the neighbouring nations, they became a controversial issue.

China had built a road through a large area, the ownership of which was disputed. That was one of the causes of tension between the two nations. The WRI sent letters to the Indian embassy and the Chinese chargé-d'affaires in London as well as to the respective heads of States. It was decided to send further letters to the heads of State of the Soviet Union, Britain and the USA, asking them not to continue to supply arms to the two countries. The danger was that with interference from outside the conflict would escalate into a world conflict and that India would be diverted from the policy of neutrality in the cold war. Attempts had been made to contact members of the Indian peace movement but no replies had yet been received. They would be urged to oppose military preparedness in India, to offer more constructive solutions and recommend suitable activities for pacifists in other countries in support of their campaign.<sup>9</sup>

The WRI Secretariat had produced a document giving an analysis of the situation and an account of the action taken in this matter. It had been sent to the Council, all the affiliated and associated bodies and some other contacts.

To reduce the tensions between India and China and to carry the message of friendship to the people of both the countries, the Indian peace movement, Shanti Sena, with the co-operation of the World Peace Brigade and active support from WRI, organised a march from New Delhi to Peking. An international team of experienced peace workers started on March 1, 1963 from the Gandhi Memorial in Delhi. The 15 volunteers who started the journey were from Japan, Britain, Austria, USA and India. The whole action was expected to take about a year.

Not unexpectedly the Friendship Marchers were refused entry into East Pakistan (now Bangla Desh), Burma and China in the course of their trip to Peking. They marched up to the north-east of India, a little distance before the Indian border with East Pakistan. The following alternatives were considered:

1. to take the route through the North-east Frontier Agency area to the Chinese–Tibetan border
2. to go to Hongkong to try and enter into negotiations with the Chinese Peace Committee, or
3. to establish contacts from there and go by boat to the Chinese mainland.

If nothing like this did succeed,

4. call off the March or work with Chinese or Tibetan refugees in the border areas.

The British refused visas for Hongkong. Burma and China also did not allow entry into their countries. The team spent a few days in Maitri Ashram, a Gandhian centre. At the same time the Indian government also was not very comfortable with the idea of marchers going to Peking, unless proper permission was granted. The march was finally called off.<sup>10</sup>

What was gained by organising such an ambitious project, particularly as it could have been predicted that the marchers would not be permitted by the Chinese government to enter the country? Was there any better method the pacifist movement could use to bring the crisis to the notice of the world at large? The answer lies in the following argument. Given the circumstances of the Sino–Indian conflict, which was deeply rooted in history and had the potential of becoming a much more serious and widespread crisis, it was essential to raise the pacifist voice for the sake of peace between the two neighbours with large populations. The idea of a march from Delhi to Peking served well the purpose of drawing the attention of the peace

movement in general to the situation.

One of the reasons the Chinese rejected the request from the marchers to go to Peking was their impression that the march was organised by the Indians. No doubt, a large proportion of Indians in the group would have been seen as being close to the Indian government. In reality, though, it was a genuinely international project. The WRI Council Meeting held on July 31, 1963, at the time of the Stavanger Conference, had discussed this question. Following is an extract from the minutes of that meeting:

The Conference had suggested the desirability of strengthening the European representation on the March. For practical considerations, and in view of the present Chinese misunderstanding about the purpose of the March, the Council thought it inadvisable to send a direct WRI representative. We should use our influence to explain to the Chinese authorities the real purpose of the March, and, if their attitude became more favourable, our Indian members on the March should be asked to represent the WRI officially.<sup>11</sup>

WRI was fully aware of the situation. In view of the growing isolation of China and the consequent increase in international tension the WRI felt that every effort should be made, both at International as well as Sectional levels, to make contact with Chinese governmental representatives and the China Peace Committee in order to further mutual understanding.

India was one of the pioneers in promoting neutralism and showing the world that international conflicts could be resolved by methods other than the use of weapons. But India failed to use the same method to resolve this conflict. Why?

Wars, especially in national or racial context, have a hypnotic effect on populations. For instance the Indian population became very jingoistic during the war with China. We know how at the beginning of the Second World War some of the staunchest of pacifists gave up their pacifism in face of Hitler's power. In other words the solution lies not only in refusing to fight but also, and more so, in the mental preparation of the citizen, who would under no circumstances agree to bear arms. The pacifist movement had not yet succeeded in creating such a situation. Convincing the governments is of secondary importance, because it is the popular spirit that dictates them. The first task therefore should be to educate and prepare the people to realise that war will never solve such crises. The Delhi–Peking March did not have popular support in India. It does not imply that the Delhi–Peking March had no impact whatsoever.

Eventually, the tension between India and China eased for the time being. The Chinese withdrew their forces from the war front, but the crisis continued for a long time. The two countries have yet to come to any understanding on this issue.

### **Emergency Laws in West Germany**

In October 1962 the federal government of West Germany passed on to parliament an emergency law drafted by the Ministry of Interior. Common citizens in Germany were not given any information about these proposals, which, if implemented, would completely alter their lives. This scheme of *peacetime war preparations* and the militarisation of the nation, including changes to the constitution, would have given unlimited power to the government.

The German peace movement was strongly opposed to the proposed law. Two of the three Sections of WRI, IdK and DFG, were planning to organise a large-scale demonstration in Bonn on June 22, 1962. They were hoping to receive full support from the active peace movement all

over the world. Herbert Günneberg, WRI Council member from Essen, informed the Executive Committee meeting held on October 5–6, 1963 that the introduction of the laws had been postponed. The Committee, however, decided that a strong opposition, as the German Sections had also wished, should be mounted. The WRI headquarters would keep the peace movement informed about it when the German government decided the date of the introduction of the bill.<sup>12</sup>

On Saturday December 5, 1964, a protest march against multilateral force and emergency laws was organised in Bonn. About 2,000 demonstrators took part. They also held a meeting in which the federal chairman of the Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner, a Section of the WRI, spoke. One of the demands of the protesters was the dismissal of the minister of interior. They agreed to a declaration addressed to embassies of NATO countries. Delegations went to the embassies of Denmark, France and Luxembourg and handed over the declaration to the embassy officials; the Icelandic ambassador received the declaration personally. Several letters were received from Germany and other countries.

With the co-operation of other peace movements the WRI and the ICDP organised demonstrations and pickets outside German embassies in Britain, Denmark and France. A press conference was also held with 12 speakers, half of them representing the World Council of Peace and half the ICDP, including Fenner Brockway from Britain.

The WRI received a letter dated May 23, 1965 from Herbert Günneberg:

The German problem is urgent. Please help us against the Emergency Laws. Here are some information and some proposals:

**I. The present situation is highly dangerous because:**

- (1) Representatives of the German General Staff have said the Emergency Laws are the next urgent steps to build up the German military forces. They want them passed through the Bundestag very quickly.
- (2) Secret negotiations have taken place between the leaders of the three political parties in the Bundestag to reach a compromise agreement for the first passing of the Emergency Laws as early as possible before the General Election on 19th Sept. They met on 11th, 18th and 21st May and will meet again on 25th May.

I am informed that Socialist party is going to agree with the proposals of the Christian Democratic Party concerning the Emergency Constitution Law if the Christian Democrats guarantee to give them seats in a Coalition Government after the Election.

An unknown number of members of the Social Democratic Party, especially representatives of the Trade Unions, are not in agreement with this policy, but it is probable that in spite of this the SPD leaders will continue with their plans because:

- (a) they do not wish to bear sole responsibility for the coming revision of German foreign policy and therefore do not wish, should they win the Election, to govern alone,
- (b) they want to participate in the government – for the first time since the days of the Weimar republic in which they are still said to have failed, whether they win the Election or not.

The small group of leaders of all parties who do not heed or do not care for the wishes of their party members is the very group which would operate the Emergency Laws in the event of an emergency. The people have not been consulted and will not be consulted. Everything is secret. A new dictatorship is

going to arise, if the strong man is at hand – and I am sure he will be – in a very legal, secret and surprising manner. Europe will rub their eyes and say ‘I did not know that’. But then it will be too late.

- (c) Trade Unionists are against the Emergency Laws, because the fundamental right to strike will be abolished or at least restricted to certain wage question. . . .
- (3) The meeting of the political party leaders on 21st May was attended by the Inspector General of the Armed Forces but not by representatives of the Trade Unions.

## **II What is being done here.**

- (1) Professor Hein Maus, who took the initiative in the appeal of 215 University professors for action against the Emergency Laws, especially on the part of the Trade Unions, said in a press statement on 14th May: At the present time everything is in a balance. Any strengthening of public enlightenment could turn the scale.
- (2) On 23rd May there will be pickets at the meeting at Gelsenkirchen, where Willy Brandt, leader of the Social Democratic Party, is to address the district party conference. The pickets will remind the Socialist Party and its leader of their responsibility to maintain democracy in Western Germany.
- (3) On 26th May at 7.30 p.m. there will be a demonstration in the Berliner Platz in Herne by the Easter March West followed by a torchlight procession.
- (4) On 28th May at 4.30 p.m. the IdK (German Section of WRI) and the Easter March will organise a picket in Kettwigerstrasse, Essen.
- (5) On 30th May there will be a congress of student organisation Bonn University at 11 a.m. with a public meeting at 6.30 p.m.

In this part of his letter Herbert Günneberg suggested what the people of other countries could do to help the German situation:

- 1 Inform the public by press, radio and television about
    - a the character of the German Emergency Laws as originally published, but in which some changes have been made secretly.
    - b the political struggle in West Germany which will face central Europe with an entirely new situation.
  - 2 Demonstrations in front of German Embassies.
  - 3 Delegations to German Ambassadors requesting information on the European significance of the German Emergency Laws. Such delegations should include experts able to discuss with the Ambassador and his experts. The interview should be published, reported and discussed.
  - 4 Inquiries by Labour politicians to the German Social Democratic Party about its policy on the Emergency Laws.
  - 5 Support by Trade Unions for the protests of German Trade Unionists.
  - 6 Letters to the Press giving information on the situation.
- The German Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament will organise a national demonstration in Bonn when the laws come before Parliament.<sup>13</sup>

The second reading of the emergency laws was due on June 16, 1965. It was not known when the final reading would be. WRI suggested that its affiliated bodies should send letters and telegrams to the Federal German Government and its representatives in their countries and

also organise demonstrations in front of German embassies. The WRI sent the following letter to Chancellor Erhard on June 9, 1965:

We are alarmed and distressed by reports reaching us of the plan to enact some of the proposed Emergency Laws, even before the German Federal Elections which are due in September. We feel that in a matter of such vital importance the German people should have the opportunity of expressing their opinion.

You may say this is an internal German matter, but the consequences of the enactment of the Emergency Laws are far from being that. There is outside Germany widespread fear that this military preparation may easily lead to a state of affairs in which a minor incident may develop into a European and then a world war which civilization could hardly hope to survive. There is widespread belief that these Emergency Laws are not really needed for the security of the German people – which is not at the present time threatened from any visible quarter – but in order to strengthen the military elements within the Federal Republic. You may well understand the fear that this arouses among the peoples of all those countries which have suffered the effects of two World Wars in one half century, wars in which Germany played a leading part and which involved terrible suffering for German people also.

We therefore appeal to you and the German Government to think again before enacting laws which may have disastrous consequences for Germany and the whole world.<sup>14</sup>

The International prepared a pamphlet about the German emergency laws for worldwide distribution. In the introduction of the pamphlet Harold Bing wrote:

All informed peace-lovers in the Federal German Republic and all those concerned for the defence of democratic and human rights are alarmed at the plans of their government to introduce a change in the basic constitution which will give the government greatly increased powers of almost dictatorial character and a series of emergency laws which, when brought into operation, would establish a totalitarian regime.

Too little is known of the nature of these plans, both inside and outside Germany, partly because their publication, by accident or design, occurred at a time when public opinion was diverted by such events as the Cuba crisis and the 'Spiegel' affair and because the politicians have concealed their real intention by talking about natural emergencies, such as floods, for which advance planning of relief measures was desirable and little of the military and political situations with which they were primarily concerned. Moreover the legal jargon in which they are wrapped up makes them almost incomprehensible to the man in the street.

The French Emergency Code

It is true also that an emergency code has recently been introduced in France. If in France, why not in Germany? What is the difference? The difference lies in two directions:

The French people are much more individualistic than the Germans; much less obedient to government authority. They have a genius for evading and resisting laws to which they object. In Germany there is a tradition of obedience to authority which it is very hard for the individual to resist, as the history of the Hitler period shows, and therefore dictatorial powers in the hands of a German government constitute a greater threat to liberty.

Germany is a divided country and the focal point of the Cold War. The frontier between East and West runs through Germany. Any increased militarisation of either part of Germany, whether psychological or material – and that is what the Emergency Code involves – therefore heightens international tension and increases the danger of World War. To some extent the French Emergency Code (though objectionable in itself) can be regarded as primarily a French matter, though with international implications. The German code is at once a matter of international importance and the fact that West Germany is more closely wedded to the USA and NATO than is the France of De Gaulle is an additional danger in the situation.<sup>15</sup>

How serious the German government was about the enforcement of these laws could be understood by the news that was being published in the German press. Watch units of some of the big industrial concerns had been armed. The shop stewards of the state-owned Hibernia AG had received the resolution of its executive that at the head of administration was going to be an office which would deal with questions of civil protection. The following were to be its special tasks: To work out directions for plans of self-defence and to assist the workshops to do the same. To participate in the preparation of measures of self-defence. To work out proposals for the formation and training of self-defence units for factories. And preparation of training, meetings for giving information, etc. The *WRI Newsletter* 59, dated September 29, 1967 reported:

The trade-union of the miners declared in a circular that the participation in these preparations can be refused as the enforcement of the Self-Defence Law had been postponed for two years because of '*financial reasons*'.

Federation of German Trade-Unions in Hesse is planning on November 17 a Mass Rally against the Emergency Laws in Frankfurt. The Campaign for Disarmament is organising a special week against the Emergency Laws in preparation for the Rally the days before the 17th. There will be activities in Kassel, Marburg, Giesssen, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Offenbach, Russelesheim, Hanau, Darmstad and Langen.

Enforcement of three of the Laws was postponed in the end of 1965. At that time it was announced to be so with a view to 'balancing the budget for the next two years'.<sup>16</sup>

Nils C. Nagel of *Courage*, the Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner monthly, in its December 1965 issue had stated that "the postponement was more likely due to the quarrels between groups within the two political parties".<sup>17</sup> Even more likely was the realisation of the government of the scale of public opposition to the idea of introducing emergency laws. The government could not implement its plans thanks to several factors; most likely it was on account of the popular opposition organised by several pacifist groups nationally and internationally.

### **India–Pakistan war**

Once India and Pakistan became two separate independent nations, they could not live in peace with each other. However, it is important to know that the masses of people do not feel so hostile to each other as their governments suggest. The "war" is not between the peoples of the two countries, it is between the two States. Despite several agreements and negotiations the major issue has been Kashmir, once considered the Switzerland of India. At the time of partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 Kashmir had opted to be a part of India. The rulers of

the State of Kashmir, who had always been of Hindu religion, opted for becoming a part of India. By traditions and laws this was taken as the final arrangement.

The majority of the population in Kashmir being Muslim, Pakistan did not accept that arrangement. It insisted that before taking any decision the opinion of the Kashmiris should have been sought and continued questioning Kashmir's being part of India. A few years later Pakistan invaded Kashmir. The conflict reached a stalemate with the *Line of Control*, which divided Kashmir into two parts – one being *Pakistan-occupied Kashmir*.

In 1958 Pakistan had a military coup and Ayub Khan became the dictator. He sought to resolve the crisis between the two countries by military means.

The first Indo–Pakistan war was fought in the Ran of Kachchh in North Gujrat in April 1965 and seemed to be heading for a victory of Pakistan over India. The war made the life of the whole of the north-west of India tense because of the danger of its spreading. Fortunately the prime ministers of the commonwealth countries with the United Nations managed to bring a halt to the fighting. But Pakistan again launched another attack on the Kashmir frontier calling it Operation Grand Slam. Lal Bahadur Shastri had just become the prime minister of India after Nehru's death. He was invited to Tashkent by the USSR which was acting as mediator between the belligerent countries. They reached an interim agreement to stop the war.

The whole episode was naturally of great concern for the pacifist movement. Britain had a large population of Indians and Pakistanis. The Secretariat of the WRI felt deeply concerned about the crisis. WRI member Janaki Prasad wrote a letter to the press with the spirit of conciliation and a suggestion that the two communities in Britain hold a meeting and make a plea for mutual understanding. A meeting took place in London between Pakistanis and Indians. They issued a statement which was printed as a leaflet in three languages, Urdu, Hindi and English and distributed it widely.

### **The Leaflet**

#### **What will this war mean to our people?**

Loss of life and property on both sides and economic chaos. Innocent people who do not understand what the war is all about will suffer most.

For the past few years Pakistan has been spending 60 to 80% of her annual budget on defence. Her development programmes have been severely curtailed. In her eastern wing Pakistan has the world's poorest peasants living in a limbo between life and death.

In India more than 350 million Indians earn less than 11d. a day according to an all-India household survey. One hundred million Indians earn less than 8.5d. a day, 10 million a fraction over 4d. Yet every bullet fired would pay to keep a child for a week. Every rifle used would pay for the cost of a well, which would irrigate 3–10 acres of land.

Then there is a danger of communal bloodshed. Ten million Hindus live in Pakistan; 50 million Muslims live in India. Neither government could control the situation if communal rioting began.

#### **Why have we come to this state of tension and mutual distrust?**

*Religion?* Agreed that there are differences, which originated in our history, but is it not true that the vested interests have always used, and still use, religion as a weapon to maintain their domination over people. It is the power structure which is responsible for blowing up these differences. Have we forgotten the British policy of 'Divide and Rule'?

*Political boundaries?* Yes, there are disputes not yet solved but is it right to solve them by the primitive method of 'might is right'? Few disputes have ever been solved by war in such a way as to satisfy all parties.

### **What must we do?**

Use sane, peaceful methods to solve problems concerning minorities, political boundaries and disputed areas. Build real democracies in our own countries, so that people can be active in influencing their respective governments to use peaceful methods. Use all the available forces to reconstruct our countries, economically and culturally, presenting to the world a new dynamics of corporate living.

### **We urge**

Indians and Pakistanis to pledge that they will never use force or the threat of force in dealing with disputes.

That leaders of public opinion in India, Pakistan and Kashmir be brought together for round table negotiations.

We the undersigned, endorse the statement in this leaflet.

Chowdry Akbar Khan (Pakistan); C. S. Salaria (India); Fazle Lohani (Pakistan); Hira Mukherjee; Om Sharma; P. Lal (India); Rashid Karapiet and S. Rafi Irtizaali (Pakistan).

People interested in the ideas expressed in this leaflet should write to 197 Kings Cross, London WC 1.

Whatever the long-term impact this action had on the two communities in London, there is no doubt it prompted a calmer atmosphere between the two communities.

## **WRI–WCP Meeting at Ostend**

The World Council of Peace observers who had attended the Stavanger Conference, had responded positively to the Stavanger statement about co-operation between the two organisations. It was the result of the discussions that took place between the WCP observers and some of the WRI delegates in a meeting held in Stavanger at the time of the Triennial Conference. The Secretariat of the WCP wrote to the WRI on October 11, 1963 saying that they welcomed the statement. They also suggested that a joint meeting between representatives of the WRI Council and the Presidential Committee of the WCP be organised 'for the purpose of clarifying common points of view'. The WRI Executive Committee accepted the suggestion and decided that proper preparations should be made and documents giving policy statements be exchanged between the two organisations before the meeting took place.

A small commission was set up to prepare the policy statement for the meeting. The statement was sent to the WCP and the WRI Council and all the WRI Sections. During the process of preparing the statement Sections and other individuals were consulted, especially the German East–West commission of DFG, one of the WRI Sections in Germany. Some of the comments were positive; a few had some doubts about the proposal. For instance the chairman of the German commission of the DFG, Dr Friedrich Müller said:



The positions of the two partners in the debate are different in that the policy of the World Council of Peace organisations in all essential points is in agreement with the policies of their Governments, whereas the pacifist organisations in Western countries find themselves in a more or less pronounced opposition to the tendencies of their Governments. . . . There is also a certain fundamental contrast between the material attitudes in so far as the pacifist organisations in the West condemn war under any condition and without any exception, whereas the Peace Councils recognise the justification of certain forms of war, such as Civil War against Fascist despotism, or war of liberation against imperialism. All Peace Councils share the opinion that the general success of socialism, and even of communism, is an irrevocable prerequisite to the final removal of war, whereas the opinions on our side in this respect vary widely, and the majority will probably believe that any synthesis of the economic systems wrestling with each other is practicable and worth striving for. . . .  
. . . However, the WRI should be careful not to let itself be drawn-in by the WCP for the support of specifically communist tendencies, since the Peace Councils have occasionally the tendency to try to persuade their western partners to join in a pronounced eastern policy. In such cases it is necessary to persist in the basic pacifist attitude.<sup>18</sup>

Representatives of the War Resisters' International and the World Council of Peace met in Ostend on October 3–4, 1964 and after a comprehensive discussion reached conclusions which are embodied in the following working document:<sup>19</sup>

#### **Multilateral Force**

An immediate task of the peace movement is to oppose the proposed NATO Multilateral Force, and efforts should be concentrated on this up to 15th December when the NATO Council is to meet in Paris to decide on this proposal. In this campaign we should seek the co-operation of all peace movements and other interested organisations. While our reasons for opposition to MLF may differ, we are agreed that it is a matter of the greatest urgency. We therefore ask our sections and associated bodies to take whatever action is possible.

The prevention of MLF is not the end but part of a campaign to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to facilitate disengagement in Europe, to further the relaxation of international tension and thus make possible the eventual dissolution of the military blocs.

#### **[U. N.] International Co-operation Year**

Regarding the International Co-operation Year of the United Nations, which we support, we think it desirable to remind all member nations of their obligations under Article 2 of the Charter not to resort to force or the threat of force in the relations between States and of the need to implement the resolution of the General Assembly calling for the final elimination of colonialism and respect for the principles of independence and non-intervention in one another's internal affairs. Within this context we recommend the following measures:

- 1) Extension of the Test Ban Treaty to cover all Tests and nations.
- 2) The establishment of de-nuclearised areas.
- 3) A substantial percentage cut in arms expenditure, the saving to be devoted to economic reconversion and the assistance of developing countries.

- 4) The invitation of the People's Republic of China to occupy its rightful place in the United Nations.

We also recommend the United Nations to study the possibility of establishing an international service corps.

We recommend to peace organisations the following activities during the International Co-operation Year:

- 1) The Danube Project – a suggested river trip on the Danube for several hundred young people from all European countries for mutual understanding and the study of problems of international co-operation and peace;
- 2) The strengthening and extension of Marches at Easter with each country free to choose its appropriate themes including, it is hoped, certain common ones, and the exchange of speakers between countries of the East and West.

### **Conscientious objection**

The representatives of the WCP agreed to ask the Peace Council of the German Democratic Republic to send to other national Peace Committees details of the provision for alternative service for conscientious objectors in the German Democratic Republic. They agreed to suggest to their associated bodies that serious consideration be given to the problems of conscientious objection and pacifist groups.

It was agreed to recommend the widest possible participation in Prisoners of Peace Day (1st December) and to make known the WRI's Study Work Camp to take place in Italy in the summer of 1965.

### **Areas of co-operation**

The meeting welcomed the idea of Study Conference on "Education for a World Without War" which it was hoped could be held in Poland in 1966 under the sponsorship of the WRI, WCP and other international organisations.

The WRI plan to hold a World Conference on Nonviolence in 1966 was welcomed and the WCP representatives agreed to assist with contacts and, if possible participation.

The WCP representatives announced the intention of the WCP to hold a World Congress in 1965 and expressed the hope that the WRI would be able to send representatives.

It was agreed that further attention should be given to the exchange of information, periodicals and articles.

All present found the discussions fruitful in exploring areas of agreement and differences in our common struggle for peace and agreed that such creative dialogue and consultations should continue and might usefully be extended to other international peace organisations.<sup>20</sup>

Participants of the meeting were, from the WCP side: Walter Diehl, WCP Secretary; Prof. Nikolai Matkovsky; Stanislaw Trepczynski, Member of the Presidential Committee of the Polish Peace Committee; Andrew L. Walker, personal assistant to Prof. J. D. Bernal, Chairman WCP; Madame Rosy Holender, Gen. Secretary of the Belgian Union for the Defence of Peace and Martin Hall, member of the Editorial Board of the Bulletin of the WCP; and from the WRI side: Harold Bing, Chairman; Devi Prasad, General Secretary; Michael Randle and Jean van Lierde, Council Members; David McReynolds, Field Secretary of the WRI, USA and Herbert Stubenrauch, Chairman of Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, W. Germany.

## Nonviolent revolution needs training in nonviolence

### The first conference on training

In 1960 WRI had taken the initiative in setting up the World Peace Brigade (WPB) and later saw that it started functioning. But that alone was not sufficient to develop the instrumentality for achieving pacifist objectives.

The Introduction to a booklet *Training in Nonviolence*<sup>21</sup> published in 1965 stated that the WPB as a movement had not yet developed into a force capable of influencing situations. One of the reasons behind this fact was that too little importance had been attached to the training of a cadre equipped with the necessary tools – skills, attitude, knowledge etc. Much of the nonviolent action in the past had been taken under the leadership of personalities like Gandhi and Martin Luther King who by virtue of their own qualities and self-training were capable of ‘leading’. It was not possible to recreate leadership of that type. The accumulated experience was sufficient for providing us with active principles for planning and conducting a comprehensive training programme in nonviolence. The booklet went on to say:

The initial task before us is not of drawing up a “blue print” of a worldwide non-violence training programme. What we should do now is to explore the different training possibilities and make practical suggestions for developing the work during the coming months and years. We should try to investigate how non-violence works in different situations, on different planes and through different media. For instance, we should analyse the ways in which non-violence works in:

a) spreading of correct information, b) working of inquiry commissions, c) discussions and dialogues between opposing groups, d) mediatory and conciliatory efforts by a third party, e) the mere presence of a third party which is neutral, f) protest actions, g) civil disobedience and fasts, etc.

There are many different institutions engaged in resolving conflicts between opposing forces. Although they might not be using non-violence as such as an instrument for conflict resolution there could be a considerable degree of non-violence – or “un-violence” if you like – involved in the process. A study of the working of the following institutions in the field of conflict resolution would be of special value:

- a. Local and national governments;
- b. United Nations and other similar agencies working on governmental plane;
- c. non-governmental and voluntary organisations;
- d. trade unions;
- e. churches and other religious institutions etc.

A study made on the above lines would help us as non-violent direct activists to co-ordinate the work of different forces and to find out how we can make use of these forces in the interests of non-violent conflict resolution. Eventually this would be of great value to the non-violent training programme.

While we wish to see fully fledged non-violence training institutions in every country, we should not ignore the fact that there are already people imparting training in non-violence in their own way and with whatever resources available. . . . There are communities like L’Arc in South of France, Danilo Dolci’s centre in Sicily. Only after having made a survey of the already existing centres and projects in the offing, efforts ought to be made to do co-ordination work and raising the standard of training.<sup>22</sup>

The International organised the first-ever international study conference on the theme of Training in Nonviolence in August 1965 in Perugia, Italy. Workers from the American civil rights movement and the Gandhian movement in India were among the 50 participants, representing organisations in 10 countries. The conference heard reports on the training work being undertaken in various countries; it discussed how to develop this work and co-ordinate it internationally. After lengthy discussions in committees the conference adopted a report describing the content of nonviolent training, outlining the requirements for setting up training centres, and putting forward proposals for international co-ordination.

A delegate described the conference as follows:

Only a few people at the Conference had any direct experience of training, and the rest of us were fortunate in being able to learn from them. We had one practical session in which George Lakey, author of *A Manual for Direct Action*, took us through a couple of 'role-playing' scenarios. Volunteers took the parts of policemen, pickets and the rent refusers in one scene, and sit-in demonstrators, waitresses and lunch-counter customers in another; their acting out of the picket line and sit-in situations led to a more lively discussion of the tactics and principles of non-violence than anything else in the Conference.

The theme which ran through the Conference, was that training (or education, as some people preferred to call it) was necessary if non-violence was not to be thought of as faith or dogma. Non-violent agitators could work more effectively if they were prepared to learn from past experience, by analysing their own and other people's campaigns; by studying the theory of non-violence; and by concentrating their experience by practical application in new situations. The factors involved in this kind of training ranged from learning how to communicate with other people and understand their point of view, through training for endurance (hunger, cold, violence), to learning how to become free from fear and how to restrain aggressive feelings in a constructive way.

At the back of our minds was the feeling that this was the beginning of something important, which could lead to the growth of a new world peace brigade, with a more solidly based structure than the last one. That this is of importance can hardly be doubted, if you consider the peace movement's total paralysis in face of the current Rhodesia crisis, and its likely confusion when the South African holocaust eventually comes. Signs of encouragement are few; the WRI's initiative in holding this Conference, and in deciding to undertake the international co-ordination of training work, is one. Having taken the initiative, the WRI deserves to be backed up.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the conference its conclusions were prepared for wide distribution. The titles and sub-titles of the findings of the WRI study conference on Training in Nonviolence were:

#### Content of Training

##### **Part I**

1. Recruitment of Trainees
2. Location of Training Centre
3. General and Specific Training
4. Methods of Training
5. Assessment
6. Psychological Aspects of Training
7. Kind of Discipline in a training centre, individual and collective

## **Part II**

Centres for Nonviolence  
Setting up such Peace Centres  
Setting up of Training Institute

## **Part III**

International Co-ordination of Training Work  
Work of the Committee.<sup>24</sup>

### **Education for a World without War – study conference in Poland 1966**

Although the possibility of holding a WRI study conference in Poland had been under discussion since 1962 it was only at the Stavanger Triennial (1963) that Stanislaw Trepczynski, who had represented the Polish Peace Committee, gave assurance that their committee might help in organising it. Eventually the decision was taken at the joint meeting of WRI and WCP held at Ostend. The topic, Education for a World without War, was an outcome of that meeting where it was felt that education was of crucial importance if a world without war was to be created.

The conference was sponsored jointly by the WRI and the WCP and hosted by the Polish Peace Committee. Fifty-nine people from 18 countries participated; they ranged from academicians, heads of colleges, school teachers, nursery workers and active members of peace organisations. The main topic was divided into three sections: Early years, School years and The Education of the Educators. After the major speeches participants worked in three commissions, which produced their independent reports.

Among the participants many were equipped with a good degree of practical experience and quite a few, nearly all of them from non-communist countries, had challenged the prevailing systems of education in their countries. Bram van der Lek from the Netherlands, a close associate of Kees Boeke, asked why most children never become full-grown people. He also talked about the importance of harmonious development of a child's personality for education in the spirit of peace.

Radhakrishna was a senior member of the team of educators experimenting with the educational institute founded by Mahatma Gandhi in Sevagram (India). He began by asking if there can be education worth its name for anything but peace? He said that education must provide adequate social experience to enable children to conduct themselves as members of a community, appreciative of divergences of faith and viewpoint, of the freedom and responsibility of the individual as well as of co-operative endeavour, and of joint responsibility and harmonious relationships.

While talking about the role of teachers in education for peace Bogdan Suchodolski, Polish professor of pedagogy, talked about three great new processes in the world: the abolition of the class system; an unprecedented rate of technical and scientific progress which put at man's disposal mighty power resources, and introduced far-reaching automation; and liberation of the peoples of Asia and Africa. He stressed the importance of patriotism and said that he did not mean to deprecate the significance of education for peace, but that without giving greatest importance to the tasks dictated by the present era, education would fall short of its purpose.

As was expected, all delegates from East European countries were official representatives of government education departments or other institutions occupying important posts. Participants from other countries, however, came from an extremely wide range of educational expe-

rience and political convictions. This kind of difference between the backgrounds of participant sometimes caused frustration among those who wanted the discussions to remain highly specialised. On the other hand the wide range of views certainly helped the conference go into problems which ordinarily many educationists tend to ignore. One such issue for instance was *obedience* and the task of education to prepare the individual to face situations where obedience could be disastrous and immoral. Obviously opinions differed widely on such matters.

On the question of patriotism too the range of opinion was extensive. The major difference was ideological, though semantic difficulties added to the problem. Despite the basic differences the atmosphere of the conference was remarkably friendly and creative. Everybody was eager to understand the other's viewpoint. Another lesson to learn from this conference was that honest cordiality based on caution about hurting anybody's inner feelings pays in the long run. It showed that many such occasions need to be created to bring about the understanding for which the pacifist spirit had been looking for.

One delegate from an East European country said to me: 'I am hearing these ideas (on nonviolence and nonviolent action) for the first time and I find them very interesting. You should give us some time to think them over. We should meet more often to understand each other. I am sure we can get much closer.'<sup>25</sup>

The following paragraphs are part of a joint communiqué issued on August 7, 1966 by the Secretaries of the WRI and the WCP:

The conference has resulted in the establishment of close contacts between different organisations and individuals working in the sphere of education and helped the participants to understand the educational experiences and problems connected with international understanding and personal values. It was agreed that teachers have a vital contribution to make to peace through specific educational and social responsibilities.

The participants considered that the conference was a valuable beginning to the work, and that the two organisations should consider the best way in which the work could be developed, further contacts established and more information exchanged. It was felt that a working group should be established to promote these aims.<sup>26</sup>

The Council meeting held prior to the study conference had already discussed the details of the practical side of the conference. Both the organisations had agreed on the agenda and the number of participants to be expected (65) of which a maximum of 25 should be from the East European countries. At the meeting in Warsaw (February 1966) representatives of the WRI and the WCP expressed the view that 'if we want to build a peaceful world and make practical suggestions in regard to the Study Conference there should be an honest effort to discover some fundamental principles on which education should be based.'<sup>27</sup>

## The Rome Triennial – 1966

This was the first Triennial Conference of the WRI to adopt a specific Conference theme. It was Nonviolence and Politics. The conference was divided into two parts; one for the major theme and the other as a 'business session'. Previous Triennials were mainly for reviewing the work done in the previous three years, planning for the coming three years, along with dealing

with the current international situation and its relevance to the work of the International.

The Conference was held in Domus Pacis in Rome on April 7–12. Joan Baez, the famous US singer, gave the Conference added colour and strength. Her opening song talked of a heaven. Introducing the song she said:

In this song I'll sing, it mentions heaven, and to me when I sing the song I use the word "heaven" not as something for another life but as something that with a tremendous amount of effort at times we can reach while we are still here in this life on this earth. I don't think it is something that is easily attained. I do think it is something which involves the way you choose to live your life. I have chosen to live my life as nonviolently as I can because I think it is the only way that's decent, the only way that's human and, now especially, the only way left that is practical.<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of his inaugural speech, entitled Vision of a New Society, Arthur Waskow of the Institute of Policy Studies, Washington announced that he would put before the Conference neither a utopia nor a prediction. "I am going to make what may be called possidiction; I am going to suggest what a *possible* world might be, in the sense that there is a reasonable chance we could nurture seeds that already show signs of life in our society today, to flower into the new society of, say, 1999. Call it the society of Creative Disorder."<sup>29</sup>

Arthur Waskow talked of "three most important seeds of change in our own society". The first was "the slow realisation of governments that war is becoming irrelevant to the pursuit of political and other interests, and the slow search for a way of carrying on international conflict that will be *an extension of war by other means*". The second was the "growing demand on the part of those in every country who have been excluded from politics for a share in making the decisions that affect their lives, and the slow invention of what might be called *atechnology of revolution or rebellion*, a set of ways for forcing the acceptance of the excluded into the body politic. And the third, the emergence in the developed countries of a large *new class* which owns no property in the old sense but does own its education, which is not needed to carry on or even to manage the tasks of automated production, which finds itself free to get involved in politics and social change, and which increasingly lives a considerable part of its life outside the boundaries of any one country, either literally or in its access to ideas and information and styles of living."

John Morris from Britain said that the parliamentary system of government was essentially an authoritarian government. It was invented in Great Britain and forced upon the rest of the world. He also said that even the most revolutionary movements unconsciously absorb the features of those they oppose. Even the peace movements, which oppose power and authority, are caught up in the conventional power structure.

Vo Van Ai of Vietnam explained the 'Buddhist concept of nonviolence and the crisis of Vietnam' and the way Vietnamese Buddhists were struggling to resolve it. Jose Smole of the Yugoslav League of Peace, Independence and Equality of Peoples talked of Yugoslavia's concept, which should lead the future towards direct democracy. He believed that the solution of their problems lies not in the dilemma between a multi-party system or a one-party system. The real answer is a partyless system in which the people are grouped in various organisations which do not have the characteristics of the classical type of parties but are the organisations through which the will of the people was channelled.

Vimala Thakar, a colleague of Vinoba Bhave, described the new concept of party-less democracy being developed in India, mainly through the Sarvodaya movement. She also called

it *participatory democracy*. Vimala Thakar told the conference that the Western concept of democracy was not acceptable to Asia and Africa. It had failed to bring good to those countries. In the pursuit of finding new patterns these countries were passing through great turmoil.

WRI Chairman designate, Michael Randle, chaired the session on Nonviolence and Social Change, in which Danilo Dolci, the retiring Vice-Chairman of the WRI, spoke followed by John Lewis, the Chairman on the Students' Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) of USA who described the nonviolent revolution SNCC was carrying out in the deep South. Referring to his own experience of a camp in Cyprus, Malvern Lumsden of the Oslo Research Institute talked about the potential of work camps in conflict-stricken areas. The Conference heard about the work of the study centre run by Danilo Dolci, who had been helping the Sicilian population against the Mafia menace, to develop a deeper awareness of the problem and to gain the courage to fight against it.

In Scotland an experiment in common ownership and management of factories was being conducted, known as 'Factory for Peace'. Tom McAlpine, the director, in describing his experiences said that through the Factory for Peace they were trying to build up a real industrial democracy.

The Conference adopted the following statement, called the Conference Summary:

In this Conference we have seen no widely opposing views, but we have observed tendencies to give different emphasis and different priorities to various aspects of resistance to war and to war making society. Some prefer to use more frequently words like 'pacifism' and 'war resistance'; others are more concerned with words like 'non-violence', while others again have put a greater emphasis on phrases like 'direct democracy', 'decentralisation' etc. We do not think these tendencies are antagonistic, but they are different. In this last group we have noted two main responses: those who think they can see the possibility of real present action, as for example, on very different scales, in Yugoslavia and the Factory for Peace in Scotland; and those who do not see how to start.

This third stream of thought has been more prominent in this conference than previously. Since the last Triennial Conference we have become aware that 1962 was a turning point. From 1945 the Great Powers were preparing for an atomic World War III and we had to limit ourselves to resisting the immediate war threat. Now that the form of this danger has changed we are able to concentrate more on changing the nature of war-making society, and helping to save the new countries from inheriting the evils of the old.

These concepts are new and exciting. Because they are new it is our thinking that is primitive and underdeveloped. What is important is that many of us from totally different societies and backgrounds have independently reached converging conclusions. The basic responsibility for decision must lie with small communities, co-ordinated by leaders rather than by people who issue orders. Orders and commanders are necessary for armies and wars; a peaceful society does not need them.

We must now select a few of the ideas which have emerged from this discussion:

- many people find it hard at first to take on responsibility.
- these concepts will spread only by example.
- it is therefore of first importance that in our own organisations we should work out a responsible democracy in finer details.
- we have been warned of the Italian post-war experience when the need for quick



results prevented the development of the genuinely democratic forms which arose spontaneously; and this is today a major problem in the developing countries.

- perhaps the most immediate problem is what we mean by leadership. A secretary becomes indispensable and because he is indispensable alternatives do not develop. Paternalism, even if benevolent, must be prevented. It has been suggested that one way to avoid this is rotation of office.

The same principles apply to the conduct of relations between societies. Thus the factors leading to war are rested on two fronts, both *within* societies and *between* them.

We have encountered a feeling that we could perhaps with advantage have heard more about the detailed problems of leadership and organization in the more successful undertakings, particularly Students' Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee, the Yugoslav experience, the Factory for Peace in Scotland, the Dutch Pacifist Socialist Party, the Scandinavian Folk Socialist Parties, developments in Sicily, etc. This is particularly important for those in other countries, because the most difficult part of any such enterprise is to *start* it.

We are very much impressed by the report of the Work Camp in Cyprus which brought together members of the Greek and Turkish communities and it is felt that the WRI should take responsibility for a new type of work camp with similar objectives (starting with a pilot scheme first) in situations of conflict or near-violence. These work camps should have a more or less permanent staff drawn from various direct democracy movements around the world.

We feel that the discussion must continue. It is generally felt that at this stage publication and discussion of concrete experiences is the most important thing, a more useful form of development than establishing new organisations.<sup>30</sup>

The discussions on the theme Nonviolence and Politics, in the first part of the conference, provided a good basis for some serious thinking as to what the WRI should be doing in the coming years, particularly in view of the world situation. There was an awareness that these discussions could lead to an integrated approach to a new politics and new experiments to integrate theory and practice.

A small committee was set up to draw up a series of proposals to be considered at the Council Meeting for action. The Conference made the following recommendations for action (*War Resistance* 17, 2nd quarter 1966, p.11-12):

## **NATO**

WRI should explore ways of co-ordinating the activities of its Sections against NATO and putting forward to the public a clear alternative both to NATO and to independent national nuclear forces. This alternative should point to the importance of disbanding both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the urgency of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, thus creating atom free and eventually a totally disarmed Europe and a community of nations between West and East Europe. Steps towards disarmament and non-alignment in Europe should be seen in the context of the problems of world disarmament and peace. It should be presented as a part of the world struggle for disarmament and a new political and social order.

To this end the WRI should seek contact with the Peace Committees and other groups in Eastern Europe. It was suggested that WRI Sections should dramatise opposition to NATO by organising resistance to any attempt to establish the NATO headquarters in another country. The WRI should organise a simulated or 'mock' NATO conference with representatives from

all NATO countries to discuss the problems of disbanding NATO and put forward the kind of proposals the WRI would wish the real NATO conference to debate in 1969.

### **International Peacemaking**

WRI should try to look for nonviolent methods for resolving tension in crisis situations. It was suggested that the work camp organised last year in Cyprus, described by Malvern Lumsden provided for a model for a possible WRI project. The WRI should give careful consideration to experimental projects possibly in either the Dominican Republic or in Rhodesia.

### **Conscientious Objection**

After having heard of the difficulties of the Swiss and Italian Sections in their struggle to ensure the rights of COs, the WRI urged all its Sections to extend assistance to Sections still engaged in this kind of struggle. From its inception the WRI had been urging for the recognition of COs throughout the world. As the intensity and barbarism of militarism was increasing it was impressed by the new forms of resistance, e.g. burning draft cards, and other forms of civil disobedience. Although it regarded open resistance as socially and politically most useful, it supported every expression of individual resistance.

The WRI recommended the setting up of an International Commission on Conscription, which should go into all the questions connected with military and civil conscription, and the possibility of building up a worldwide campaign against it. The WRI was asked to compile a register of young people who would volunteer to offer one or two years of service in any part of the world including their own countries as alternative to Alternative Service.

### **Study-work Camps**

The WRI should continue organising study work camps on the lines of those already held in Hospental in Switzerland and Signa in Italy. The Council was asked to consider the possibilities of combining such camps with the proposals also made at the Conference for its annual conferences.

### **Organisation of WRI**

The Conference emphasised the desirability of decentralising the work of the WRI both to specialised committees and to national sections, in order to spread the work and financial load falling on the international office, and to involve many more individuals and groups in the international activities of the WRI. Such decentralisation could cover both the organisation of particular projects, and the preparation and distribution of literature and information.

One specific proposal for increasing the involvement of national and local sections in the international work of WRI was to appoint international secretaries for local Sections.

In his closing speech the retiring Chairman, Harold Bing, said:

In this Conference, however, we have not produced a blueprint for a new social order. We have not passed a series of resolutions expressing our views on many topics, as is so often done at Conferences of political parties and trade unions . . . The value of this Conference to my mind will lie not in particular decisions but in the thoughts provoked in all of us, in the new points of view discovered, in the strengthening of our fellowship and the inspiration for fresh endeavour.<sup>31</sup>

## Meeting of the International Council 1966

The meeting of the new International Council took place immediately after the Domus Pacis Triennial on April 13, 1966. After serving the WRI as Chairman for five terms Harold Bing retired and handed over the position to Michael Randle, who chaired his first meeting of the WRI Council.

The newly elected Council unanimously agreed to request Martin Niemöller to accept the post of Vice-Chairman in place of Danilo Dolci, who had wished to retire from the post. Harold Bing, Niels Mathiesen, Pietro Pinna and Tony Smythe were elected to the Executive Committee.

## The Vietnam War

Until the mid-1960s the majority of the US population was either ignorant of or indifferent to their government's behaviour in Vietnam. One of the reasons behind this was that the war had not yet made an impact on the day to day life of the people. A large majority of the population did not even know in which part of the world Vietnam was situated.<sup>32</sup>

The Chinese invaded Vietnam in 111 BC and ruled the country until they were thrown out in AD 939. But again they dominated the region until AD 1427. After that period the Vietnamese lived a fairly peaceful life until Christian missionaries went there from France. Minh Mang, then the emperor, became anxious about the likelihood of Vietnam taking to Christianity, which he considered to be morally evil. He thought that if that happened, they would lose their own culture. He started persecuting the missionaries, which prompted the French to retaliate. They sent their navy into Vietnamese ports. As a counter retaliation the Vietnamese emperor exterminated all Christians. As a result the French invaded the country in 1859. That was the beginning of Western colonialism in Vietnam.

In 1927 the Vietnamese started a struggle for independence from French rule. There was an unsuccessful coup. The French executed the leaders. Then emerged Ho Chi Minh as the new leader. As a cabin boy he had made his way to Paris. He was idealistic and anxious to help his people. He had studied Marx and Lenin. After returning to Vietnam Ho Chi Minh brought together all the groups working for their country's liberation. After a few initial failures he founded the Indochinese Communist Party.

While France was under German occupation during the Second World War, the Japanese took advantage and invaded Vietnam on March 9, 1945. Almost immediately after that the Vietnamese emperor, Bao Dai, declared independence of Vietnam from French rule. The Communist Party, now generally known as Ho Chi Minh's party, persuaded Bao Dai to abdicate. In return Bao Dai was made the supreme councillor to the premier.

After the end of the Second World War in early 1946 the French returned. Ho Chi Minh made an agreement with the French who recognised the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. However the French soon realised that under those arrangements they would not be able to further their own interests. They set up a separate illegal government with Bao Dai getting back his position as emperor. In the meantime some new groups had emerged, which did not want their country to become communist. Although they represented a very small proportion of the population, less than ten per cent, they had with them many wealthy people and old bureaucrats of the imperial court as well as half of the Christian community. They made Ngo Dinh Diem their leader.

When Diem understood that the French, under Charles de Gaulle's government, would not give him any anti-communist support he turned to the United States. The French then realised that it would be difficult for them to maintain their power and they withdrew from Vietnam. France called the Geneva Conference of 1954 and drew up an agreement aimed at achieving 'peace, independence, democracy and neutrality' in Vietnam.

Vietnam had already been divided into two independent countries: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The Geneva agreements formulated a democratic procedure to unify Vietnam through general elections. They provided for democratic freedoms to be guaranteed until the elections. If these agreements had been fully implemented Vietnam would have been united and become a free and peaceful country.

In 1954 Diem was studying 'American democracy' in the USA. He returned to South Vietnam and became the prime minister. He had the confidence of Eisenhower, who knew that Diem would safeguard American interests in the whole of south-east Asia. As soon as Diem became prime minister he introduced conscription and started waging war against those whom he considered communists, known as the Viet Cong. In the process he persecuted not only communists but also ordinary peasants, religious sects, Buddhists and even fellow Christians.

The National Liberation Front (NLF) was formed in December 1960. Roughly speaking its programme was to establish in South Vietnam a government with representatives of all social classes, nationalities, political parties and religions. The NLF itself had a Buddhist and a Catholic priest as its vice-presidents. But, despite the fact that Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam, discouraged the formation of the NLF, the NLF was termed as their stooge. The situation gradually got worse. In the name of freedom and security, murders and brutality were committed on a large scale throughout the country by the Diem regime and US soldiers. The only people who were for the South Vietnamese dictatorial government were the Americans. The US military was virtually fully in charge of the country. Their presence in Vietnam was against the decisions agreed by all the parties concerned.

In protest against the brutalisation of the population, Buddhist priest Thich Quang Duc and his brother set fire to themselves on June 11, 1963. Their self-immolation became known all over the world. This was not the only event of such serious protest made by the Vietnamese Buddhists.

The Americans started bombing North Vietnam on August 4, 1964. The US had not only remained with its forces in independent Vietnam against the wishes of the majority of people of the country, but had rapidly increased its forces and escalated military activities.<sup>33</sup>

News from Vietnam continued coming daily to emphasise senseless deaths, torture and the dictatorial nature of the US-backed Saigon government. Every day the war continued there was an increasing threat to world peace.

Some well known American citizens put out the following Declaration of Conscience:

BECAUSE the use of the military resources of the US in Vietnam and elsewhere suppresses the aspirations of the people for political independence and economic freedom;  
BECAUSE inhuman torture and senseless killing are being carried out by forces armed, uniformed, trained and financed by the US;  
BECAUSE we believe that all peoples of the earth, including both Americans and non-Americans, have an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the peaceful pursuit of happiness in their own way; and  
BECAUSE we think that positive steps must be taken to put an end to the threat of nuclear catastrophe and chemical or biological warfare, whether these result from acci-

dent or escalation –

WE HEREBY DECLARE our conscientious refusal to co-operate with the United States government in the prosecution of the war in Vietnam.

WE ENCOURAGE those who can conscientiously do so to refuse to serve in the armed forces and to ask for discharge if they are already in.

THOSE OF US who are subject to the draft ourselves declare our own intention to refuse to serve.

WE URGE OTHERS to refuse and refuse to take part in the manufacture or transportation of military equipment, or to work in the fields of military research and weapons development.

WE SHALL ENCOURAGE the development of other nonviolent acts, including acts which involve civil disobedience, in order to stop the flow of American soldiers and munitions to Vietnam.<sup>34</sup>

### **WRI's Response to American War in Vietnam**

The American war in Vietnam had escalated to a degree that caused the deepest concern among most of the organisations working for peace all over the world. The WRI Executive Committee meeting held in Dublin on May 16, 1965 asked its local and regional Sections to organise an intensive campaign during the week from May 23 to 30 against the war in Vietnam.

At its next meeting the Executive Committee reviewed the prevailing situation regarding the campaign. Although there was no immediate response from the three international bodies to which the Dublin proposals had been sent the response the world over had been very good. The International sent the following statement to the press:

There has been a widespread response to the call for demonstrations on Vietnam Day, October 16th.

Demonstrations in countries as far apart as Britain, New Zealand, Japan and Denmark are being planned.

An appeal for world action was made in May at the University of California teach-in, attended by 35,000 people, by the Vietnam Day Committee. Next Saturday the Committee will stage a 'Committee of 100' style civil disobedience campaign at the Oakland Army Terminal, America's major send-off port in California for men and material to Vietnam.

In London, the American singer Joan Baez will be supporting a mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

International support was planned in Dublin last August when an American delegate flew to Eire for a meeting of the WRI Council attended by representatives from India, Africa and many European countries.<sup>35</sup>

### **Memoranda on Vietnam situation**

The meeting of the WRI Council in Dublin, Ireland from July 28 to August 2, 1965 discussed the situation in Vietnam. In response to the request from the WRI Executive Committee, David McReynolds of the WRL, USA, submitted a memo, which, in essence, suggested the following:

- 1 All WRI Sections to call together peace organisations which are non-aligned, Trade

Unions with which we have good contacts, students groups, religious bodies that are concerned for the purpose of staging massive silent and nonviolent vigils at the various American Embassies. . . . The leadership of the demonstrations should be of an impeccable nature, so that the American government could not dismiss it as being communist-inspired.

- 2 We make every attempt in every country to get church groups within that country to correspond with the church groups in United States, to get trade union organisations to correspond with trade unions and student organisations to correspond with student organisations in the US. . . . It is to try to bring home as close to the American grass roots as possible the degree of opposition that much of the world feels towards American policies.
- 3 Send a delegation to Washington, D.C. to talk to President Johnson. It would make sense only if the delegation were of the highest level and formed in co-operation with the IFOR, ICDP and groups like the Council of Churches. If the leadership of the Japanese Trade union movement, key figures in the British Labour Party, outstanding European intellectuals who have been known for playing a role independent of the Communist world, could be assembled for the delegation to go to Washington to demand the ending of the war, Johnson negotiating directly with the NLF, demanding the ending of American mass terror of napalm bombing, the Delegation might carry the moral authority that the American public could not so quickly dismiss.

The Delegation should of course attempt to see Johnson, but it also might engage in picketing the White House, a silent vigil in front of the UN headquarters and also attempt addressing some mass meetings.<sup>36</sup>

A memorandum by Pat Arrowsmith and Tony Smythe proposed that the WRI send a team to Saigon and Hanoi. The Council highly recommended the plan of VK, one of the WRI German Sections, to start a fund to help the victims of war in Vietnam, particularly the children. The Council also decided to write to President Kenneth Kaunda and President Ayub Khan to intervene and initiate negotiations between the belligerent parties. The Council also accepted Pierre Martin's proposal to write to the president of Senegal to seek his intervention in the serious situation created by the Vietnam crisis and to take an immediate initiative to secure cease-fire and press for a meeting of the Security Council of the UN, or by direct negotiation between the belligerent parties with which Senegal had good relations.<sup>37</sup>

Representatives of War Resisters' International, CND, Movement for Colonial Freedom, Friends Peace Committee, Peace Pledge Union and ICDP met the first secretary of the American embassy in London on December 18, 1965 to explain to him that in their opinion it was highly desirable, both politically and morally, for the USA to withdraw its military forces from Vietnam. As she had the necessary power and resources, she should try to bring all countries directly concerned to a round-table conference. Efforts should be made to let the Vietnamese have a democratically elected government, which should not be under the influence of either power block or any foreign country.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Rome Triennial and the Vietnam War**

The second part of Rome Triennial Conference, the business session, discussed topics such as the International's relations with its affiliated bodies, financial and office matters, relations

with other organisations and the future activities of the International, Vietnam being one of the most urgent among them. It worked out the following plan of action:

1. Following on the Resolution on Vietnam ... we urge that WRI Sections should express to American tourists at American Express and Consular offices in Europe the revulsion many Europeans feel about the war in Vietnam. A leaflet should be made available by WRI to Sections wishing to use it. Sections are also encouraged to produce their own leaflet.
2. The WRI office should arrange a delegation of eminent Europeans to Washington so that they may represent to the American government and people European opposition to the American policy in Vietnam.
3. We urge the Sections of the WRI to follow the initiative of the American peace movement to urge US servicemen in Europe to defect from the armed forces in protest against the war in Vietnam. We also urge Sections to aid any US servicemen who do defect, and to press their governments to give asylum to any US defectors who wish to seek asylum in any country.<sup>39</sup>

### **Resolution on 'War in Vietnam'**

Those of us gathered in Rome for the 12th Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International are united in protesting the brutal war in Vietnam. We begin by sending our greetings not only to the American Sections of the WRI – the War Resisters League and the Fellowship of Reconciliation – but to all sections of the American peace movement, to the religious and intellectual leaders, to the students, to the veterans of other wars and present-day soldiers who now declare against war, to the handful of courageous political leaders such as senators Wayne, Morse, William Gruening and William Fulbright, and particularly to those men who have been jailed for refusing to be conscripted.

Because you have spoken and marched in protest, and because in some cases you have accepted prison rather than military service, you have made it possible for us to see 'the other America', the one concerned for democracy and for peace. You are the heroes of your country today. We greet you with fraternity and count you as comrades in the continuing and world-wide struggle against militarism and violence in all countries and for the cause of democracy, not only in Vietnam but everywhere, both East and West.

We know, however, that the situation is extremely grave. If the protest movement in the United States speaks for the best in America, it does not speak for the majority. We know that most Americans support President Johnson's militarism and that strong elements within the Pentagon desire war with China and see Vietnam as a chance to provoke China into that war.

If such a war should break out, then Vietnam would be not only a moral issue for the peoples of the world, but it would present the danger of a nuclear war and the destruction of human civilisation. Therefore we call upon all our member Sections to consider the following actions within their own countries:

- (1) In every case where, under pressure from Washington, national governments are giving token support to the American position on Vietnam, political campaigns must be waged to force those governments to withdraw such support. Even token support permits the American government to tell the American people that the American position has wide support. It is essential for the American people to understand how

very isolated the American government is on the issue of Vietnam. In some cases trade unions may be able to mount direct industrial action against American shipping involved in carrying supplies to Vietnam.

- (2) We call on our member Sections to seek creative ways of communicating with the tens of thousands of Americans who, as tourists, visit our countries. If pacifists would regularly leaflet every American Express Office in every country, this would be of enormous value. In the best traditions of non-violence such leafleting would not be hostile or anti-American, but would rather seek to communicate our friendly attitude towards individual Americans even as we explain the horror with which the world views the actions of America in Vietnam.
- (3) We urge our member Sections in those countries where American troops are stationed to seek, in an active and friendly way, to persuade those troops to separate themselves from the American military forces. We oppose all military forces and, particularly, we oppose conscription. But we realise the moral difference between military service in a nation at peace or even in the army of a nation defending itself against attack (and which, because it does not understand non-violence or because it lacks the courage to defend itself by non-violence, resorts to violent defense), and an army engaged in a brutal war of aggression against a whole population, including women and children, as in the case of Vietnam.

Under the International Law laid down at Nuremberg Trials, not only the pacifist but also the non-pacifist has a legal obligation to refuse service in a war such as that in Vietnam; a war in which prisoners are tortured and killed, civilian areas bombed, gas and napalm widely used, and the crops deliberately destroyed with chemicals.

As pacifists who believe in the right of every nation to self-determination we have always condemned the military intervention of the great powers into the affairs of the smaller and weaker nations. We sharply condemned the Russian action in Hungary, the British–French–Israeli action in Egypt, and the French action in Algeria. But the American actions in Vietnam are more terrible, more destructive, more senseless, and more criminal than all of these previous actions taken together.

If in the present situation any American serviceman should seek release from the American armed forces on grounds of conscience and if, failing to win such release, he defects from the American forces and seeks political asylum in any country where we have an active Section, we urge the WRI Section in that country to provide all possible protection to such defectors.

- (4) We urge our national Sections to seek, either through official actions of their governments or through voluntary actions of their people, to send medical aid and medical teams into all areas of Vietnam, both Northern and Southern Vietnam, in order to manifest in material form the conscience and the compassion of mankind.
  - (5) We will expect the International Office of the WRI to continue to seek, in co-operation with other international bodies, to mobilise leading intellectual, political, trade union, student and religious leaders whose prestige is such that their voice cannot be ignored by the American political leaders. Also, to continue to take an active part in those non-violent demonstrations which, by their sheer size, force the American government to take note of the growing world-wide opposition to US policy in Vietnam.
- Finally, we extend our special greetings to the Buddhist leadership in Vietnam itself, where, under extremely difficult conditions, they have sought non-violent ways to cre-



ate a government which would represent all the forces in South Vietnam, including the National Liberation Front. We appreciate and support the desire of the people of Vietnam to create a unified nation, free from the military intervention of any external government, East or West.

We are aware that just as American aggression has brutalized the American people so even the most decent elements within the revolutionary force in Vietnam are brutalized by a war in which both sides, because they have adopted the method of violence, are forced into acts of terrorism against civilians as well as soldiers.

We appreciate the numerous efforts of the National Liberation Front, through diplomatic channels, to negotiate the withdrawal of American troops. We are discouraged by the dishonesty of the Johnson 'Peace Offensive' during which the United States called for peace but refused to discuss a timetable for the swift withdrawal of US troops. Despite the Johnson duplicity, we hope the National Liberation Front will continue to seek the negotiated withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam. We would hope that such diplomatic actions by the NLF would be even more public and continuous in order that killing on both sides might stop at the earliest possible moment.<sup>40</sup>

### **The leaflets**

One leaflet planned at the Rome Triennial addressed the American tourists abroad. It was to tell them that, because of the American action in Vietnam, the prestige that the USA enjoyed in the world was at a very low ebb. It was therefore the duty of US citizens to take the necessary action to urge their government to put an end to the war. To begin with the WRI got 12,000 copies of the leaflet printed. Later, as was suggested, WRI Sections in other countries printed this leaflet themselves and distributed it; these included the Danish Section, AmK; the British Section, PPU; the Dutch Section, ANVA and the Irish Pacifist Movement.

The War Resisters' International involved several of its Sections and individual members in drafting and finalising the second leaflet addressed to American soldiers in Europe. The International alone printed 47,000 copies of this leaflet. The British group, called Vietnam Information Group, printed 10,000 copies for its own use and for sending abroad. More than 150,000 leaflets had already been distributed by the end of 1970.

The text of the leaflet:

To American soldiers in Europe

You could not have been in Europe long without discovering how widespread is criticism of the American war in Vietnam; and you may have discovered how false is much of the information in the American press and from the American government.

We are asking you to consider what action you can take to end this war. We know that you are in an extremely difficult position and that it is easy for us to talk. We only ask you, after weighing up all the possible consequences, to consider what you can do.

During the Algerian war thousands of young French conscripts demonstrated against the war and helped in some measure to end it. They demonstrated openly in the streets, and some even sat down in front of the trains taking them to Marseilles for embarkation. Some deserted rather than take part in what they considered an unjust war; others voluntarily gave themselves up and went to prison as conscientious objectors. Will you consider:

1. Making clear your objection to the Vietnam war by petitioning and writing letters to superior officers, President Johnson, senators, congressmen, etc.
2. Staging protests within the barracks or taking part in public demonstrations.
3. Holding a token walk-out of the barracks or some other action of this kind.
4. Deserting, either singly or in groups. This action would have very serious consequences, such as the imprisonment of those involved. We do not ask you to undertake it lightly without considering exactly what might happen. But we hope you will consider it. It could have a powerful effect in building up pressure against the war.
5. Registering as a conscientious objector. Did you know that American law provides for conscientious objection to the war? That even men in the army can get out if they firmly maintain their views? That at least 300 men have received discharges because they can no longer honestly support war?

Your action could help to end a terrible war and save Vietnamese and American lives. It is quite wrong to suppose that only “communists” are against the American policy in Vietnam. Many religious and other organisations have opposed it. The War Resisters’ International, which publishes this leaflet, has opposed all wars since 1921; many of its members have been imprisoned for their beliefs and have taken action against both Soviet and Western military policies.

The Nuremberg Judgment places on you the duty to decide whether a war is right or wrong.

Every day innocent lives are being lost in Vietnam. Will you consider taking some action that could help to end this bloodshed? Any of the following organisations will be pleased to give you advice and help.

The following organisations were listed with their address:

War Resisters’ International; Peace Pledge Union; Committee of 100; *Peace News*, UK; Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer; Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner, W. Germany; Algemene Nederlandse Vredes Actie, Netherlands; Movimento Nonviolento per la Pace, Italy; and War Resisters League, USA.

The leaflet also gave some information about Vietnam, including the dates of different stages of the crisis and up to date figures of casualties of both Vietnamese – 250,000 up to August 1965, and Americans – troops 3, 047; non-combatants 640; wounded 15,866 up to April 16, 1966.

This leaflet played an important role in raising the consciousness of American soldiers about their participation in a war which had become unpopular and destructive. It touched their conscience too. A journalist named Dudley Freeman reported in the *Sunday Express* (May 1966) that a senior US security officer told him:

“Many GIs already find themselves confused over America’s role in Vietnam. These leaflets are specially designed to prey upon such inner conflicts. They could cause untold damage to morale.”<sup>41</sup>

### **World campaign in support of American deserters** <sup>42</sup>

The World Campaign, which was started in 1966 with the launch of the leaflet, was intensified by issuing an appeal signed by more than 125 personalities from 10 countries, most of them very well known.

By the end of the war it was believed that nearly 45,000 American soldiers had been killed.

More than 150,000 young men had deserted or gone AWOL from the armed forces. This figure did not include the draft dodgers, many of whom left America to escape conscription. The impact of the leaflet campaign was significant from the point of view of the hierarchy of the US armed forces. This can be judged by some statements made by the top-ranking military leaders.

On August 17, 1967, *The Times* (London) published an article about US deserters. The story was 'built round a leaflet addressed to American soldiers in Europe and which was widely distributed in many countries where US servicemen were stationed or where they were likely to go for holidays'.

The next day, August 18, *The Guardian* reported:

The Secretary of Defence, Mr. MacNamara, described as "sheer nonsense" this morning's report in *The Times* in London that the desertion rate among United States soldiers in Germany largely in order to evade service in Vietnam was running at about 1,000 a year.

The Pentagon said that it had been aware for some time of reports that an organisation opposing the Vietnam war was aiding deserters but it claimed that they had been greatly exaggerated. The activities of the organisation 'had little or no effect on absenteeism' and there had been no appreciable increase in the number of soldiers failing to report back for duty.

The Commander of the US Army in Europe, Gen. James Polk, also commented on the report: "There are 348 American soldiers at present listed as 'long-term absentees' in Europe out of a force of 225,000 men."

About 18 months later in March 1969 some newspapers reported that one GI was deserting every ten minutes. "The desertion rate from the American Army during the year which ended June 30th last (1968) was one man every ten minutes – 53,357 in the year and the equivalent of three-and-a-half combat divisions. These astonishing figures were reported to the Senate Armed Services Committee today. The desertion total has increased by 13,000 over the previous year."<sup>43</sup>

### **Asylum for deserters and AWOLs**

Most of the WRI Sections tried to convince their governments that they should allow American deserters who left the army on account of their conviction to be granted asylum, on the grounds that the American war in Vietnam was neither legal nor moral. Few accepted it openly. Sweden was the first country openly to accept American deserters as refugees. As of June 1971 there were a little over 500 deserters in Sweden. After February 1969 the Swedish government had been pursuing a policy of granting 'humanitarian asylum' to deserters. Until 1971 the authorities took a deserter at his word on the point of seeking asylum that he had been ordered to go to Vietnam. But later the situation became somewhat harder.

After Sweden it was France, amongst the European nations, which started giving permission to American servicemen who left the forces as AWOLs or deserters to stay and work in the country. In the late 1960s, according to some estimates, there was a floating population of 600 to 1,000 American deserters in France, where the situation for them was fairly favourable. No other European country accepted deserters *officially*.

There was more than one reason for the unpopularity of the war, but its end was caused, to a great extent, by the realisation by parents and relatives of the dead that their sons were being

killed in such alarmingly large numbers and that too for no valid reason whatsoever.

The commission on Vietnam at the 1969 Triennial Conference discussed the latest situation in Vietnam and suggested further actions against the war. The commission demanded that the USA and its allies withdraw their troops from Vietnam and stop all military aid to the Saigon government. The commission also called for the release of nearly 200,000 political prisoners in South Vietnam and to channel through international agencies large-scale economic, cultural and technical assistance to Vietnam for reconstruction. This should be in accordance with the expressed wish of the Vietnamese people.

### **Vietnam Direct Action Project**

Besides 58 official prisons in the provinces there were five big prisons in South Vietnam. One of them took up the whole of Con Son Island and had 15,000 prisoners. The project was to sail a boat to the island about 100 miles from the coast. The boat would carry the slogan 'Free All Political Prisoners' and would also carry aid material such as medicines. The point was to dramatise the fact that there were political prisoners and to question the legitimacy of a government which relied on the imprisonment of those who opposed it to maintain its power.

The WRI Council asked A Quaker Action Group (AQAG) to do the preliminary work on it and use the WRI services as much as they could be used. Larry Scott of the AQAG should work on it and report on the progress of the project.

It was also proposed to conduct an international amnesty campaign for war resisters living in the country or in exile, and political prisoners. The WRI Executive Committee was asked to work on the proposal when it was the right time to do so.

### **In support of the open letter by seven US resisters<sup>44</sup>**

Seven of the thousands of US war resisters – some of them army deserters – who were living in exile in several European countries, wrote an open letter addressed to the American president, Mr Nixon, when he visited London at the beginning of 1969:

We write to you as Americans who have been driven into political exile by the still continuing outrage of America's Vietnam policy. There are roughly 15,000 of us scattered beyond America's shores, and an additional 1,000 now incarcerated as political prisoners in American jails. We have all refused to participate in a war so contrary to human ideals, and to American and international law and principles. We are among the "forgotten Americans" you spoke of in your campaign for the presidency, and we write to you on the eve of your visit to the Paris peace talks . . .

You have the unique opportunity of creating a radical change in American policy and priorities. You say you have come to Europe to listen and learn. Perhaps you have already learned how much America's name has come to be feared and abused, how much it has come to symbolize napalm and mace rather than justice and hope.

We ask you to re-direct American foreign policy so that it respects international law and serves justice. Only when this happens will there be no further reason for the exile and imprisonment of ourselves, our brothers, and our views.

In support of the above open letter the WRI headquarters wrote the following letter to Mr Nixon during his London visit:

The War Resisters' International extends its full support to the open letter by seven US draft resisters addressed to Mr. Nixon, President of the United States of America, asking him to revise his government's policy on Vietnam.

We believe that these and thousands of other Vietnam war resisters have taken a brave and positive step by refusing to associate themselves with their country's war in Vietnam on account of their conviction that it is immoral, unjust and illegal. We salute these brave men of America for the contribution they are making for the cause of peace and which, we hope, will help to end the war without further delay.

We appeal to Mr. Nixon that all those who are either in prison or in exile on account of their opposition to their government's Vietnam policy be given amnesty and be released with immediate restoration of their civic and political rights.

WRI Headquarters, 25 February 1969.<sup>45</sup>

### **Pacem in Terris II – Manifesto of Love**<sup>46</sup>

The Pacem in Terris convocation was held in Geneva from May 28 to 31, 1967. It was organised by the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions of Santa Barbara, USA and attended by nearly 350 people from various circles. US senators and congressmen, members of parliament from different countries, Nobel laureates and peace activists made this a high-powered conference though completely non-governmental.

The topics of discussion included:

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) threat to co-existence | (d) the Middle East        |
| (b) the case of Vietnam    | (e) International Law, and |
| (c) the case of Germany    | (f) beyond co-existence    |

The main thrust of the conference was to address power centres and to try to find out what they could do to bring about peace and understanding. Given the type of participants and speakers it was only natural that only two or three of them spoke about, or even mentioned, the role of the youth or protest campaigns in the reconstruction of human society based on principles of human freedom and love. One report of a meeting of church leaders, however, emphasised the need for conscientious objection to military service.

In my capacity as WRI Secretary and an invitee I took part in a special discussion group consisting of, among others, John Sealey, Jean and Hallock Hoffman, delegates from the USA. We presented a statement at the convocation entitled 'Manifesto of Love on Behalf of the Human Race'. The Manifesto was signed also by Martin Niemöller, Martin Luther King, Johan Galtung, Ernest Bader, Thich Nhat Hanh, Rev. Pike, James Farmer, myself and 30 others present at the convocation. I was asked to present it to the convocation.

### **A Manifesto of Love on Behalf of the Human Race**

War must cease

Other widespread acts of mass violence must cease

All these acts depend on individual willingness to commit individual acts of violence

We will no longer co-operate with any institutional demands or solicitations that we participate in mass violence

Our loyalty must be given first of all to humanity

No other loyalty may be permitted to come before it  
We have a supreme opportunity at this Convocation to declare loyalty to mankind by  
an act of love:  
We refuse all participation in acts of organised violence – direct or indirect  
We call upon everyone to do likewise  
We dedicate ourselves to the service of life and the living  
We call upon everyone, everywhere to do likewise  
Gandhi speaks for us: ‘In the midst of death, life persists. In the midst of darkness,  
light persists’  
We are today in the midst of death and darkness  
We can strengthen life and light by our personal acts:  
by saying ‘no’ to violence  
by saying yes to life  
We ask you to join us.

## WRI and the Liberation Movements

The 1960s will be remembered for the growth of several liberation movements, and with it the questioning, by an increasing number of people, especially the youth, of the efficacy and relevance of nonviolence as an effective tool for liberating peoples from colonialism and dictatorship. The Secretary’s Report for the 1968 Council meeting held in Vienna said:

Events during the past few years and particularly the last have raised numerous questions within the peace movement. They are tearing apart movements which looked pretty well united and clear in their thinking. Within the WRI circles the question, whether to support the National Liberation movements or not, has brought about what a well positioned WRI member once called, a *palace revolution*.

It is Vietnam which is greatly responsible for this heart searching by pacifists. But Vietnam is only a symbol. Conflicts in Africa, the Middle East (etc.) have forced many an advocate of nonviolence to do some kind of appraisal of their idealistic grounds. The notion that nonviolence has failed had already begun at the end of the last decade when the South African freedom fighters started saying that nonviolence had failed and that without violence the enemy will not be brought to his senses.

It is difficult to say how many WRI affiliates can claim that their policies are crystal clear and that there is a happy unity within the organisation – both at executive and rank and file levels. We know for certain that two of our very active Sections – FMK (Norway) and VK (W. Germany) – have passed through a crisis of conscience about their role in relation to *revolutionary movements*. . . . Half of the membership which takes some kind of active interest in the movement, thinks that the WRI Declaration and the conception of rejecting all wars is no more meaningful and effective to deal with brutal regimes and centralised military power. They feel that Che Guevara’s and Mao Tse Tung’s methods alone have any hope of success. The other half of the membership believes that adherence to the principle that there cannot be a *just* war is of prime importance, and that pacifists must reject all violence by whomsoever it may be committed.

This is also an inner conflict with many war resisters and their sympathisers, who in

their consciences cannot deny the righteous cause of freedom struggles, yet, who cannot approve of their violence. . . . pacifists who abhor the injustices and cruelty committed by dictatorships of all kinds, and who are morally on the side of the *oppressed*, but who do not know what they can actually do. Who sometimes feel humiliated in front of the victory to the VC demonstrators. It is their dilemma which we have to resolve.

Student revolts, almost in every corner of the world, have given a sense of isolation to many pacifists. A WRI Section (VK) expressed this recently in a circular. It said that up till now *we were at the spearhead of the extra parliamentary opposition, but during the last few years we have received rather than given impulses*. The French students/workers revolution has caused an internal crisis within a progressive pacifist group which is not only concerned with the immorality of war but also with the urgent need to bring about basic changes in society. Student revolts everywhere have asked the fundamental question: What is wrong with our society? Why is youth so restless?

The notion that it is because of the 'classic' age-gap is a fallacy. Student revolts must now be seen in the context of the character of modern society. They see man being deprived of his liberty and being swindled so cleverly that he does not even notice it. The *repressive tolerance* (Marcuse) of affluent capitalist society is maintained by gigantic power bureaucracy. If the younger members of society, who have a much longer future before them, do not revolt against the horrifying image of the future, then who else will?

The situation in communist countries is not very different. Youth there is also rapidly losing trust in those who manage their society. He knows that he will be sent to prison if he talks of liberty. Nobody can say exactly how many young people are in prisons within these countries. Trials of young Soviet writers and the treatment of their cases by the authorities and the popular reaction whether inside or outside the country (including the student demonstrators in Yugoslavia) are but symptoms of the disease from which all of the industrialised world suffers.

In fact the problem of youth unrest must also be attributed to the complete failure of the educational system.

Pacifists, especially those who want to be politically relevant, have so much of the feeling of lagging behind that it can only be called a developing inferiority complex.

What kind of a society are we trying to build and what are our loyalties? Is it possible to achieve freedom for *everybody* by using conventional means (i.e. violence)?

It is not a simple question of violence or nonviolence, pacifism or not pacifism. It is a question of liberating man from the monstrosity of primitive thinking and so called *modern living*. . . . He has become a slave of his own creation. As far as his inner development is concerned, man is still tied up with his outdated, if not primitive, notions of loyalties. Politicians have miserably failed for they have lost the imagination and the ability to face the issues. Scientists and specialists have sold themselves to politicians. Only the pacifists and people with similar concerns have the potentiality of facing this problem creatively.

Many pacifists still think that their task is limited to the CO cause and that to work for social change is the business of political and social service institutions. No one now thinks that war will end when every country has a CO law. And, although the consequences of such a law can be far reaching the forces which rule and administer society are clever enough to continue to manoeuvre the effectiveness of having such laws.

It has been hard for many pacifists to take a political stand in relation to questions like Biafra. If there had not been thousands of deaths every day how many people would have spoken with such emotions about the Biafran cause? There is much more in it than the question of starvation and British weapons for Nigeria. It is the question of freedom for a people who want to be themselves. And there are hundreds if not thousands of Biafrans who are fighting for their liberty.

There is not much difference between Biafra and Czechoslovakia. It is a shame that we as pacifists found ourselves helpless in these matters. We sent letters and issued statements; but that is of little value if not followed by action.

We have to find out our special role in these situations.<sup>47</sup>

After a full discussion the Council unanimously agreed to issue the following “working document” for wide circulation:

### **Liberation Movements and War Resisters’ International**

The WRI is first of all a freedom movement. We work for man’s right to freedom: freedom to live without hunger, war, pestilence: freedom to live without economic, social, racial and cultural exploitation: freedom for the individual to express himself and to develop to the full his powers as a creative human being: freedom to develop social capacity, so often cramped and distorted by authoritarian structures, which enables men to live in community and to rise above egotism.

From this belief in freedom stems our opposition to war and to systems which exploit and corrupt such as colonialism, capitalism and totalitarian forms of communism. Positively the implications of our belief touch every aspect of human activity. We want an educational system which liberates rather than cramps the human spirit, economic organisation which is democratic and gives power to the workers involved. We work for nothing less than a total nonviolent revolution. Our pacifism and war resistance take their place in this total vision of liberated man.

A violent revolution creates a violent structure in which, having killed one’s enemies, it is all too easy to kill one’s friends for holding ‘wrong positions’. Having once taken up weapons it is difficult to lay them down. If violence may have – as Fanon suggests – a liberating effect on the oppressed, it also has a brutalising effect. If it is argued that a nonviolent revolution is too slow a method, and that violence more swiftly brings justice and freedom, we point to Vietnam where a violent struggle has raged without pause for 22 years and where more than a million Vietnamese have been killed and the revolution has not yet been won.

It would be easy, confronted with the brutality and inhumanity of American actions in Vietnam and the American support of oppressive regimes elsewhere in the world, so to lose ourselves in anger that we forget some of the lessons of this century. Those who used the method of war in dealing with Germany, Italy and Japan should not forget that fifty million human beings perished in that struggle and that the American people who entered that war with considerable idealism and who were shocked by the cruelty of the Germans and Japanese ended the war by dropping two atomic bombs, and had become so insensitive by that time that they do not to this day feel any sense of national guilt. We should keep in mind the heroic experiment in revolution of the Russian people, which began with the moral support of virtually all progressive movements in the world, and which eventually produced a state which killed millions of its own citizens in purges



and forced labour camps, oppressed the nations of Eastern Europe, and to this day is still imprisoning writers who seek to exercise the most elementary freedoms.

We must ask our brothers and sisters in the movements of violent liberation whether they are really certain that out of the bloodshed of their revolution a just society can be created; and whether they believe the Russian experience was simply the result of theoretical mistakes, tactical errors, and Western intervention (all of which were certainly factors) or whether it was not in large part the basic mistake of thinking that violence, both during the revolution and in solving economic and social problems, could bring justice and freedom.

Man is not free when he is subjected to violence and therefore the struggle against violence must be seen in the context of a revolutionary effort to liberate humanity. We know that violence takes many forms, and that in addition to the direct violence of guns and bombs there is the silent violence of disease, hunger, and the dehumanisation of men and women caught up in exploitative systems.

With the reticence that comes from our knowledge that we do not have answers to many of the problems of revolution, we must say that men should not organise violence against one another, whether in revolution, in civil war, or in wars between nations. If it is argued that our position is utopian and that men can turn to nonviolence only after the revolution, we reply that unless we hold firmly to nonviolence now, the day will never come when all of us learn to live without violence. The roots of the future are here and now, in our lives and actions.

But our unwavering commitment to nonviolence does not mean we are hostile to the revolutionary movements of our time, even though on certain fundamental issues we may disagree with some of them. It is impossible for us to be morally 'neutral', for example, in the struggle between the people of Vietnam and the American government, any more than we were able to be morally 'neutral' 12 years ago in the struggle between the people of Hungary and the Soviet Union. We do not support the violent *means* used by the NLF and Hanoi, but we do support their *objective* in seeking the liberation of Vietnam from foreign domination. We particularly emphasise our support for our friends in the Buddhist movement, who at great risk and with little support from world opinion, have sought to achieve self-determination without using violence. It is particularly important for pacifists to maintain close contact with these elements in the revolutionary movements which quietly hold to nonviolence.

We do not romanticise nonviolence and know better than anyone else its setbacks. But we ask our friends who feel they have no choice but to use violent means for liberation not to overlook the problems they face. The violence of revolution destroys the innocent just as surely as does the violence of the oppressor. The American soldier in Vietnam is not the cause of American imperialism but only its agent. He, no less than the Vietnamese he is oppressing, is a victim of American imperialism. And there are those who are innocent in a more obvious sense such as civilians who are inevitably killed in the course of the struggle. Clearly one has to distinguish between the violence of the Americans, which is criminal, and that of the Vietnamese which, by contrast, is tragic.

We have to consider the argument of those who criticise pacifists because they do not have an answer to the problem, for example, of South Africa. We know this and are haunted by our own limitations. But just as every nonviolent movement in South Africa has so far failed, so has every violent movement. There are moments in history when we find situations that cannot be immediately resolved either by violence or by nonvio-

lence. In Spain, for example, there have been organised appeals for violent action against Franco for the past twenty years and yet Franco still holds power. The murder of Martin Luther King is often cited as evidence of a final defeat of nonviolence. Surely it is no more or less so than the murder of Che Guevara is evidence of a final defeat for violence in Bolivia?

We remind all pacifists and all Sections of the WRI that the greatest single contribution we can make to the liberation movements is not by becoming entangled in the debate over whether or not such movements should use violence, but by actively working to bring an end to colonialism and imperialism by attacking its centres of power in the West, for these are the factors which drive people towards the tragedy of violence, and, for too many of the oppressed seem to exclude the options they might otherwise have, for more gradual and nonviolent methods of social revolution.

One of the basic reasons why we hold to nonviolence, even when it seems to have failed or when it cannot offer a ready answer, is because the nonviolent revolution does not seek the liberation simply of a class or race or nation. It seeks the liberation of mankind. It is our experience that violence shifts the burden of suffering and injustice from one group to another, that it liberates one group but imprisons another, that it destroys one authoritarian structure but creates another.

We salute those who are using nonviolent action in their struggle in spite of the current trends and pressures towards violence. We also salute our brothers and sisters in the various liberation movements. We will work with them when it is possible but without yielding up our belief that the foundation of the future must be laid in the present, that a society without violence must begin with revolutionists who will not use violence.<sup>48</sup>

The statement was widely appreciated and reproduced in several non-WRI journals as well as those of the WRI Sections. It articulated a new pacifist response to freedom struggles.

## Russian Invasion of Czechoslovakia

The year 1968 was a year which saw the rise to some prominence throughout much of the Western world of a loose grouping of radical socialist and liberation movements which was called the 'New Left'. Students of many universities and colleges took active part in the 'revolution'. This was also the era of *flower power*.

The situation in the East European countries was at the same time becoming increasingly tense, especially as regards relationships between the Soviet Union and its 'satellite' nations. For the first decade after the Second World War the USSR had headed a generally united communist world. Stalin had felt free to intervene militarily in the internal affairs of neighbouring socialist states and in 1956 Soviet troops had crushed Hungarian attempts to forge their own vision of society. China was the first communist state to sustain an independent approach to communism and Stalin proved unable to exercise domination over this vast country. As a result there was a clear break between the Soviet Union and China. The latter's refusal to accept Russia's authority encouraged the demand for autonomy among other communist parties of the East European countries and their governments. The Russian Communist Party was finding it difficult to maintain the semblance of communist unity throughout the world, an image that it had nurtured since the Russian revolution.

After Hungary, in 1956, despite threats, the USSR had to back away from intervention in Poland, and Gomulka became the first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party. In 1968 the Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia was replaced by a liberal government ushering in the so-called Prague Spring. The demand for peoples' genuine participation in developing a socialist society, though controlled by the Communist Party, was led by Dubcek and Svoboda, the new leaders of the Czechoslovakian Republic.

Dubcek and his colleagues gave repeated assurances that the country would not leave the Warsaw Pact. People flocked to sign a declaration indicating their support for the Communist Party so that the Russians would be reassured that there was no danger of a counter-revolution.

Despite these efforts Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Such an action on their part was understandable for only one reason. Nobody could have doubted that the Czechoslovakian experiment was attractive and would be followed by the other East European countries. The Russian regime was also afraid that these countries would either become non-aligned or join NATO, which would greatly weaken the Warsaw Pact.

The WRI Council was meeting in Vienna at the time when the situation in Czechoslovakia was becoming tense. Though deeply concerned, the WRI Council looked with hope at the changes taking place in Czechoslovakia. To express its goodwill the Council decided to send a delegation to meet the Czechoslovakian Peace Committee at Bratislava, which was only a few miles from Vienna. The Council unanimously accepted the following statement:

The Council of the WRI at its meeting in Vienna on August 17, 1968, has seen more clearly its role in terms of the pursuit of genuine human freedom to overcome suffering, to release man from the burden of militarism and war to pursue the new developments of which man is capable and which should benefit all irrespective of national boundaries.

With this in view the WRI watches anxiously the situation in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union where recently hopes have been alternately raised and diminished.

In all the ways open to us we would strengthen the urges for freedom and the recognition of the right to freedom, and in this connection we have a very particular concern for the writers in the Soviet Union who have been imprisoned and for the evident threat to liberty of action of the Czech people to have the government of their own choice.

We hope that this expression of concern will reach those in both countries who are in positions of responsibility as well as those who are pioneering for such genuine freedom as we treasure.<sup>49</sup>

One of the members of the delegation of the Slovak Peace Committee in Bratislava urged the WRI Council with great passion to step up their campaign against NATO. In the end, he said, the only hope for Czechoslovakia lay in neutrality; but this was impossible while NATO and the Warsaw Pact continued.<sup>50</sup>

The War Resisters' International seemed well placed to take action, as it was responsible for co-ordinating and initiating activity among its national Sections on key international issues. As has been stated earlier, it had, two years previously, taken such an initiative in publishing and distributing a leaflet to American soldiers in Europe asking them to think whether the war they were fighting in Vietnam was morally justified. The WRI thus had played an important role in the movement which developed among socialists, anarchists, communists and disarmament groups to aid Americans who deserted from the forces to avoid fighting in Vietnam.

But more importantly the WRI was committed to the use of nonviolent action in the strug-

gle for justice, freedom and peace. It therefore seemed especially important to respond to the courageous and imaginative resistance being undertaken by the Czechs and Slovaks, and to find an appropriate way to express support.

The Warsaw Pact tanks and troops began to enter Czechoslovakia on the night of Tuesday, August 20. The resistance by the people was almost completely spontaneous. They came out into the streets. In many places they tried to block the movement of the armoured columns; sometimes by improvised barricades; sometimes, and with rather more effect, by sitting down in front of the tanks. After being delayed nine hours by a sit-down at a bridge over the river Upa, Soviet tanks were reported to have been forced to try another route. In the town of Gottwaldov another tactic was adopted – everyone stayed indoors, all work and business came to standstill, and the Soviet troops moved uncertainly through a deserted town which came to life after they had moved out again. Resistance immediately crystallised into a refusal to co-operate with the invading troops. This policy was maintained even when in some instances commanders threatened military retaliation against such non-co-operation.

The main purpose of the resistance was to tell the soldiers that their leaders had misled them and that socialism in Czechoslovakia had not been endangered before the occupation. Although resistance was expressed by anger, burning of propaganda leaflets or chalking of swastikas on Russian tanks, the more important manner of expressing it was by reasoned arguments and humour. Young men clambered onto the tanks to argue with often young and bewildered conscripts from the Soviet Union. Mini-skirted girls went up to Russian soldiers and urged them to go. Men and women joined in the discussion with the Soviet troops. Leaflets were printed for the soldiers. Slogans were pasted everywhere. One of the posters said: “Lenin wake up – Brezhnev has gone mad”.

On August 21, 1968 the Chairman Michael Randle and the headquarters of the WRI issued a statement calling on the World Council of Peace, on communist parties throughout the world, on anyone who could in any way influence Soviet policy to condemn the invasion and call for the withdrawal of all troops:

The invasion once again underlines the reactionary and repressive role played by the two military alliances, the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Warsaw Pact forces are directly involved in repression. NATO is powerless to help those under attack and its very existence poses a threat to security in Europe which hampers and restricts progressive development in the countries of Eastern Europe.

The invasion also strengthens the hand of right wing and reactionary forces in the west whose blanket condemnations of socialist and progressive movements will now carry more weight. It will be easier, for instance, for these forces to present the American aggression against Vietnam as part of a crusade against totalitarian communism. The invasion therefore is a betrayal not only of the Czech people but hardly less of the Vietnamese people and other people struggling for peace.

The War Resisters' International fully supports the dignified resistance of the Czech people which has included sit-downs in front of Soviet tanks, strikes and non-co-operation. We express our hope, even in this dark hour that peaceful yet uncompromising resistance may eventually secure the withdrawal of invading forces and the continued progress of Czechoslovakia towards true socialism under conditions of freedom.<sup>51</sup>

## Project – Support Czechoslovakia Action

The WRI organised an action programme to hold demonstrations and distribute leaflets in the centres of four of the Warsaw Pact capital cities: Moscow, Budapest, Warsaw and Sofia. The leaflets were printed with translations in Russian, Polish, Hungarian and German. Banners were displayed bearing the slogans: End NATO, End the US war in Vietnam, End the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Sixteen volunteers took part from seven different countries – Italy, Denmark, Britain, USA, West Germany, Holland and India. All these volunteers had records of being actively opposed to Western military policies, such as the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, NATO, and the war in Vietnam. They were all arrested but later released by the police of all the four countries.

### The Leaflet<sup>52</sup>

#### HELP

This is an appeal to you on behalf of your Czechoslovak comrades.

Troops from your country invaded Czechoslovakia early on Wednesday, August 21st, together with contingents from other Warsaw Pact countries. The Communist Party Secretary, Mr. Dubcek, and other Party leaders were arrested. Prague Radio called on the people to carry out passive resistance. People demonstrated in the streets as Warsaw Pact troops and tanks took over. The Government, the Communist Party, the people generally refused to co-operate with the occupation forces, or to assist in setting up an illegal puppet regime. Clandestine radio stations went on broadcasting.

President Svoboda said in a recorded broadcast on August 21st that Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops had “entered our territory without the consent of the constitutional forces of our state.”

In a farewell issue on August 22rd the writers’ weekly *Literarni Listy* issued the following appeal to fellow writers, artists and intellectuals:

“No one in Czechoslovakia asked for this intervention, or for any other Government except the one led by Dubcek, Cernik and Smrkovsky. Do not allow us to remain alone. Do not allow the hopes of the Czechoslovak people to be destroyed.”

The reason given to citizens of the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries for the invasion was that Czechoslovak Communists had called for help against counter-revolutionary forces. But the democratisation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic since January this year has been carried out under the direction of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Communists named as having called in Warsaw Pact forces have since denied this. Mr. Svetska, former editor of *Rude Pravo* was reported in *Rude Pravo* on September 5th as follows: “I do not betray my country, nor our Communist Party, nor my communist convictions. Rumours claiming that I was among those who had called for troops of the Warsaw Pact are not true.” Mr. Jan Piller made a similar denial to the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and so did Mr. Bilak and Mr. Kolder.

On August 23rd President Svoboda flew to Moscow; Mr. Dubcek and other leaders joined him for talks with the Soviet Government. As a result of the Moscow agreement published on August 27th, the legality of Mr. Dubcek’s Government was confirmed. The Czechoslovak leaders reaffirmed their undertakings made at Bratislava and Cierna

to ensure Czechoslovakia remained within the Socialist camp, and that internal policies were developed under the guidance of the Communist Party.

At Moscow the Soviet and other Warsaw Pact Governments agreed to withdraw their troops from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as soon as the situation was "normal". The situation in Czechoslovakia was peaceful and orderly before the Warsaw Pact troops moved in, and is peaceful and orderly now. The presence of Soviet tanks and soldiers can only be designed to prevent the Czechoslovak people from freely pursuing their own form of democratic socialism.

When Warsaw Pact forces entered Czechoslovakia, President Tito of Yugoslavia, and the Rumanian President, Mr. Ceausescu, condemned this violation of the sovereignty of a Socialist state; and Communist Parties in France, Italy, Britain and other Western and non-aligned countries have expressed their sorrow and dismay.

The cause of peace has been gravely damaged by your Government's action in Czechoslovakia. It is now more likely that a right wing candidate will become the next President of the United States, that the American arms programme will increase, and that NATO will be strengthened.

The people of Vietnam will suffer because the American opposition to the Vietnam War has lost ground to the right wing in the United States.

The people of Europe will suffer if cold war tensions increase, and the North Atlantic Alliance and Warsaw Pact are strengthened. The development of genuinely free and democratic societies in the whole of Europe depends on an end to military alliances, and on European disarmament.

In addition we believe that the occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic is a terrible blow to the future of socialism in your country, in the rest of the socialist camp, and in the whole world.

The total withdrawal of all Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops from Czechoslovakia is the first and most necessary step, which could bring new hope to the people of Czechoslovakia, and to the forces of peace and socialism everywhere. The Governments and people of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria have the power and the responsibility to ensure that ALL troops are withdrawn.

This is why we ask you to take any PEACEFUL action in your power.

We represent thousands of people in Western Europe, the United States, Africa and Asia, who have campaigned for many years against United States' nuclear policies and against the North Atlantic Alliance; and who have demonstrated and gone to jail to oppose the war in Vietnam.

This leaflet is issued by the War Resisters' International, which is a nonaligned organisation with branches in many countries, and is committed to promote freedom, social justice and peace by non-violent means. In November the War Resisters' International is taking part in an international demonstration, which will include direct action, at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. During the past two years it has been campaigning among American servicemen in Europe asking them not to fight against the people of Vietnam.

The War Resisters' International was a sponsor together with the World Council of Peace and others, of the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam in July 1967.

The War Resisters' head office is in London at 3 Caledonian Road, London N1, England. Telephone: London 837 3860.

The purpose of the demonstrations:

To answer the appeal of the Czechoslovak people for international action to support their cause.

To break through, in however small a way, the barrier of silence and distortion about the occupation of Czechoslovakia being promoted by the authorities and the press in the Warsaw Pact countries. And to show that opposition to the occupation was felt very strongly in the West by the socialist movement, peace movement and other radicals, who now have the urgent task of preventing a military build-up of NATO and a swing to the extreme right.

To encourage and show solidarity with those courageous and open protests which have already been made in the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Hungary and to encourage more open opposition by those groups among students, workers and intellectuals who were opposed to the occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by the USSR. At the same time it was also to clarify the political point of the demonstration, only individuals with a record of determined opposition to their own government.

The above points were clarified in a note attached to the *WRI Newsletter 75*, signed by Michael Randle, April Carter and Devi Prasad. The same note talked about the achievements of the Support Czechoslovakia project, which most importantly constituted the demonstrations.

Technically at least the demonstration was a complete success. All co-ordinated actions took place as planned. Plans for informing the press in London, Brussels, Copenhagen, Rome, Vienna and New York worked perfectly. At 4 p.m. the press in those cities were informed. The Peace Pledge Union and *Peace News* played a vital role by phoning out a short report to the press agencies and the main daily newspapers. A press conference was held at the WRI office at 6.30 p.m. John Hyatt of the PPU Youth Section delivered a longer press statement by hand to the news agencies and dailies. Replicas of the banners were displayed and the leaflet HELP was handed over to the press representatives.

### **Protest teams to Moscow, Warsaw, Budapest and Sofia**

**Moscow:** On account of difficulties in obtaining visas only two people could be sent. Andrew Papworth, 20 years old, a printer from London; and Vicki Rovere, 24, a computer programmer from the USA. *Izvestia* published quite a long article on September 26, saying that the fact that there had been simultaneous demonstrations in four capitals showed that there was a big organisation behind the action.

They were held together and interrogated for some hours. They were then taken back to their hotels and told that they would be put on first plane to London the next morning.

**Warsaw:** Much of the preparation for the action was done by the Danish Section of the WRI. Five people from Denmark took part in the demonstration: Paul Nexmand, 25, student of political science; Kent Mikkelsen, 24, student of political science; Jette Mikkelsen, 22, student of French and English; Klaus Jorgensen, 20 years, student of history.

**Budapest:** Five people took part in the demonstrations, one each from the USA, UK, Holland, West Germany and India. Bob Eaton, 24, member of A Quaker Action Group, Philadelphia; Satish Kumar, 31 years, a Gandhian activist from India; April Carter, 30 years, founder member of the Committee of 100, UK; Wolfgang Zucht, 39 years, Assistant Secretary War Resisters' International; Frank Feiner, 22 years, Social worker from Amsterdam.

The response of the public in Budapest was most encouraging. Two girls helped to straighten the banner, one man hung a necklace as a good luck token over the banner and later thrust it into April Carter's hands when she was being arrested. A large crowd gathered and a number of them expressed their support; some took a handful of leaflets and distributed them. As the police moved in and closed off the Square some students grabbed the banner and ran off with it.

The Hungarian News Agency put out reports saying that this action was aimed at supporting the anti-socialist forces in Czechoslovakia and to agitate against the policy pursued by the Hungarian government.

The demonstrators were arrested but soon released with an explanation that they were being released because they opposed NATO and the war in Vietnam. The authorities wanted them to be free to continue this work, but they should distinguish between 'imperialist action and socialist action'.

**Sofia:** Four Italians took part in the action. The Partito Radicale, Rome, the Italian radical socialist and anti-militarist political party and one of the associated bodies of the WRI did the organisation of the action. Marco Panella, 43, founder member and secretary of Partito Radicale; Marcello Baragheni, 23, an executive member of the party; Antonio Azzoleni, 26, student of politics and member of the Partito Radicale; Silvano Leonardi, 28, mother of a three-year-old child, a teacher in an Italian secondary school, and an active member of teachers' trade union.

During the morning of September 24 the group leafleted in cafes, bars, offices and parks. At 5 p.m. they recommenced their action in front of the Balkan Hotel. They had no banner. Instead, they had a thousand mimeographed sheets with slogans, which they distributed for 13 or 14 minutes until their arrest. The police kept them for half an hour before they were handed over to the State security service, by whom they were held and questioned until their release 30 hours later. Two were released in the early evening on Wednesday and the other two at midnight. Their action was reported on State television, and they received very good newspaper coverage in Italy.

The planning and organising of the demonstrations was carried out by April Carter and Michael Randle. The WRI published a 64-page document entitled 'Support Czechoslovakia' written by these two organisers.

## Biafra's struggle for independence

The crisis between Nigeria and Biafra was one of the many examples of the tragic inheritance of colonialism in Africa. The central government in Nigeria not only neglected the Biafran province of the country, it did not even try to solve the problem of hunger and deprivation in the region. The Biafrans demanded independence as a separate nation; in return they got military repression.

At its Vienna meeting, (August 12–17, 1968) the International Council unanimously accepted the following statement on the Biafran situation:

People everywhere must be free from hunger and from all wants which deny their supreme worth and dignity. They must be free from exploitation and political, economic, social and religious oppression if they are to achieve full growth and find cultural fulfilment. They must be free from the scourge of war and violence and the enslavement of military systems.

These are the freedoms which the War Resisters' International has struggled for and



continue to struggle for. They are the standards by which they judge situations which confront them, such as the one in Biafra.

At its meeting in Vienna on August 16, 1968, the Council of the WRI has been stirred by the challenge presented by the continuance of military action and the failure to solve the problem of hunger and deprivation in Nigeria. Military action must stop and those who supply the equipment of war must cease to do so forthwith. The conscience of the world demands this and the same conscience demands that food and medical supplies reach all those in need. It is the Council's view that immediate action on the part of the United Nations should be requested by the Governments concerned; and the consent of those in authority in Nigeria and Biafra should be sought to allow unarmed peace-keeping forces to carry out this urgent humanitarian task.

The Council of the WRI is mindful of the tragic inheritance of colonial rule in Africa, as elsewhere. The situation in Nigeria and Biafra is an example. The Council applauds freedom from colonial rule but recognises that freedom is hollow unless it is felt by all people and communities. National boundaries are often artificial and may involve serious injustices and oppressions. The path to true freedom for all must be sought and found, for if this is not done the continuance of bloodshed will be inevitable.

The Council urges all in positions of responsibility to recognise the importance of the fundamental claim and right to freedom, which includes the right of small communities to choose wider association with other communities for their economic and cultural well-being. It urges that the pursuit of such freedom be through negotiation, conciliation and all nonviolent means, but in doing so it recognises its own responsibility to identify itself with all communities seeking freedom and to do all it can to achieve what is after all man's birthright.

In making this public statement the Council of the WRI commends the subject to all Sections and Associates for their consideration, and requests them to find means of bringing its urgent demands before Governments and people everywhere.<sup>53</sup>

The critical situation in Biafra was again discussed at the thirteenth Triennial Conference held in Haverford, USA on August 25–31, 1969. The Conference prepared the draft of a resolution which was then adopted by the Council at its meeting soon after the Triennial Conference:

### **Boycott of arms to Nigeria and Biafra**

The resolution stated:

This WRI Conference recommends all WRI Sections and members in countries supplying either side in the Nigeria/Biafra conflict to join with others in demanding of their governments a complete cessation of the supply of arms to both sides and to members in other countries to bring pressure to bear upon arms-supplying governments. The Conference further appeals to both sides in the conflict to seek to resolve their differences by nonviolent means.<sup>54</sup>

## Invasion of Anguilla by the British

The British pushed Anguilla, one of its Caribbean colonies, into the St Kitts–Nevis–Anguilla Federation in February 1967. They decided that Anguilla should be ruled from Basseterre in St Kitts, which was 70 miles away. In May 1967 the central government police was forced to leave the island, which declared its independence of St Kitts, and called for direct British rule pending elections to form an individual associated state. A referendum in July 1967 confirmed the people's wish to be independent.

On January 16, 1969 Britain announced that it was cutting off development aid to the island. Following a positive referendum vote, Anguilla set up an independent republic on February 6, 1969 with a new constitution. The next month, on March 19, British forces invaded the island. War Resisters' International with the Peace Pledge Union and *Peace News* issued the following statement denouncing the British invasion of Anguilla:

It is not rhetoric to describe the invasion as deliberate aggression against a peaceful and orderly people asserting only their right to decide their own destiny. We also deplore the fact that yet again, as in the Suez affair, Parliament was not consulted or informed, and that the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Stewart, was deliberately evasive when replying to questions in the Commons.

In essence, if not in scale, the British Government's action is comparable to the Suez escapade, to the American war on Vietnam, to the Russian invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Its colonialist complexion is clear from the contrast with Rhodesia where an illegal but white regime is allowed to oppress the vast majority of its citizens.

Anguilla was pushed into the St. Kitts–Nevis–Anguilla Federation, but it broke away from the Federation in 1967, a step based on plebiscite. The alleged 'take over of the island by gangsters' has never been substantiated, nor was there any evidence of a breakdown of law and order. The WRI–PPU–PN statement continued:

We call on the Sections of the War Resisters' International and on everyone opposed to colonialism and military intervention to protest to the British Government and its representatives. We hope there will be protests and demonstrations at British Embassies and Consulates throughout the world.

In Britain we are seeking a deputation with the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary; we find it particularly deplorable that the police are being used in a colonialist adventure. We urge the troops and police involved, when they discover they have been misinformed and deceived, to refuse all further participation.

In Anguilla we welcome the decision not to use arms in resisting the British invasion and hope that passive and non-violent resistance, used to such effect in Czechoslovakia, can be employed to thwart the attempt to deprive the people of their rights.

We demand:

1. The immediate withdrawal of British troops and police.
2. The recognition by Britain and other countries that the people of Anguilla have a right to decide their own future.
3. That Britain send to this island suffering from years of colonialist neglect economic aid to further its development in accordance with the wishes of the people.

War Resisters' International, Peace Pledge Union, *Peace News*, 19 March 1969.<sup>55</sup>

## Mahatma Gandhi's Centenary

The year 1969 was Gandhi's centenary year. The War Resisters' International planned two major events for the occasion. One was to hold the thirteenth Triennial Conference with the title Liberation and Revolution – Gandhi's Challenge, and the other was to hold two seminars on subjects closely related to Gandhi's work for liberation and peace: Gandhi's Relevance Today and Problems of Economic Development.

The seminars were organised by the WRI in co-operation with the World Council of Peace. It was a follow-up of the decision taken at the Ostend meeting between the WRI and the WCP. One of the objectives of WRI was to develop contacts and, if possible, undertake collaborative work, with international organisations which might not have a pacifist base but were working for world peace. The WCP had shown interest in such an approach. As a result one seminar was held in Budapest, Hungary from September 29 to October 1, 1969 and the other from February 14 to 16, 1970 in London, UK. The Budapest seminar was entitled Gandhi's Relevance Today and the London seminar was on Problems of Economic Development.

## The Thirteenth Triennial Conference

### **Liberation and Revolution – Gandhi's Challenge**

A suggestion had been made in 1965 that a major WRI conference ought to be held in the USA. At that time it was hoped that the 1966 Triennial could take place in the USA with the help of the War Resisters League. There were two reasons behind such a suggestion. First, an international movement like the WRI could be truly international only if it understood and represented radical pacifist trends in different areas in the world. The tenth Triennial Conference held in India had enriched the International tremendously by focusing the attention of the world pacifist movement on nonviolent direct action and constructive ways of making peace, as worked out in India, inspired and led by Gandhi. Similarly it was thought that the civil rights movement had much to contribute to the richness of the International's activities. The worldwide campaign against the American war in Vietnam added force to the argument for holding the Triennial in the States.

The US peace movement, especially the radical pacifists, needed international support. On account of practical considerations the twelfth Triennial in 1966 could not be held in the States. By 1969 the argument for holding the conference there had become more pressing. The year also being the Gandhi centenary year added further strength to the proposal.

There was yet another reason in favour of this event to take place in the States. This was a period when young people had become very receptive to the idea of nonviolence. This mood was expressed in rock music, in the growth of 'alternative' literature, in lifestyles and in the 'flower power' movement. The venue for the Conference, to be held from August 25 to 31, 1969, was chosen with the help of the War Resisters League. It was the beautiful campus of the Quaker College in Haverford, a small town 10 miles from Philadelphia.

Among the 260 participants from all the continents, including Australia, there were 200 citizens of the USA. Twenty countries were represented and 69 international and national organisations sent delegates to participate in the deliberations. Organisations that could not send their delegates sent messages. Many individuals also sent messages of support, amongst them Benjamin Britten, Lord Fenner Brockway, Yehudi Menuhin, Archbishop Roberts,

Benjamin Spock, Erik Erikson, Allen Ginsberg, Alfred Kastler, Gunnar Myrdal, and Sean MacBride.

### **The Conference**

Igal Roodenko, Chairman of the War Resisters League, the hosts, welcomed the delegates. He said:

It is right and fitting that the WRI hold its 13th Triennial Conference here in the United States, a country which is for so long immersed in the longest and cruelest and least justified war in the memory of living man. But it is also right that we bear in mind how strange it is that this country, so deeply engaged in this business of butchers, should tolerate an international meeting of its most active and illegal opponents. And it is this kind of paradox that justifies our optimism. ... You might well ask how one can be an optimist in the face of oppression. ... Cynicism and pessimism in this world is very easy, but being hopeful is the happiest way of life. And with that I bid you a happy welcome.<sup>56</sup>

Michael Randle, the WRI Chairman welcomed the delegates:

I just want to say a little bit about how I see the situation. We are looking at the relevance of Gandhi and of what we loosely term Gandhian politics to the present situation, the present critical situation. There is always a danger, I think, in looking back to figures in the past, and in a sense I don't even call myself a Gandhian. I think that it can encourage a kind of cult of the personality and encourage us to look at the present in ways that may not be relevant. However, I do think that Gandhi's very positive insights are of tremendous relevance to the situation that we face.

I think the crisis can be defined both positively and negatively. Negatively, we are faced with a pile-up of nuclear weapons which can destroy mankind. . . . The second kind of crisis which I think we're being increasingly aware of is the ecological crisis, the pollution of air, water and so on, which demands a completely different life style from the one which has been adopted in most of the western countries.

The positive side of this strife is that more and more people, especially young people, are rejecting these consumer, bourgeois values, are rejecting militarism, and are rejecting the style of life which is poisoning the atmosphere and waterways. I think that we have some important things to say and some positive things to contribute to this young movement, though I don't mean that we should try to take it over or preach to them. A lot of young people these days are questioning all the values of their society. They're not accepting militarism any more. We not only have the hippie thing, but we have the draft resistance, the deserters, the civil rights campaign in Northern Ireland and the black movement in this country, which again is questioning the values right at a very fundamental level. Some of these people are not choosing political methods, but maybe their non-political methods will burrow away at this whole political structure in the end.

Some of them are choosing more or less violent methods, but even in these cases, I think we must see our essential comradeship with those who are rejecting the values of the society, even if we do not always agree with the methods that they use. ...

Finally, I would say that just as a crisis has its positive and negative sides, so our answer must be in both positive and negative terms. Negatively, we can say that where

they enlist and conscript we will subvert and sabotage; on the positive side I can do no better than echo a quote from Bernadette Devlin. She was talking about the situation in Northern Ireland, but I think we can extend it to what's happening elsewhere. "For every inch that they burn, we will build a home."<sup>57</sup>

In his comments on the Triennial Harold Bing wrote:

It illustrated the fact that world war and world peace are no longer decided in the Chancelleries of Europe. The world has in a very real sense become one world. Europe has declined in relative importance. The United States and 'the Third World' are now of major importance. The Europeans were a minority of the Conference. It illustrated the growing concern for world peace of many groups of people outside the traditional peace movement; in churches, political organisations, trade unions etc.

It emphasised the intimate relationship between the struggle for peace and abolition of militarism on the one hand, and the struggle for a new social order on a radically different basis from the present ones on the other hand. War had come to be recognised as an inevitable expression of social systems based on exploitation, on selfish competition, on the tyranny of authority over human beings.

In its title 'Revolution and Liberation: Gandhi's Challenge', it recognised that the great issue facing mankind today is not whether or not there will be revolution, but whether that revolution will be violent or nonviolent. What will be the consequences of the adoption of one or the other method?<sup>58</sup>

### **Work in commissions**

During the course of the Conference, members met in commissions to discuss and make recommendations on specific topics. It was in these commissions that the participants had the additional possibility of expressing their opinion on the topics of their choice and that much of the constructive work of the Conference was done. Commission reports presented to the Conference were subsequently considered by the business conference, which took place immediately after the theme conference ended. The business conference took some decisions and passed them on to the Council for their implementation as far as possible.

The commissions were: Vietnam, USA/Japan Security Treaty and the Question of Okinawa, Nonviolent Positions on Violent Revolutions, Training in Nonviolent Action, Nonviolent Action, Minorities, Ecology, Students and Youth Movements, Africa, Latin America, NATO, Warsaw Pact and Security of Europe, Middle East, Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution.

The Conference took a number of decisions on the basis of commissions' reports. The following motions were adopted:

#### **Commission on Vietnam**

This Triennial conference of the War Resisters' International calls for a unilateral cease-fire by the USA and its allies, as a first step towards ending the war in Vietnam and urges the other side to respond. We call for the withdrawal of US and allied troops to begin immediately and be completed as soon as possible. All military aid to the Saigon government should cease at once.

We call for the release of the 200,000 political prisoners (Buddhists, Catholics, students, workers, etc.) in South Vietnam.

We support the voiceless majority of the Vietnamese people who want peace, independence and neutrality, and who are the victims of the continued conflict.

We consider that the future independence of Vietnam should be insured by the neutralization of the whole of South East Asia.

To make good the war damage there should be large-scale economic, cultural and technical assistance to Vietnam channeled through international agencies and in accordance with the expressed wishes of the Vietnamese people.

There is great need for extensive study of the tactics necessary to achieve the above stated aims.<sup>59</sup>

### **Commission on US/Japan Security Treaty and the Okinawa Problem**

The Conference recommends:

Because we believe that the presence of armaments, particularly nuclear armaments, in Japan and Okinawa is a threat to world peace;

Because this military occupation constitutes a daily oppression on the Japanese, and in particular, the Okinawan people;

Because these armaments put human life, human values and human dignity in constant jeopardy;

The War Resisters' International demands that both parties refuse to renew the US/Japan Security Treaty upon its expiration on June 22, 1970.

We demand the total demilitarisation of Okinawa and mainland Japan by the United States, including the abandonment of all its military installations therein and the cessation of the ports of call of its military ships, submarines and aircraft thereon. And, we demand that the United States relinquish its political, military and economic control over Okinawa.<sup>60</sup>

### **Commission on Africa**

Nonviolence has been woven into the life of Africa for centuries.

Although historians, here as elsewhere, have emphasised wars, power politics and empires, the life style and organisation of a number of African societies have had many of the characteristics which keynote speakers at this conference have described as the ultimate goal of man in the overdeveloped or 'ultra' developed world. Those who are hung up on rigid political structures, work compulsion, repressed sexual drives, and power madness would do well to examine the stateless societies and social and cultural values which modern specialists on Africa are only now placing on record. Four hundred years of ruthless exploitation has resulted in terrible destruction of the life and values of African peoples and is at the root of much of the chaos which exists in modern Africa today, but below the surface of wars, coups, poverty and corruption still survive fundamental values and traditions upon which Africans can build for themselves a way of life that will achieve in human relations an advancement comparable to the progress achieved by industrialized nations in technology.

In modern history nonviolence in the struggle for liberation in Africa can be examined from two aspects:

1. completely indigenous nonviolent movements and actions for liberation, which, like the rest of real African history, is just in the process of being discovered;
2. the effect of external nonviolent influences upon the direction of the liberation of Africa.

In considering what role the WRI can have in the present and future development of Africa the second point has more relevance at this time, keeping always in mind, however, the limitations placed upon our evaluation by the distortion, perversion and glossing over of the history of African peoples to which we, along with the rest of the world, have been subjected.

A brief summary of the effect of external nonviolent influences upon African peoples would include:

1. Gandhi's work in South Africa . . .
2. The nonviolent achievement of independence by India . . .
3. The influence of external nonviolent *movements* upon political events in Africa during the 1950's and early 1960's.
  - a) co-operation of American, European and Asian direct action groups with the South African liberation movements from 1952 to 1960.
  - b) the initiative of these same direct action groups in keeping the nuclear arms race away from African soil and in organising the Accra Positive Action Conference ...
  - c) the co-operation of the French nonviolent movements with the African liberation movements in Francophone Africa, particularly Algeria,
  - d) co-operation of the World Peace Brigade with the liberation movements of Zambia and South West Africa in 1960's.
4. The influence of nonviolent *individuals* upon political leaders and movements in Africa e.g. Michael Scott, Jayaprakash Narayan, Pierre Martin, Jean van Lierde, Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland, Martin Luther King, . . .

The trend *away* from nonviolence in Africa can be dated from the development of the Congo crisis in 1960 when African leaders feared a reversal of the march towards political independence. Although Zambia achieved its independence, primarily through nonviolent means in 1964, all of the other liberation movements concluded that Algeria pointed the way to liberty and violent struggle, which has been the main element in the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and the Portuguese territories.

What is the situation today? The government of the Republic of South Africa appears to have been successful at this stage in history in ruthlessly suppressing the liberation movements in South Africa (Azania) and South West Africa (Namibia). . . . The liberation movements in Portuguese territories have been the most successful in carrying on their revolution through violent means but have a very long way to go. The liberation movement in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) has not made headway and one element of that movement is seeking a new approach.

As far as the independent states are concerned, Nigeria and Biafra have been engaged in a bloody war; Francophone Africa is still very much dominated by the mother country; Algeria has reverted more to Arab nationalism than to social revolution; Guinea is suffering internal dissension; most of the former English colonies have succumbed to Western domination in one form or another. Only Tanzania, the former trust territory, has had reasonable success so far in travelling her own road towards political, economic, social and cultural independence.

With this background in mind the WRI Commission on Africa gave careful attention to what role the WRI could play in Africa given the historical situation and the nature of the WRI as an organisation. In delineating possible areas of activity, it was felt important to establish first what the WRI, as an organisation should *not* attempt.

1. The WRI should not attempt to engage in dialogue concerning these problems at

UN or African State diplomatic level.

2. The WRI should not attempt war relief work.
3. The WRI should not attempt to solve African economic problems on any grand scale.

It was recognised that efforts along these lines could be very important but that existing organisations were in a position to do a much better job and that only the Africans themselves should be solving some of these problems without outside interference.

The following is presented as a realistic programme:

1 *Re-Open the Dialogue on the way of nonviolence in Africa.*

- a. *Information packets* with specific examples of effective nonviolent action relevant to Africa should be sent once more to all African liberation movements, heads of state, and the Organisation of African Unity.
- b. *Conferences.*
  - 1) Reconsideration of a meeting between leaders of the nonviolent movements and representatives of liberation movements on the theme: 'Liberation Movements Challenge the Nonviolent Revolutionists'.
  - 2) African student conferences in host countries set up by the nonviolent movements in those countries.
- c. *Disseminate information* about Africa; particularly what is going on in Biafra and Tanzania. . . . The WRI should offer to be a clearing house for such information, . . .
- d. *Dialogue with Liberation Movements Representatives.* These representatives are often found in countries where WRI has chapters. The American chapter, in particular, has a unique opportunity to carry out this suggestion in view of the large number of liberation movement representatives who attend the UN. It should be emphasised that these discussions would be at the level of nonviolent revolution and what does or does not constitute nonviolence. This is particularly important since many Africans base their claim that nonviolence has failed on a misunderstanding of what constitutes nonviolent revolutionary action and what is actually war through politics of a violent nature.

2. *Research*

Even among ourselves we are not sufficiently aware of the research that has been done on nonviolence. Nevertheless this research should be brought up-to-date through the use of interested scholars and *put out in a form which would appeal to non-pacifists, such as the African revolutionaries.*

3. *Political Action in Home Countries*

In those countries where policy and behaviour, governmental and non-governmental, has supported repressive regimes or interfered with the internal affairs of Africa, WRI Sections have a responsibility either on their own or through other organisations to initiate campaigns of exposure and pressure to end such policies and behaviour.

4. *Presence of the WRI*

WRI should consider supporting individual WRI members who, because of their history of close relationships with African leaders and scene, can constantly place before African people the WRI concern and feed the WRI accurate information about Africa.

Nowhere else in the world has the world nonviolent movement played a more impor-



tant role than in Africa for a period, no matter how brief, at the decision making level. We should not be blind to the great possibilities of mutual association and action in the future, even though historical circumstances prevent a more significant association at this time.<sup>61</sup>

### **Latin American commission**

Latin America, half a hemisphere with more than 260 million people divided into more than a score of nations, is a too often ignored part of the world. Diverse in its languages, customs and problems, it shares a common history of colonialisation, exploitation and imperialism. The most common denominator is that of hunger and lack of personal freedom. Of its more than 500 revolutions none can be called complete, and at present about three quarters of its people live under military governments, aided and abetted by more than one of the developed nations, but principally by the U.S.

One of the points the commission made was:

In view of the general ignorance of the realities of Latin American life and circumstances, we urge the WRI to make Latin America an increasingly large part of its interest and programme. To this end we respectfully suggest the following:

That the WRI establish a study section to investigate the potentials for WRI activities throughout the world regarding Latin America and to establish connections with Latin American groups and individuals looking towards common action.

We seek to recognise the complexity of the situation, and think that the greatest contribution we can make, aside from identification with our Latin American brothers, is to remove, within our own countries, those hindrances, (military, economic, and cultural) that make revolutionary social changes in Latin America difficult if not impossible. . . .

We support those liberation movements within the various Latin American countries, and while we feel that revolutionary nonviolence is a better way to achieve social change, we accept the fact that people must be free to make the revolution they will make, and if goaded beyond endurance by the enormity of their problems, they resort to violence, we the exploiting developed nations are not in a moral position to condemn them in light of our own violence. And we will not thereby withdraw our support of their right to independence. We do however commend to those who would make revolution the options of militant and aggressive nonviolence and promise whatever help available to us and which is required of us if in their judgment it is needed.<sup>62</sup>

## **A call for a Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution**

The Conference agreed that a manifesto for achieving a nonviolent revolution was needed and articulated this consensus in a paper as follows:

### *Preamble: Why Revolution?*

We must spell out the conditions in the world which make a revolution imperative. Topics covered would include unequal distribution of world resources, nuclear and

CBW weaponry, racism, population, pollution, etc. Without being an academic exercise, this section should be detailed and documented.

#### *The Revolutionary Vision*

We have a vision of the world we want to create. In this section we should describe that vision for different areas of human relationship, being as specific as possible without fooling ourselves or others about the extent of our control over the future. There could be sections on the following areas, at least: political life, education, economics, forms of cultural association, human-scale technology, humanist ecology, defence of values (instead of property).

#### *Why the Revolution Must be Nonviolent*

It must be made clear that a nonviolent revolution is not just a violent revolution without violence. All of the information we have, from sociology and psychology, from history and philosophy, about the relationship of means to ends should be put into a cogent and concise statement. The WRI statement on wars of liberation is very relevant here.

#### *Strategy of Nonviolent Revolution*

The ideas of cells of pacifists, of supporting and building upon natural groupings of peoples, of establishing parallel institutions to undermine oppressive governments, of maintaining, even in the midst of violent revolution, forces of nonviolent action and values which work for the same objectives as the violent revolutionary organisation without merging with it, of human-scale government and technology, all of these ideas and more that have been brought before this conference suggest ways that we can work for world-wide revolution. What we need, and what these ideas point to, is a form of strategy that is simultaneously revolutionary and supportive of life. With it, we will not fall into the traps of either irrelevance or counter-revolution.

We particularly ask for the help of those who have been involved in revolutionary movements in drafting this section.

Please send your criticisms and suggestions.<sup>63</sup>

### **Commission on Training for Nonviolent Action**

#### *Recommendations:*

1. That the WRI is commended for its publication of information on nonviolent training centres, and urged to continue publication more frequently as an otherwise unavailable co-ordination service.
2. That the WRI set up a committee to gather aggressively information on training, to analyse it, and to develop models which might be applied on a transnational level.
3. That the WRI consider setting up a short-term training project, applying what has been learned about training, with the participation of people from many countries, and looking towards direct action participation.<sup>64</sup>

### **Commission on the Middle East**

The commission was aware of the historical forces and conflicting claims which have shaped the continuing and potentially catastrophic conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Instead of going into the analysis of the issues involved the commission decided to emphasise the perspective of the present and offer its proposals for a movement towards a just and lasting settlement.

Despite the roles played by big powers in creating the present situation the point the com-

mission wished to focus upon was the fundamental issue of the claims of Jews and Palestinians on the ownership of Palestine. Any arrangement which excluded the rights of the one in favour of the other could be neither just nor lasting. The commission felt that in the process of creating the State of Israel the fundamental rights of the Palestinian Arabs had been and continued to be grossly violated. In effect, the Palestinian people were rendered homeless to provide a homeland for the Jews; and Israel had continued to expand at their expense. In so far as the Arabs had consistently refused to accept this outcome as final, Israel's expansion had been predicated upon the fear of and the pressures from the Arabs. The spectre of a growing Palestinian diaspora would continue to haunt Israel and exacerbate the Middle Eastern crisis until the Palestinians' basic grievances had been met, and their identity recognised.

The Israeli delegates stated that any non-military solution of the Middle East conflict must involve the redressing of the fundamental injustice which Israel's creation entailed for the Palestinian nation. In so far as it touched on national identity and the very commitment of a people to their soil, the dispossession and displacement of an entire people could not be compensated only materially. Hence a lasting solution must include (a) recognition by Israel of the right of refugees to repatriation and/or rehabilitation; (b) renunciation of the policy of annexing and colonising the areas occupied during the war of June 1967.

While the recognition of Arab rights does not put into question the rights of the Israeli people, it does involve a redefinition of that part of Zionist ideology which accords priority to the rights of Jews, as is most evident in the Israeli Law of Return. It is not difficult to understand Arab refusal to accord recognition and legitimacy to a sovereign state which prevents them from returning to their homes on the theory that the Jews of the world have a more pressing need and greater right to settle in Palestine. Similarly, a Palestinian nationalist ideology which excludes the yearnings and rights of the Israeli people is unlikely to inspire the confidence among them which is essential to the creation of Jewish–Arab co-operation in the Middle East. . . .

While the military activities of the Palestinian liberation movements have created a sense of hope and solidarity among the Palestinian people, it is, nevertheless our conviction that militant, nonviolent methods of struggle are best suited and most likely to gain the goal of producing a political arrangement which would permit Jews and Arabs to live in harmony. It is our feeling that a revolutionary movement which fails to bring into full relief the basic contradictions of the system against which it is struggling, is failing in its revolutionary obligations. The basic contradiction of the Israeli system is that it justifies itself on a moral basis, while its creation and continued existence in its present form has entailed the rejection of the rights of the Palestinians. This contradiction must be made explicit to the Israeli people through the tactics of militant, political and nonviolent struggle to assert the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.

The commission proposed that the following actions be organised:

1. The "exodus" of Palestinian refugees to their homeland by means of nonviolent marches from the bordering territories and by ship sent to Haifa.
2. Economic non-co-operation such as boycotts of Israeli products in the occupied territories.
3. Reconstruction of houses and rehabilitation of Arabs in occupied or Israeli territory in order to prevent further Arab emigration from these areas.

4. Contacts with leaders of the Palestinian liberation movements in order to persuade them to adopt nonviolent tactics.
5. A team to investigate the repressive actions and atrocities being committed in the occupied territories by the Israeli occupation authorities, and also the violations of human rights occurring in the neighbouring Arab countries. The findings of this team should be given the maximum international publicity.

The Commission believes that War Resisters' International is a most appropriate organisation to take the initiative and to direct its resources for the purposes of aiding the implementation of the above proposals. Some members of the Commission have expressed their intention to dedicate themselves to the realisation of these tasks.<sup>65</sup>

### **Motion on Nonviolent Revolution and Developing Countries**

One of the primary needs of a world without war is to create conditions for a peaceful society. Taking into consideration the fact that the world is divided today into two economic categories: the developing and the affluent countries and considering the growing feeling among the people of the developing countries that the wealth of the world be shared, the Conference thinks it important that the following points should be taken into account:

1. A revolution should not lead to imitation of the affluent society. This would mean a flight from the plight of poverty, disease and illiteracy into the problems of affluence, dehumanization, mechanization and alienation.
2. The aid given by the so-called advanced countries both in the East as well as in the West to the developing countries is almost always given with some 'strings' attached to it. Even where there is no interest charged, the conditions of the market and currency are so manipulated that the loan receiving countries have to repay a much larger amount than what they had received. This leads the Conference to the conclusion that even where self-sufficiency is not possible, self-reliance is definitely a better approach than depending upon foreign aids for development.
3. Several developing countries do already have people's movements, traditions and in some cases, even government policies that take into account the risks involved both in poverty and in affluence, and are trying to evolve their own methods of integrated development. The Sarvodaya movement in India, the rural reforms in Tanzania, the constructive approach of the Buddhists in Vietnam, the concept of Intermediate Technology, co-operative developments in Israel, the development of small scale industries, and self-help movements in several countries are some such examples. The Conference whole-heartedly supports such experiments and movements and strongly commends them to WRI Sections and members. A nonviolent revolution of the world will have different character in different parts of the world, and the Conference believes that nonviolent revolution in the developing countries would mean a qualitative social change based on the principles of self-reliance, dignity of labour, respect for the individual, the spirit of service and sharing among the members of the community, participatory democracy and a face-to-face society.<sup>66</sup>

### **Chairman's closing speech**

Michael Randle stated that although 'Normally, I suppose I would be expected to try to draw together some of the strands, some of the various thoughts and ideas from the meetings and commissions' and that it was an important task, he would not try to do that:

I would only say something about my personal reactions to the worth of this conference. I think it has shown us the need for certain directions or certain work. Not merely for action, which I know most of us have felt the need for in the past, but also for a strategy of action; not merely for talk, but for some kind of comprehensive theory about change and . . . *revolution*. I think we have to explore ways of developing our intellectual tradition, which, though I think it is rich, is somewhat diverse and defused. However, I think the impression that I will take away from this conference, the thing that has really impressed and moved me, has been coming into contact with enormous vitality and youthfulness and really a different way of looking at things, a different kind of relationship between people that has been very much in evidence during the sessions but even more after the sessions. And this is perhaps why I made the rather sweeping suggestion that our next conference should be one long party. The key to the revolution is the change in relationships, which must in turn entail change in the structures, in the social structures, economic structures and so on, but the key is what we are as human beings and how we relate to other human beings. In other conferences, in other meetings, I think perhaps we have attached too much importance to attacking the structures, to even analysing the structures, though that's got to be done too. Out of this conference I have felt that the really important thing has been coming into contact with this vitality and this fantastic relationship among some of the people here, which I feel can provide the dynamic for all the other changes which are necessary to bring about the nonviolent revolution.<sup>67</sup>

### **A few highlights of the Conference**

One of the remarkable outcomes of this Conference was the inspiration and strength Daniel Ellsberg derived from his experience and encounters. It was this experience that finally convinced him that he should take the courageous step of publicly exposing the 'Pentagon Papers'. Amongst other insights into the working of the administration the papers notoriously showed how at times the defence establishment was acting without the president's knowledge in pursuing the bombing of Vietnam and Cambodia. At the Conference Ellsberg had the opportunity of having intimate discussions with several pacifists including Rev. Martin Niemöller, Vice-Chairman of WRI, who had served as a U-boat commander during the first World War and had later spent several years in a concentration camp for opposing Hitler.

### **Randy Kehler – ready for prison**

Randy Kehler, who was due to be sent to jail for refusing military service, ended his talk with the following words:

Yesterday our friend Bob went to jail. This is getting to be like a wedding we had a

month ago, when Jane and I were married on the beach in San Francisco, because I was crying a lot. Our friends Warren and John and Terry and many others are already in jail and I'm really not as sad about that as it may seem. There is something really beautiful about it and I'm very excited that I'll be invited to join them soon. Last night . . . Igal said: "you have nothing to worry about, because you know that God will take care of you." I am not someone who talks about God very much, in fact I'm not sure that I even believe in anything I could call God, but . . . I know that, and I think Bob and David know that, but there's one other reason why I guess I can look forward to jail, without any remorse or fear, and that's because I know that everyone here and lots of people around the world like you will carry on.<sup>68</sup>

### **Vigil in support of Bob Eaton – at the Philadelphia Court**

Another important highlight of the Triennial was the court trial of one of the participants. Bob Eaton had refused military service, hence was sentenced to three years imprisonment for non-co-operation with the Selective Service System.<sup>69</sup>

A vigil in front of the court in Philadelphia where Eaton's imprisonment was announced was held with most of those attending the Conference along with many others from the town participating in it. Some sat inside the courtroom, others stood in vigil outside the building. Eaton's courageous stand and his statement to the court generated a spirit of activism among the Conference participants, and a feeling of international solidarity with American draft resisters.

The Haverford Triennial proved to be very prolific in its productivity. There were many projects suggested for the pacifist movement, especially the WRI, to follow and discussions on a great variety of issues and activities. The enormous wealth of ideas contributed by some of the most experienced pacifists would always remain a source of inspiration for the future work of the movement.

### **International Year of Human Rights – 1968**

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all member countries to publicise the text of the Declaration and 'to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools, and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories'. It was the affirmation of collective faith in the equality of the rights of men and women and in the right of the individual to live with dignity. At the same time it was a unilateral pledge to work for a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

But in reality very little happened in that direction in the following years. In fact over the next 20 years progress was quite different to what one would have expected in an age far advanced in technology and in sociological research and theory. Hence it was appropriate for the UN to create a new occasion to push the idea and try to assure it was accorded due importance. The Year 1968 was declared the International Human Rights Year.

The WRI responded to the proposal by having discussions on the subject, bringing out a special issue of *War Resistance* with a view to help spreading the information and drawing the

attention of the general public to current issues of importance. It reproduced the original Universal Declaration and conventions held by the UN to go into the various aspects of human rights. For instance conventions on social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, punishment of the crime of genocide, racial discrimination, status of refugees, rights of women, different sides of issues connected with marriage, slavery, forced labour, education and discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. This issue of *War Resistance* also dealt with the work of the Council of Europe on human rights. In its lead article it said:

Today human rights are denied in every country. The violation of the basic right, 'the right to life', has reached an unprecedented level. Lives of thousands of innocent human beings are being destroyed by bullets, bombs and starvation. So-called highly civilised societies are manufacturing and piling up all kinds of weapons of genocide and total destruction.

As the 'right to life' is a basic right, so is the 'right not to take life'. Nonetheless, millions of young men and in some countries also women, are conscripted into armies to participate in the process of preparing for and actually carrying out killing and destruction. People who challenge the right of governments to conscript, who refuse to be ordered to do military service on grounds of conscience and who want to assert their 'right not to take life' are put behind bars and tortured. A very small proportion of UN member countries can claim that they recognize this right, but even most of those do so only during peacetime. How many among them would uphold this right above everything else in time of war is doubtful.

Moreover, once a man has become a soldier it is hard and often impossible for him to get out of the forces, even though it is considered that there are greater chances of the awakening of one's conscience after having some experience of military life, particularly during the time of war. But no! The 'right to life' and the 'right not to take life' are less important than the duty to look after the interests of the rulers!

. . . The Convention defines genocide as the 'committing of certain acts with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such'. The Vietnamese being killed in the most barbarous of all wars may not be classified strictly under the category of 'religious, ethnic, national or racial group as such' but it would need a feelingless legal 'computer' not to admit that in reality the United States is bent upon destroying a nation which has chosen to go left. The leader article in the *International Herald Tribune* (Paris, Feb. 19, 1968) . . . put this point effectively: '. . . the US military command has concluded that the only way to stop the harassment and disruption is to destroy the enemy. [This] has become the United States' major strategy in South Vietnam.'

. . . According to Larisa Bogoraza Daniel and Pavel Litvinov the trial of the four writers was carried out in violation of the most important principles of Soviet law. Foreign journalists and observers were kept out of the trial and not allowed at a press conference given by the wife of one of the accused. These are probably only a few of the many who are undergoing the greatest hardship in labour camps, not only in Soviet Russia but in many other countries too.

In India, which claims to be the largest democracy in the world, and in size it is, and which has the background of Mahatma Gandhi's work during four decades, the government does not hesitate to fire on a crowd of demonstrators expressing their indignation about the miserable conditions they live in. Students who want to share in the running

of their own affairs are sometimes treated brutally. Human life there is cheaper than bullets. . . . Wasn't it Jawaharlal Nehru whose suggestion it was to celebrate 1968 as International Human Rights Year?

This article on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration cannot be concluded without regret about the way member countries of the United Nations have ignored the most significant recommendation the General Assembly made immediately after it adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It called upon all member countries to publicise the text of the Declaration . . . *particularly in schools and other educational institutions* . . . In other words it was expected that the Declaration should be utilized as an important means of 'education for peace and international understanding'.

The article ended with this declaration:

The Human Rights year provides an opportunity for an honest stocktaking of the treatment we have given to the Declaration and also an earnest pledge to fulfil our commitments. The year will be celebrated in many lands with much ceremony and ritual. We cannot be satisfied with ritual alone. We have to act. It is up to individuals and groups who are interested in human rights in our society to find out what is to be done and how this task should be fulfilled.<sup>70</sup>

## Gandhi's Relevance Today

### International seminar in Budapest

For the three days before the one-hundredth birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, October 2, 1969, there was a gathering in Budapest in which 60 people came together to consider the relevance of his life and thought today. It was a seminar organised by the WRI jointly with World Council of Peace (WCP). The hosts were the Scientific Commission of the Hungarian Peace Council and the Hungarian Gandhi Centenary Commission. Countries represented were Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, India, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Poland, Mongolia, Italy, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Norway, Roumania, USA and USSR.

Among the main speakers there were Jozsef Bogнар (Hungary), S. Sinha (Indian Ambassador), Raymond Goor (Belgium), Donald Groom (UK), Gyula Germanus (Hungary), Gyergy Haraszti (Hungary), La Pira (Italy), Sandor Purityi (Hungary), Romesh Chandra (India), Prof. Chelyshev (USSR), Devi Prasad (India), Istvan Kubik (Hungary), H. D. Malaviya (India), Mihaly Simai (Hungary), Szadeczky-Kardoss Elemer (Hungary).

Donald Groom, who had worked with Mahatma Gandhi, wrote about the seminar in *War Resistance* 31:

It was a success – but the credit must go to Gandhi himself whose life and thought could be seen to be so significant and relevant to challenge people from such different backgrounds and with such different economic and political approaches. It was clear that Gandhi was relevant to world peace to all present and had been studied in great depth by people of Soviet Russia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia as well as by people of India, the United States and Great Britain. Some of us found the scholarly papers from Hungarian Professors beyond us in their depth of analysis – but how good to have them to study.



In the first session I read a Statement on behalf of the War Resisters' International in which I said 'the WRI is founded upon the belief that *War is a crime against humanity*. Its members refuse to give sanction to war under any circumstances and seek to remove all causes of war. . . . It recognises that the individual conscience has a supreme authority over the claims of any human institution, . . . but seeks to establish a sense of loyalty and identity with the whole human family beyond all barriers of nation, race, colour and creed. . . .

What is tremendously relevant today is the fact that it wasn't so much 'mankind' but individual human beings who mattered to Gandhi. For him broad generalisations, general principles, had to be applied at the personal level.

In this nuclear age the abandonment of violence is paramount for the sake of human survival and the challenge that Gandhi brought to the world, in particular the application of nonviolence to the social, political and economic struggle, is of absolute relevance today. But what is also very relevant today, is his determination, his absolute resolve, to root out evil, exploitation, injustice and all inhuman practices. The WRI seeks to discover dynamic, yet nonviolent methods of achieving the same objectives.

Gandhi guided and counselled leadership, but at the end of his life he realised that the creation of the new society must be pursued at the grass roots and called his followers away from positions of power to the role of service. Gandhi's vision of true power resting in the hand of the common people is as relevant today as ever: the power to resist oppression and all human exploitation must be consciously felt by the common people. Then militarism and war will be ended for all time.

There was wide interest in this statement and several said that they had heard of the War Resisters' International for the first time.

Unfortunately, in spite of intense efforts, April Carter was unable to receive an entry visa so could not present her paper on Disarmament. Devi Prasad spoke on 'Independence' giving a fresh interpretation of Gandhi's thought and action; Romesh Chandra, Secretary of the World Council of Peace, spoke warmly of the inspiration he gained from Gandhi's leadership in the Indian Independence struggle.<sup>71</sup>

### **Appeal to all who cherish peace: Seminar Statement**

On the occasion of the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi the participants in the Gandhi International Seminar, held in Budapest from September 29 to October 1, 1969, appeal to all who cherish peace, to join hands in intensifying their efforts for complete disarmament, for independence of all peoples and for the ending of the scourge of hunger.

Mahatma Gandhi devoted his whole life to working for the unity of the Indian people in their struggle for independence, against colonial rule, for a new life, free from the misery and oppression imposed on them by British imperialism and for a new world from which war and war weapons have been banished for all time.

The three-day Gandhi International Seminar, convened on the initiative of the War Resisters' International and the World Council of Peace discussed those key problems facing the world. Men and women coming from different international and national organisations holding varying and different views on some questions discussed ways to strengthen the work for peace by increasing the co-operation and joint action of the forces of peace.

It is in the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, the spirit of unity, that the participants in the seminar call for the continuation of the work begun in this seminar, work aimed above all at creating that mutual understanding among different organisations working for peace, which is so vital at this time.

In the coming months, we propose to join in the initiatives for the holding of discussions, seminars and common actions on several urgent questions of peace – to start with, on the issue of disarmament and on the problems facing developing countries.

We invite all international and national organisations interested in world peace to join us in these initiatives.

Peace can be won by the direct action of the peoples themselves – this is the message of the Gandhi International Seminar.<sup>72</sup>

This seminar was an unusual instance of collaboration between the communist-sponsored peace movement and an independent pacifist international organisation.

#### Notes Chapter 16

- 1 'Statement at 16th St. Baptist Church, May, 1969' in Clayborne Carson (ed.), *An Autobiography of Martin Luther King*, IPM in association with ABACRS, London, p.209
- 2 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 7, London, November 8, 1958, item 8, 'Argentina–Chile Dispute', p.5
- 3 Letter to Council Members and Sections, dated August 4, 1950, WRI Archives with the International Institute For Social History, Amsterdam
- 4 'World Tension and Korea', *The War Resister* 58, Winter 1950, p.13
- 5 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Holte, Denmark, July 24–26, 1953, item 6-g, p.10
- 6 'Conference Report', *War Resistance*, 2:7, 4th quarter 1963, p.10
- 7 Ibid. p.11
- 8 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 8, Enfield, London, November 4, 1962, item 13, p. 5
- 9 Ibid. item 14, p.5
- 10 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 9, Enfield, London, January 13, 1963, item 9, p.5
- 11 Minutes of the International Council Meeting 1, Solborg Ungdomsskole, Stavanger, Norway, July 31, 1963, item 10, p.2
- 12 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 1, October 5–6, 1963, item 13, 'Emergency Laws in West Germany', p.9
- 13 Letter from Rev. Herbert Günneberg, WRI Council member, Essen, Germany, dated May 23, 1965, *WRI Newsletter* 39, June 2, 1965,
- 14 'Urgent Appeal', *WRI Newsletter* 40, dated June 11, 1965, p.1
- 15 *Emergency Laws, a Bill Before the Parliament, Federal German Republic*, a WRI publication with Introduction by Harold Bing and Preface by Devi Prasad, December 1, 1964, Prisoners for Peace Day
- 16 *WRI Newsletter* 59, September 29, 1967, p.9
- 17 *WRI Newsletter* 44, January 6, 1966, p.6
- 18 Notes on Meeting with World Council of Peace, Ostend, Belgium, October 3–4, War Resisters' International Documents 28/64, from author's archives
- 19 Participants of the meeting were: Walter Diehl, WCP Secretary; Prof. Nikolai Matkovsky, WCP Secretary; Stanislaw Trepczynski, Member of the Presidential Committee of the Polish Peace Committee; Andrew L. Walker, personal assistant to Prof. J. D. Bernal, Chairman of the WCP; Madame Rosy Holender, Gen. Secretary of the Belgian Union for the Defence of Peace and Martin Hall, member of the Editorial Board of the Bulletin of the WCP represented the WCP and the WRI was represented by Harold Bing, Chairman; Devi Prasad, General Secretary; Michael Randle and

- Jean van Lierde, Council Members; David McReynolds, Field Secretary of the War Resisters League, USA and Herbert Stubenrauch, Chairman of Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, Germany.
- 20 'Ostend Conference of WRI and WCP', *War Resistance*, 2:11, 4th quarter 1964
  - 21 Fred Bloom, Evert Huisman, George Lakey, Aldo Capitini, Narayan Desai and Devi Prasad, *Training in Non-violence*, WRI, London, 1965, p.2
  - 22 *Ibid.*, p.2–4
  - 23 Rod Prince, 'Training in Non-violence', *War Resistance* 2:15, 4th quarter 1965, pp.7–8
  - 24 Fred Blum et al., *Training in Non-violence*, WRI, London, 1965, pp.14–21
  - 25 Devi Prasad, 'Education for a World without War', *War Resistance* 2:18-19, 3rd and 4th quarter, 1966, p.6
  - 26 *Ibid.*, (Joint Communique), p.39
  - 27 Minutes of International Council Meeting 4, La Domus Pacis, Rome, Italy, April 7, 1966, item 6, 'Study Conference', p.3
  - 28 *War Resistance* 2:17, 2nd quarter 1966, p.3
  - 29 *Ibid.* p.4
  - 30 *Ibid.* pp.7–8
  - 31 *Ibid.* p.3
  - 32 I travelled widely in the States in 1967 giving talks on the WRI and Gandhi's philosophy. When I went to the south, I was amazed to note that very few people who came to my meetings knew why I was expected to talk about WRI activities, especially its opposition to the war in Vietnam. Only a few of them knew anything at all about the role their country was playing in such a far-away land, and most of them had only the vaguest knowledge about it.
  - 33 William Ledwich and Moira Woods, *Ireland and Vietnam*, Thoreau Press, Dublin, 1968, pp.5–15
  - 34 *WRI Newsletter* 35, February 4, 1965, p.1–2
  - 35 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 12, Enfield, London, October 11, 1965, item 9, p.4
  - 36 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Dublin, Ireland, July 28–August 2, 1965, item.13, 'Vietnam', pp.9–12
  - 37 *Ibid.*
  - 38 *WRI News Release*, December 29, 1964, p.4
  - 39 'The WRI 12th Triennial Conference, Proposed Action', *War Resistance* 2:17, 2nd quarter 1966, p.11
  - 40 *Ibid.* pp.16–18
  - 41 Quoted in Devi Prasad, *They Love It but Leave It – American Deserters*, WRI, London, 1971, p.28
  - 42 *Ibid.* pp.24–5
  - 43 From *The Guardian*, March 7, 1969;  
Devi Prasad, 'America's War in Vietnam and her GIs', *American Deserters*, WRI, London, p.3
  - 44 'Support for the Open Letter by Seven U.S. Draft Resisters to Mr. Nixon during his London visits', *WRI Statements*, WRI, London, 1972, pp.25–6
  - 45 *Ibid.* p.26
  - 46 'In Orbit, Pacem in Terris II', *War Resistance* 21, 2nd quarter 1967, pp.26–7
  - 47 Secretary's Report for the Council Meeting in Vienna, Austria, August 12–17, 1968
  - 48 'Liberation movement & the W.R.I.', *War Resistance* 2:25 & 26, 2nd and 3rd quarters 1968, pp.29–31
  - 49 'Czechoslovakia', *WRI Statements*, WRI, London, 1972, p.18
  - 50 *Support Czechoslovakia*, WRI, London, 1968, footnote on page 6
  - 51 *WRI Statements*, WRI, London, 1972, p.25
  - 52 'WRI Demonstrations in Moscow, Budapest, Warsaw and Sofia', attached to the *WRI Newsletter* 75, October 3, 1968. Also see: *War Resistance* 2:25 & 26, 2nd and 3rd quarters 1968, pp.7–8
  - 53 *War Resistance* 2:25 & 26, 2nd and 3rd quarters 1968, pp.10–11
  - 54 Thirteenth Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, August 25–31, 1969
  - 55 'Invasion of Anguilla', *WRI Statements*, WRI, London, 1972, pp.26–8
  - 56 'Opening Session', Igal Roodenko, *Liberation & Revolution: Gandhi's Challenge*, Report of the

- Thirteenth Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, August 25–31, 1969, WRI, London, 1969, pp.9–10
- 57 Ibid. p.10–12
- 58 ‘Liberation and Revolution, Gandhi’s Challenge’, *War Resistance* 2:31, 4th quarter 1969, p.3
- 59 *Liberation and Revolution: Gandhi’s Challenge*, Report of the Thirteenth Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, August 25–31, 1969, WRI, London, 1969, p.130
- 60 Ibid., p.118
- 61 Ibid., pp.125–9
- 62 Ibid., p.129
- 63 Ibid., pp.135–6
- 64 Ibid., pp.120–1
- 65 Ibid., pp.132–3
- 66 Ibid., pp.139–140
- 67 Ibid., p.113
- 68 Ibid., pp.33–36
- 69 The following note was published in *Liberation and Revolution: Gandhi’s Challenge*, Report of the Thirteenth Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, August 25–31, 1969, WRI, London, 1969, p.221:  
 ‘Since his decision to non-co-operate Bob had worked in the peace movement. He was a member of the *Phoenix*, which sailed to North and South Vietnam bearing medical supplies; he worked with A Quaker Action Group and the Resistance, and he participated in the WRI group which leafleted the capitals of Warsaw Pact nations after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the spring of 1969, Bob took sanctuary along with friends from Quaker groups and the Resistance, in a Quaker meeting and coffeehouse in Philadelphia. When the Federal authorities arrived to arrest him, they found Bob surrounded by singing supporters, all chained to him. After breaking the chains, they carried him to a Federal car, while several people attempted to block the car with their bodies. Many of these people were arrested at that time.  
 The sanctuary was not an attempt to protect Bob from imprisonment; rather, it was held in a spirit of community support for draft resisters, and in an attempt to express the political and moral content of Bob’s act to the press and to the public. His sentence, which took place during the WRI Conference, was significant in this way. For Bob was able to call to his defence three international peace leaders, Rev. Martin Niemöller, Vo Van Ai and Devi Prasad, making public before the court the political and social implications of this act which was being judged as a crime. He was able to stand before the court with the knowledge that behind him was a large crowd of supporters, both in the packed courtroom and in the demonstration on the street outside. His friends from the Philadelphia movement, as well as people from all over the world, witnessed his stand against militarism and conscription.’ Eaton’s statement to the court is given in Appendix 11.
- 70 ‘Human Rights: the Task Before Us’, *War Resistance* 24, 1st quarter, 1968, pp.3–6
- 71 ‘Gandhi’s Relevance Today’, *War Resistance*, 31, 4th quarter 1969, pp.23–4
- 72 ‘Seminar in Budapest: “Gandhi’s Relevance Today”’, *WRI Newsletter* 84, October 27, 1969, pp.6–7

## CHAPTER 17

### **Love**

*I can offer no guarantees about the Revolution. I don't claim to have any total understanding of it. What I have written is guess. As we proceed in the Revolution, step by step I think we will understand much more. It is bigger than any of us, so there will be no lack of things to learn. It is life itself. Eros, what the Greeks understood as the life-force, was also understood as love. I am convinced that the Revolution will grow as we begin to understand the implications of that force. The mere idea of it is immense. It can't be contained, only described, like an uncharted sea. You don't push it around, you follow with it. It brings together and synthesises. It makes whole the shattered and heals the broken. It makes 'we' out of what was once 'us' and 'them'. It denies death by proclaiming and exercising our capacity for vision and fruition. It integrates an infinite progression of forms; it closes the circle. Its harvest lays waste to its adversaries. It hates the sin and not the sinner. It builds but does not beg. It calls forth the germination of man, humbles the highest, and ennobles the prostrate and used. It is the power of all men and in it all men are strong.*

David Harris<sup>1</sup>

### **The Rebel Girl**

*There are women of many descriptions  
In this queer world as everyone knows.  
Some are living in beautiful mansions  
And wearing the finest clothes.  
There are blueblooded queens and princesses,  
All dressed in diamond and pearl.  
But the only and thoroughbred lady  
Is the Rebel Girl.*

Joe Hill<sup>2</sup>

## Beyond Anti-Militarism

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### Second seminar on Mahatma Gandhi's Relevance Today

#### **Aid and development**

To celebrate the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi the WRI and the World Council of Peace jointly sponsored two seminars. The first, already described in Chapter 16, had been held in Budapest in September/October 1969. The second seminar was held in London on February 14–16, 1970 and was attended by participants from 17 countries including India, Argentina, the Soviet Union and Guyana, representing a wide range of opinions. A note from the editorial

of the special issue of *War Resistance* reporting the seminar said: "Aid and Development are two very complex issues which are closely related to each other. In the last few years the attitude of aid-receiving countries has changed considerably. At the same time, opinion on Aid in the rich countries has also shown serious signs of change. The matter has become controversial; many new questions were being asked, especially by the radical section of the movement. Has aid, as it is given today, the potential of changing social and economic relations? Isn't it an extension of colonial and imperialistic tradition and attitude, widely practised by rich countries?"<sup>3</sup>

The discussion was divided into three sections: (1) Problems of aid; (2) Patterns of industrial development; and (3) Food and agriculture. Harold Bing, former Chairman of WRI, chaired the opening session. Gordon Schaffer on behalf of the World Council of Peace and Devi Prasad on behalf of the WRI gave opening statements. Topics included Problems of Aid, Fight for Economic Development, UK, and Patterns of Industrial Development.<sup>4</sup>

### **Concluding Statement of the Seminar**

The seminar examined different ways in which aid is being given to the developing countries, by private and governmental agencies, by bilateral and multilateral arrangements and by states with different social and economic systems. It also examined the social and political implications of these methods. It was noted that political independence has not necessarily brought economic independence and that without economic independence, necessary changes in the social and political structure are often impossible. It noted too that the national independence movements are in general taking a new shape; today they are, above all, movements for economic sovereignty of countries free from colonialism.

The respective advantages of state enterprise and voluntary co-operative enterprise were discussed, and also the application of intermediate and large-scale technology and their social implications. It was generally felt that all had their place provided they are adapted to the stages of economic and social development of the country concerned.

In view of the world food/population problem, delegates strongly condemned artificial restriction of food production and the destruction of crops, and urged the use of the already available scientific knowledge to improve quality and quantity of world food supplies and to process and store surpluses.

Throughout the seminar the overwhelming need to divert to constructive purposes resources now devoted to the crippling burden of armaments was emphasised.

Mahatma Gandhi's message is still valid. His uncompromising refusal to tolerate human suffering and his method of arousing the initiative of the masses of the common people for the solution of urgent problems continue to have the greatest relevance in the world today. The seminar saw in actions by the people themselves, such as the *Gramdan* movement in India and a number of other movements, a great potential for radical social change created by man in the service of man as an individual, and not subordinate to any other interests.

In a world which must meet the needs of an increasing population and conquer hunger and war, the participants of this seminar appeal to peoples and governments throughout the world to give urgent priority to these problems.<sup>5</sup>

## Invasion of Cambodia

The US and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia in early 1970. The excuse given in support of the invasion was that the National Liberation Front of North Vietnam was using Cambodia as a staging post. The invasion followed a right-wing coup d'état in Cambodia. Many observers with knowledge of the area believed that the CIA was involved in this coup. Even if it was not, the US Government had made use of the opportunity to invade a neutral country and expand the Vietnam war. This followed large-scale massacres of Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia.

The US Section of the War Resisters' International appealed to the International to organise worldwide protests against the invasion of Cambodia. An increasing number of American draft-age men were leaving their country to find refuge in Canada, Britain, France and Scandinavia, especially Sweden. Although some countries were becoming flexible regarding allowing them to stay, the situation as a whole was becoming difficult. The WRI Secretariat had been intensely occupied with the problem for some time and they had come to the conclusion that the way the peace movement could help to stop the war was to assist desertion in such a way that the number of deserters increased substantially.

The War Resisters' International issued a press release suggesting building of a campaign for getting rid of American bases in all those countries where they were situated.

### **Special Press Release Issued by the Headquarters and the Chairman<sup>6</sup>**

The invasion of Cambodia by US and South Vietnamese Forces is an outrage. Morally it is indefensible; politically it makes no sense.

. . . The hopeful thing is that this new act of aggression has started protest throughout the length and breadth of the US – in many cases such as the Kent University, Ohio, to be met by bloody repression. Discontent has spread to the American Army itself, and some of the US units involved in the invasion are reported to be on the verge of mutiny.

WRI feels that protest and direct action by American people including soldiers and airmen represent the main hope of ending the Indo-China War.

WRI groups in other countries are urged to do what they can to support this opposition. Protest could take the form of:

- demonstrations at American embassies;
- at firms such as Dow Chemicals manufacturing napalm or other weapons for use in Indo-China;
- sympathy strikes at colleges and universities in support of American students;
- direct action against governments, such as the British Government, giving active or passive support to the US;
- and a campaign of intensive activity at American bases where soldiers and airmen can be urged to refuse to fight in Vietnam to form action committees against the war and if necessary mutiny and desert rather than take part in this cruel and barbarous war.

A Campaign could now also be prepared in co-operation with other peace movements to get rid of American bases in all these countries where they are situated.

Michael Randle, Chairman, May 8th 1970.

## State of the struggle against conscription

The general trend in Europe, to a considerable extent, had been shifting from total non-cooperation with the system of military conscription to the official recognition of conscientious objection to military service as a fundamental human right, with provision for alternative civilian service. Although most COs asked for an alternative civilian service there were a significant number of them who were satisfied with some kind of non-combatant service within the military.

Nevertheless, the concept of the total abolition of conscription continued to be a major part of the nonviolent struggle for revolutionary change envisaged and programmed by the War Resisters' International. The WRI had been pronouncing its policy for the abolition of not only military conscription but of all kinds of conscription:

The WRI reaffirms that its campaign against conscription is only part of its general struggle against war and its causes and for the establishment of a nonviolent social order.<sup>7</sup>

It had become clear that many of those who were going for official recognition of conscientious objection against military service believed that doing some form of national service was the patriotic duty of every young man. They did not necessarily have any interest in working for nonviolent social change. Some simply wanted to do something less strenuous than military duties. In countries which had recognised conscientious objection, mostly on religious grounds, as an acceptable right sanctioned by the State, the life of COs was becoming easier. A CO, in some countries at least, while doing alternative social service often had more freedom socially than the soldier who spent all his time in barracks and was allowed limited opportunities to go home or spend time with his friends. Those COs naturally chose alternative civilian service.

Yet, there were an increasing number of enlightened young men who felt a responsibility to consider their action as citizens in the context of a future world free from militarism. They preferred prison rather than the freedom that was chosen by many others. However, the issue of national responsibility in some situations was so overwhelming that most young men could not do other than co-operate with the idea of alternative service. Denmark was one such country where the WRI Section advocated alternative civilian service rather than total rejection of conscription which they believed was a right of the State to impose upon each citizen. Some of the COs did show the others the path of peace by taking upon themselves the hardships involved in rejecting conscription altogether, as Pietro Pinna, Jean Moreau and Jean van Lierde had done.

## Training for Nonviolent Action

The WRI and A Quaker Action Group of Philadelphia jointly sponsored an international gathering of activists in February 1970 in Denmark. The aim was to find out how a feeling of community could be developed amongst nonviolent activists and the ways in which communication could flow more freely across national borders.

In Denmark a nonviolent training project, led by George Lakey and Barney Barratt was conducted from July 13 to 19 in the same year. It was sponsored jointly by the Folk High



School Sotoftgaard, Aldrig Mere Krig, the WRI Danish Section, and the WRI. A special feature of the project was to discuss opportunities to plan transnational direct action projects. From the point of view of making demonstrations more effective, it was important to keep them peaceful. Therefore the need for training had gained more relevance and urgency. The International, therefore, organised a seminar to evaluate training techniques and programmes that were being tried in different parts of the world.

### The seminar

The successes of nonviolent action – such as in the case of the struggle for the independence of India, ending legal segregation in the American South and for achieving many local aims – have not taught its advocates as much as their failures did. Followers of Gandhi, staunch in their nonviolence against the British, found themselves nearly completely helpless when confronted by communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. Means well adapted to forcing desegregation in the USA failed when applied to more complex problems of informal but widespread discrimination in housing and employment. Many local actions foundered, with consequent long-term disillusionment, when they found themselves unprepared to cope with sustained public apathy or hostility, internal suspicions and disagreements, or unable to make complex judgments or solve logistic problems.

Systematic training can work towards the solution of many of these problems. In a long-term struggle, moral fervour and sound political analysis are not enough to sustain a movement. Nor is authoritarianism possible in a movement that relies on personal worth, mutual confidence, and individual contributions. If groups of people are serious about ending some social evil, they should be willing to undergo training, often during as well as before their action programme.

The first experiment in training for nonviolent action was probably made by *Shanti Sena* – ‘peace army’ – in India. It was successful in some situations. However, not being systematically organised, it could not develop and grow into a full-fledged training programme. However, it had many lessons for the endeavour to develop a well-thought-out training tradition.

The first seminar on training for nonviolent action had taken place in Perugia, Italy as early as 1965 (see Chapter 16). Now a second seminar was organised in Preston Patrick, Westmoreland, England from June 27 to July 2, 1970, co-sponsored by the Friends Peace and International Relations Committee of Great Britain and the War Resisters’ International. The seminar was led by George Lakey and attended by 18 people with direct experience of training.

At the end of the seminar two of the trainers, Theodore W. Olson and Lynne Shivers, prepared a full document, *Training for Nonviolent Action*,<sup>8</sup> on the sessions. This is an outline:

#### Kinds of Training:

- Training for specific action situations
- skills training
- theoretical training
- competence and confidence training
- crisis training
- training for organisation

#### Training Methods:

- |   |                    |   |                         |
|---|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Role-playing       | 3 | Quick decision exercise |
| 2 | Situation analysis | 4 | Strategy game           |

5	Street spaking	10	Case study
6	Guerilla theatre	11	Lecture
7	Shared experiences	12	Discussion and analysis
8	Non-tactical training	13	Enabling tools
9	Journal keeping		

Methods According to Purpose:

To develop a sense of tactics

To develop a sense of strategy

To develop individual competence and confidence

To develop group cohesion and To develop understanding of theory

Guidelines for Training:

- 1 Training for nonviolent direct action ought to prepare people for real situations
- 2 Training could be best done in situations of stress
- 3 Training should be so structured as to provide practical skills quickly
- 4 Training must provide for participants' responses and evaluations
- 5 Training was subordinate to organising
- 6 One goal of training should be to increase the capacity of participants to train others

Frameworks for Organising Training:

Work shop

Training programme as Part of a Centre

Independent Training Centre

Action Agency; Inter-organizational Framework; and Team Training

Evaluation of the training programme was considered very important. The Question was Evaluation for What? The major reason for evaluating training for nonviolent action was to learn whether it helped in the action. Questions to which trainers should have answers:

- 1 Had the needed skills been demonstrated, under pressure whenever possible?
- 2 Had the training led to action?
- 3 To what extent had information and principles been internalised?
- 4 Had the stated goals of the process been achieved?
- 5 To what extent had information and principles been internalised?
- 6 Had other individuals or groups seen the value of some kinds of training?
- 7 To what extent had participants achieved insight about group relationships?
- 8 Had the sense of community and solidarity been found or increased?
- 9 Had participants sought further training?
- 10 Had participants seen the importance of evaluation and been active in finding further ways of increasing its effectiveness?
- 11 Did we record evaluation of the training in such a way that it can benefit others?

Means of Evaluation:

A. The observer

B. The whole group

C. Journals, logs and other accounts

D. Agenda meetings, minutes, and group journals; tapes and videotapes

E. Content analysis

- F. Interviews
- G. Coding systems
- H. Tests and questionnaires
- I. Theories and models
- J. Discussions

From among the items discussed at the seminar, the International Council meeting held in Namur, Belgium from July 25 to 30, 1970 accepted the following as priority items to be taken up for the first year:

- 1) The need for information
- 2) Inventory of trainers
- 3) Contact with movements and encouraging ideological discussions with other left-wing groups
- 4) Training programme for transnational actions

*Training for Nonviolent Action* proved to be a helpful handbook for trainers who take their task seriously and with a spirit of research.

## Spain's first pacifist CO – Pepe Beunza

A 23-year-old Spaniard, José Luis Beunza (Pepe), took a courageous stand against military service when he was expecting to receive his call-up orders. Prepared to face the prospect of seven years in a military prison, he announced:

I do not wish to convert myself into a machine to obey orders that force me to deny my conscience as a free man.

In Spain there was no recognition of conscientious objection to military service. Those who did not comply with the law of the country were sentenced time after time until they reached the end of their military service age, i.e. 30 years. In around October 1970 there were nearly 200 COs in prisons. According to reports all but one – a Seventh Day Adventist – were Jehovah's Witnesses. Their objection to military service was on religious grounds. Pepe Beunza was the first to reject military service on the grounds of conscience and humanitarian conviction. He continued:

I do not wish to serve an oligarchy of governments, bankers and landlords, who with the power of the army and the blessing of the official church maintain structures of oppression that impede the development of justice and liberty and, as if this were not enough, has just entered into a pact with imperialist America. When I am asked what conscientious objectors would do if we were invaded and had no army, I always say that we are *already* invaded by the Americans, politically, culturally and economically and not only does our army not defend us, but they open our gates to the invaders. It is sad but it is the truth.

. . . I am lucky because my family understand and agree with me. If things go badly I am prepared for a long test. I do yoga, am learning to play the flute, do art and am preparing for fasting. I think that all this will help me to leave prison, at the age of thirty, prepared to take part in other actions.<sup>9</sup>

The WRI fully supported Pepe Beunza's stand and whole-heartedly sympathised with his belief in nonviolence.

Mankind has something more important to do than learn how to kill his fellow man and to engage in pretty drills. To entertain generals and their families, and to thrill the general public who cheer those who one day will make cannon fodder of them and their children. There are much more urgent things if we consider that in Spain there are a million children who have no school and nearly two million women that are illiterate. These figures could be reduced by means of a form of social service substituted for military service and would disappear altogether if the finance and equipment and potential of the army could be deflected towards the struggle against poverty, illiteracy, under-development, etc. At the same time nonviolent methods of defence might be put to the test. These methods call for a conscience and for individual preparations and could be employed against an invader or a dictator or an imposed government and for this reason governments prepare to keep their 'guard dogs' rather than to educate all men to rise up against any type of oppression.<sup>10</sup>

Beunza received his military call-up papers and was expected to report to his detachment in January 1971. A worldwide protest action was planned in response to his expected arrest. It was hoped that there would be strong enough pressure on the Spanish parliament to amend the law and allow conscientious objection to military service on pacifist grounds.

A Geneva-Madrid 'Support Pepe Beunza' march was planned, leaving Geneva on February 21 and expected to reach the Spanish border in about six weeks. The WRI Executive Committee decided to keep at least one WRI representative on the march all the time. The Secretary was asked to find people who could go on behalf of the WRI. The Executive accepted my offer to go on the march for a few days towards its end. The march started with 20 people who, it was hoped, would remain on the march throughout its journey. Additionally there were a couple of dozen or so volunteers, among them such well known personalities as Lanza del Vasto, Jo Pyronet and Gonzalo Arias. On the day before the march started, supporting demonstrations took place in many countries.

In France a group occupied the UNESCO building and staged a sit-in in the main hall, demanding an interview with the director-general, whom they urged to put pressures on the Spanish authorities to amend the CO law.

In Britain a vigil was mounted outside the Spanish embassy with posters such as '7 years for refusing to kill'. Leafleting took place and a letter to the ambassador was handed in urging recognition of conscientious objection and provision of civilian alternative service. Among the demonstrators was Harold Bing, veteran conscientious objector of the First World War and former WRI Chairman.

The Norwegian WRI Section Folkereisingning mot Krig arranged a demonstration in front of the Spanish embassy in Oslo. Posters were used with slogans such as 'Peace work – not prison – for COs' A letter to the Spanish government signed by the National Peace Council, the Peace Bureau in Oslo and FMK, was handed in to the embassy. The action was given good coverage in the newspapers.

The *WRI Newsletter* (no. 101, April 16, 1971), reported:

Pepe's trial might take place any time between 20th and 30th April. THEREFORE PLEASE PREPARE FOR YOUR ACTION IMMEDIATELY. As soon as we get the

information regarding the exact date we shall send it, probably by cable, to one contact in your country. This person should inform every group immediately.

**Proposals for Nonviolent Action:**

A group will occupy the church in Valencia (Spain) and fast for a period. You may join this group. Information from Toulouse.

Similar action in towns where there are Spanish embassies or consulates, e.g. 'occupation' of a church, or the embassy or consulate, itself, as a symbolic gesture.

Pickets at the Spanish embassies and consulates.

Distribution of leaflets, writing letters and sending telegrams of protest against the arrests of conscientious objectors and the brutal treatment of the nonviolent demonstrators at Bourg-Madame on 11th April, and a demand for a CO law which will be acceptable to all objectors.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Bourg-Madame demonstrations**

As a statement in the same *WRI Newsletter* narrated:

Pepe was arrested on 13th January 1971. On 21st February the march started from Geneva. By the time the march was within 30 kms of the Spanish border there were 80 marchers and on 11th April, the day of the attempt to cross the frontier, more than 500 marched the last km; among them were Spanish, French, Swiss, Swedish, Dutch, American, Indian, French and English citizens.

I took the opportunity of talking to a French police officer who was on duty and was keeping a watch on the situation at the time of the sit-in on the bridge. He said: 'Oh, it was wonderful. We were all very much impressed.' Of course he was not so happy about the sit-in, but that is another matter.

The march was divided into three sections; the seven Spaniards, very beautiful people who called their action *March to the Prison*, were in the front. Gonzalo Arias, the well known 'poster man'<sup>12</sup> was their leader. The second section was of those who wanted to cross the border and continue walking for a few days at least. Some among them were prepared to march as far as Valencia, the place where Pepe is imprisoned and where his trial will soon be taking place. The third, the largest, was the group of people who came with the march to 'see the people off', and not to cross the border. This group had decided not to take part in any direct action, e.g. a sit-in, if the second group undertook this.

The French authorities cleared the formalities rather quickly. Their barrier was on this side of the bridge over the river. When we reached the Spanish barrier at the other end of the bridge, the Spanish police separated us from the seven Spaniards who were allowed to enter. They walked with the greatest calm and self-confidence with their posters on them. They had distributed the following declaration of their position:

At the time of entering our country, we, Spaniards of the *March to the Prison*, are anxious to announce that what we intend by our action is to affirm the rights of the human person. We see the campaign for conscientious objection as part of a more widespread struggle, which we want to be nonviolent, a struggle for justice and peace. We would like to help our countrymen to discover new paths, new horizons, and we regret the inevitable offence that this revolutionary attitude might give to some people's feelings.

The demonstrations of international solidarity engendered by the conscientious objection of José Luis Beunza and our march, are for us a cause of deep satisfaction. To all those who have accompanied and helped us, our brotherly gratitude.

Finally, we are happy to announce that we are already seven Spanish marchers demanding for ourselves – to proclaim it more strongly – the same unjust repression suffered by conscientious objectors. . . .

The above statement given at Bourg-Madame on April 11, 1971 was signed by Gonzalo Arias, Lluís Fenollosa, Mara Gonzalez, Santiago A. Del Rieco Juan, Maria Angeles Recasens, Miguel Angel Gil and José Gabriel Diez.<sup>13</sup>

A message came from the authorities that no one other than the Spanish would be allowed to enter the country. As a result the spokespersons of the march announced that a sit-in be staged on one side of the road, keeping a lane free for traffic movement. At about 7.45 p.m. the mayor of the town Bourg-Madame came and gently requested that the marchers should return to their places because the sit-in was causing inconvenience to the people of the town. A few minutes later the French and the Spanish police addressed the marchers and asked them to clear the road.

After some frantic activity the Spanish border police came with a loudspeaker and ordered the demonstrators to clear off in 10 minutes. The demonstrators did not move. However, in the meantime the authorities arranged to divert the traffic by another road. This was brought home to the demonstrators when a police officer came and said *now you can stay as long as you like – one year.*

The sit-in ceased to be a silent demonstration. Singing had gone on for three hours in the form of a festival in the morning at the ground of the town gymnasium. It was resumed and the demonstration turned into a festival. The organisers served food and when it became really cold some of the people took out their sleeping bags and coats to protect themselves.

It was nearly 9.30 p.m. and most of the ‘third group’ had left. There were now about 150–200 people in the sit-in and some were standing outside. Suddenly and unexpectedly we saw 15 or so Spanish gendarmes standing on the other side of the barricade with helmets and batons – all ready to ‘go’. We understood that their officer had thought of giving us ten minutes; but the ‘higher ones’ in plain cloths standing nearby said ‘No! No ten minutes – start immediately’. The barricade lifted. We, about hundred or so of us, who had decided to face the situation calmly, sat down closely to each other making a solid round ‘block’. For 12–15 minutes the gendarmes had a real go at us. We were baton charged and physically pushed out of the ‘region Espagnol’ which our folk thought, and still think was a *no man’s land.*

Our retreat was glorious. We helped each other, started singing ‘*We shall overcome . . . some day*’ and marched to the town centre. More than thirty of us received baton charges, some more harsh than the others. Four were taken to hospital with rather bad injuries. . . .

Evidently they wanted to ‘teach us a lesson’. I wonder what the Spanish gendarmes thought of us – cowards or abnormal people? The French police were amazed at the nonviolence the group demonstrated. They had already been impressed, I heard someone saying it, by the dignified and disciplined manner in which the large procession was moving towards the Franco–Spanish border. When we were being ‘thrown out’ the

French border police had come with dogs and additional men. It seems that (as one of us had spoken with some French policemen) they were expecting us to be angry, frustrated, defeated people who turn to violence after such an experience. But when they saw us retreating with dignity and singing, although some were limping, not only did their fear disappear, they were once again 'impressed'. And imagine if these demonstrators had been fully trained nonviolent activists what kind of impression that would have made. Nonetheless, it was great as it was.

What happened to the seven beautiful Spaniards? We had seen them slowly disappearing from our sight. But the Spanish police allowed the three small girls – daughters of Gonzalo Arias – to bring messages to us about what was happening to the men and women of the 'March to the Prison'. The first note written by Gonzalo said that their posters had been removed but they were allowed to continue walking. The second message was that they were taken to the police station, detained, but not yet arrested. The third message came informing us that negotiations between the demonstrators and the police officers were going on to allow 25 marchers to cross the border before the rest of them returned to their camps. It said 'they have been arrested and a bus will take them to Barcelona.'

When I was on my way to London after a meeting in Perpignan, I saw in *L'Independant* that they had been sent to Madrid. What will happen to them is hard to say. How long Pepe will be in prison is also a difficult question to answer. One can only speculate at a report in *Le Monde*, that 'The Spanish Minister of Armies has, in fact, announced that a second draft bill would soon be placed before the Cortez.'

The meeting at Perpignan was to plan the nonviolent actions which should be taken in connection with Pepe's trial which might take place any time now – probably next week, i.e. 20–25th April. It is most important that no effort should be spared to show support for the Spanish COs particularly the eight now in prison. Please inform the WRI of your plans and also send full reports following your actions.<sup>14</sup>

### **The trial of Pepe Beunza**

Beunza's trial was held on April 23, in a crowded courtroom in Valencia. He was accused of treason, refusing military service and being a member of the War Resisters' International. According to *Le Monde*, the tribunal president's view was 'Christ yielded to the civil laws. The Council is here in order to judge the accused according to the laws in force.' Beunza was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment with 'hard labour' in Cartagena prison in southern Spain.

The WRI appealed to its affiliated bodies:

It is essential that the demonstrations, petitions etc. should continue with persistence. A conference should be called in June to discuss a long-term strategy in this matter. Further demonstrations should certainly take place at the time of the trial of the seven Spanish COs who were arrested after trying to continue the march to Bourg-Madame. Four of them are being held in prison while three, including the two girls, have been released on bail. According to *Le Monde*, they have been accused of committing an offence 'against the external security of the State'. Their trial would take place towards the end of June and they could receive sentences of up to twelve years imprisonment.

International action in support of Beunza's stand against conscription was widespread. In Spain about twenty people from several countries staged a three-day fast in the church of

Santa Maria in Valencia. In USA Jim Peck of WRL sat down and blocked the entrance of the Spanish national tourist office so that visitors had to push him out of the way to get in and out. While Jim displayed a placard saying 'Protest jailing of Spanish peace-walkers', six of his colleagues distributed leaflets to the passing crowd. The manager asked him to move, but he refused. At the request of the manager police came and arrested Jim, charging him of 'criminal trespass'. But in court on April 27 the manager of the tourist office said that he had filed the charge solely because he had feared he might be sued in retaliation for having ordered the arrest. As there was no intention to sue, he declined to press the charge and the case was dismissed. The action received good publicity including television coverage.

Demonstrations and handing over of petitions took place in several countries, e.g. Belgium, France and England. In Norway Jon Grepstad and Sverre Larsen spoke to the Spanish Embassy officials in Oslo. The officials were evidently well informed about the case. The FmK, Norwegian Section of the WRI, set up a stand which included Pepe posters, anti-war postcards for sale and an appeal to the Spanish government for signatures. The stand was well attended and many people and political youth organisations signed the appeal.<sup>15</sup>

### **Beunza's letters from prison**

The following are some extracts from Beunza's letters:

. . . although I am imprisoned, my morale is good and I am intensely living this new experience which compels me to examine thoroughly and put to the test many of my ethical ideas. Prison is a world of violence, a manifestation resulting from the society in which we live – being surrounded by walls, mistrusted by one's companions, the armed police on the wall which we would have to scale if we wanted to escape, the squabbles which sometimes take place, being locked up in the cell for the night, relationships with insensitive and authoritarian officials etc. . . .

Prison gives some unusual opportunities for reflection and I must put them to good use . . . this is not to overrate prison but it needs to be put in its right perspective . . .

I have learned what prisons are and although they are tough (one has hardly any covering during the day), I am not afraid of this.

The theoretical problems are not easy to resolve; life is not mathematics and there are many problems without clear solution, or where today's reply will not be valid tomorrow. Sometimes the only reply is to act with integrity and have profound hope – and above all not to be afraid; there is no reason. One cannot have a reply to every question. Success will come. *Life* is our concern . . . distinctions do not last, nor power, nor luxury, but what is righteous will be recognised and what gives us an invincible force, the force of truth, which is Nonviolence, – and this force requires initiative, effort, and has nothing to do with passive submissiveness which complies with injustice.

Much courage to everyone,

Pepe.<sup>16</sup>

Pepe Beunza came out of prison on November 2, 1971 as a result of an amnesty promulgated by Franco. Arriving at his home in Valencia, he found an order to present himself for military service. He did not obey it but instead wrote to the captain general explaining his position. Then he began working with children in a poor suburban quarter of Valencia as part of a team which was already there.

In a further letter Beunza wrote:



With the order of release, I received a notification to return and present myself for military service. As the judge pointed out to me in the court-martial, when he sentenced me, if I didn't want to do military service, I didn't have to turn up. This is what I am doing now, thus continuing in my refusal to do it; but I wish to demonstrate that my action is positive.

You know that here in Spain there are seven and a half million illiterates and one million children with no school. Because of this, I am going to live in a barrio . . . in the suburbs, with many needs, one of those which form the sad belts of the large cities. Here live about thirty thousand persons, the majority immigrants, with a high incidence of illiteracy. The school-age population is 4,000 children . . . and there is only one national school for five hundred places. Until they are six years old, the children have to make the street their school, since no pre-school groups exist.

A group of people, together with the parish priest, are doing social assistance work. They have organised a night school, in which teachers are needed, and I am beginning to work with them, giving classes. Also I look after the children of a day nursery in a centre for Popular Culture, and collaborate in a Youth Centre. There are many problems of integrating amusements, cultural education, teaching reading and writing etc. and we are going to be doing all we can to better the hard conditions of life in this slum.

This is one of the many services we conscientious objectors can perform if you do not continue to sanction us with the penalty of prison.

You cannot say that we are refusing to serve the country . . .

I do not intend to hide or flee, since I defend a human right, at this time punishable in Spain with prison, until the age of thirty-eight. . . . That which we ask for is quite simple as I am demonstrating to you. Moreover, we are all responsible, and among us all we ought to resolve this question.

Wishing you a dynamic peace of just men.

(Pepe Beunza)<sup>17</sup>

Beunza was again sent to prison on December 13, 1971 'to serve the second part of his sentence. This consists of a period of at least eighteen months in a disciplinary battalion in the Spanish Sahara. . . . In a letter written from the Canary Islands just before his final transfer he said 'I am rather alone and far from everything, but even this solitude and distance give me strength. I feel in good form, and shall need to be for what is to come.'<sup>18</sup>

Extracts from another letter from Pepe:

Dear comrades:

I have been imprisoned for a year today and I find myself in good shape, although this second time prison comes harder to me, especially now that I am in a common offenders' prison (murderers, thieves, pimps, etc.). After the sentencing they will take me to a political or military prison and that's rather better. Last year there were several politicals here with me but now they are free and so I feel myself more lonely.

. . . When I was in London, I didn't know whether I was going to be helped or not and everything went well. I am optimistic and sure that we shall win even though we have to wait a while.

. . . I consider nonviolence as an experimental way which I have chosen in order to transform society; and the struggle for the right to conscientious objection as a training and step towards a more free and peaceful society.

When there are several of us political prisoners, we form communes and we organ-

ise discussions, classes and study of topics. I have given in prison three talks on conscientious objection. One to a trade union group, another to a group of university comrades who were the university provincial committee of the Communist Party and the third I gave in the prison called Jaen.

They were very fruitful, for apart from those who knew me already from the struggle in the university, many thought I was like the Jehovah's Witnesses and now they understand (some of them) and respect nonviolence and conscientious objection according to our point of view.

In Jaen jail there were three communes, one of the Basques, another of *Moscow* Communist Party, who were the majority, and ours, who were ten and were a mixture of anti-authoritarian, pro-Chinese, one ex-ETA, armed anarchists and myself. . . . I learned a lot from them. . . . There were problems, for the prison is a faithful reflection of the fascist society we live in; but our fighting morale was always very high.

. . . Now I am cheerful and studying because I want to take the examination for the two subjects that I need to finish my studies. The food is so-so, but they bring me food from home; and it's cold . . .

They have told me that the parish priest has written a letter to the Captain General, asking for my freedom so that I can go on working there. This is very important, for the military don't want conscientious objection to get through to the man in the street.

. . . All my love. I hope and long to see you soon. Peace, strength, joy and a speedy victory.  
Pepe Beunza<sup>19</sup>

On his eventual release from prison Beunza continued to work as an active war resister.

## Operation Omega

### **Bangla Desh declares independence**

After the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 the two parts of Pakistan – the western part consisting of West Punjab, Sindh and the North-west Frontier and the eastern part being East Bengal – had never been able to constitute a united country. East Bengal, with its own rich and distinct character, never accepted to be ruled from West Pakistan – nearly a thousand miles away and with very a different culture and history. West Pakistani regimes treated East Pakistan as at best a 'stepsister'.

The first elections since the formation of Pakistan in 1947 were held in 1970. In East Pakistan Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party, the nationalist Awami League, won with a large majority. After this overwhelming victory they demanded virtual independence for East Pakistan proclaiming it as independent 'Bangla Desh' – the 'Land, or Nation of Bengal'. The president, military dictator Gen. Yahya Khan, ordered the arrest of Mujibur Rahman and sent him to prison in West Pakistan. Yahya Khan's military forces then invaded East Pakistan, attacking Dacca, the capital, and massacring thousands of people. Nearly 10 million people crossed the East Pakistan–India border as refugees.

According to contemporary reports:

There is now no doubt that the Yahya Kahn's armies have committed the grossest crimes in East Bengal. Several reports from sources other than the official Pakistani Press and

radio have described the military atrocities in detail. The *Daily Telegraph* reported on March 30th: "After 24 hours of ruthless, cold blooded shelling by the Pakistani army, as many as 7,000 people are dead, large areas have been levelled . . ." It is not yet possible to assess what this act of the Yahya regime has cost in terms of human lives. The *Daily Telegraph* states: "Only the horror of the military action can be properly gauged – the students dead in their beds, the butchers in the markets killed behind their stalls, the women and children roasted alive in their houses, the Pakistanis of Hindu religion taken out and shot en masse, the bazaars and shopping areas razed by fire . . . Leading political activists have been taken in, others have been murdered . . . but the first target as the tanks rolled into Dacca on the night of the 25th was the students . . . An estimated three battalions of troops were used in the attack on Dacca . . . Led by American-supplied M24 World War II tanks, one column of troops sped to Dacca University shortly after midnight. Troops took over the British Council library and used it as a fire-base to shell the nearby dormitory . . ."

East Pakistan's population is more than 73 million and it was solidly behind the demand for autonomy for the region. Martin Adeney in *The Guardian* (March 29) said that he was told by "friends and strangers at any party I attended in Dacca" that "never in the history of the world has there been a movement like this. Never have a people been so united." It is therefore beyond comprehension how a government could behave as the Pakistani Government did with the East Bengalis. Does Yahya Khan think that his armies can hold 73 million people in check permanently across a distance of one thousand miles? He should have been the first to know that such an action, instead of keeping Pakistan "united", will tear her apart. In fact, it would not be cynical to say that Pakistan has lost the East Bengalis forever. But at the same time she has sown the seeds of greater violence which may last a long time.

More than the violence within the country there is going to be a greater danger of a conflict between India and Pakistan, whose mutual relations are always on the ignition point. It is no surprise that Pakistan has already accused India of "armed infiltration", and it would be naïve to think that some of the belligerent forces in India would not try to take advantage of the crisis. The aiding of subversion in the neighbour 'enemy' country has existed for a long time between India, on the one hand and Pakistan and China on the other. There is no need to go into the question of whether this kind of relationship should or should not exist; the fact is that it does exist, and in the present circumstances it is quite likely that it will do the greatest harm not only to the two parties engaged in the immediate conflict, but also to the neighbouring countries which will inevitably become involved. With the turbulent situation in that part of the continent; with increasingly deteriorating India–Pakistan relations, India–China tensions, Pakistan–Burma discord and the Naga problem in India, it is impossible to foretell what magnitude the conflict will reach if the bloodshed going on in East Bengal is not brought to end immediately.

The Pakistan Government should have realised by now that even if it is able to crush the rebellion for the time being, it will not be able to retain Bengal within Pakistan. The best it can expect now is a not too hostile Bangla Desh. But this can happen only if Pakistan openly admits her blunder, withdraws her military forces from East Bengal and starts constitutional talks. Already irreparable damage has been done – there is no way to go back to the pre-invasion stage. The Bengalis must have the right to determine their own future. If they want Bangla Desh, nobody can deny it to them.

Every nation, every member of the United Nations, has the responsibility to see that the right of self-determination is granted to them.

The peoples of Pakistan, India, and for that matter every country should feel it their business to force Yahya Khan's government to end the bloodshed quickly, so that the situation does not become complicated. There are already enough examples of conflicts and wars which have become extremely complicated only because they were not tackled early enough. With the U.S. invasion of Laos and the war in Indo-China, a crisis such as this civil war could bring total disaster to South and South-East Asia.

We therefore demand from the Yahya government an immediate end to the crisis by a complete withdrawal of armies from Bengal, and the initiation of talks between them and the leaders of the 73 million of East Bengal to grant them the right of self-determination and to make arrangements for framing the kind of constitution the people of Bengal want.

Press release issued by WRI Headquarters, 5 April 1971<sup>20</sup>

### **Operation Omega**

The WRI Executive Committee meeting that took place on May 15, 1971 discussed the Bangla Desh crisis and put forward various proposals. One of these came from the Indian peace groups asking international movements to take the initiative and, if possible, organise a peace march to Bangla Desh. Another was to send a series of Land-Rovers with food and medical supplies to Bangla Desh. Yet another suggestion was to arrange a team of some well known people to meet the Pakistan president with the view to urge the following:

- (1) opening of all possible channels of relief into Bangla Desh,
- (2) ending the killing and torture by the Pakistan military in Bangla Desh and
- (3) respect for the concept of self-determination for Bangla Desh.

People concerned felt that the idea of sending relief supplies to Bangla Desh had a sense of priority and urgency.

The main idea behind the project of sending Land-Rovers to Bangla Desh was to take relief material where it was desperately needed specifically in defiance of the authority of any government if it sought to hinder the relief operation.

Eventually it was decided that the project, to be called Operation Omega, would be organised by an independent group operating from the WRI office. Roger Moody took responsibility as the main organiser. At the very beginning of the project the group printed the following slogan:

*No boundary is legitimate which attempts to separate those in pain from those who can help. Human beings do not need permission to aid those threatened with death.*

On August 14, 1971 the group issued the following press statement:

On Tuesday morning, August 17th, at 10 a.m. local time a group of eight people, British and American, will drive across the Indian border into East Bengal (Bangla Desh). They will carry 135,000 high protein biscuits, 500 saris and a small quantity of medical supplies directly to people in need in Bangla Desh.

Their route takes them along the international highway between Calcutta and Jessore. They will be the first group to pass openly between India and war-torn Bangla Desh

since India, Pakistan and the Bangla Desh Freedom fighters took up positions along the border a few months ago. They will cross the border at the Petrapol / Benepol crossings point where frequent firing has been reported.

Their hope is to 'crash' the artificial, unnatural and immoral boundary erected by an army to stop aid reaching its own citizens, and thus to establish a human precedent which will be followed not only in India and Pakistan, but in similar conflict situations throughout the world.

Members of the mission are pledged to nonviolence. They will be completely unarmed and are prepared to face the risk of arrest or death. They have not sought the permission of the Pakistan authorities for they believe: 'Human beings do not need permission to aid those threatened with death.'

Operation Omega was launched by Devi Prasad (War Resisters' International), Roger Moody (*Peace News*), Ellen Connett (Action Bangla Desh) and David Graham (Manchester Community research Action Group) on 7th June 1971. It is supported entirely by voluntary contributions and voluntary labour.<sup>21</sup>

On August 6 the WRI Secretariat sent the following letter to British MPs and other prominent people who had put their signatures on a resolution published in *The Times* on June 30:

The people on the mission will be risking arrest, injury, or death, and their fate, I believe, should not be left to the concerned few. I ask you to be prepared to act, should OMEGA meet with harassment from the Pakistani, or any other, authorities, by telephoning or sending a cable to the authority in question, or in any other way you feel would be effective. Could you also please send to Operation Omega a telephone number and/or address at which you can be contacted immediately in an emergency.<sup>22</sup>

On September 5 a team of four volunteers walked into Bangla Desh towards Benapol carrying relief supplies.

We were unarmed and a little scared – there had been firing 30 minutes before. In no-mans land we walked past the tattered Bangla Desh flag and from a shell-shattered ex-customs house on the other side of the road, four or five *Mukti Fouj* (freedom army) waved and shouted greetings – embarrassing, does one answer in such circumstances? We didn't.

A few hundred yards inside Bangla Desh we were met by a Pakistani Army soldier and asked to wait there for his officers. They came . . . In the course of one and a half hours discussions, we were invited to walk forward to Benapol and meet there a Lt. Col., we would in all likelihood be allowed to distribute our supplies as we wished. Being rather doubting but slightly gullible we agreed to walk forward.

At Benepol, no Lt. Col. but troop carrier and more soldiers. We explained our wish to side with neither army and accept no armed escort, least of all army transport. We sat down to add weight to our refusal and at that point their sham ended – we were bodily picked up, put into the troop carrier and taken to Jessore, 23 miles away.

After a preliminary interrogation with an extremely angry army major, we were handed over to the police and taken to Jessore Central Jail. There, later that evening, our packs were searched and all documents and writing material taken from us.

In the jail we stayed for ten days. Four or five times we were questioned separately

and accused (mostly quite gently) of all sorts of things from spying to carrying ammunition and illegal entry. On the fourth day we started a hunger strike having warned that we would do so until charged and given a definite date of trial. Charge sheets arrived next midnight – illegal entry and having ‘in our possession a booklet containing phrases likely to prejudice the public order’ . . .

Twelve hours later a new charge sheet arrived, without the illegal entry charge. The first charge sheet had included Martial Law Regulations, that is we would have been tried by Court Martial, presumably to avoid this the illegal entry charge had been dropped.

After four days the team was given the date of trial, so they were able to eat again. Before taking them to the court for trial they were taken to the British High Commission and the American Consulate whom they had briefly met earlier in the week.

The Pakistan Home Secretary was in touch with [the Consulate] and said that if we did not co-operate with the court we would be liable to contempt of court, with a likely sentence of three years. But if we were willing to admit our guilt and apologise, we would be released and repatriated without even a trial. We chose to go ahead with the trial.

The court was hot, very dirty, and packed with onlookers. The Magistrate looked unsympathetic, and I [Ben Crow], at any rate, feared the worst. The first witness, a police inspector, claimed to have met us at Benepol, searched us, seized our passports and other documents and arrested us. We’d never seen him before and at the time he claimed to have done all this we were in India. So it went on with only one witness, out of six, telling the truth, and the rest constructing the most unnecessary and absurd sham.

At the beginning of the second day, we again met the representative of the British High Commission. He told us that, far from the maximum of six months detention we had been told, the charge we were on was liable to a 5-year penalty, not including anything added on for contempt. We discussed this, but decided to continue, as had been agreed before, not to plead, and to state our reasons for not accepting the authority of the court.

The prosecution completed its case and in a rather chaotic half-hour of exchanges between us and the magistrate, our refusal to plead and our non-acceptance of the court’s authority were stated. The magistrate smiled and took what we said as a plea of guilty and with no further ado, sentenced us – a few hours further detention and ordered to return to our home countries, not passing through India.<sup>23</sup>

The next day they were flown to Dacca and then home.

### **A worldwide appeal from Omega**

Operation Omega subsequently issued an appeal for help from the international community:

Please help Operation Omega take food and medical supplies direct to the people of Bangla Desh. They suffered a cyclone in November, civil war in March and now they are threatened with the worst famine in human history. WE MUST ACT NOW.

Pakistan says Bangla Desh is an internal problem. OMEGA believes it is every-

one's problem.

. . . OMEGA will not allow starvation to be used as weapon of war to suppress people of different views, or national and political barriers to separate those in pain from those who can help.

One of our teams which entered Bangla Desh on September 5th was arrested by West Pakistani troops and spent 11 days in Jessore jail. After a trial they were deported to England. Other OMEGA teams have been able to enter Bangla Desh at other points without meeting West Pakistani troops. These teams will continue to take food and medicine across the border in an attempt to establish a regular route for food to hungry people. Our volunteers are unarmed and prepared to take risks.

There are some ideas which are more powerful than guns – but only if there are enough people to support them.

Please support OMEGA now. We need campaigners, support groups, volunteers, money.<sup>24</sup>

More teams entered Bangla Desh to distribute food, clothing and medicines and to render whatever help they could. Several of them were arrested, kept in prison for a few hours or days, some of them experienced physical suffering, and then returned to India, which they had made their base, or direct to their home countries. From August until the middle of October 11 British and American members of Omega teams had been arrested for trying to break the Pakistan blockade on independent aid to famine-stricken people and for trying to arouse world opinion to take positive action in support of the work Operation Omega was doing.

An Omega press release gave the news, received through the British Foreign Office, that Ellen Connett and Gordon Slaven, a Briton, had been arrested by the Pakistani troops while distributing relief supplies on October 4 and October 11. They were sentenced to two years imprisonment. In Britain *The Observer* and the *Daily Mirror* newspapers published editorials on the issue. A motion was tabled in the British House of Commons:

This house deplores the sentence of two years imprisonment imposed upon Ellen Connett and Gordon Slaven for the *crime* of distributing food to hungry people in East Bengal. It calls upon Her Majesty's government to make immediate representation to the West Pakistan government with a view to securing their early release and to seek to organise an international relief force in East Bengal which would make such private initiative unnecessary.<sup>25</sup>

The last successful Omega mission was on October 29 and was undertaken by Mike Thompson and John Cook. They distributed 100 blankets, 60 saris and 60 dhotis. It was the ninth mission, during which 11 members of three missions were arrested but released after a few days.

### **The Indian response**

Rightly or wrongly, until then the Indian Government had kept aloof from the Pakistan–Bangla Desh war, no doubt worried about getting involved in a fully-fledged war with Pakistan. It had not even dared give official recognition to Bangla Desh as an independent nation. The Gandhian community too did not or could not play any role in the Bangla Desh–Pakistan conflict. Jayaprakash Narayan, the Gandhian leader, called an international conference on Bangla Desh,

which was held on September 18–20, 1971 in Delhi and was attended by participants from nearly 20 countries.

Reporting on the conference I expressed my disappointment that, in spite of the presence of almost the whole of the Gandhian leadership of India, the conference had hardly anything to contribute in terms of a nonviolent response to the crisis. Indeed it had come out almost completely in favour of giving military and economic assistance to the government of Bangla Desh in exile.

I was able to visit a couple of places where Bangla Desh refugees were camped and to meet people of different political orientation. I found the situation to be very critical and felt that the forces of nonviolence could make a significant contribution in giving a new direction to the youth of Bangla Desh, especially those who were in India as refugees. On the other hand I was aware of the fact that everybody was under the moral and political influence of the Bangla Desh government in exile. Most of them belonged to the traditional, middle-class group of people, socialistic-minded, but who at this time were incapable of thinking in terms of starting to build a society without violence and responding to the crisis accordingly. If there had been an active well established WRI Section in India it may have been able to offer help in that direction.<sup>26</sup>

### **Independent Bangla Desh**

With the moral support of the USSR, which had already for some time recognised Bangla Desh, Indian troops entered East Bengal on December 3, to help the Bangla Deshi liberation forces to fight the Pakistani invaders.

The WRI Secretariat issued a statement on December 16, 1971:

WRI has been watching the tragic events of the past few months in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. WRI has openly and in the strongest possible terms opposed the oppression of the Bengalese by the military regime of Pakistan. The International has expressed its position by issuing press statements, initiating direct action projects, such as Operation Omega, and by trying to seek direct contact with the government of Pakistan.

The problem grew to its present magnitude because of Pakistan's genocidal action against the people of Bangla Desh, resulting in ten million people fleeing from the country and seeking shelter in India, a country already afflicted by extreme poverty. The world had rightly applauded India for her magnificent treatment of refugees, but it is distressing that the world had not responded by giving significantly concrete assistance to solve the refugee problem, nor by recognising the fact of Bangla Desh even up to date.

India, however, by her impatience and dependence on military solutions, has once again threatened the fragile fabric of peace, with the result that the big powers are now threatening the peace of the world.

On behalf of the peaceful people of the world, WRI re-states its condemnation of Pakistan's oppressive treatment of 76 million Bengalese and also condemns India for her military action to solve the present problem.

On behalf of the peaceful people of the world, WRI demands of every power – big and small – especially the Soviet Union, the United States and China, not to aggravate the tension by any threat of military action and to withdraw their navies and stay away from the Indian ocean.

WRI urges:



- a) That Pakistan face the reality of Bangla Desh as an independent country, even at this late moment; Pakistan can rectify its tragic blunders by taking the right step now . . .
- b) That all countries recognise the independence of Bangla Desh.
- c) That both India and Pakistan cease military actions and withdraw their forces to their own territories, leaving the people of Bangla Desh to determine and establish the pattern of government and administration they wish to have.
- d) That the people of Bangla Desh reject militarism altogether and devote all their energies to the reconstruction of their beautiful land.

The International appeals to all the peace movements to use their energy to help create peace and justice in the Indo-Pak sub-continent.

Press release issued by Headquarters – 16 December 1971<sup>27</sup>

Pakistan surrendered on December 16, 1971, and on that day Bangla Desh became an independent nation. In Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had in 1970 won a convincing majority in elections voided by Yahya Khan took over from the disgraced dictator. He released Mujibur Rahman and flew him back to Dacca. Mujibur Rahman became the first president of Bangla Desh.

Operation Omega ended its mission with dignity and success: success, because it made the government of the newly formed state of Bangla Desh realise that an international action is not easy to ignore. It continued as an independent active team dealing with other problems such as those of Biharis in Bangla Desh.

## Fifty years of war resistance: what now?

The year 1971 was the completion of the first 50 years of the WRI. The Executive Committee meeting held on October 17, 1970 proposed that the golden jubilee of the International should be celebrated enthusiastically. The War Resisters League too had shown much interest in the idea. One of the suggestions put forward was the publication of a pictorial history of the pacifist movement highlighting the contribution of the WRI. The Secretariat was asked to explore the possibilities of such a project and to work out its details.

As a result an enlarged issue of *War Resistance*, entitled 'Fifty years of war resistance: what now?' was published with a special format and essays by Kenneth Boulding, Barbara Deming, Alfred Kastler, Lewis Mumford, Ted Roszak, E. F. Schumacher, George Lakey, Peter Jones, Francois de Lucy, Michael Scott and Paul Wehr, with an editorial by myself. A special feature of the booklet were its 41 photographic illustrations, which were arranged in such a way that they, along with their captions, told almost a living story of the WRI from the very beginning of its foundation to the early 1970s.

The two sections of the booklet – writings and illustrations – dealt with two different yet inevitably closely related aspects of nonviolent social change. Whereas the photographs told a story of the work and the theoretical background of the WRI, the writings tried to project the need for a sound understanding of the dynamics of nonviolence and pacifism. There was an effort to discover a path to world peace and human unity that would be capable of facing the various contemporary conditions of life today.

For instance Barbara Deming wrote about the importance of *anger*, but also suggested

that if we are willing to confront our own most seemingly personal angers, in their raw state, and take upon ourselves the task of translating this raw anger into the disciplined anger of the search for change, we will find ourselves in a position to speak much more persuasively to comrades about the need to root out from all anger the spirit of murder.<sup>28</sup>

E. F. Schumacher explored the roots of violence; and Kenneth Boulding, after describing the different faces of power, came to the conclusion:

As we look at the various forms of power, neither the kind of power that comes out of the end of a gun, nor the power that comes out at the end of a balance sheet are adequate to deal with the subtle and difficult problems of the spaceship earth. It is the power of community and the power of love, that doesn't come out of the end of anything, but enfolds and unites us all in common tissue, which we must understand and develop if we are to survive in the small, closed, quarrelsome, and talkative planet of the future.<sup>29</sup>

Paul Wehr stated:

In conclusion, let me observe that the peace movement, like any other social organism, must operate as a system. It either becomes a true social system with each of its elements – actionists, educators, scholars, policy makers – communicating with, complementing, supporting, interdependent with the others, or it sickens and dies. The alternatives are health or morbidity. Some of us see new possibilities for the former condition and are spending much time encouraging and facilitating those integrative trends essential to real community and effectiveness.<sup>30</sup>

Nonviolent training expert George Lakey's hope was:

In the years ahead change will accelerate, confusion will alarm; the casual person reading the signs of the times will lose his place. Our movement, through new clarity of thought and action, can serve in the seventies. To serve best we should join our resistance to war with the struggle for a new society.<sup>31</sup>

Lewis Mumford laid stress upon the need for redefinition and Ted Roszak, in his letter acknowledging the request for a contribution to the book, emphasised the need for persistence:

I despair to see so many radicals turn to violence as a proof of their militancy and commitment. It is heartbreaking to see all the old mistakes being made all over again. The usual pattern seems to be that people give nonviolence two weeks to solve their problem . . . and then decide it has "failed". Then they go on with violence for the next hundred years . . . and it seems *never* to "fail" and be rejected. I feel certain myself that no amount of writing will ever talk people out of violence. One simply has to have an independent movement going, which can show commitment and results . . .<sup>32</sup>

## Council Meeting in Germany – July 1971<sup>33</sup>

### Homage to Louis Lecoin

The man who had profoundly served the causes of French COs, Louis Lecoin, died on June 9, 1971 after a serious illness.

Harold Bing wrote his obituary:

‘A little man with a very big spirit’. These words sum up the view of Louis Lecoin by all who knew him. . . . Born in 1888, the son of a labourer, he early became aware of social injustice and joined the rank of the anarchists. While doing his military service, in 1910, he was court-martialled for refusing to march with his regiment against workers on strike. Again, in 1912, he was arrested and imprisoned for anti-war propaganda, particularly for the pamphlet *Imposons la Paix* (insist on peace).

In fact Louis was to spend twelve years of his life in prison and to undergo many other hardships in his uninterrupted struggle for the welfare of his fellow men. Yet, at the end of it, in his autobiography, *Le Cours d'une Vie* published in 1965, he could write: ‘My life has been well filled and I have no cause to be dissatisfied with it.’. . .

In September 1939 his famous pamphlet *Immediate Peace*, brought him once more into prison where he remained till 1941.<sup>34</sup>

### Conscientious objection on the United Nations' agenda

The Council discussed the status of the issue of giving recognition to conscientious objection to military service, and asked for increased pressure from pacifist organisations on the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

The World Petition for the recognition of conscientious objection as a human right, presented to the UN Human Rights Commission on June 30, 1970, inspired further action. The twenty-sixth session of the Commission discussed the matter and decided to make further study of the subject. If all the concerned organisations kept up the pressure there was no reason why the UN should not pass a resolution similar to that of the Council of Europe, which asked their members to give legal recognition to conscientious objection to military service.

### The Northern Ireland crisis

Attention of the Council was drawn to the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland where violence was becoming more and more severe. The Council adopted the following statement:

The WRI Council is alarmed at the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland and the increasing danger of civil war.

We are convinced that the solution to the problems in Ireland must be political not military.

This solution must grow out of a new radical politics which unites people across the religious sectarian lines and identifies the causes of oppression in such factors as economic exploitation, class division, and colonial and neo-colonial relationships. The beginnings of such a radical politics can be seen in the civil rights campaign of 1968–1969. The Council gives its support to our friends in Ireland who are working at this grass roots level.

As an interim measure the WRI favours a conference in Northern Ireland to which all the interested parties would be invited, including government and opposition parties and representatives from the republican movement and Dail Eireann. One of the aims of such a conference should be to make an early withdrawal of British troops possible.

The Council has empowered the Executive to work on the draft of a leaflet for distribution to British people, including British soldiers, and British visitors abroad, informing them about the situation in Northern Ireland. The Council has also decided that in order to get clearer understanding of the situation and explore ways in which WRI Sections might take positive action, it will hold a study conference in Northern Ireland in 1972.<sup>35</sup>

### **Human rights, conscientious objection and the sale of arms**

Apart from the situation in Northern Ireland the Council was concerned about the persecution of the students movement and army deserters in South Vietnam. The support given to both the groups by the Vietnamese public showed that they represented the strong rejection of the war by the Vietnamese public at large. The WRI Council supported an international campaign to help the South Vietnamese students to exercise their rights to express their opinions freely.

The Council resolved:

In the name of Human Rights it demands that the Government of Saigon stop interfering with the autonomy of universities; and stop all police actions against students movements. The WRI Council also appeals to its Sections and to the public to help increase awareness about the thousands of deserters who are living in desperate conditions in South Vietnam and to seek help for them through such channels as the students movements and religious communities.

The WRI is aware that the greatest source of these problems derives from present U.S. policy and we continue to demand the immediate settling of a date for the total withdrawal of troops and weapons from Vietnam.<sup>36</sup>

In regard to conscientious objection to military service in Spain in the context of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN and of article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which made it obligatory for signatory States to guarantee freedom of religion and conscience, and in view of Resolution 337 of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe:

the Council of the WRI, representing Sections in twenty countries, assembled at Lübeck on 25–30 July 1971; urges the Spanish Government in its proposed law “to recognise conscientious objection as a human right and make adequate provision for the exemption of conscientious objectors; to liberate immediately C.O.s now in prison; pending the passage of the proposed legislation, not to imprison those claiming C.O. status.”<sup>37</sup>

On the general situation regarding conscientious objection to military service:

The Council of the WRI notes the rapidly increasing number of conscientious objectors to military service and draft resisters in the German Federal Republic, Denmark, the U.S.A. and many other countries. It welcomes this development as an important

step in the struggle against militarism and appeals to all peace-lovers to give these young men all possible encouragement and support.<sup>38</sup>

Council adopted the following resolution on the sale of arms:

The WRI requests all its Sections to begin a wide campaign for stoppage of all types of governmental or private export of weapons.

The appeal should be directed to the United Nations with the recommendation that a similar resolution be passed and that all states make the necessary laws. This appeal should point out, amongst other things, the extent of weapons' deliveries, the growing danger of crises and war, especially in new states and nations of the so-called Third World.<sup>39</sup>

Hannelis Schulte of the German Section DFG-IdK argued that if arms export was effectively banned it would put the giant powers in an even stronger position, a position that the Russian communist peace organisation had been taking. It was pointed out to her that the opposition to arms' export was clearly implied in the terms of the WRI Declaration.

## The fourteenth Triennial Conference

The WRI Council was keenly aware of the pressing need to discuss questions which were being raised in connection with the processes of social change and the responsibility of the WRI in its future course. The venue of the next Triennial Conference had already been decided: it was to be the campus of the University of Sheffield, England and the dates July 22–27, 1972. One of the objectives of the conference should be, the Council felt, to see that it was attended by a wide representation of the movement and other individuals concerned with the theme of social change. One of the key questions was 'Social change by working through the establishment or outside it?' As the issue of WRI's commitment to nonviolent social change was crucial, it was felt important to have the following topics on the agenda:

1. Manifesto for nonviolent revolution.
2. WRI and liberation movements.
3. Pacifist approach to aid and development.

Finally it was decided to call this fourteenth Triennial Conference 'Revolution: Prospects and Strategies'.

### **Revolution: Prospects and Strategies**

The Conference was held in Ranmoor House, a students' hostel of the University of Sheffield, which, with its extensive modern buildings and newly developing gardens, provided all the facilities needed in very pleasant surroundings. An exhibition of military recruitment posters and anti-militarist posters was also arranged, prepared by the Lansbury House Trust Fund with the help of the Peace Pledge Union, British Section of WRI. These posters were from Britain, United States, West Germany, China and Japan, and included clippings of posters from the First and Second World Wars.

This was the fifth Triennial to be held in England and the first since 1957. With its 300 participants from 21 countries, it was the largest yet. The Conference was remarkable for the large percentage of young people attending. It was characterised by informality, with no set speeches by well-known figures in the peace movement. Instead, the speakers introduced their topics briefly before a general discussion on them. The first topic was Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution presented by George Lakey, the second was on Aid and Development introduced by myself. Cao Phuong gave a very moving speech on Self-determination for the People of Vietnam. Ann Davidon introduced the topic of Elimination of Discrimination. She spoke of discrimination on the basis of sex, class, race and age, and Tony Smythe described specific problems of discrimination in Great Britain.

Rather unexpectedly, representatives of DFG-IdK, a German Section of WRI, presented three documents on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Section to show why the question of preparing a manifesto for nonviolent revolution was irrelevant for the work of WRI. They stressed that the International ought to limit its activities to straightforward anti-militarism. They declared that nonviolence should not be considered the central force in the development of pacifist politics. Although some of the members on this commission subscribed to the idea of the WRI not meddling with anything other than its fight against military conscription, the DFG-IdK approach came as a shock and a surprise to the majority of the participants. Those who had either attended the Haverford Triennial (1969) or had heard or read its reports felt that at Sheffield there was not a sense of being united in one family struggling for a common cause, the sense that had characterised the Haverford Triennial.

And yet this very tension seemed to embody the importance of this conference. Whereas at Haverford, the obvious conflicts and differences were almost forgotten, at Sheffield, they were brought to the surface and presented themselves as a serious challenge for the future development of pacifist politics in general and the WRI in particular.

### **Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution**

The idea of such a manifesto had been launched in 1969 at the Haverford Triennial. The 31-page draft presented by George Lakey would be considered a working document, which after full discussions and suggestions for amendments would be circulated throughout the world for further discussion and comment. It was hoped that the final version would be ready to be adopted by the movement as a whole in two or three years' time.

The discussion in the commission on the manifesto for nonviolent revolution was dominated by the differences between the draft presented by George Lakey and the paper circulated by the DFG-IdK. From the perspective of the DFG-IdK paper, the draft manifesto Lakey had presented was unhistorical, in particular in its attitude towards industrialisation and urbanisation. The vision was described as a pure utopia rather than a historically realisable 'concrete' utopia. Anarchist ideals, it was said, are not a basis of revolution. And it should be realised that even in a post-revolutionary situation, there must be state power 'to protect the revolution from the counter-revolution', although ultimately the State would wither away.

The IdK paper sees the socialist revolution as being fostered by Socialist State power (acquired either through election or a take-over/coup), peaceful coexistence (in which Socialism competes with capitalism in non-military spheres – economics, education, culture, etc.) and finally by liberation movements. Hannelis Schulte argued that pacifists must work within the framework of the socialist revolution, and so our manifesto

must consider how we introduce nonviolent revolution into the socialist revolution. In reply, this was compared with the Red Cross working within the military.<sup>40</sup>

The DFG-IdK paper argued that there is only one revolution – the socialist revolution – which had both a violent and a nonviolent wing. In a different context, similar statements had also come from some pacifists in Europe and North America, namely that nonviolence was simply a technique and to speak in absolute terms of a ‘nonviolent revolution’ rather than ‘socialist revolution’ was not correct. In these latter cases it was not too difficult to see the position as a genuinely independent one, un-compromised by any ‘party line’.

The commission on the manifesto for nonviolent revolution spent most of its time in understanding the points raised by the DFG-IdK paper. It was also apparent that there was a third position – implicit in Hugh Schonfield’s remarks – which did not seem to see the necessity for struggle, believing in evolution rather than revolution. There was little detailed criticism or discussion of the Lakey draft and the points raised were not properly discussed.<sup>41</sup> The majority of participants of the Sheffield Triennial felt that the role played by the DFG-IdK was quite unhelpful.

The case of DFG-IdK was a mixture of loyalty to the communist ideology rather than to pacifism, and a clear-cut rejection of the basic approach to nonviolent socio-political revolution advocated by the War Resisters’ International. Some participants interpreted it as an effort to bring about changes in the basic approach of the WRI.

### **Aid and development**

For this theme I had prepared a paper from earlier drafts, including those of Michael Randle and David McReynolds. My paper advocated the Gandhian approach to development based on co-operation with nature rather than exploitation of natural resources; which at the same time gives priority to the idea of just distribution rather than overall increase in wealth.

### **Sex roles liberation**

The following resolution was adopted:

The WRI supports liberation from sex roles as an integral part of the nonviolent revolution, and opposes all forms of discrimination based on sex or sexual preferences.

This was backed by concrete proposals:

1. We propose that people writing literature for WRI take care not to use sexist language or illustrations. Just as the stereotype image of women as passive should not be used as a justification for war, it should not be used as the main reason for peace. We want peace for all people, not only to make life better ‘for women and children’. If we want to refer to non-combatants or ‘innocent victims’ then we should say precisely that. Sexist terms such as ‘mankind’, ‘chairman’ and ‘he’ when we mean ‘he or she’, or ‘brotherhood’ when we mean ‘brotherhood and sisterhood’ should be dropped.
2. Discrimination against women and homosexuals should be eliminated and fuller participation should be actively encouraged.

3. Facilities for the care of children should be provided at WRI activities. No-one should feel that they cannot attend WRI activities because of children. Men and women should share equally in their care. There should be no charges for children.<sup>42</sup>

### **International Action commission**

After discussing various international actions which the WRI had organised the International Action commission recognised the need to formulate some guidelines on international actions. It recommended the formation of a working group on international nonviolent action with the following purposes:

1. To arrange for the study of past actions and provide better documentation of international actions taking place now and in the future.
2. To lay down guidelines for improving the effectiveness and quality of nonviolent actions.
3. To advise and counsel WRI on projects that WRI itself might sponsor.
4. To provide guidelines to WRI on sponsoring INVAs (international nonviolent actions) in times of emergency. To this end WRI should build up a contingency fund to be used for INVAs in crisis situations.
5. To suggest organisational procedures whereby WRI can promote and better serve INVAs, for example, a re-examination of the communications set-up between Sections.
6. To prepare an inventory of tasks and problems that those organising INVAs characteristically face.<sup>43</sup>

During the discussion on this topic certain problems consistently arose. When does an action become a form of interference? Should emphasis be placed on initiatives arising from those directly involved in the problem? What steps can be taken when such a request is not possible, as in the case of Bangla Desh? What criterion should be used for choosing allies? Does such action necessarily involve taking a position of complete neutrality towards warring sides? Or is it possible to constructively support any given side's ends if not their means?

Some international actions were criticised as elitist and of failing to provide impetus to mass action. International nonviolent action can help to develop the nonviolent movement in its single sectors and as a whole.

The following was added to the above proposals:

We need actions in which common people can participate and around which many groups can organise. We commend parallel transnational actions as particularly helpful in this direction. Let us recognise the continuing value of transnational forms of action such as marches, demonstrations, vigils, work-study camps, and the like. Through these kinds of initiatives, individuals can be reinforced in their convictions, and increase their involvement. They regard themselves as protagonists and become more militant in the organised movement. Thus, Conscientisation and organisation-building come together and create a broad and solid base upon which the movement can rely as it enters successive stages of the revolution.<sup>44</sup>

Although the response of the Triennial was concerned with several current world events, Vietnam and Czechoslovakia were in the forefront, and the following resolutions were passed:



## **Vietnam**

The War Resisters' International Conference finds the most critical issue under its consideration to be the war in Indochina. We are alarmed by the silence of the world community in the face of unprecedented escalations which threaten the extermination of a people and a culture.

In the month of April 1972 alone, an estimated 85,000 people died in South Vietnam: the death toll has continued at an appalling level in subsequent months. Hundreds of thousands of children, women and men have been wounded and forced to leave their homes, seeking shelter in refugee camps in which not even the barest of human needs can be met. In addition, the current American bomb attacks on the dikes of North Vietnam threaten the annihilation of much of the population in a catastrophe unequalled in our time.

The suffering of our sisters and brothers in Indochina are mocked by the cordial meetings of the leaders of the three superpowers and by their willingness to manipulate the peoples of Indochina to their own political and economic advantage.

War Resisters' International calls on all members of the human family to support these demands:

1. That the USA cease all military action in Indochina, including all bombing, all ground operations, and the use of chemical poisons and meteorological weapons; and that it set a date for withdrawal of all its troops – ground, navel and air – and cease all military and financial support of dictatorial regimes in Indochina.

These regimes have arrested and barbarously tortured thousands of Vietnamese, Buddhists, Catholics, draft resisters, suspected PRG sympathisers, peace workers and their families in the months of May, June and July throughout South Vietnam. The above actions which we demand of the Americans, should be taken immediately, unilaterally and without any conditions whatsoever.

2. That following the American withdrawal from Indochina, all nations refrain from the shipment of arms into North or South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia, leaving the peoples of Indochina free to work out their relationships without further military intervention from the great powers.
3. We urgently call for all parties fighting in the Kontum-Binhdimh Quangtri-Anloc areas to allow the Vietnamese Buddhists, Catholics and other volunteers to evacuate women and children trapped in the fire zones.

The WRI urges people in all countries of the world to take all nonviolent actions at their disposal – including those involving civil disobedience – to bring about an end to the war. Among these are draft resistance, resistance within the military, the refusal to pay war taxes, and efforts to block the shipment to Indochina of arms from all countries.

The WRI respects the right to self-determination of the Vietnamese people, and it urges acceptance of the above conditions so that all the Vietnamese warring parties may agree to a ceasefire to reduce the suffering of the people and to create a climate for coexistence.<sup>45</sup>

## **Czechoslovakia – political trials**

In Czechoslovakia, despite the government's assurances that no political trials would take place, a number of supporters of the Dubcek regime were being tried. The Triennial passed the following resolution asking people all over the world to do whatever they could in this regard:

WRI condemns the present series of trials in Czechoslovakia of academics, journalists and others for distributing leaflets in last November's elections reminding people of

their right to strike out the names of candidates and for other peaceful activities.<sup>46</sup>

### **Some comments and experiences of the fourteenth Triennial**

Howard Clark, a young British activist who later managed the WRI office, about the conference:

And when I am asked for my evaluation of the Triennial, my answer is primarily in personal terms – the relationships I found it so easy to enter into and which I value so much. The re-affirmation of the personalist basis of my nonviolence and the re-assessment of parts of my approach, the quality of the people attending . . .

This was a Triennial Conference – there will not be another one for three years – and it really is difficult to see how, apart from a personal re-invigoration that many of us feel, the work of the WRI over the next three years has been helped. With some Sections – such as two of the German ones – purely anti-war, not fully committed to work for non-violent radical social change and, indeed, spurning disobedience; with others mainly engaged in theoretical work; with some members in the ‘Third World’, but most living in the affluent west, the WRI is an International without a common vision.<sup>47</sup>

David McReynolds, one of the most important figures in the WRI, wrote in the War Resisters League journal *Win*, September 15, 1972:

Sheffield did its work, and it worked hard, but too many things were left only partly finished and some important matters never taken up at all. It was, perhaps, the least successful Triennial I’d attended . . .

And for all the factional wrangles with the four German Sections, the parliamentary confusion over whether to have one or three Chairpersons, and the inconclusive discussion of whether to change the statement of purpose, the fact remained that at the end of the week there was still a War Resisters’ International and that, however slowly, it continued to develop ideologically . . .

One can easily look at the WRI, see how fragile and powerless it is, how little impact it has on the world, and be discouraged. Yet somewhere there must be a group, a network of individuals, which is tied to no government, and which gives its allegiance to humanity alone. For all its defects, that is the WRI.

The following is from a report by David Harding of the Fellowship of Reconciliation:

A WRI Triennial is an indescribable experience characterised by inspiration, frustration, education and especially good companionship. The XIVth . . . was no exception. . . . the issues of sexuality, race and professional responsibility were especially well debated and explored. Certainly the best work was done in specialist commissions which covered everything that could be imagined as pacifist concern and more . . . On the other hand, difficult decisions were avoided and minority views scarcely challenged. . . . One of the German delegations, whose views were clearly out of accord with the vast majority, blocked much work with their exclusively pro-communist line, yet their presence and policy were hardly tackled publicly. I suspect that in some commissions, for example on Wars of National Liberation, a conference minority became a commission majority yet their conclusions were not challenged in plenary session.<sup>48</sup>

## General Secretary's retirement

I announced at the Triennial that after over 10 years working as administrative head of the International, I felt that the time had come for me to hand over the responsibility to someone else. Howard Clark wrote:

Last Thursday afternoon, Devi Prasad announced his resignation . . . And as the stunned participants at the Triennial stood and applauded, the supreme strength of the WRI shone out . . . – wildly various thoughts racing through our heads as feelings of gratitude for his work and sadness at his resignation clashed – and even as we had an especially early adjournment, the affection felt towards Devi by the whole conference, including his critics, swelled through the assembly with true emotion.<sup>49</sup>

In my resignation statement I said:

I took over this responsibility exactly 10 years and two months ago. I had not applied for the job. I was conscripted, as a very willing draftee. And now I want to say how glad I am that I accepted the job. These have been ten very creative years for me personally – full of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Great experience. Great friendships. Full of love and concern, as well as lots of hate and quarrels. I have experienced the most beautiful kind of comradeship.

I am deeply grateful to you who are here and those who are not here at present including the hundreds who have made me one of the richest persons in terms of friendship. You have shown me how human nature works – not that I have understood it. I have only seen its variety of faces – its warmth, its visual and spiritual beauty, and at the same time its hatred, its racialism and paternalism – in subtle as well as crude forms – its creative genius. . . . I am indeed happy to have had the opportunity of working in this position.

After ten years of serving the International as its administrative head, I now feel that I should relieve myself of this responsibility.<sup>50</sup>

In the note saying 'Goodbye Dear Good Friends and Colleagues' on the editor's page of *War Resistance* 43 I added to the above statement the following:

I am very happy to have taken this step. Firstly because it is completely voluntary and secondly because it is not due to anything like policy differences. It is not on the grounds of health. Nor is it on the grounds of general pessimism, as I believe that the work the WRI has done and is doing has a great future.

So, then, why have I resigned – particularly when I was at the height of my influencing capacity (if there is any such thing) within the Movement? I think the best time for one to retire is not when one is at one's lowest ebb of influence or optimism. It is when one is on the highest ebb – just to ensure that the ego does not permanently blind one with the feeling that one is indispensable, and that the 'departure' is of a beautiful character. It is lovely, though sad, to see a few tears, including one's own, trickling down cheeks when one says 'I am going'. This way you do not go – you are there – you live there for ever.

I wish to continue living with you in spirit, in mind, and if somehow possible in body too, by being of whatever help to the movement I can.

1972–1975

### **A new staff structure**

At the Council Meeting held immediately after the Triennial I recommended that the WRI should no longer follow the traditional hierarchical staff structure. Running the WRI headquarters should not depend on only one person considered the *top officer* and responsible for taking decisions on behalf of the Executive. Moreover, it was essential for an organisation like the WRI not to create a situation in which anyone became indispensable. The work was done by the whole staff, which, if operated as a team, should produce better results. I suggested that the responsibility of management should be given to a collective. This would also be a reflection of the WRI's own ideal of a future society.

George Lakey and Uri Davis proposed the following resolution at the Council meeting held in July 1972:

The Council accepts in principle that the HQ should work with a Staff Collective and that the post of General Secretary be abolished. The details of such a framework should be worked out by the Executive in consultation with the staff . . . It is moved that the status quo is maintained until Devi leaves the position of General Secretary.<sup>51</sup>

A collective was accordingly formed including Ben Makins, who had worked for the Movement for a New Society (Philadelphia, USA), Joe Gerson and Lani Gerson, also from the USA, Toma Sjk from Israel and Madeleine Bridges, a young Englishwoman, with Kie Fullerton serving as secretary of the Lansbury House Trust Fund.

In February 1973 I was elected as Chairman of the WRI, and served in this position until 1975.

### **Council Meeting – St Louis, May 1973**

This was the second Council meeting after the Sheffield Conference, and had much to deal with in the matters raised and discussed at the Triennial. It started with the response to a paper by Myrtle Solomon on issues related to WRI policy and functions. Opinions differed extensively. On one side there were statements such as, 'it is sometimes necessary to mute our call for nonviolence'; 'WRI members need not all be nonviolent'; 'nonviolence is only a means and can never be a goal of society. . . the primary responsibility of the political sector is to relate to needs of people . . .'; 'the WRI should be concerned with precise and specific changes and focus on the Western hemisphere'; 'the work of the organisation should be based on a minimum definition . . .'; and 'the WRI should be only an anti-militarist body helping conscientious objectors'. On the other side opposite opinions were expressed, such as 'WRI must be very clear that it is nonviolent'. One member expressed his 'long felt disappointment that in the International the nonviolent principle is continuously questioned . . .'.

The Council accepted a resolution, which was clearly a compromise between the two sections of opinions. In support of that compromise the resolution quoted from the Vienna statement, 'Liberation Movement and the WRI', a paragraph starting with ' . . . our unwavering commitment to nonviolence does not mean that we are hostile to the revolutionary movements of our time . . . '.

The resolution opposed nuclear weapons and asked for universal disarmament, condemned

all military pacts and alliances, appealed to all nation states to recognise the right of conscience in regard to military service, called for the release from prisons everywhere in the world of all those held for reasons of political, religious or ethical beliefs and condemned imperialism and global dominion, militarism and state military intervention as well as the repression of national, ethnic and religious minorities by all nation-state administrations, including the USA and the USSR.

The resolution ended with:

We know that various sections of the WRI will differ in their strategies and tactics. They will also differ on their evaluation of the social systems of the Soviet Union, the Peoples Republic of China and the United States of America, etc. But we hold that the sections should hold to the points laid down in this resolution.

## A move to Brussels

As we have seen, moving the headquarters from London to somewhere outside of the UK had been on the agenda for quite some time. In particular there was a feeling among the European Sections that the WRI was a basically an Anglo-Saxon organisation and did not understand or care for the European approach to pacifism. Brussels had a claim to be considered the *capital* of Europe and therefore an ideal location for the WRI in the view of many people.

There was already a centre with the offices of several Belgian peace movements. Most importantly this centre – Maison de la Paix – had the office of the Belgian Section of the WRI, Internationale des Resistant a la Guerre, who were keen for the WRI to move there. At the Executive Committee meeting held at 3 Caledonian Road, on February 2 and 3, 1974 Jean van Lierde described how the *Maison* had been purchased in 1969 with the dream of bringing both the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters' International to Brussels.

The Council at St Louis in 1973 favoured the move and left the decision up to the Executive, which, at its meeting on 2 and 3 February 1974, decided that a postal vote would be necessary in confirming a decision to move. There was a general recognition that the move might mean a change away from the traditional British 'anarcho-pacifism'. One member indicated his anxiety at these possible changes and opposed the move. Some other members too shared the anxiety but expressed the view that these tendencies dominate the WRI because it is based in London. The Executive voted for the move with five in favour with one opposed and two (Chairman and Vice-Chairman) abstaining. A postal ballot confirmed this decision by a substantial majority.

In 1974 the WRI headquarters was moved to Brussels.

## The fifteenth Triennial Conference

The fifteenth Triennial conference was held at Noordwijkerhout, Holland on July 12–19, 1975. At the Executive Committee meeting held on June 14–15 election of the Chairperson for the term 1975–8 had been announced. Myrtle Solomon was declared the WRI Chairperson for the next term.

As the outgoing Chairperson I handed over the charge to her and in my speech I said:

It is a great joy for me to be in the position of a retiring chairman, handing over the responsibility to somebody who for certain will be able to fulfill it in a much better way than I was able to do. Moreover, the feeling of relief is indeed very pleasant. Three years seemed a long period; I do not know how Harold managed it for sixteen years and Michael for six. Nevertheless, I am happy and grateful for having the experience, which taught me many things. I am grateful also to all of you for the kind co-operation and love I received during this period.

The WRI headquarters remained in Brussels till the early 1980s, when it moved back to London into a house that Myrtle Solomon herself had bought to accommodate it.

### Notes Chapter 17

- 1 David Harris, *Goliath*, Sidereal Press, New York, 1970
- 2 'Among Memories', in Michael True, *An Energy Field – More Intense Than War*, Syracuse University Press, 1995, p. 53  
(Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was a co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union and a member of the Communist Party from the 1920s. She contributed much to social reforms. Joe Hill, her co-worker, conveys something of Elizabeth's spirit in 'The Rebel Girl', the song he wrote and set to a ragtime tune shortly before his death in 1915.)
- 3 Editorial, *War Resistance* 33/34, 2nd and 3rd quarters 1970, p.2
- 4 Ibid., Adam Curle (Professor of Education and Development, Harvard University, USA), Aid and its implications, p.3–5; Clive Jordan (Executive Secretary, Universities' Fight for Economic Development, UK.), Transformation in the approach to aid, p.6–9; Julio Laborde (from Argentina), Aid and the imperialist ideology, p.10–13; Beti Laszlon, representing the Hungarian peace council chaired the session on Patterns of Industrial Development and the speakers were Mansur Hoda (Intermediate Technology Development Group, India), Hope lies in the intermediate technology, p.23–5 and Gilbert Julis (Confederation Generale du Travail and Movement de la Paix, France), Industrialisation in developing countries, p.26–9. The last session was chaired by April Carter on behalf of War Resisters' International and the speakers were Sugatha Dasgupta (Director, Institute for Gandhian Studies, India), Social structure and the growth in food production, p.38–40 and Gordon Schaffer (Chairman Political Committee, London Co-operative Society, and British Peace Committee, UK), We must produce more, p.41–3
- 5 Ibid., Concluding Statement of the Seminar, p.47
- 6 *WRI Newsletter*, Special Press Release issued by Chairman and headquarters, May 8, 1970
- 7 See Chapter 5, 'Conscription, Its Origin and Opposition to It', section on 'Abolition of conscription is only the first step'.
- 8 Theodor W. Olson & Lynne Shivers, *Training for Non-violent Action*, WRI, London, 1970.  
Theodore W. Olson, a long time participant in North American direct action projects, was Assistant Professor of Social Science at York University, Toronto, Canada, Co-author of *Thirty-One Hours* and numerous articles on nonviolent direct action projects.  
Lynne Shivers graduated from Martin Luther King School of Social Change in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1968. She had been active in training and action programmes with the Friends Peace Committee, A Quaker Action Group and Pendle Hill.
- 9 *WRI Newsletter* 95, October 23, 1970, pp.1–2
- 10 Ibid. p. 2
- 11 *WRI Newsletter* 101, April 16, 1971, p.1
- 12 In the early sixties Gonzalo Arias became well known for his demonstrations against conscription, standing with posters hanging on his shoulders declaring his opposition.
- 13 *WRI Newsletter* 101, April 16, 1971, pp. 2–3
- 14 Devi Prasad, 'The Bourg-Madame Demonstrations', *WRI Newsletter* 101, April 1971, pp.3–4
- 15 *WRI Newsletter* 102, May 11, 1971, Spain: Support Pepe Beunza Campaign, pp. 1–4

- 16 'Pepe Beunza Writes from Prison', *WRI Newsletter* 106, August 17, 1971, pp.4–5
- 17 'Spain's first pacifist CO re-arrested', *WRI Newsletter* 111, December 31, 1971, pp.2–3
- 18 *WRI Newsletter* 125, January 25, 1973, pp.1–2
- 19 *WRI Newsletter* 113, February 4, 1972, pp. 4–5
- 20 'Withdrawal of Pakistani Forces from Bangla Desh – The People's Will and the Guns of the Dictator', *WRI Statements*, WRI, 1972, pp.38–40
- 21 'Operation Omega', Press Statement, August 14, 1971, author's WRI Archives
- 22 Letter written on August 6, 1971 by the WRI Secretary, author's WRI Archives
- 23 'Omega: Jessore Jail and After', a press release meant for an article in *Time Out* and other papers written by Ben Crow, one of the team members, author's WRI archives
- 24 A leaflet distributed widely by Operation OMEGA
- 25 Operation Omega Appeal to all the members of the British House of Commons dated October 23, 1971, author's WRI Archives.
- 26 Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, London, November 20, 1971, item 18 (c), p.9
- 27 'Independent Bangla Desh – End the Pakistan/India War', *WRI Statements*, WRI, London, 1972, pp.46–7
- 28 Barbara Deming, 'On Anger', in *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?*, WRI, London, 1972, p.13.
- 29 Kenneth E. Boulding, 'The Roots of Violence', in *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?*, WRI, London, 1972, p.21.
- 30 Paul Wehr, 'Getting the Movement Together', in *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?*, WRI, London, 1972, p.43
- 31 George Lakey, 'Struggle for a New Society', in *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?*, WRI, London, 1972, p.35
- 32 Ted Roszak, 'The Need for Persistence', in *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?*, WRI, London, 1972, p.45
- 33 *War Resistance* 38, 3rd quarter 1971, pp.1–7
- 34 Harold F. Bing, 'Louis Lecoin', *War Resistance* 38, 3rd quarter 1971, p. 15
- 35 'Northern Ireland', *War Resistance* 38, 3rd quarter 1971, p.4
- 36 Minutes of International Council Meeting, Lübeck, Fed. Germany, July 25–30, 1971
- 37 *Ibid.*, 'Conscientious Objection in Spain', p.11
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.12
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.12
- 40 Commission Reports – 'Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution', *War Resistance* 43, 4th quarter, 1972, pp.16–17
- 41 *Ibid.*, p.17
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp.18–19
- 43 *Ibid.*, p.20
- 44 *Ibid.*, p.21
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp.2 and 21
- 47 Article published in *Peace News*, August 4, 1972
- 48 *War Resistance* 43, 4th quarter 1972, p.26
- 49 *Ibid.*, p.25
- 50 *Ibid.*, editor's page
- 51 Minutes of the International Council Meeting, Sheffield, July 21, 1972, items 8 (a) and (c), 'H.Q. Staff'

## E P I L O G U E

I feel that it is too early for a full assessment of the period since 1975. The International has been continuing its work with vigour. Its areas of work have expanded and so have the number of affiliated bodies. One of the encouraging aspects of its work is of the question of empowerment, particularly of women. The International has a Women's Working Group, which publishes a Newsletter and holds workshops and seminars. The latest is the plan for a conference on *Nonviolence and Social Empowerment* due at the end of this millennium and the beginning of the next.

The world has changed beyond what could have been imagined in 1975, with the fall of the 'Communist Block' and the dominance of Global Capitalism. On the left the current wisdom is to unite around issues rather than put forward visions of an alternative society. In their own way movements such as those for the rights for minorities or for environmental issues have taken up the use of nonviolent techniques pioneered by pacifists and war resisters. The WRI has contributed to many campaigns including that against nuclear weapons and against arms sales. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the WRI actively sought to build links in the former Eastern Block countries. Later it acted in response to the conflicts caused in the wake of the break up of Yugoslavia. It continues as a serious pacifist force.

At the end of this book I want simply to raise three points, which I feel are crucial for the international's further development.

The first point is illuminated forcefully by the Vienna Statement of 1968:

The WRI is first of all a freedom movement. We work for man's right to freedom: freedom to live without hunger, war, pestilence: freedom to live without economic, social, racial and cultural exploitation: freedom for the individual to express himself and to develop to the full his powers as a creative human being: freedom to develop social capacity, so often cramped and distorted by authoritarian structures, which enables men to live in community and to rise above egotism.<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning of my acquaintance with the War Resisters' International the main attractions I had for the Organisation was both its complete rejection of sectarianism and its Declaration, in the second part of which I saw the determination not only to eliminate war from the world but also remove all the causes that generate war. For me this meant total non-violent revolution.

The more involved I got into the war resisters' world the more I realised that the two parts of the WRI Declaration made hardly any sense if seen and dealt with separately.

Already in 1937, Olga Misar, an active Council Member from Austria, had put it to the Council several times. At last she was compelled by her own conscience to give it up and not to accept re-nomination for Council elections at the Copenhagen Conference held that year. In 1937 on June 2<sup>nd</sup> she wrote a letter to Runham Brown:

I have hesitated so long before writing this letter, because I have found it so extremely difficult to come to a decision. But now I have to say that I am not coming to the Conference in Copenhagen and also that I cannot stand for election to the International Council any more.



In the last years I have not been able to agree with the political views of the Council and I do not hope to persuade the Council to my point of view. But I feel that I cannot continue to carry my share of the responsibility for actions with which I do not agree.

...

With this letter Olga Misar sent a *Memo for the International Council*, explaining her position and the way, she felt, they were ignoring her point of view. I quote here a couple of paragraphs from it:

For a considerable time I have had the feeling that many of my pacifist friends do not realise the meaning of *the great changes that have come over the world and that have thoroughly altered the state of things and the ways of thinking*. When reading our pacifist papers I have often the feeling as if pacifists went on writing in the old manner, just as if nothing had happened. It is, however, one thing to remain true to one's opinion in the face of difficulties, and quite another thing to realise changes and facts that have happened and to find *new answers to new problems* that are facing us.<sup>2</sup>

Olga Misar wished that the WRI should not only talk, hold meetings and conferences, write or give statements, make appeals, and even hold demonstrations, organise sit-ins etc., but give priority to the search for the true path to the genuine freedom for the individual and humanity as a whole. The real work of the WRI must be at the grass roots level, i.e. educating and persuading the people, individuals and groups, to create for themselves a pattern of life opposed to militarism in every respect.

In the last few years only the section, *Implications of the Declaration* has been rewritten to fit with the changing situations. Nonetheless, the actuality is that the Movement has not yet discovered the tools, weapons as it were, which would be used to remove the causes of war. The task is to build a world inspired and motivated by the dynamics of nonviolence, a world free from war, all varieties of dictatorships – right or left, exploitation, inequalities – economic as well as social.

In this connection the basic question is: How long would we, the pacifists, go on postponing the responsibility of taking our fight to the grass root level? How long would we go on making appeals, protests and organising demonstrations and campaigns against the rulers and administrators or begging from them the peace we are looking for? When will we realise that peace does not drop from the sky, it grows from below.

WRI is one of the very few organisations that are privileged with a Declaration, meaningful and of permanent nature. And that is the strength of the War Resisters' International. The story of the successes of the WRI had been on account of the trust and conviction its members/activists had been cherishing for so many decades. The story that is told in this book has many witnesses to that truth, and these are only a few examples from uncountable number of witnesses.

### **Unity and Mutuality**

The second aspect about the work of the International I want to raise is expressed by the question: Is the WRI a co-ordinating body, or an autonomous organisation, or both? How many times has this question been asked!

There is insufficient mutuality between the WRI and its affiliated bodies. For example, in

the case of an organisation like WRI it should be expected that if a piece of information is sent by the headquarters to its affiliated bodies it ought it to be passed on to their membership unless meant specifically for official use. In many cases this does not happen and that results in creating a distance between the WRI and the national or local membership.

From past experiences it is evident that a grass-root movement cannot be built with that kind of gap between the International, national and local membership. The organisational structure of WRI is nearly ideal for a grass root movement. It is decentralist with significant contribution from its membership. I recall the occasion of Danilo Dolci's fast in the early sixties<sup>3</sup>, which illustrates this side of the movement very well. As soon as the HQ received the news of the fast we sent an SOS to all the Sections, who took immediate action and sent messages of support to Danilo Dolci who must have received them in dozens, if not hundreds. Messages of protest sent to the Sicilian administration made them realise how important was the fast.

While this action was considered a success, imagine if the Sections and the HQ had built a united *family* of activists, and all the membership had received the WRI communication, the messages reaching Dolci and his opponents would have been in the thousands rather than hundreds.

Unusually for an International organisation the WRI does not have a compulsory fixed contribution to be paid by its affiliated and associated bodies. For four or five decades the WRI has relied on a mild appeal or two in a year to its sections and individual members. Yet very few Sections made any regular contribution towards the cost of running the International. True Mutuality implies that that the sections see it as their responsibility to support the Headquarters. Without this, it will remain difficult for the WRI to be effective.

### **The Non-Western World**

The third and final point I would like to raise is in respect of the WRI's relationships outside Europe and the USA. To give an idea of the seriousness of the matter I end with a paragraph from my 1975 paper *WRI and the Third World*:

The sad fact is that on conceptual levels these two worlds are very different and that it is hard for them to understand each other or establish a dialogue or communication of the spirit. After a 'successful' consultation held in 1971 in Holland, a well-known Vietnamese priest<sup>4</sup> said to me: "I have been taken to hundreds of places; I have talked to thousands of people in public meetings and in private gatherings. I have spent much time with people in Europe and North America, but I am sad to say that not many people have been able to understand what I have been trying to communicate. Our languages are different and our worlds, it seems, are not the same." I had no difficulty in believing what this extremely gentle monk told me. I know that some people in the West have also felt in the same way. I do not know its dynamics, nor do I know the answer. But I am sure that such a bridge can be built, for the crisis is the same for all women and men of the world. It is a struggle to be liberated in every sense of the word. And liberation should be the same for the Asians as it is for the English. There is so much in common in humanity that there is no need for despair. But we must find the way to act as free and equal partners in the struggle for freedom and equality.

#### Notes Epilogue

- 1 'Liberation movements and the WRI', *War Resistance* 25 & 26, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 1968, p.29
- 2 Olga Misar, Letter to Runham Brown, enclosing the *Memo for the International Council*, from the WRI Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam Holland. (See the Memo in Appendices)
- 3 At the beginning of January 1966 Danilo Dolci wrote a letter to the WRI Secretary saying that he was starting a fast for a week to protest against a court order, and that he would like WRI's support. He also gave the dates of the fast and the date for the start of the protest action. The WRI sent an urgent appeal through their New Letter (no, 44, dated 6-1-1966) asking for response to Danilo Dolci's letter with the following request: "We hope you will take supporting actions in whatever way you can – by putting pressure on the Italian Government through its representatives in your country and writing or cabling direct to Rome."
- 4 Rev. Thich Nhat Hanh

## A P P E N D I C E S

# A P P E N D I X   O N E

## Constitution and Rules

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*as agreed at the International Conference in 1957 and amended at the Conferences of 1963, 1966, 1969, 1972 and 1982, by postal ballot in 1991, at the Conference in 1991, and by postal ballot in 2002*

### CONSTITUTION

#### **BASIS**

1. The basis of the War Resisters' International is the following Declaration (hereinafter termed the Declaration) adopted at the first International Conference at Bilthoven, 1921:  
“War is a crime against humanity. I therefore am determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war”.

#### **AFFILIATION**

2. Any organisation whose members individually accept the Declaration or an alternative form approved by the Council is eligible for affiliation as a Section of the International subject to the approval of the Council.

#### **ASSOCIATION**

3. (a) Any organisation whose objectives are consistent with the Declaration, but which either does not provide for individual membership or whose members do not individually accept the Declaration or an approved equivalent, may be accepted by the Council as an Associate Organisation.  
(b) Any publication appearing not less than four times each year whose policy is consistent with the Declaration but which is not the publication of an affiliated Section or Associate Organisation, may be accepted by the Council as an Associate Publication.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

4. All members of affiliated Sections shall be members of the International. In addition, any person ineligible for membership of any existing Section may be accepted by the Executive Committee as an individual member of the International on signing the Declaration.

#### **DISAFFILIATION**

5. The Council shall have the power to terminate the affiliation of any Section or the association of an Organisation or Publication on stating its reasons. Any Section so disaffiliated and any Organisation or Publication so disassociated shall have the right of appeal to the Triennial Conference.

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

6. (a) An International Conference shall be held within four years of the previous conference, on dates determined by the Council. The Conference shall determine the policy of the International and shall elect up to twelve persons to serve on the Council until the next Triennial conference. A Special International Conference shall be convened at the request of one fifth of the Sections.

(b) Sections shall have the right to send representatives whose collective votes for each Section shall be determined by the following scale of membership:

Fewer than 500 members – 2 votes;

500 to 999 members – 3 votes;

1,000-2,999 members – 4 votes;

More than 2,999 members – 5 votes.

Associate Organisations and Publications shall have the right to send representatives. There shall be two votes allotted to each Associate Organisation and one vote to each Associate Publication, except that such votes shall not apply in case of motions to amend the Constitution. Members of the Council other than those appointed by Sections shall have one vote on all matters except the election of Council and motions to amend the Constitution.

Other persons, who are members of Sections but not acting as a representative of a Section, or who are individual members, may also attend but shall not have a vote.

## **COUNCIL**

7. (a) The following persons shall be members of the Council:

The Chairperson and Treasurer(s) of the International ex officio; up to twelve persons elected by the Triennial Conference; One representative of each properly constituted Section appointed by that Section.

The Council shall have the power to co-opt not more than three additional members, who may hold office until the next occasion when a new group of Council members elected by the Triennial Conference assumes office.

Each Associate Organisation and each Associate Publication shall have the right to send an observer to Council meetings.

(b) The Chairperson shall be elected by postal ballot of the Sections in accordance with the Rules. The election of Council members by the International Conference shall be determined by the Rules. The Treasurer or Treasurers shall be appointed by the Council and may continue to hold office irrespective of the dissolution of the appointing Council. The Council shall elect from its members not less than one nor more than three Vice-Chairpersons, having regard to the desirability of representing different world regions through these appointments. No person other than a member of the International may be nominated, elected, appointed or continue as Chairperson, Treasurer or member of the Council.

(c) The Council shall meet at least once a year. It shall be responsible for carrying out the decisions of the International Conference and shall act in the name of the International between Conferences. It shall represent the International in all matters both legal and non-legal.

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

8. There shall be an Executive Committee composed of Council members, elected by the Council. It shall be responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Council and for general administration and finance. It shall act in place of the Council between Council meetings. Members of the Council not elected to the Executive shall have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the Executive Committee.

#### **STAFF**

9. The Council shall be empowered to appoint and pay staff for the Secretariat who must be members of the International and shall be expected to attend Executive and Council meetings and International Conferences. The Council shall have the power to terminate such appointments.

#### **FINANCE**

10. Sections, Associate Organisations and Associate Publications shall pay an annual affiliation fee based upon their membership and income in accordance with such guidelines as may be set out in the Rules. Individual members, whether members of Sections or not, shall be asked at least once a year to contribute according to their ability.

#### **AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION**

11. This Constitution may be amended by a vote of the Sections either at a Triennial Conference or by postal ballot. Amendments may be proposed by the Council, a Section or any five members. A proposed amendment shall require two-thirds of the votes cast to pass. The procedure for ballots on proposed amendments shall be determined by the Rules, provided that there shall be an interval of not less than six months between the first formal notification of the wording of a proposed amendment and the first day of the relevant International Conference, or the closure of the ballot, as the case may be.

#### **RULES**

12. The Council shall have the power to make rules to implement the Constitution, provided that such Rules, and any subsequent amendments of such Rules, shall be approved by not less than two-thirds of the Council members present. The Rules, together with amendments to the Rules, shall have the same force as the Constitution and shall have immediate effect, but shall be subject to confirmation by not less than two-thirds of the votes cast on a motion or motions for that purpose at the next Triennial Conference.

### **RULES**

#### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

1. (a) The preliminary agenda of an International Conference shall be circulated to all Sections, Associate Organisations, Associate Publications and Council Members not less than three months before the Conference.  
(b) Decisions of an International Conference shall be minuted and reported to the next succeeding Council Meeting. The Council shall act in accordance with these decisions.  
(c) Where there is not consensus on resolutions proposed to the International Confer-

ence, a vote will be held on the basis of one voting card for each vote allocated in Article 6. No individual may hold voting cards on behalf of more than one organisation; nor should an individually elected Council member who is also an organisations representative use both votes simultaneously.

## **ELECTIONS**

2. (a) Candidates for the office of Chairperson may be nominated by a Section or any five members. Nominations must be received by the Secretariat not less than six months before the first day of the International Conference. The Secretariat shall send ballot papers to the Sections promptly after the deadline. Sections shall have the same number of votes as for the International Conference. Ballot papers must be returned to the Secretariat not later than 90 days before the first day of the International Conference. The Chairperson shall assume office in the course of the International Conference.
- (b) Candidates for election to the Council by the International Conference may be nominated by a Section or any five members. Nominations must be received by the Secretariat not less than 90 days before the first day of the International Conference. The election for Council shall take place during the International Conference on the basis of one ballot paper for each vote allotted in Article 6, provided that any Section, Associate Organisation or Associate Publication not represented at the Conference shall have the right to return a postal vote not later than one week before the first day of the Conference. Any ballot paper declaring votes for more than 12 candidates shall be invalid. Council members so elected shall assume office at the close of the International Conference.
- (c) All nominations of candidates must be in writing. The written consent of candidates must be obtained by the nominators or the Secretariat. Announcements of nominations shall include the names of the nominators.

## **COUNCIL**

3. (a) Sections shall be responsible for the travelling expenses of their representatives attending Council Meetings. Payment of travelling expenses of elected members and of members of the Executive Committee shall be decided by the Executive Committee.
- (b) Any Section, Associated Organisation or Associated Publication wishing to submit an item for consideration by the Council shall inform the International Secretariat which shall place it on the Agenda of the next meeting.
- (c) Any Council Member receiving an official request from a Section, Associated Organisation or Associated Publication to place an item or items on the Council Agenda shall act in accordance with that request and a Council Member may also be required by any Section, Associate Organisation or Associated Publication to express its view on any item on the Council Agenda.
- (d) Agendas and Minutes of the Council shall be circulated to all Sections, Associate Organisations and Associated Publications.

## **THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

4. (a) The Executive Committee shall establish its own procedure within the framework of the Constitution and Rules and shall report to the Council.
- (b) The Executive Committee shall meet at least four times in a year. Dates of forthcoming Executive Committee meetings shall be notified to other Council members.



(c) Minutes of the Executive Committee shall be sent to all Council members, Sections, Associate Organisations and Associate Publications.

#### **STAFF**

5. In making appointments to the staff, the Council and Executive Committee shall endeavour to maintain a Secretariat which is both multinational and multilingual, and balanced with regard to gender.

#### **FINANCE**

6. (a) Associate Organisations and Publications shall pay an annual affiliation fee according to their means, having regard to the need to cover at least the cost of mailings received from the Secretariat.  
(b) The Executive Committee shall have the power to authorise acceptance of contributions in kind in lieu of a financial contribution.  
(c) Non-payment of affiliation fees by a Section or Associate during two successive years may be construed by the Council as a ground for disaffiliation or disassociation.  
(d) In addition to affiliation fees, the Council shall raise funds by direct appeal, with the cooperation where possible of the Sections concerned.  
(e) The Annual Financial Statement and Balance Sheet shall be submitted by the Treasurer for the approval of the Council.

#### **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

7. (a) The proposers of a Constitutional Amendment shall have the right to submit with the proposal a paper setting out their argument for its adoption. Such paper shall be circulated by the Secretariat with formal notice of the proposal. Any further arguments pertaining to the proposal received by the Secretariat not later than two months before closure of the ballot shall also be circulated.  
(b) Any formal proposal for amendment of the Constitution received by the Secretariat shall be placed on the agenda of the next relevant International Conference unless either the Executive Committee or the Council determine that it shall be put to a postal ballot. In the latter case the Executive Committee shall set the timetable for the ballot.

#### **LANGUAGE AND INTERPRETATION**

8. The Constitution and Rules shall be published in the English, French, German and Spanish languages, provided that in the event of dispute as to interpretation the English text shall prevail.

## A P P E N D I X T W O

### International conferences

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Year	Town and country	Serial number and description
1921	Bilthoven, Holland	The founding Conference
1925	Hoddesdon, Britain	First: the first Conference after the International moved from Holland to Britain in 1923
1928	Sonntagsberg, Austria	Second
1931	Lyon, France	Third
1934	Welwyn, Britain	Fourth
1937	Copenhagen, Denmark	Fifth
1940–8:	During the Second World War International Conferences could not be held, but a few alternative Regional Conferences were organised.	
1948	Shrewsbury, Britain	Sixth
1951	Brunswick, Federal Republic of Germany	Seventh
1954	Paris, France	Eighth
1957	Roehampton, Britain	Ninth
1960	Gandhigram, India	Tenth: the first Conference outside Europe
1963	Stavanger, Norway	Eleventh: the first Triennial Conference with a theme: <i>The Relevance of Individual Refusal in the Nuclear Age</i> as the first part. The second part was for organisational matters.
1966	Rome, Italy	Twelfth: theme: <i>Nonviolence and Politics</i>
1969	Haverford, USA	Thirteenth: the second time a Triennial was held outside Europe. Theme: <i>Liberation and Revolution: Gandhi's Challenge</i>
1972	Sheffield, Britain	Fourteenth: theme: <i>Revolution: Prospects and Strategies</i>
1975	Noordwijkerhout, Holland	Fifteenth: theme: <i>Festival of Nonviolent Alternatives</i>
1979	Sonderborg, Denmark	Sixteenth: theme: <i>Towards Liberation</i>

## APPENDIX THREE

### Meetings of the International Council

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Year	Date	Place	Chair	General Secretary	Asst. Secretary
1926	January 1–2	Berlin, Germany	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1927	May 21–2	Enfield, UK	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1928	July 26	Sonntagsberg, Austria	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1929	January 4–7	Enfield, UK	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1929	January 5 Joint Meeting with the No More War Movement	London, UK	H. Morland Chair of NMWM		
1929	Aug. 30–Sept. 2	Zurich, Switzerland	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1931	August 1	Lyon, France	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1932	January 2–5	Enfield, UK	Fenner Brockway	H. Runham Brown	
1933	December 30–1	Enfield, UK	Lord Ponsonby	Grace Beaton	H. Runham Brown, (Dpty. Chair)
1934	July 26 and 29	Welwyn, UK	H. Runham Brown for Lord Ponsonby	Eva Loveless and Margrit Weidmann	
1935	July 26–8	Zurich, Switzerland	Dpty. Chair H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	
1936	July 24–7	Hoddesdon, UK	Lord Ponsonby	H. Runham Brown	
1937	July 26	Copenhagen, Denmark	George Lansbury	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton
1938	July 26–8	Bilthoven, Holland	George Lansbury	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton
1939–45	No International Council meetings were held during the Second World War				
1943	August 28	An unofficial meeting held in London with the available members			
1946	December 28–31	Cambridge, UK	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	
1947	July 26–9	Basle, Switzerland	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	
1948	August 5	Shrewsbury, UK	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	
1948	August 9	Shrewsbury, UK	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	

<b>Year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>General Secretary</b>	<b>Asst. Secretary</b>
1949	July 29–August 1	Bloomendal, Holland	H. Runham Brown	Grace Beaton	
1950	July 28–31	Turin, Italy	Harold Bing Ac(ting)	Grace Beaton	
1951	July 27	Brunswick, F.R.of Germany	Harold Bing (Acting)	Grace Beaton	
1951	July 30	Brunswick,	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1952	July 25–8	Braziers Park, UK	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1953	July 24–6	Holte, Denmark	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1954	July 29	Paris, France	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1954	August 2	Paris, France	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1955	July 19–23	Geneva, Switzerland	Harold Bing	Grace Beaton	
1956	July 16–20	London, UK	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum, (Acting)	
1956	December 28–30	Bergisch- Gladbach, F. R. of Germany	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	
1957	July 15	London, UK	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	
1957	July 20	London, UK	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	
1958	July 17–20	Sonderholm, Denmark	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	
1959	July 18–21	Bruxelles, Belgium	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	
1960	May 27–9	Ostend, Belgium	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	Tony Smythe
1960	December 21	Gandhigram, India	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	Tony Smythe
1960	December 28–7	Gandhigram, India	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	Tony Smythe
1961	July 18–20	Partinico, Sicily	Harold Bing	Arlo Tatum	Tony Smythe
1962	July 25–9	London, UK	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe	
1963	July 26	Stavanger, Norway	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe	
1963	July 27–30	Stavanger, Norway	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe	
1963	July 31	Stavanger, Norway	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe	
1964	July 28–August 1	Frankfurt, F. R.of Germany	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad and Tony Smythe	
1965	July 28–August 2	Dublin, Ireland	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad	
1966	April 7	Rome, Italy	Harold Bing	Devi Prasad	Wolfgang Zucht
1966	April 13	Domus Pacis, Rome	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	Wolfgang Zucht
1967	July 25–8	Spode House, UK	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	Wolfgang Zucht
1968	August 12–17	Vienna, Austria	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	Wolfgang Zucht
1969	August 31– September 1	Haverford, USA	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	
1970	July 25–30	Namur, Belgium	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	
1971	July 25–30	Lübeck, F. R.of Germany	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	

<b>Year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>General Secretary</b>	<b>Asst. Secretary</b>
1972	July 21	Sheffield, UK,	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	
1972	July 28	Sheffield, UK	Michael Randle	Devi Prasad	
1973	May 27–31	St Louis, France	Devi Prasad	Collective	
1974		Turin, Italy	Devi Prasad	Collective	
1975		Noordwijkerhout, Holland	Myrtle Solomon	Collective	
1979	June 20–26	Natoye, Belgium	Myrtle Solomon	Collective	

## A P P E N D I X   F O U R

### Members of the International Council

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#### 1926–8

A. Fenner Brockway	Chairman
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Martha Steinitz	Asso. Secretary
Cecil H. Wilson	Treasurer

Members: Helene Stöcker (Germany); Marianne Rauze (France); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); Jo Meijer (Netherlands); Olga Misar (Austria); Allan Degerman (Sweden); Hans Kohn (Palestine); Harold Bing (UK); Elinor Byrns (USA).

#### 1928–31

A. Fenner Brockway	Chairman
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Martha Steinitz	Asso. Secretary and Literature Executive
Stephen J. Thorne	Treasurer
Harold Bing	Youth Executive

Members: Helene Stöcker (Germany); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); Elinor Byrns (USA); Olga Misar (Austria); Allan Degerman (Sweden); Jo Meijer (Netherlands); Pierre Doyan (France); Valentin Bulgakov (Russia / Czechoslovakia).

#### 1931–4

A. Fenner Brockway	Chairman
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Stephen J. Thorne	Treasurer

Members: Martha Steinitz (Germany); Harold Bing (UK); Valentin Bulgakov (Russia); Pierre Doyan (France); Hans Kohn (Palestine); Edouard Liechti (Switzerland); Olga Misar (Austria); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); Wilhelm Solzbacher (Germany).

#### 1934–7

Lord Ponsonby	Chairman
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Reginald Reynolds	Political Agent
Stephen J. Thorne	Treasurer
Grace M. Beaton	General Secretary

Members: Devere Allen (USA); Harold Bing (UK); José Brocca (Spain); A. Fenner Brockway\* (UK); Bartholomew de Ligt (Netherlands); Eugène Lagot (France); Olga Misar (Austria); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); James Saunders (New Zealand).

\* resigned in 1936

### 1936–40

(This Council was interrupted because of the Second World War.)

George Lansbury	Chairman
A. Ruth Fry	Hon. Treasurer
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Reginald Reynolds	Political Advisor
Grace M. Beaton	General Secretary
Frans Arijs	Youth Secretary

Members: Lord Ponsonby (UK); José Brocca (Spain); Bart de Ligt (Netherlands); Jessie Wallace Hughan (USA); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Eugène Lagot (France); Harold Bing (UK); Premysl Pitter (Czechoslovakia); H. R. L. Sheppard (UK).

### 1946–8

Laurence Housman	Chairman
A. Ruth Fry	Vice-President
John P. Fletcher	Hon. Treasurer
H. Runham Brown	Hon. Secretary
Grace M. Beaton	Secretary

Members: Jorge Rio de la Loza (Mexico); Jacques Savasy (Argentina); Jessie Wallace Hughan (USA); Theodore Walsler (USA); J. Lavell Smith (Canada); Lincoln Efford (New Zealand); G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Marjorie Fleming (South Africa); Nathan Chofschi (Palestine); Avraham Lisavoder (Palestine); Helge Heiberg (Norway); Eland Sundstroem (Sweden); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Arne Jorgensen (Denmark); Hein van Wijk (Netherlands); Jannie van Wijk (Netherlands); Hem Day (Belgium); Fernard Gouttenoire de Tourey (France); José Brocca (Mexico); Heinz Kraschutzki (Germany); Regine Hesse (Germany); Eduard Damm (Germany); Suzanne Girard (Switzerland); Reinhold Duschka (Austria); Paul --- (Czechoslovakia); Stanley M. Halliday (Eire); Harold Bing (UK); Stuart Morris (UK); Frank Dawtry (UK); Samar R. Sen\* (India); Mary ---\* (Czechoslovakia).

\* Co-opted

### 1948–51

Laurence Housman*	Chairman
A. Ruth Fry	Co-Vice-President
Rajendra Prasad	Co-Vice-President
H. Runham Brown**	Chairman
John P. Fletcher	Co-Treasurer
Edward C. M. Richards	Co-Treasurer
Grace M. Beaton	Secretary

Members: Harold Bing (UK); Heinz Kraschutzki (W. Germany); Samar R. Sen (India); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Hein van Wijk (Netherlands); Hem Day (Belgium); Frances Ransom (USA); Stuart Morris (UK); Robert Porchet (France); Reginald Reynolds (UK); Lincoln Efford (New Zealand); Ulrich Herz (Sweden); Frank Dawtry \*\*\* (UK).

\* Retired in 1949, no replacement was made.

\*\* Runham Brown died in 1949, Harold Bing was made Acting Chairman.

\*\*\* Co-opted in 1950.

### 1951–4

Harold Bing	Chairman
Frank Dawtry	Editor: <i>The War Resister</i>
John P. Fletcher	Joint Hon. Treasurer
Edward C. M. Richards	Joint Hon. Treasurer
Grace M. Beaton	Secretary

Members: G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Hem Day (Belgium); Lincoln Efford (New Zealand); Pierre Hovelaque (Argentina / France); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Wim Jong (Netherlands); Heinz Kraschutzki (W. Germany); Stuart Morris (UK); A. J. Muste (USA); Reginald Reynolds (UK); Bernard Salmon (France); Samar R. Sen (India); Hein van Wijk\* (Netherlands).

\* Co-opted

#### 1954-7

Harold Bing	Chairman
Lionel S. Penrose	Jt. Hon. Treasurer
Margaret Penrose	Jt. Hon. Treasurer
Grace M. Beaton	Co-Secretary
Arlo Tatum	Co-Secretary

Members: G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Frank Dawtry (UK); Hem Day (Belgium); Lincoln Efford (New Zealand); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Wim Jong (Netherlands); Heinz Kraschutzki (F. R. of Germany); Stuart Morris (UK); A. J. Muste (USA); Bernard Salmon (France); Samar R. Sen (India); Johannes Ude (Austria).

#### 1957-60

Harold Bing	Chairman
Hagbard Jonassen	Vice-Chairman
Lionel S. Penrose	Co-Treasurer
Margaret Penrose	Co-Treasurer
Arlo Tatum	General Secretary

Members: Joseph Abileah (Israel); A. C. Barrington (New Zealand); G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Joyce Runham Brown (UK); Banwarilal Choudhri (India); Frank Dawtry (UK); Hem Day (Belgium); Jean van Lierde (Belgium); Wim Jong (Netherlands); Heinz Kraschutzki (F. R. of Germany); Pierre Martin (France); Stuart Morris (UK); Bayard Rustin (USA).

#### 1960-63

Harold Bing	Chairman
Hagbard Jonassen	Vice-Chairman
Joyce Runham Brown	Hon. Treasurer
Arlo Tatum*	General Secretary
Tony Smythe	Asst. Secretary

Members: Joseph Abileah (Israel); Banwarilal Choudhri (India); Johan Galtung (Norway); Jean van Lierde (Belgium); Stuart Morris (UK); Bayard Rustin (USA); G. Anthony Bishop (Australia); Danilo Dolci (Italy); Heinz Kraschutzki (F. R. of Germany); Pierre Martin (France); Michael Randle (UK); Bill Sutherland (Ghana / Tanganyika).

\* Devi Prasad took over as General Secretary from Arlo Tatum in May 1962.

#### 1963-6

Harold Bing	Chairman
Danilo Dolci	Vice-Chairman
Joyce Runham Brown	Hon. Treasurer
Devi Prasad	Co-General Secretary
Tony Smythe*	Co-General Secretary

Members: Joseph Abileah (Israel); Hugh Brock (UK); Narayan Desai (India); Johan Galtung (Norway); Herbert Günneberg (F. R. of Germany); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Jean van Lierde (Belgium); Pierre Martin (France); Niels Mathiesen (Norway); Michael Randle (UK); Bayard Rustin (USA); Bill Sutherland (Tanganyika), Arlo Tatum.



**1966–9**

Michael Randle	Chairman
Martin Niemöller	Vice-Chairman
Joyce Runham Brown*	Hon. Treasurer
Devi Prasad	General Secretary

Members: Joseph Abileah (Israel); Harold Bing (UK); Uri Davis (Israel); Narayan Desai (India); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Jean van Lierde (Belgium); David McReynolds (USA); Pierre Martin (Senegal); Niels Mathiesen (Norway); Pietro Pinna (Italy); Tony Smythe (UK); Hein van Wijk (Netherlands).

\*Donald Groom replaced Joyce Runham Brown as Hon. Treasurer at the 1967 Council meeting.

**1969–72**

Michael Randle	Chairman
Martin Niemöller	Vice-Chairman
Donald Groom	Hon. Treasurer
Devi Prasad	General Secretary

Members: Vo Van Ai (Vietnam); Harold Bing (UK); Uri Davis (Israel); Narayan Desai (India); Hagbard Jonassen (Denmark); Randy Kehler (USA); Sverre Roed Larsen (Norway); Jean van Lierde (Belgium); David McReynolds (USA); Pietro Pinna (Italy); Myrtle Solomon (UK).

(Notes: 1. From now on all the Sections became entitled to appoint a representative each to the Council with full voting power. 2. In 1970 Donald Groom died. Norman Edwards was appointed Hon. Treasurer.)

**1972–5**

Devi Prasad	Chairman
Jean van Lierde	Vice-Chairman
Harold Bing	Hon. Treasurer

Members: Vo Van Ai (Vietnam); Ann Davidon (USA); Uri Davis (Israel); Jon Grepstad (Norway); Randy Kehler (USA); George Lakey (USA); David McReynolds (USA); Martin Niemöller (W. Germany); Pietro Pinna (Italy); Myrtle Solomon (UK); Janaki Tschannerl (India); Michael Randle (UK).

**1975–9**

Myrtle Solomon	Chairwoman
Helga Weber	Vice-Chairwoman
Jean van Lierde	Hon. Treasurer

Members: Pepe Beunza (Spain); Ann Davidon (USA); Jean Fabre (France); John Hyatt (UK); George Lakey (USA); David McReynolds (USA); Pietro Pinna (Italy); Devi Prasad (India); Michael Randle (UK); Michael Schroeren (W. Germany); Vo Van Ai (Vietnam); Hein van Wijk (Netherlands).

## APPENDIX FIVE

### Some selected publications of WRI (1921–75)

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*The War Resisters' International had been well aware of the need to provide to the public as much information as possible about its background, philosophy and work. Herbert Runham Brown, the man behind the building of the movement, was a good communicator and so was its first Secretary, Grace Beaton.*

*The following list of WRI publications is a selection from the large number of pamphlets and leaflets containing all kinds of information about the day to day work of the movement. The following list has been compiled with the help of a list of publications occasionally produced by the International and the list of WRI material kept with the Swarthmore College Peace Collection in Philadelphia, USA, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, Holland and the author's own collection.*

*(n.d. = no details, the best estimate has been made of the date)*

- 1 *War Resisters of the World*: an account of the movement in 20 countries and a report of the International Conference held in July 1925 at Hoddesdon, England, 84 pages, 1925
- 2 *War Resisters in Many Lands*: an account of the movement in 21 countries and a report of the International Conference held in July 1928, in Sonntagsberg, Austria, 79 pages, 1928
- 3 *Modern Martyrs*: 40 pages, n.d. 1928(?)
- 4 *Western Samoa*: imprisonment, deportation and shooting, 18 pages, 1930
- 5 Runham Brown, H. *Principle, Policy and Practice*, n.d. 1935(?)
- 6 Beaton, Grace. *Review of the International Movement, July 1934 to July 1937*, 32 pages, n.d. 1937(?)
- 7 *Our Work in Spain*: saving the children, 12 pages, n.d. 1937(?)
- 8 Runham Brown, H. *Spain: A Challenge to Pacifism*, 12 pages, n.d. 1938(?)
- 9 Messel, Rudolph P. *South American Settlement for Refugees*, Colombia, 12 pages, 1939
- 10 Eyles, Merle. *He Laid Down His Life That We Might Live*, 10 pages, n.d. 1939(?)
- 11 Runham Brown, H. *Why Hitler?* 20 pages, n.d. 1940(?)
- 12 Reynolds, Reginald. *Why India?* 28 pages, n.d. 1940(?)
- 13 Housman, Laurence; Ponsonby, Lord; Runham Brown, H. *Autarchy, Internationalism and Common Sense*, 16 pages, 1941
- 14 *Down on the Farm: The Lansbury Gate Farm*, 16 pages, 1942
- 15 Hill, Charles H. E. *Memorandum on the National Service Acts 1939–41*, 14 pages, 1942
- 16 *Letters Coming Through the Barriers*, 24 pages, n.d. 1943(?)
- 17 Beaton, Grace. *Four Years of War*, 32 pages, 1943
- 18 Bing, Harold. *Pacifists over the World*, 8 pages, 1943
- 19 *The War Resisters' International in War-time*, 12 pages, 1943(?)
- 20 Solimann, William F. *Educational Reconstruction in Germany*, 16 pages, n.d. 1944(?)
- 21 Beaton, Grace. *Twenty Years' Work in the War Resisters' International*, 27 pages, 1945
- 22 Jonassen, Hagbard. *Resistance in Denmark*, 8 pages, 1945
- 23 Lund, Diderich. *Resistance in Norway*, 11 pages, 1945

- 24 *The War Resisters' International Calling*, 20 pages, 1945
- 25 *6th Triennial Conference at Shrewsbury*, 1948, sketches, 26 pages, 1948
- 26 Bing, Harold. *The problem of Palestine*, 16 pages, n.d. 1948
- 27 Beaton, Grace. *The Rainbow in the Clouds*, 24 pages, 1951
- 28 Beaton, Grace. *Meeting the Challenge*, (Eighth Triennial report), 32 pages, 1954
- 29 Narayan, Jayaprakash Shri. *Inaugural Address to Tenth Triennial Conference*, 17 pages, 1960
- 30 *Nonviolence and Peacemaking: A Bibliography*, 35 pages, 1963
- 31 *Emergency Laws: A Bill Before the Parliament of Federal German Republic*, 28 pages, n.d. 1964(?)
- 32 *Training in Nonviolence*, Full documentation of the WRI Study Conference (1965), Perugia, Italy, 1965
- 33 Milani, Don. *Self-Defence* (3rd edition), 24 pages, 1967
- 34 Prasad, Devi and Smythe, Tony (Eds.). *Conscription – A World Survey*, 166 pages, 1968
- 35 Randle, Michael, Carter, April and others. *Support Czechoslovakia*, 68 pages, 1968
- 36 Prasad, Devi (Ed.). *Human Rights: A handbook, International Year for Human Rights*, 32 pages, 1968
- 37 Hunnius, F. C. *Student Revolts: The New Left in West Germany*, 44 pages, 1968
- 38 *Why Did the Students Revolt in Yugoslavia?* 8 pages, 1968
- 39 Martin, Pierre. *Violence in Africa*, 20 pages, 1968
- 40 Prasad, Devi (Ed.). *Gramdan: The Land Revolution of India*, 48 pages, 1969
- 41 *Gandhi's Relevance Today*, Report of the international seminar jointly sponsored by the WRI and the Hungarian Peace Committee, 32 pages, 1969
- 42 Sacks, Howard. *Addendum to Manual for Draft-age Americans in Europe*, 18 pages, 1969
- 43 *The Presidio 27*, 34 pages, 1969
- 45 Prasad, Devi (Ed.). *Problems of Economic Development*, based on the Gandhi Centenary Study Conference (1970) held in London, 48 pages, 1970
- 46 Prasad, Devi (Ed.). *Liberation and Revolution: Gandhi's Challenge*, Full report of the 13th Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, 230 pages, 1970
- 47 Olson, Theodore and Shivers, Lynne. *Training for Nonviolent Action*, 40 pages, 1970
- 48 Prasad, Devi. *They Love it but Leave it, American Deserters*, 80 pages, 1971
- 49 Prasad, Devi (Ed.). *50 Years of War Resistance: What Now?* Illustrated with historical photographs of the International, 48 pages, 1972
- 50 Bing, Harold. *The Historical and Philosophical Background of Modern Pacifism*, 13 pages, 1972
- 51 Lakey, George. *WRI-Draft Manifesto for a Nonviolent Revolution and Critique*, 38 pages, 1972
- 52 Randle, Michael. *Draft Statement: Towards Liberation*, revised Draft Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution, 30 pages, 1972
- 53 *WRI Statements, 1962–1972*, compiled by Sandy Goldsmith. A selection of statements and resolutions giving a WRI perspective on world events
- 54 *WRI Catalogue of Publications*, A list of conference papers, periodicals, press releases, books and pamphlets published between 1923 and May 1972. Compiled by June Mitchell, 19 pages, 1972
- 55 Wirmark, Bo. *The Buddhists in Vietnam: An Alternative View of the War*, 44 pages, 1974
- 56 During the earlier years reports of some of the WRI Council Meetings were published

as separate folders/pamphlets. The following are mentioned in the list of WRI archives published by Research Publications, England:  
International Council 1933 (4 pages); International Council 1934 (4 pages); International Council 1936 (4 pages);  
International Council 1937 (4 pages); International Council 1945 (6 pages); International Council 1948 (4 pages);  
International Council 1950 (4 pages); International Council 1955 (4 pages).

## A P P E N D I X   S I X

### WRI International Network

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S = section; A = associate organisation; AP = associate publication.

#### War Resisters' International

5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, Britain (tel +44 20 7278 4040; fax 7278 0444; email [info@wri-irg.org](mailto:info@wri-irg.org))

#### ARGENTINA

**Frente Opositor al Servicio Militar Obligatorio** (FOSMO) c/o APDH, Callao 569 1/o 15, 1022 Buenos Aires; tel +54 11 4804 2628; fax 4620 2837 [A]

#### AUSTRALIA

**War Resisters' League** (WRL) PO Box 451, North Hobart TAS 7002; tel +61 3 6278 2380; fax 6234 8209; email [pdpjones@mpx.com.au](mailto:pdpjones@mpx.com.au) [S]

#### AUSTRIA

**Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Wehrdienstverweigerung und Gewaltfreiheit** (Arge WDV) Schottengasse 3a/1/59, 1010 Wien; tel +43 1 535 9109; fax 532 7416; email [argewdv@verweigert.at](mailto:argewdv@verweigert.at); website [www.verweigert.at](http://www.verweigert.at) [A]

**Begegnungszentrum für Aktive Gewaltlosigkeit** (BFAG) St Wolfgangstr 26, 4820 Bad Ischl (Pfandl); tel /fax +43 6132 4590; email [mariechl@ping.at](mailto:mariechl@ping.at); website [www.begegnungszentrum.at](http://www.begegnungszentrum.at) [A]

#### BELGIUM

**Action Jeunesse pour la Paix** *YouthAction for Peace* 3 avenue du Parc Royal, 1020 Bruxelles; tel +32 2 478 9410; fax 478 9432; email [yapis@xs4all.be](mailto:yapis@xs4all.be); website [www.yap.org/](http://www.yap.org/) [A]

**Forum des Jeunes pour la Paix** 35 rue van Elewyck, 1050 Bruxelles; tel +32 2 648 5014; fax 640 0774 [A]

**Forum voor Vredesactie** Patriottenstraat 27, 2600 Berchem; tel +32 3 281 6839; fax 281 6879; email [forum@vredesactie.be](mailto:forum@vredesactie.be); website [www.vredesactie.be/](http://www.vredesactie.be/) [S]

**Mouvement International de la Réconciliation/ Internationale des Résistant(e)s à la Guerre** (MIR-IRG) 35 rue van Elewyck, 1050 Bruxelles; tel +32 2 648 5220; fax 2648 6988; email [mirirg@swing.be](mailto:mirirg@swing.be) [S]

#### BRAZIL

**Serviço Paz e Justiça** (Serpaj-Brasil) SdS-Ed Venâncio V, Bloco R - Sala 313, 70393.900 Brasília DF; tel +55 61 225 8738; fax 321 6533 [A]

#### GREAT BRITAIN

**Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign** (AWPC) c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX; tel +44 7904 450307; email [awpc@gmx.co.uk](mailto:awpc@gmx.co.uk); website [www.aldermaston.net/](http://www.aldermaston.net/) [A]

**Anglican Pacifist Fellowship** 11 Weavers End, Hanslope, Milton Keynes MK19 7PA; tel +44 1908 510642; email [ajkempster@aol.com](mailto:ajkempster@aol.com); website [www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/](http://www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/) [A]

**Brotherhood Church** Stapleton, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 3DF; tel +44 1977 620381 [A]

**Conscience – The Peace Tax Campaign** Archway Resource Centre, 1b Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ N19 5NJ; tel +44 20 7561 1061; fax +44 20 7281 6508; email [info@conscienceonline.org.uk](mailto:info@conscienceonline.org.uk); website [www.conscienceonline.org.uk/](http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk/) [A]

**Fellowship of Reconciliation UK** (FOR-UK) The Eirene Centre, Old School House, Clopton, nr Kettering, Northants NN14 3DZ; tel +44 1832 720257; fax 720557; email [fellowship@gn.apc.org](mailto:fellowship@gn.apc.org); website [fore.gn.apc.org/](http://fore.gn.apc.org/) [S]

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**France sans armée pour un monde sans armées** (FSA) 19 rue Principale, 68140 Griesbach au Val; tel /fax +33 38942 1907 [A]

**Mouvement International de la Réconciliation** (MIR) 68 rue de Babylone, 75007 Paris; tel /fax +33 14753 8405; email [mirfr@club-internet.fr](mailto:mirfr@club-internet.fr) [A]

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*Please refer to the War Resisters' International website on [www.wri-irg.org/](http://www.wri-irg.org/) for up to date addresses.*

## A P P E N D I X   S E V E N

### Austria and Germany – between two world wars

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*In 1933 after a long and serious discussion based on Olga Misar's report about the difficulties in Austria and from Wilhelm Solzbacher on the situation in Germany and the war refugees, the Chairman, Lord Ponsonby, on behalf of the Council, gave the following statement in The War Resister 35, Spring 1934, p.2–3.*

The Council of the War Resisters' International at a meeting held on 30th December, 1933, attended by delegates from seven countries, unanimously decided that in the present disturbed state of the world there was special need to emphasise once again its adherence to its original declaration of policy . . .

As Chairman, I am directed by the Council to send our comrades in all parts of the world our cordial fraternal greetings and to assure them of our sympathy and understanding in the difficult circumstances in which many find themselves.

The rise of militarist nationalism in so many countries, the scares engineered by the armament firms to increase the tension between nations, and the failure of the Disarmament Conference are prevailing conditions which should only serve to stimulate increased activity on the part of war resisters. More than ever is it clear that security and equality of status between nations can only be achieved by Total Disarmament.

We must condemn with all the power at our command the use of armed force and violence, which during the war and since the war has wrought irreparable damage, not only physically, but economically and morally, in all countries. No desirable object can be achieved permanently by this method. It is merely the attempted short cut of impetuous and short-sighted impatience.

We would remind those of our members who are victims of persecution, or subject to the menace of personal violence, that although a change from such a situation may be wrought by armed revolt, such action involves the upholding of a new order by the same methods of violence. Relief from such a situation can often be hastened by our exercising all possible influences against meeting violence with violence, and against initiating or encouraging movements dependent on force for bringing about the change.

...

While some may feel that inactivity is for the time being forced upon them, they may rest assured that what may appear now to be a defeat of their purpose is only the temporary phase of passing conditions. Present apparent failure in certain countries is balanced by encouraging success elsewhere. All our comrades by the strength of their convictions should continue undismayed to proclaim an ideal, the eventual success of which is inevitable if our civilisation is to survive.

Few or many, depressed or encouraged, ignored or opposed, free or persecuted, we can all use what capacity we have to continue our work in certain confidence that the future is ours.

Ponsonby

## APPENDIX EIGHT

### Herbert Runham Brown, 1879–1949

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*The full text of Harold Bing's article in The War Resister 57, first quarter 1950.*

The news of Runham Brown's death[, on December 30th, 1949,] will bring a sense of tragic personal loss to men and women in practically every country in the world – to thousands even who never met him.

No man has done more in the past 35 years for the pacifist cause and particularly to help and encourage those young men in many countries who were facing persecution, imprisonment and even death on account of their refusal to submit to military training or co-operate in the crime of war.

The War Resisters' International in the course of the past 27 years, has become far more than a world-wide organisation standing uncompromisingly for pacifism: it has become a great living family bound together by ties of deep comradeship and a common philosophy of non-violence. It was the spirit of Runham Brown which created and sustained it.

No one I have ever known expressed in his own life and action more clearly the principles which he held. I have known him for thirty years and never once in that time have I heard him utter an unkind word or speak harshly of someone with whom he disagreed – even under the greatest provocation. His great humility and his wonderful charity were a shining example to all. Herbert Runham Brown was born on June 27th, 1879, at Redhill, Surrey, the son of a Sunday School Superintendent and grandson of a minister of religion. He showed no particular scholastic gifts and left school at fourteen to be apprenticed to the building trade. Here his skill as a craftsman and his genius for establishing human relationships soon showed themselves. At the end of his apprenticeship, whilst still only 19 years of age, he became foreman on a small building concern and a year later founded his own business.

A master-builder he remained for the rest of his life, honoured and respected in his profession for his ability, his absolute honesty and his unflinching courtesy. In business and in social and political life he was marked out by earnestness, sincerity, love of truth and an independence of mind, combined with a deeply religious spirit and above all by an incorruptible zeal for justice.

He was only 20 years old when Britain entered the Boer War. He at once felt bound to oppose it and his first public speech, made in 1900, was a denunciation of the British concentration camps in South Africa. Even earlier, at the age of 14, he had written a paper showing the incompatibility of war and Christianity.

In 1902 he married Edith Miller to whom he had become engaged at the age of 16. When he first met her he decided that she was the one he wanted for his wife and when Runham Brown once made up his mind, there was no moving him! Their long married life was a very happy one, terminated by Edith's death two and a half years ago – a blow from which Runham never really recovered. They had two daughters, Joyce and Eileen.

To know the Runham Brown's as a family was a rich experience, and because they kept open house to all members of the W.R.I., hundreds of people from all five continents have had the privilege of sharing that friendly atmosphere and the warmth of that welcome to which each member of the family contributed.

Runham Brown's early pacifism grew stronger as time went on and 1914 found him taking prominent part in opposition to the First World War.

In 1915 he joined the No Conscription Fellowship which had just been formed by Fenner Brockway, Clifford Allen and others, for he saw clearly that he could take no part, directly or indirectly, in the prosecution of the war. He became Chairman of the Enfield branch of N.C.F. and this brought him for the first time into conflict with the law.

A Mr. Beavis brought him one day a letter from his son, H. Stuart Beavis, who had just been sentenced to death in France, along with some thirty other C.O.s, for disobeying military orders. In an effort to save his friend's life Runham Brown had the letter printed and circulated to M.P.s and local clergy and residents.

He was prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act for prejudicing recruiting and the discipline of the forces, and fined £30 or two months' imprisonment.

### **His Arrest**

In the summer of 1916, shortly after the coming into force of the second Military Service Act, which conscripted married men, Runham Brown appeared before the local tribunal as a C.O. Three members of the tribunal were for granting his absolute exemption and four were against. The result was the useless offer of non-combatant military service.

The Appeal Tribunal withdrew even this concession and in due course he was called up, arrested and court-martialled. Like many more, he served three successive Hard Labour Sentences and was released only in November 1918, after two and a half years' imprisonment, on medical grounds.

While in prison he underwent some trying ordeals; he began systematically to ignore those prison regulations which he regarded as particularly objectionable. For a long time he edited the manuscript magazine which was secretly written and circulated among the C.O.s in Wandsworth Prison, London, and he used remarkable means to have news conveyed to the outside world.

In the solitude of his prison cell there came to him the vision of his future work. He realised that in every belligerent country there must be those who felt as he did, and were opposing war as he was – many doubtless in greater isolation than those in Great Britain, facing harsher treatment and without the moral support of an organised, if small, body of public opinion outside the prison walls. He had a vision of all those lonely pioneers united into a great world-wide family and, largely through his own faith and efforts, he lived to see that vision realised.

In 1921 came the foundation of the No More War Movement (N.M.W.M.) in Britain, and in this Runham played a leading rôle. He became and remained throughout, a member of its National Committee. For a good many years he represented the No More War Movement on the National Peace Council and was for some considerable time a member of the Executive of that body.

Co-operation between bodies having similar aims (providing it was not a case of setting up unnecessary machinery, to which he was utterly opposed) was always part of his policy. No feeling of rivalry or jealousy ever touched him.

Shortly after forming the Peace Pledge Union, Dick Sheppard invited him to become one of its sponsors and when the N.M.W.M. decided to merge with the P.P.U. in 1934, Runham Brown was elected a member of the Pacifist Research Bureau which was formed to continue some of the specific research work of the former body.

In 1921 he visited Germany to contact the N.M.W.M.'s sister organisation in that country, "Nie Wieder Krieg". From this first contact the War Resisters' International was to grow. A few months later representatives from four countries met at Bilthoven in Holland and founded an international organisation under the name of PACO, the Esperanto word for peace. In 1922 the headquarters was

transferred to London – or rather to Runham Brown’s home at Enfield – the name was changed to War Resisters’ International and Runham Brown became the Honorary General Secretary.

### **Building the W.R.I.**

From that day to this, the work of the W.R.I. has occupied the greater part of his thought and filled a large part of his life. His devotion to it has been unlimited, unqualified, and with no consideration for personal convenience or self-interest.

To tell of these activities would be to write the history of the W.R.I. that is impossible here. For thousands of men and women of all nations, creeds and colours, Runham Brown was the W.R.I. and the W.R.I. was Runham Brown.

It was his tremendous genius for sympathetic understanding, his capacity for speaking the right word and doing the right thing at the right moment which have gained for the WRI a reputation unique among peace organisations. In all its work there has been something intensely personal. Isolated individuals in remote countries felt they were grasping the hand of a friend, not merely being enrolled in a card index.

Runham Brown was no scholar in the academic sense. He never mastered any foreign language and always expressed amazement at the ability of those who could use fluently languages other than their own. But his genius for understanding, when he met them, people whose speech he could not comprehend, was something which appeared even more wonderful to those who witnessed it.

Runham’s great qualities were of a subtle and somewhat indefinable character. “My greatest intellectual gift,” he once said, “is the ability to recognise exceptional ability in others.” He was certainly a profound judge of character and of sincerity and he secured the co-operation of many outstanding men and women in academic and political circles to further the work of the International.

He showed his genius for recognising ability and placed the whole movement forever in his debt when he chose Grace Beaton to be his colleague in 1925. That remarkable partnership, which has terminated only with Runham’s death, has constituted the very heart of the International.

\* \* \* \* \*

Runham Brown has passed beyond our sight and touch, but for all who have had the privilege of knowing him his spirit will remain – an encouragement in our pacifist work and an inspiration to ever greater efforts for the achievement of world-wide brotherhood. We feel, as did the poet Shelley of his friend Keats, that:

Burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
The soul of Adonis, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Runham Brown’s life and work will form a keystone in the triumphal arch of peace which we who remain have yet to build.

### **The World Mourns Runham**

The messages poured in; from Sections and from individuals all over the world, from groups he had met and those who had never seen him, from individuals who knew him for many years and from those to whom he was but a man.

It would be impossible to publish them all, or even to make a fair selection, but the extracts which follow represent the feelings of thousands of war resisters.

“We shall never cease to be grateful for his untiring labour in the furtherance of our aims, feeling convinced that the good seed sown by him is bearing and will continue to bear good fruit” – that is from the Argentine. From Australia, Jean Russell writes: “By his life he interpreted the law of love”; and from Austria an old friend says: “It was always an experience to hear him speak to us, and his captivating personality impressed each one of us and spurred many to further co-operation”. In *La Hera*, a Chilean newspaper, “C.V.A.” wrote: “For thirty years this exemplary man devoted the best of his life as a sacrifice to the noblest of human ideals, peace among all mankind. With the ardour and persistence of an apostle he did not hesitate to sacrifice his personal interests and even his health and peace of mind so as to dedicate himself to a laborious task with no other object nor reward than ceaselessly to spread abroad the ideals of peace. He was an ‘Unknown Soldier’ of pacifism, who has died in a halo of glory after seeing his white banner raised in almost all the countries of the five continents”.

Hagbard Jonassen wrote: “We shall miss him very hard in the daily work and at our meetings, where he in his own quiet way was able to unite contradictory opinions, and we will honour him by promising each other to strengthen our work and co-operation, and always be ready to respect a serious conviction”. From France, Robert Porchet wrote: “Let us think of what he was – this friend who, dead, yet lives. These things we need must remember – his kindness and his courage, his tolerance that never wavered and his capacity for enthusiasm that was an inspiration to us all. And how can we forget the consistent wisdom of the decisions he made, which, for us, became the symbol, almost the shadow, of Truth herself?”

As an example of those who hardly knew him, “Runham Brown and I met but once. We had no common language. But we understood the glow in each other’s eyes, and our handshakes made our hearts tingle as well as our fingers. These are the accents of humanity” – that was from Emile Véran of Paris, and a similar message came from a colleague in Hanover, Fritz Küster: “When I returned from the concentration camp I heard from my wife of your and Runham Brown’s untiring and finally successful efforts for my release, of the moral and material support you both had given her, and I wished to be able to meet you one day face to face . . . [When] this wish was fulfilled Runham Brown was just like the picture I had formed of his kind, impressive personality, and that is how he will continue to live in our memory”.

In the P.P.U. journal (Britain), Stuart Morris, General Secretary of the Peace Pledge Union and a member of the W.R.I. Council, wrote: “He [Runham] had the amazing capacity of accepting responsibility for the whole Movement without in any way lessening the sense of responsibility which he wanted everyone else to feel. What he did was to hold all the threads but never to let the threads become the reins. He never attempted to drive, but he was never afraid to lead and his leadership was gladly accepted because he never attempted to become the head of a movement. He preferred to be at its heart”.

Hein van Wijk, of Holland, another Council member, said the same thing: “He was the heart of the movement. He had the ability of uniting around him some thousands of men and women who are characterised by this common trait, that they are nonconformist to injustice, notwithstanding the consequences”.

Samar Sen wrote from India: “He was indeed a rare spirit among men. That I had his friendship and affection I consider to be among the greatest assets of my life. I have met many a man, great and small, in this country and abroad. But I have not met any one who was more noble and wise and selfless in his work for humanity than Runham Brown”.

From Israel, where the struggle of the war resister is just beginning, came a typical mes-



sage from one, Nathan Chofschi, who had never met Runham. "I love him deeply though not personally acquainted with him. His name was for me and for our comrades in all countries more than a private name. It was a symbol of tireless work for peace, non-resistance and conscientious objection". They wrote from Ireland and from the Gold Coast, from Japan ("He has been my spiritual leader ever since I first met him" – M. Sadayasu), from Norway ("Runham Brown was a firm believer in fellowship – a good father of the one family which he was so incessantly striving to create all over the world"); from Pakistan and Poland, from India and Spain where "We shall never forget his labour and his help in the terrible days of the civil war". Uli Herz, from Sweden (a Council member), wrote an open letter of thanks to dear Father Runham, in the custom of his country where they say "Thanks for the last time" when they meet the first time again after a formal meeting which has given something of value. "You represented in your spirit much of that which to us outside the Island kingdom stands out as being 'typically British', but you were much more – you represented an international, not only in a formal way by being Chairman, but by your very personality. You were the beating heart of the International". The Chairman of the Swedish Section, Erik Svedberg wrote that "All over the world there are thousands of people united in a prayer of gratitude that Runham has lived and that we have been allowed to call him our father and comrade".

A note from Montevideo calls Runham the "Prime Minister of pacifism", and one from the co-treasurer, Edward C. M. Richards, says "Runham Brown impressed me as being a deeply consecrated soul who had dedicated his energies to the work of aiding individual conscientious objectors no matter where they were, even in the most difficult situations. In a word, one felt that here was a real friend".

The tributes must end with the nameless from various places behind the iron curtain: –

"Though none of us has ever seen him personally, we were always glad to receive his letters full of spiritual strength and hope for a better future when there will be no more wars, when all people will live together in one great family", one writes, and another – "Thinking of the death of Father, I remember also the death of that other great heart, George Lansbury. As far as I have known them both, it seems to me that of all the war resisters' movement leaders in your country, these were the most alive". Two old friends loved by us all, write: "How often we have recalled his modest wisdom, his natural generosity, his quiet patient ways, in the days when boasting nationalism and wild covetousness and terror surrounded us. We felt encouraged by the mere thought of him who could not have changed. It was worth bearing hardships and tribulations as long as there still lived strong souls like Father. But the thought of him not only evoked the picture of his own dear person. It was at the same time the symbol of that world-wide family of his that he has linked together with paternal insight and great love". Finally, another old comrade writes, "My best of friends. Mere words cannot express the sense of grief I knew when your letter brought the sad news of Runham Brown's death. The blow is all the harder because of the juncture at which it comes. Now, in this cold war, bloodless so far and yet how potentially lethal, we find ourselves suddenly without the man of all men who was a bulwark against this war that sweeps down upon us".

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The tributes end only because the promises must replace them. These were legion and they were the best forms of tribute. Tony Bishop sums them up – "From grief we turn towards the future. Our memorial is determination to continue his work". The W.I.L. of Australia wrote: "His loss to the pacifist movement is a serious one but the cause will go on. There are many

brave souls who are giving their lives to the work". Franz Dittrich said: "We shall honour his memory by toiling for the continuation of his work"; and our contact in Canada, Rev. J. Lavell Smith, said: "We, in Canada, feel ourselves the losers, because of his passing, and pray that worthy successors may be raised up to follow him".

Hagbard Jonassen's tribute also said: "We also know that what he wanted was to create a movement able to work, and that the best way for us to remember and honour his life and achievement is to continue our own work and, if possible, increase our efforts". La Ligue d'Action Pacifiste (France) said: "We hope that his work will bear fruit until the final goal – the disappearance of war. That depends on us all, and the tenacity with which we set ourselves to the struggle for our fine cause". "Commemoration with us does not mean lamentation about a lost friend" said our German Section – "it means a solemn pledge to carry on his work. By doing so in our respective countries, we are commemorating with you".

Our friends in Eastern Europe say, "He will continue to guide us in the troublesome days to come. The strong soul that did not bow to any outward might cannot lose anything of its power . . . it enjoys freer development and more effectual influence in a wider sphere of action".

Stanley McC. Halliday, from the All-Ireland Antiwar Crusade, writes: "In the course of his busy career Runham Brown was responsible for much building, but we are sure that the WRI was the edifice that gave him most satisfaction in life; in death may it be his monument". From Israel, "Let us follow his living spirit by our deeds and he will remain alive within us for ever"; from Japan: "My friends here in this country pledge within our souls to carry on the spirit of his work for the peace of the world"; and from South Africa: "So much has been said and written at the passing of our beloved Runham that there seems little we can add from South Africa – save that we feel intensely that the torch which he lit and carried so bravely must never be dimmed".

The Chairman of the Swedish Section offers a last farewell to our Father Runham and "a brotherly greeting to you, his friends, and a quiet but firm promise to follow in his footsteps," and a friend in Switzerland – "We know that the only way really to honour his memory is to continue vigorously the fight until the day of triumph of the great ideal to which he consecrated his life". Devere Allen of Worldover Press says simply: "We shall treasure his profound influence and strive to make it count in difficult days ahead", and Roy C. Kepler of the New York War Resisters League: "The responsibility is now ours . . ." New Zealand echoes the same thought, and old friends like José Brocca and Professor Pioli send their messages of sympathy plus encouragement. Professor Pioli speaks for all Italian War Resisters who desire to "associate themselves with war resisters of all nations in paying a reverent tribute of gratitude and love for that embodiment of devotion and service to humanity, which appeared in the person of Runham Brown. They express earnest pleas for the preservation of his spirit in the heirs of his mission, and the pursuance of his policy till the world is brought into sympathy with his aims and made into one family of brothers and a city of God, worth living in".

So we must end. Perhaps Samar Sen speaks again for us all – "All of us who care for peace and honour the life and memory of Runham Brown can make the spirit of the great departed happy in only one way – that is by dedicating our lives to the cause for which he lived and died". We can join with R. Melo, writing from France, who concludes his message – "The way to honour the memory of our friend is to continue his work. The best homage that we can pay to him is to pledge ourselves thus:–

'Friend Runham Brown, we, conscious of the value of your life, pledge ourselves to continue your work, and to lift up ever higher the flame of that total universal peace that you cherished with all our strength and spirit'."

Harold Bing

## A P P E N D I X   N I N E

### Grace Beaton leaves the WRI

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Through the Council meeting held in London in July 1956 the WRI had to face a sad situation in relation to the misuse of WRI funds by the Secretary Grace Beaton. She had stopped working at Christmas of 1955.

At the July 1956 Council meeting some questions were raised about the accounts, which had already been circulated. Wim Jong asked why the auditing fee was as high as £105. Lionel Penrose, the Hon Treasurer said that this also included the auditor's fee for the previous year. He also said that the present auditor had indicated there would be a substantially reduced charge in future.

Again Wim Jong asked why the deposit with the Magnet Building Society had dropped from about £2000 to £633. The Treasurer indicated that as expenditure during the fiscal year exceeded income by £1678, so Grace Beaton had felt forced to draw upon the Magnet Building Society deposit.

The Chairman pointed out that according to an Executive Committee decision only the Hon. Treasurer was authorised to withdraw from the Magnet Building Society.

The Treasurer then moved acceptance of the accounts, which had been signed by the Auditor; and also by the Chairman and Hon. Treasurers in the presence of the Council.

Under the heading Executive Committee, item 8, a Special Report was presented. The Council discussed the Confidential Report prepared by Executive Committee, which had been circulated to Council Members in advance. This Report gave detailed results of the investigations into the finances of the WRI, which the Executive Committee had been carrying out since October 1955:

“It will be remembered that, as Executive Minutes recorded, dissatisfaction had been expressed with the form of the Accounts presented to the Council at its meeting in July, 1955, and the auditor had been asked to clarify certain items. When revised Accounts were received by the Executive Committee at its October meeting certain differences were noted, about which Grace Beaton informed the Committee that the Accounts, which she had presented in July as audited, had not in fact received the auditor's certificate, although this had been typed on the copies supplied to Council members. This statement from Grace Beaton led to detailed investigation.

Previously there had been no systematic authorisation of expenditure, but since the election of an Executive and the appointment by them of an auditor (who was already employed by the Peace Pledge Union and Peace News Ltd.), the whole financial system had been revised in accordance with his recommendations. A strict control is now exercised over all expenditure.

The result of the Committee's investigation showed:

- 1) That Grace had for some years been supplementing her salary by withdrawals, not reported to the Council, from WRI funds, including an annual “honorarium” from the relief funds; payments for coal for her own house; hire of cars for personal use.
- 2) That the large amount included for postage was disproportionate to the subsequent rate of controlled postage expenditure.
- 3) That no adequate explanations were forthcoming in numerous cases in which money

had been withdrawn from the relief fund.

Grace was pressed to explain these matters but was unable to provide satisfactory answers, and the Committee felt that it had no alternative but to recommend that Council ask for her resignation.”

Subsequently Grace wrote a letter to the Chairman asking him to place before the Council her resignation as Secretary on ground of ill health. After a full discussion the Council reached the following decision:

“The Council, having considered the Confidential Report of the Executive Committee together with additional information given to it, and the very serious matters discussed therein, endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee that Grace Beaton be asked to resign. In view, however, of the past services of Grace Beaton to the Movement, it agrees to accept her own letter of resignation which had been received since the preparation of the Report by the Executive Committee.”

The Council then had some discussion regarding Grace’s superannuation fund and took a compassionate decision. Grace had reached a stage in which she had very little control on her mind. At the decision of the Council the Chairman, Harold Bing, wrote her a letter:

19th July, 1956

Dear Grace,

The Council of the WRI has spent many hours in considering the Confidential Report of the Executive Committee and other relevant matters. It also had before it your letter of resignation, which was received after the Executive Committee had drafted its Report and Recommendation.

We hope you will understand the very great shock it has been to all your friends on the Council to learn of the matter in the Report. We all appreciate the fact that you have been in bad health for some time, but could not feel that the difficulties had risen solely from that, or were due only to the method of book-keeping. The Council believed you would wish it to discuss the whole situation primarily with a view to finding what is best for the WRI, but it was not regardless of your many years of service to the Movement in considering both your resignation and its own obligation in regard to our future.

You will remember that the Executive Committee had reluctantly decided to recommend Council to ask for your resignation. In view, however, of our past services to the Movement, Council agreed to accept your resignation, which had since been received.

The Council then considered what provision should be made for you when your salary ceases under the existing arrangement on Friday, July 20th, 1956. It was agreed that the WRI should not accept any further financial commitment in excess of the sum necessary to maintain your insurance policy, under which £ 150.00 a year in two six-monthly installments becomes payable to you from 1st October, 1960. This involves the WRI in a payment of £ 83. 19s. 9d every half-year, and seven more payments are due, making a total of £587. 18s. 3d.

The Council, however, agreed to offer you the following choice as to how this money should be used: 1) That the Council should continue to hold the policy and pay the premiums as they fall due until the policy matures, when you will receive the £ 150 a year above mentioned; 2) That the Council should inform the insurance company that they

would not pay any further premiums but would hold the policy at its present value until it matures on April 1st, 1960, and that in the meantime, instead of paying the premiums to the insurance Company, they should pay you the same total in weekly installments. The effect of this would be that you would receive £ 2. 15s. 0d. a week from Friday, July 27th, 1956, until the Friday next preceding October 1st, 1960, when you would begin to receive your annuity under the policy. In this case the annuity would be at a reduced rate, which we estimate to be not less than pound 2 per week instead of the £ 3 per week which it would be if you choose No 1. This figure is subject to checking with the Insurance Company.

We realise that you will want time to consider these alternatives, but we should be grateful if you would let us know your wishes as soon as possible, so that the new arrangements may be made.

We trust you will continue to regard all of us as your friends and keep in touch with us in the days ahead, which we hope will bring you better health.

Signed on behalf of the WRI Council  
Harold F. Bing, Chairman.

After some discussion on this, rather delicate, situation and on the best way to inform the Movement about it the Council decided that an open letter signed by the Chairman should be sent to Sections, Contact members and Section papers. The Headquarters staff and the Sections should be able to use it at their discretion in answering enquiries; and Sections were urged to treat the Minutes of this item in strict confidence. As Grace would still be a Council member till her resignation took effect on July 20, 1956, she should receive a copy of the minutes. As promised by the Chairman Confidential Report was sent to the Council. This report had information about the way Grace Beaton had been mishandling the WRI accounts. Several members of the Committee had heard criticisms of Grace's handling of WRI Finances. The letter to the Council also said that in view of the facts that came to light it was felt that many of the criticisms were valid. A cursory investigation of our financial records over recent years revealed considerable confusion and showed the necessity of a more detailed enquiry.

The Report of the New Auditors showed that expenditure totaling £ 1,700 in the year just ended were unsupported by vouchers.

Although Grace was ill and on leave of absence the Committee asked her a number of questions in regard to these and other unexplained expenditures. The letter to the Council included a long and a full list of these questions and Grace's replies.

No reply to the letter was received from Grace.

The Committee recognised that her state of health has made it difficult for Grace to supply all the information desired. Although very few relief payments listed were requested by the recipients, or these requests were not put on file, the Committee recognised that the unsolicited gifts are sometimes appropriate. Very few of these gifts were acknowledged prior to Grace's requests for receipts or these acknowledgments were not filed.

While fully recognising Grace's past services, the Executive Committee, in view of all the circumstances, reluctantly reached the conclusion that it should recommend Council to ask for Grace Beaton's resignation on the understanding that she be given the benefit of her annuity policy which shall be maintained by the WRI until it matures, and that in the meantime the WRI should make provision for her to receive an income not less than the annual income receivable under the policy when due.

The Chairman on behalf of the Executive Committee signed the Letter.

The next Council Meeting held in Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany reported that Grace Beaton had chosen the alternative pension system offered by the Council. Arrangement of a plan was made which would give Grace about the same income as agreed by the July Council meeting. The Council said that the Executive Committee's action and recommendation were in keeping with the previous Council decision.

The Belgian Section did not agree with such a compassionate way of doing things. Having heard Hem Day's confidential report of the Council discussions the Belgian Section, with the support of the French Section resolved:

1. (It) considered that the text of the resolution approved by the International Council cannot be published in its present form. It should be limited to a simple statement of the resignation of Grace Beaton and the appointment of the new Secretary, Arlo Tatum.
2. (It) expresses surprise that the International Council approved the continuation of payments to Grace Beaton and considers that all payments to her should cease immediately.
3. (It) requests that the International Council should consider this recommendation as soon as possible.

Hem Day said that only four Council Members, Wim Jong, Hagbard Jonassen, Margret Penrose and Stuart Morris, had voted for the present pension arrangement. Four others, Frank Dawtry, Heinz Kraschutzki, Hem Day and Bernard Salmon, had abstained. Hem Day queried whether such an important decision should be made by only four assenting voters? Had it been a democratic decision?

Arlo Tatum, The WRI Secretary intervened and explained that two of the four abstentions were based on the conviction that the pension was inadequate. Lionel Penrose, who was not present at the time of making the decision, had strongly favoured a pension for Grace. Tony Bishop had favoured a larger pension, and Lincoln Efford had since cabled "support continuance Grace's pension". A. J. Muste had felt unable to participate in the decision, without being present at the discussion, but had expressed his confidence in the Council to reach a solution fair to both the WRI and to Grace. The Chairman and the Secretary, while not voting, both felt the present arrangement to be reasonable compromise. This meant that twelve Council Members favoured a pension, two were opposed and the views of the remaining two were unknown.

The Secretary of the Norwegian Section expressed his disappointment over the Belgian Section's request, and expressed the opinion that further discussion of the matter was a disservice to the Movement.

There would not be doubt in any one's mind that the Council dealt with such a delicate situation admirably with discretion and compassion. Her case was obviously related to the concept of personal sacrifice for the sake of idealism, particularly at the time when such idealism was understood and greatly admired. Grace Beaton, who had given more than thirty years of incomparably, devoted service to the Movement, for whatever reason – mental and physical stress, and/or economic problems, with hesitation and the implications of hurting her self-image, had become sick mentally and emotionally, behaved in a totally unexpected manner. The case surely did not warrant a commonplace legal approach on the part of the International; it needed a pure and simple nonviolent approach, which was well reflected in the Council decision.

Grace Beaton died in September 1957 The Executive Committee meeting held in London September 22, 1957 asked the Secretary to convey their sympathy to her brothers. Stuart Morris and the Secretary would attend the Cremation Service on behalf of the WRI Secretariat.

## A P P E N D I X   T E N

### Is legal recognition a pacifist victory?

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*Legal recognition for conscientious objection was a focus of debate in the International for a long period. This is the full text of 'Is Legal Recognition a Pacifist Victory?' by Arno Hamers, published in The War Resister 78, first quarter, 1958, p.10–12, together with the introduction by Arlo Tatum.*

The W.R.I. works for legal recognition of conscientious objection where none exists on behalf of the many members who have no scruples against compulsory alternative service. It has, however, never commended or committed itself to any form of conscription, civilian or military. This effort to serve both those members who accept civilian alternative service and those who withhold co-operation is severely criticised in the following paragraphs from Mr. Hamers' letter of resignation. It was sent to the Committee of the Belgian Section of the War Resisters' International, and has been translated into English by Jack Goundry. Your comments are welcome.

The Editor  
[Arlo Tatum]

Dear Friends,

I have safely to hand your invitation to the meeting of 19th October, 1957, organised by the S.C.I., the M.I.R. and the W.R.I.

In it, it says: "For years the members of our movements have conducted a ceaseless public campaign for the liberation of conscientious objectors and to obtain legal recognition (especially alternative civilian service) guaranteeing respect of their convictions". And further on: "This Government bill constitutes a valid response to our claim, but it is important, however, that we discuss together certain amendments to be made to it".

I would remind you that since I have worked within the W.R.I. I have always fought to ensure that the demand for the liberation of conscientious objectors be put forward as a consequence of what, in my opinion, is the first of our claims, namely: the abolition of compulsory military service. In addition, I have always been opposed to the presenting of the claim for legal recognition of conscientious objectors as a claim made by the W.R.I. as an organisation, since the W.R.I. embraces both supporters and opponents of acceptance of compulsory alternative civilian service.

However, your invitation – signed on behalf of the W.R.I. – gives the impression that the W.R.I. *as an organisation*, accepts compulsory alternative civilian service, and that it considers that the government bill, save for a few amendments, "constitutes a valid response to our claims". This is inadmissible.

With due regard to the truth, the Committee of the Belgian Section of the W.R.I. should at least ensure that the circulars it issues, concerning the legal recognition of objectors, mention that the Belgian Section counts among its members supporters of alternative service, and also others who, on principle, refuse all such form of service.

Concerning the meeting on the 19th, I would also point out that, had the W.R.I. remained faithful to its original principles, such a meeting – at which it is proposed to discuss amendments to a government bill for compulsory alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors – would actually be inconceivable.

Indeed, as recalled by Hem Day in his report presented at the one day school of 22nd June, 1952 (see "Documents de l'I.R.G." No. 2), the WRI in the beginning only admitted as members those who also refused any form of compulsory alternative civilian service, and it was only later, owing to an

error, not then considered worthy of correction, that supporters of acceptance of this form of service were admitted to the organisation.

In the face of the present world situation and the tasks it imposes upon war resisters, it is more clearly apparent than in the past that the founders of the W.R.I. took the right view in laying down such rigorous conditions for admission to the organisation.

It is not for us, of course, to judge those who, in circumstances different from our own, have accepted modifications to the original principles of the W.R.I.. But, it is nonetheless evident that it was an error, which is being paid for by considerable confusion within the organisation and by a weakening and diverting of its activity at the very moment when a correct and clear line of action is most necessary.

It is, indeed, extremely grave for the idea of war resistance, that, in the eyes of public opinion – and even to many members and supporters of the W.R.I. – the problem of conscientious objection is reduced, in practice, to the securing of a form of legal recognition aiming at “resolving” the cases of a few Belgian objectors and of those in other countries where compulsory military service obtains, but without recognition.

In no circumstances can it be permitted to sanction such a view, for that is not, in fact, the essential problem.

It should be clear to any war resister that the H-bomb is, in reality, the symbol of absolute evil. Therefore, any idea of compromise with the military system of blocs of States, which claim to base the security of their peoples upon the threat of using thermo-nuclear weapons, must be absolutely rejected. In addition, at the moment when the atomic threat hangs over humanity, discussion of the amendments to be made to a government bill for legal recognition seems to me, at the very least, completely divorced from the realities and needs of the hour.

In the present circumstances I think that the only line of action of consequence to war resisters, in the countries belonging to the two opposing military blocs, is progressive and ever-increasing non-cooperation with the State in the sense outlined by Gandhi and ever increasing offensive civil disobedience, even going as far as total civil disobedience, if the demands of the world situation require it.

Such a line of action is evidently quite incompatible with the acceptance of a form of compulsory alternative service of whatever kind, since it is, on the contrary, a question of purely and simply ignoring the authority of the State in all legal measures relating to conscription, and of possibly violating – in the final phase of action – all the laws of the State which one can infringe without moral degradation.

Since giving my support to the Belgian Section of the W.R.I. I have never actually felt at ease in it, since, the further I pursued the study of non-violence, the more clearly it seemed to me that the activity of the Belgian Section as much in spirit as in method, was, in general, hard to reconcile with non-violence in the true sense of the term. It was, moreover, disagreements on this point, which led me on 22nd October, 1956 to resign my position as secretary of the Liege Group of the W.R.I. which I had held since June of the same year, and then to suspend my practical participation in the activities of the W.R.I.

I think, in fact, that only action carried out strictly in the spirit of truth and nonviolence (which excludes, among other things, the use of secret methods) can effectively contribute to the advancement of the cause of peace.

I am persuaded that all members of the Belgian Section – including those who are quite opposed to the concepts I have just expounded – are as sincerely attached to the cause of peace as I believe myself to be. However, experience shows that fruitful co-operation is only possible if there is a minimum of concepts in common and if, in addition, there are no fundamental incompatibilities.

The only constructive solution is therefore to define clearly the respective ideals and to work independently the one from the other, until, with time, practical experience may lead to an adequate reconciliation of the points of view. Consequently, I have decided to send you to-day my resignation as a member of the Belgian Section of the W.R.I.

Until I meet you again in the course of our activities for peace I offer you, dear friend, my fraternal greetings.

Arno Hamers



## A P P E N D I X    E L E V E N

### Bob Eaton's trial

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*The trial of Bob Eaton, a young WRI activist and US draft resister, coincided with the thirteenth Triennial Conference of the WRI which took place in Haverford near Philadelphia, USA, August 25–31, 1969. These are statements given in court by Eaton and WRI witnesses and recorded in: Liberation and Revolution: Gandhi's Challenge, Report of the Thirteenth Triennial Conference, Haverford, USA, August 25–31, 1969, WRI, London, 1969, p.221–5.*

#### **Statement by Bob Eaton**

“Conscription is for slaves, not free men. These words do not come easily, but they are true and the truth needs saying. The truth, as clearly as one sees it, also needs acting upon.” With these words three years ago I publicly returned my draft cards to the Selective Service System and renounced the privileged occupational, educational and religious classifications available to me.

As I've worked in the peace movement since then, travelling to campuses and Quaker Meetings around this country and doing civilian medical relief work in North and South Vietnam, I've come to another understanding. A free society cannot be built or defended by conscript labour. Our society still suffers from racism. . . Nor can we defend freedom with conscription. My great, great grandfather came to this country from Prussia with a price on his head for leading students, anti-militarism demonstrations at his university. The Prussians didn't understand the heavy price militarism exacts from a society that would call itself free. America is slowly learning the price in terms of postponed rehabilitation of our society and loss of individual freedom and the real question is whether we will pay it.

Many of my generation are not going to pay the price. In my work I've traveled to Canada and Sweden and met with some of the thousands of young American exiles in these countries. Men who have left their family and friends rather than commit moral and political crimes. Yes, America has a refugee problem – thousands are leaving rather than face the alternatives for many of us who stay – complicity in a war most of the world judges as American aggression or prison terms harsher on average than those handed out during World War II to war resisters.

Part of my generation is staying. Thousands in The Resistance have stopped dodging the draft with all the deferments available to us. Across the country in public Squares and college halls and houses of worship we have publicly refused to go to Vietnam or sanction with our cooperation the conscription system that would send others in our place – a public commitment by free citizens to their fellow citizens to begin with their own lives to reconstruct our society. We won't allow militarism to drive us out as my ancestors were driven from Germany. We are staying because America will be better only if there are people willing to work and sacrifice, if necessary, to make it better. We've registered voters, tutored drop-outs, and worked in settlement houses. And we've learned that the beginning of construction has to be a clear no to destruction. How could I continue to work in a settlement house with young people who get no deferments from our society – unemployed high school drop-outs from a school system that doesn't meet their needs and an economic system that accepts unemployment on depression levels in the slums as an acceptable status quo. Too many have been sent to Vietnam to die.

We're part of the problems that face us as a society. It's the war of all silent Americans who don't care. We find ourselves administering to an increasingly fossilized and violent society. We've

become, each in his own way, high priests to the past and not prophets to the future. Established religion blesses nuclear submarines, legislatures outlaw flag burning in this country and finance child burning in Vietnam, courts back down on a solemn pledge at the Nuremberg and Tokyo War Crimes trials to apply the same standard of justice involving war crimes to our country that we applied to our World War II enemies. Most tragic of all, many of us recline in Apathy.

Before the Civil War, many Quakers broke the law of the land to operate an underground railway to Canada. Many Americans preferred the slow, but legal and orderly, festering of the cancer of slavery in our society to this breach of legal order. It was these people who laid the foundations for the Civil War, not those who acted in affirmation of life.

Like the early Abolitionists many like myself have similarly challenged today's society as openly and honestly as we know how. There is no easy solution to the problems which confront us as a people, but if we are to retain our ideals of freedom the solution must be based on individual responsibility and not institutional fiat. To the best of my ability I have tried to live up to my responsibilities to my fellow men. This has involved a refusal to join in regimented killing or the privileged deferments that would send others in my place. Of this I am guilty.

The issue before this court today is a political one. My crime has transgressed against no human being. It has openly challenged the political order of this society. I think, in balance, the courts of this land failed us in dealing with the great issue of slavery. The courts have played a passive role in confronting major social issues facing us today. Many of us refuse complicity with a conscripted society because our government will not act to remove this evil from our society. This has involved open and civil disobedience to certain laws. This is a serious act. But written law is not an absolute in a free society. Present in this court today is Martin Niemöller – a German who spent eight years in a concentration camp for urging Christians not to cooperate with the anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws of the German Government. If there is an absolute in a democratic society it has to be the continuing and hard search on each citizen's part for the moral and political responsibilities freedom puts upon us. In times of social stress, this is what Judge Learned Hand referred to as the "contingent anarchy" inherent in a democracy.

I don't want to go to prison – what man does? But it is a risk I take. All of us in this court live in frightening and challenging times. I urge this court to accept the challenge the draft resisters have openly placed before this country, by refusing to sentence. This risk is great – the risk was great to Northern judges challenged by the Quakers to refuse to give court sanction to the Fugitive Slaves Laws. I urge this court and all citizens present to consider deeply their role in the process of creating and maintaining a conscripted society in our land.

### **Statements by witnesses**

#### **Vo Van Ai**

It is an honour for the United States to have men like Robert Eaton to realise the spirit of respect for life by his actions against the war in Vietnam.

As a Vietnamese and Buddhist I am with him, because he will be the symbol of the friendship and reconciliation between Vietnam and the United States when the war is over.

I know Bob Eaton through his devotion for mankind, for his tremendous service in bringing medical supplies to the Vietnamese, North and South, who are suffering unjustly because of this war.

Bob Eaton is right in resisting conscription – because he saw with his own eyes, as I did, the killing in the Vietnam war – because he acts as a free man in a free and democratic country and chooses respect for life instead of killing in this or in any other war.

I do not think that Bob Eaton violates the law of life, because he lives nonviolently in the law

of love. I agree with him, as all Buddhists will, in the same task which is to liberate ourselves from hate and violence. I am with Bob Eaton wholeheartedly and express my solidarity with him today.

I beg you to bring the law into the spirit of love and compassion where you can meet man as man free from all kinds of slavery.

**Devi Prasad**

I love freedom and I live for it. It was a great experience for me to have been involved in the freedom struggle of my country, India. I have been very fortunate in having had the opportunity of meeting and working with some of the finest people. I was educated in Tagore's university when the poet was still alive. I started my work with Mahatma Gandhi, and during my work against war and for international peace and understanding I have come across many people and made friends with many whom I greatly respect. Robert Eaton, with whom I had the opportunity of working on several occasions including the September 25, 1968 action in protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia, is one of them and I consider it to be a privilege.

I am distressed to see the growing dehumanization of social and political relationships and the way the common man is being betrayed all over the world. Basic human rights are being denied to those individuals and groups who do not agree with those who wield power. The UN Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of life but millions of men, women and children are being subjected to the violence of war.

Like the "right of life", "not to take life" is also a basic human right. But thousands of young men are thrown into prison because they refuse to cooperate with the system which destroys life. Their 'crime' is that they are expressing respect for life and love for their fellow human beings – a belief in the sanctity of human life is one which no other considerations can overrule.

In the life of a conscientious and courageous person there are sometimes occasions when civil disobedience seems to be the only step he can take. Bob Eaton's refusal to cooperate with the Selective Service System is such a step. It is a profound act on his part and as one whose life is devoted to peace, freedom and love I express my deepest appreciation with Bob's action, which I hope will awaken the conscience of the community.

## A P P E N D I X T W E L V E

### Discussion on WRI policy

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*The Executive Committee meeting held on February 24, 1973 had a special session to hold discussions on WRI policy in order to present a paper at the Council meeting to take place in May. The paper was to be based on factual information available to headquarters and the personal views of Council members, Sections and staff. Myrtle Solomon prepared the report of the discussions; the main points are given below.*

#### **Myrtle Solomon's report**

The Executive Committee discussed a couple of questions which had been put to all Council members. Written replies and contributions had been received from Randy Kehler, Jean van Lierde, David McReynolds and Pietro Pinna. The Questions were:

- A
  - i) Should WRI concentrate strictly on anti-militarism or cover a much larger field and be a nonviolent revolutionary organisation?
  - ii) WRI is distinguished from other revolutionary organisations by a nonviolent strategy. There seem to be different views within the WRI as to what this implies. What do we mean by nonviolence and nonviolent revolution?
  - iii) What is the role of conscientious objection within a revolutionary strategy?
- B Sections and Headquarters
  - i) Why do so few Sections respond to circulars or initiatives from Headquarters?
  - ii) To what extent and in what way is the WRI Headquarters necessary for the work of national Sections?
  - iii) Is the WRI simply a co-ordinating body or also an autonomous body?
  - iv) What should be the procedure of initiating international projects?
  - v) Role of *War Resistance* and the *WRI Newsletter*?
  - vi) Can HQ continue to contribute to the strengthening and growth of Sections and new groups, e.g. through the work of travelling Secretary?

A

- i) The discussion was concerned with the image and function of the WRI. What sort of organisation does it appear to a person who shows interest but has not yet been involved with pacifist organisations? If this information is first obtained from his local Section or from Headquarters will he receive the same description?

The WRI Declaration confirms clearly the WRI's attitude to war, all wars.

The argument begins with the last few words of the Declaration '*. . . and to strive for the removal of all causes of war*'. The WRI had often re-affirmed its intention to work for a new society in which war could have no place. A society based on the philosophy and practice of nonviolence. Policy and methods used towards these ends therefore must be nonviolent. It is not possible to be a member of the WRI and take part in any war; on this issue there was no compromise and on which WRI members are united. The war resister's reactions to oppres-

sion, imperialism and the policies of governments who seek to maintain or obtain their ambitions through war are relatively simple to describe. They may be dangerous to implement and their results seemingly ineffective or inadequate, but the message of dissent, or rejection, are clearly defined.

It is arguable that militarism is only a tool of war and not a cause. Militarism nevertheless played a dominant part in the world's politics and economy as well as being a factor in our existence that was supported by millions of people directly or indirectly. Anti-militarism was an essential part of the work of the WRI. Some Executive members considered too great an emphasis was put on this aspect of WRI work, others considered there was still much more to be done and the discussion became linked with A-iii (the role of C.O.). It was recommended that work on anti-militarism should be enlarged both nationally and internationally. It was often uninspiring work. To constantly 'anti' anything, rejecting, undermining and trying to overthrow establishments and their centuries of habit, this was depressing and not seemingly creative work. Yet it was necessary to tackle this job vigorously at all levels. All sections of society that upheld the military or were 'protected' or oppressed by the military had to be opposed.

WRI had to find a way of getting its ideals discussed among Trade Unionists, particularly those employed by the armament industry. Direct action in connection with the sale of arms, recruitment to the forces and to laboratories of the war machine should be encouraged.

Many people were anti-militarists for political reasons but that the wider and more difficult area of nonviolent protests, educative projects; propaganda served for all forms of protests by persuasion, communication and real understanding about fundamental social change could only come by example and practical experiment. It was not possible to build a nonviolent society on a policy based solely on anti-militarism. The problem was, just how far out into the causes of war could a movement such as the WRI reach?

ii) If the image of the WRI was not to remain solely as an organisation of war resisters and war resistance, but also needed to show a more positive and creative side, it was suggested that the Declaration did not emphasise this intention adequately. Many Sections, moreover, were not willing or able to extend their work into other forms of conflict not directly related to war.

The image of the WRI as an anti-war movement was not disputed, but its image as a nonviolent revolutionary movement was criticised as weak. Many of the causes of war and worldwide inequalities and various forms of oppression and lack of freedom were barely touched by the WRI. But how was it possible to take positive action and tackle all the research work needed on so many levels, in ecology, poverty, racial, religious and political conflicts? The WRI's role was to show that these evils in our society had been caused by generations of wars and were likely to cause more wars. This picture of the WRI was not always clear to young people who often saw the WRI as collection of COs standing apart from matters that concerned him and his generation.

These matters, broadly speaking, lay in two directions. Liberation from oppression of any sort in vast areas of the world, and/or direct community action and participation in local conflicts. The person whose primary interest was in liberation of the oppressed was not necessarily impressed by a pacifist's position unless it could be coupled with successful action. He might be persuaded to consider nonviolence as method to attain his ends but he would not sustain this when faced with failure unless the conviction and commitment existed. The person primarily interested in poverty, the homeless, ecology might accept the WRI declaration and

reply '... yes, of course war is wrong, but if I join the WRI will its members help me in my local work on housing?'

One executive member said that if the WRI accepted the implication behind and in front of the words of its Declaration and considered itself a nonviolent revolutionary organization it was time 'this mask was turned into a real face'. Another member said that while there were still millions of people in the world still committed to the methods of war as a means of solving their problems or preventing solutions the WRI dare not let up on its particular function. The WRI member, as a member, as a pacifist, as a nonviolent activist could lose his identity and purpose if he did not find a way of showing the viable link between his views and those of the ecologists, community action worker, or with any person working for radical change. Many a person who worked with children in his street to build a playground was prepared on another day to bomb another playground in a different street. It was not enough to say, 'I am doing this or that because I am a pacifist' when many other people were doing the same thing without 'having' to be a pacifist.

The Committee considered that the WRI was and is different to other revolutionary organisations, and not just because of their (the WRI's) nonviolent strategy. Quite often the aims were not the same and almost always the methods envisaged were totally different. The WRI had a different interpretation of the use of the word POWER and were not interested in change that merely passed the centralised government from the right to the left or vice versa. They were concerned with decentralised decision making and the 'power' of the society. The WRI since its birth supported non-collaboration and expected its members not to collaborate with oppression and militarism. The WRI had to try to build a nonviolent society at the same time as it cracked the Establishment, it could not wait until 'after the revolution' to clear up the mess.

iii) Many groups struggled in other spheres; working class conflicts, civil rights, race relations, but nonviolent opposition to militarism is not covered and where militarism is opposed it is usually opposed by other militants.

### **Conscientious Objection**

The first direct action that any collaborator can take against militarism is by his refusal to take part in it. His objection to conscription and war can be a moral or political act or both.

The nonviolent society envisaged by the WRI can only be achieved by nonviolent means; one of its ingredients is the refusal to conform. The CO's role is an important aspect *against militarism* and for *freedom of conscience*. Conscientious objection, when extended into other spheres, becomes a vital part of the nonviolent revolution.

As an anti-war act just how effective was the refusal to conform? It was considered not yet possible to measure the power of these pioneers and much depended on the different reactions to Conscientious Objection shown by the different regimes and through the support received by war resisters throughout the world.

It could be argued that the countries which tolerated CO, did so because very few objectors challenged them, an argument that might work in favour of intensifying the CO campaign. But many countries under dictatorships took the CO threat seriously and refused to grant what many accept as human right. They were not influenced by the argument that modern warfare was not dependent on large numbers of soldiers.

The dent that could be made by the CO in addition to the moral aspect, was due to his

refusal to carry, use, make, trade or invent any component part of war, what actually was an effective opposition to war.

If the refusal is based on moral grounds there is an opportunity for all supporters and war resisters to spread their propaganda on nonviolence and the concept of *Thou Shalt Not Kill*.

Alternative service granted by some countries was acceptable to some COs and unacceptable to others. It was not realised by many that to recognise the right of CO, implied the recognition of the right of the State to conscript. That is, though, not the WRI pacifism. But the CO who accepts alternative service could at least during that time of enforced labour learn more about his own position as well as communicate his views to others. His supporters should exploit his desire and willingness to do constructive work rather than undertake a destructive training.

Nevertheless the ultimate aim of the war resister is to reverse the status quo. It was the legality of conscription that should be challenged making the right of CO redundant.

Although some war resisters favoured joining the armed forces with the view to infiltrate and undermine the system, the WRI Executive members realised that such a decision was that of the person himself. If the WRI really wants to commit itself to social change in the context of a nonviolent revolution it has no time to waste its supporters in the armed services whatever their motives. But it was understood that the man faced with conscription, had to make his own decision on how he could best serve and live out his convictions; by long term in prison, by accepting alternative service if offered or by spreading his views within the military.

## Conclusion

Executive members agreed that whether the WRI extended its policy into 'social reform' and initiating radical social changes in our society or favoured a more concentrated campaign on anti-militarism in all its forms, their singular declaration gave an opportunity for any man or woman to renounce the method of war as a means to an end.

### B. Sections and Headquarters

Executive members repeatedly use the phrases 'the WRI accepts 'this' and not 'that''. But, who, in this context was and is the WRI? The few members within the Sections, supporters outside the Sections? Some sort of an answer emerges in the discussion held on Section B.

There was agreement on:

- a) The recognition of the ideological priorities among the different Sections. Headquarters could anticipate the reaction of each Section to their circulars ranging from enthusiasm to indifference. Some Sections showed a lack of concern for conflicts outside their own country and related their work almost exclusively to national problems. Other Sections almost ignored the problems within their own country and concentrated on 'overseas' wars, threats and oppression. But in relation to policy and principle on matters of conflict or war there was unity of thinking. Whether statements guided this issued from Headquarters or through their own decisions was not known. A similarity of views within the Sections had been expressed when confronted with the crises and wars challenged by the political situation in such places as S. Africa, Czechoslovakia, Biafra, Bangla Desh. The war in Vietnam had posed a different problem to some Sections although WRI Headquarters had never wavered on their policy of non-alignment. The journals and circulars of Sections, with varying emphasis, reported on poverty, civil rights, nationalism, imperialism, and education in

similar ways. Their methods of propaganda, organisation and liaison with other non-pacifist groups varies considerably.

- b) In practical terms very few Sections made a purposeful effort to relate their work and their members to the WRI family. Consequently few members within a Section were aware of the work and incentives of the WRI. This was not always due to lack of loyalty or respect for the role of the WRI. Many Sections were financially poor and unable to spare contributions to the WRI. Many Sections had not organised Headquarters or staff, and had the support of only a small number of members.

It was considered essential that personal contact between each Section and Headquarters and Section to Section is greatly improved.

### **Recommended:**

More regional conferences wherever geographically possible; work camps, regional campaigns and a travelling WRI field worker.

- d) Circulars from Headquarters rarely went further than the Section's Secretary's desk. The Belgian Section had solved this problem by sending out a newsletter to their own members reporting WRI and international affairs and activities (regular 1,200 circulation). It was the duty of Section leaders or staff to communicate WRI news to their members and local groups in whatever way they favoured.
- e) The purpose of the publications *War Resistance* and the *Newsletter*. The former should spread the theoretical and philosophical arguments. The *Newsletter* should carry the plans for actions and current information in their own news and problems if they wished them to be shared. One suggestion not accepted by the Committee or perhaps its purpose not fully understood was that *WR* is published outside Headquarters, under the responsibility and involvement of different Sections per issue.
- f) Sections had the right to be informed in advance of any other organisation of WRI proposals and initiatives.

There was disagreement on:

- a) The interpretation and implementation of Council's agreements that the WRI Headquarters staff can act as a body independent of its Sections on international actions. This was totally acceptable in times of emergency and crisis when freedom of action not anticipated at a Triennial Conference or a Council meeting had to be exercised. But Headquarters had often failed to implement recommendations made at these gatherings and within a one or three-year period had substituted different priorities. These actions were not always accepted by Sections. Headquarters argued that they had the right and obligation to *initiate* international campaigns *just because* Sections were often so unwilling to recognise the total picture and threat. Headquarters had to lead or try to inspire the Sections and suffered from lack of guidance and pressure from the Sections. The procedure for initiating projects that seemed necessary during any one year was stated to be as follows:

Staff discussion – proposal to Executive if possible – otherwise consultation by phone and correspondence with all Council members. Decision to proceed, statements issued and methods of procedure were then circulated to Council members and the Sections.

The criticism was: who is to decide at the outset which project or crisis merits interna-



tional action (allowing for the fact that probably all crisis come into this category but that not all can be undertaken). Few Sections were in the position to run campaigns at short notice on every issue that attracted the attention of Headquarters in London.

- b) A project, with or without encouragement from Sections is adopted by Headquarters. Most Sections are grateful for guidance and factual information issued on events in 'far off countries' and to thereby learn of the problems about which they may not always be familiar. But if little interest is taken by a Section for a crisis that has emerged in their own country, or if their views on this crisis are different to those expressed by WRI Headquarters, or it is known that a Section is too weak to take action, then, according to precedent and example, the WRI HQ maintains its right to contact other war resisters and organisations known to them, and ask them rather than the Section to undertake the action considered necessary. Therefore, the WRI does not see itself simply as a co-ordinating body but also as an autonomous body, which can and should initiate any activity based on their nonviolent commitment with whomsoever they wish.

In the course of this discussion staff members reported that a large proportion of their members (HQ members) were not members of Sections, even when it was possible for them to be so.

This statement was challenged. How was this information substantiated: If it was true it should not be so. How and why had it happened?

Was it the Section's fault; did the Section not supply the answer for its own war resisters? Or was it WRI Headquarters that had so little faith in its Sections that it failed to communicate to enquirers the existence of its Sections? HQ staff replied that they held a large number of HQ members at the request of the individual concerned and that the reasons for this were varied and numerous. It was this situation that stimulated their desire to act as an autonomous movement when required and not to work solely as an office to co-ordinate the work of war resisters organised in national movements as WRI Sections.

They considered that it was not possible to make an overall ruling. Some Sections had a large membership organised in branches throughout their country; too frequently these branches were badly informed about the WRI. Other Sections had weak national structures with members who rarely met each other but who were linked together by the work of the WRI and its communications from Headquarters.

Sections should be specialists in their own country's affairs but they were often dominated by personalities or traditional images, religious and political experience in nonviolent action.

In spite of the seeming indifference and lack of involvement with the WRI it was agreed that if the WRI collapsed tomorrow another international co-ordinating organisation would have to emerge.

This was not to say that the role was purely one of co-ordination, but that the value of such co-ordination should not be under-emphasised.

The immediate task was to revive interest and trust in the WRI so that a sense of loyalty and co-operation would emerge and grow.

It was necessary that the image of the WRI 'came alive' to all its Sections' leaders. And to every member in them, so that they not only wished to finance adequately their own Headquarters, the WRI, but also welcomed and relied upon its initiatives.

## A P P E N D I X   T H I R T E E N

### Objectives of WRI

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*David McReynolds presented a background paper at the Council Meeting held in St Louis, France, in 1973. Michael Randle and Uri Davis had also placed a resolution before the Council. A committee consisting of Uri Davis, Michael Randle and Manfred Lesch rewrote it incorporating the material of the Davis–Randle resolution. The Council accepted it as a Statement of policy.*

#### **Statement of policy – concerns and orientations of the WRI**

The WRI is an international organisation whose members and national Sections are united by their opposition to war in all circumstances and their commitment to fight for the removal of its causes. Inevitably, differences in the analysis of particular situations and priorities to be pursued will arise at times.

Obviously, the fact that we refuse to be aligned with any nation-state or power-block does not mean that we are neutral or that we avoid making distinctions between the internal social structures and national policies of various states. Our rejection of violence does not imply neutrality in struggles that occur. There is a clear difference, ethical and political, between the Hungarians and the Czechoslovakians seeking to free their people from Soviet control in terms of liberated socialism and on the other hand the Soviet army seeking to maintain domination. There is a clear difference between the Indo-Chinese resorting to violence to expel the French and then the Americans from their homeland and the colonialist forces seeking control of their country.

We stated in the Vienna meeting of the WRI Council, 1968 in the resolution on Liberation Movements and the WRI:

. . . our unwavering commitment to non-violence does not mean that we are hostile to the revolutionary movements of our time, even though on certain fundamental issues we may disagree with some of them. It is impossible for us to be morally 'neutral', for example, in the struggle between the people of Vietnam and the American government . . . We do not support the violent *means* used by the NLF and Hanoi, but we do support their *objective* in seeking the liberation of Vietnam from foreign domination.

However, in view of recent political discussions within the International it is appropriate for this Council meeting to reaffirm the WRI position on several matters and request each Section to publish the full text of this statement in a publication going to all their members.

1. Nuclear weapons are in and of themselves a threat to humanity. Several nation-states now possess nuclear weapons and we condemn and oppose the nuclear policies of each and every one of them. Furthermore, we emphasise that the means which are necessary for the production of weapons of all kinds, hinder the ethical, spiritual and material development of humankind.

2. A criminal act against humanity does not cease to be criminal by becoming collective. It is no excuse for one nuclear power to point to other nation-states with similar weapons. Obviously we would support universal disarmament, but the WRI commits itself to inciting people to take unilateral nonviolent action against their respective oppressive state-bureaucracies and their war machinery in their struggle for liberation.
3. We condemn all military pacts and alliances and continue to call for their dissolution as well as for the unilateral withdrawal of members. Such alliances have been used, particularly by the USA and the USSR, as masks behind which their own national and international policies could be carried out.
4. We appeal to all nation-states to recognise the right of conscience in regard to military service. In many nation-states, both in the East and the West, there is no legal recognition of conscientious objectors and political resisters to particular wars. We oppose conscription wherever it exists. No nation-state can justify military conscription of men and women or imposing forced labour as an alternative service.
5. We call for the release from prisons everywhere in the world of all those held for reasons of political, religious or ethical beliefs. No nation-state can claim to be free, as does the United States, or progressive, as does the Soviet Union, when men and women are detained, held without trial, tortured, or jailed solely on the basis of their beliefs and political positions.
6. The WRI condemns imperialism and global domination, militarism and state military intervention as well as the repression of national, ethnic and religious minorities by all nation-state administrations, including the United States and the USSR.

The development of nuclear weapons has introduced a new dimension into war by making possible the total destruction of humankind. To this extent, pacifist opposition to war, however insufficient, has become critically important and its failure thus far to introduce historically relevant alternative forms of social organisation is disastrous.

We know that various Sections of the WRI will differ in their strategies and tactics. They will also differ on their evaluation of the social systems of the Soviet Union, the Peoples Republic of China, the United States of America, etc.

But we believe that the Sections should hold to the points laid down in this resolution.\*

\* *War Resistance* vol.3 Nos.1 & 2, 1st & 2nd quarters 1973, p.2

## APPENDIX FOURTEEN

### WRI gets Consultative Status at UN

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*In 1973 the WRI gained category II status as a Non-Governmental Organisation at the United Nations. This is the text of Beverly Woodward's report to the Council.*

In early May 1973 War Resisters' International was granted category II status as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) at the United Nations. This resulted from an effort initiated more than a year ago by Devi Prasad, along with a little fancy international footwork.

WRI's first serious contacts with the United Nations occurred in 1968, the year designated as UN International Human Rights Year. At that time Devi, then General Secretary of WRI, decided to use the opportunity of conscientious objection as a human right. Some 40,000 signatures from 17 countries were gathered on a petition entitled a *World Appeal for The Recognition of Conscientious Objection as a Human Right*, which was delivered to the Human Rights Division at the UN on the 22nd anniversary of the death of Gandhi, January 30, 1970.

Such petitions tend to gather dust unless followed up by further efforts. Fortunately, therefore, Eileen Egan, who represents Pax Romana at the UN and who has long been close to WRI and WRL, took steps which resulted in the subject of conscientious objection coming before the Commission on Human Rights at the UN. In 1971, the Commission, after protracted debate, voted to ask the Secretary General to make a worldwide study of practices with regard to compulsory military service and provision for conscientious objection and alternative service.

This spring the Secretary General's report was finally presented to the Commission. At the same time, the Netherlands and Austria introduced a resolution aimed at encouraging all UN members to make provision for the right to conscientious objection and for appropriate alternative service. But largely due to the intervention of the USSR, which argued that such action by the UN would constitute an unacceptable interference into the domestic affairs of states, a vote on this resolution was deferred until next year.

Consequently, it was strange twist when another delegate from the USSR played an important role in gaining category II status for WRI at the UN. It started with a sort of accident. When WRI's application was first being discussed, the USSR delegate looked at the wrong papers and recommended a lower status for WRI (giving it fewer possibilities of action at the UN). When he discovered his error, he was determined to rectify it and at a subsequent meeting argued forcefully for category II status. International politics being what they are, this immediately aroused the suspicions of certain Western delegates. The result was a decision to postpone a vote on WRI until the delegates could inform themselves better as to 'just what kind' of an organisation WRI was. Igal Roodenko, who was representing WRI at these meetings, was, of course, delighted to pass around literature indicating WRI's consistent stand against the use of violence wherever it occurs.

The upshot was a rather ironic speech on behalf of WRI at the next meeting by the delegate from Netherlands. He reported that his delegation had found WRI to be an organisation which advocated 'in a remarkable even-handed manner' nonviolent resistance to *all* imperialism and all wars and then quoted from the statement issued by the WRI at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in which mention was made of 'the reactionary and repressive role played by the military alliances, the Warsaw Pact and NATO'. He therefore wished to compliment the Soviet delegate for his broadmindedness in this matter! Fortunately the Soviet delegate decided not to change his stand. He accused the Dutch delegate of 'confusing' the issue, said what was involved was just a

technical question. Thus with support from East and West WRI was admitted to consultative status at the UN.

The question now will be what we shall do with this status. The WRI Council at its recent meeting in St. Louis, France, voted that I should be the WRI representative at the UN. Unfortunately, however, the pressure of the business prevented the Council from considering in a substantive way relations between WRI and the UN, so it may be helpful if I present here a few of my own ideas as a starting point for further discussion.

Everyone of course, knows the weakness of the UN and many may question whether any efforts at all in this forum are worthwhile. I think so, since I am a firm believer in the importance of strengthening transnational ties, especially among the less advantaged, and the UN is one forum where this is occurring in a significant way. While the major powers are cancelling each other out in the Security Council, the Third World, the non-aligned countries, and some of the smaller European countries have been forging various alliances in the General Assembly and some of the special committees. At the same time they are developing *Weltanschauung* quite different from the world-view of the major powers with their essentially 19th century visions of 'balance of power' world order arrangements. At the last session of the General Assembly a delegate from Malaysia made a statement that may be taken as representative: 'While the *détentes* between and among the major powers is welcome, it can well lead to a period of big power collusion in which there would exist a multi-polar world broken up into spheres of influence. A non-polar world with democratised conduct of international relations is the ideal to be sought.'

To be sure, whether this ideal can be realised without some rather drastic changes in the nation-state as an institution and in the United Nations itself (which in fact may have to be replaced with an organisation structured quite differently) is the next question that will have to be faced. The Third World still being much under the grip of nationalism (which, of course, need not be a wholly retrogressive force) it will probably be some time before really imaginative alternatives to present arrangements are proposed. National sovereignty seems too precious as a way of combating the imperious and imperial behaviours of the super powers for the smaller and less powerful nations to be willing to consider what look like derogations from it. Still this is only part of the picture. Functional co-operation, unlike anything existing in the past, is already occurring and the democratic ideal may yet lead to unusual initiatives.

I am stressing these structural concerns and the capacity of the UN to be a forum where new conceptions of world community and world order may develop, because I think they are of central importance to this effort to eliminate war. To put the matter strongly: the causes of war lie in the present insane social, economic and political organisation of the world. Given the interdependence of human kind and the growing world population, the overcoming of these existing destructive institutional arrangements do not lie in withdrawal into small autonomous communities (though such attempts may have certain positive features), but in the forging of new kinds of ties on a regional and global basis, ties that are based on a recognition of our mutual responsibility for human life everywhere.

The UN is one forum, though certainly not the only one, where it is possible to pursue actively a vision of world community based on mutual responsibility, respect for fundamental human rights, and egalitarian institutional arrangements. Efforts within this forum, therefore, should be one part of a serious programme to realise this vision. We may be realistic about the UN and its limitations without turning our backs on it and the possibilities it offers.

In the immediate future there are numerous specific areas of UN concern where it is especially appropriate that WRI be active. They include disarmament, a halt to nuclear testing, the creation of unarmed world peacekeeping units, the elimination of torture, and the aforementioned concern with the rights of conscientious objectors.

Beverly Woodward

## A P P E N D I X F I F T E E N

### WRI and the non-Western world

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*As early as July 1936 Bart de Ligt, a Dutch pacifist, urged closer contact between all peoples of the world. The minutes of the Council meeting held on July 24–7, 1936, in Hoddesdon, England recorded his comment that:*

up to the present time the war resistance movement was a *white* movement. The vital problems of the day, he urged, were rapidly becoming the problems of all; all the peoples of the earth are discussing them and seeking a way out. In many countries adopting military conscription, this involved not only the conscription of the white people, but of the coloured races as well.

*This theme was not taken up again until much later. From the late 1950s onwards there was growing awareness of the importance of this subject. A paper I submitted in 1975 relates the history of WRI's relations with the non-Western world in some detail and is printed below in full. But first the text of a memorandum on relations with Africa presented in 1962 by Bill Sutherland of the War Resisters League (USA).*

#### **Memorandum one: Africa**

The WRI faces several conditions in the non-western world which it has not had to face before. First of all we have a proximity to the seats of power in various African countries, a chance to observe at close range, and to contribute to the solution of political problems. On the other hand, we are much farther away from the mass of the people because of language, culture and other differences. We can attempt to overcome some of these differences through contacts and study, but we must always recognise that there is another majority reason why we cannot reach the people directly, unless assisted and encouraged by African leadership. This is the political fact that suspicion of the outside has become quite general; a very natural phenomenon in view of the long period when trust was rewarded with betrayal, contact meant political and cultural suppression, etc. In the present African situation, moreover, a far greater responsibility, for good or ill, is invested in the leader and the people will do nothing without reference to him.

Another condition which is analogous to the WRI position vis-à-vis Nazism during 1930–45 exists as far as South Africa is concerned. Unless Western pacifists grasp the fact that to the politically aware African in every part of the Continent the Nationalist Government in South Africa represents an evil more horrible than the Nazi regime before World War II, they will not be able to appreciate the difficulties involved in deciding whether resistance to this regime will be violent or nonviolent.

For decades pacifists have been 'speaking truth to power'. Some African leaders are now 'speaking challenge to prophecy', i.e. 'You pacifists call for a nonviolent society, a nonviolent pacifist position, there is necessarily a limitation on the possible answers to this challenge, i.e. answers acceptable to all.' The following would seem to be steps upon which we could all agree:

1. Be informed. Learn to appreciate non-Western cultural concepts and the history and condi-

tions out of which springs the present behaviour in non-Western countries. Do not project Western religious, cultural and social value where they do not apply, in making judgements upon non-Western societies. Demonstrate understanding and brotherhood through correcting the misconceptions and misunderstandings about non-Western countries, which are rife in the so-called developed countries.

2. Meet the challenge of African leaders seeking nonviolent solutions to conflict and the establishment of a nonviolent society. There is very little time in the struggle for political independence of the years immediately following independence to work out different patterns of behaviour, different approaches to the new society. Consequently, African and Asian leaders fall back upon the same old conventional means which have resulted in societies, to a great extent, being miserable and uncreative and busily preparing to total destruction. The WRI could offer the service of bringing together experienced men of nonviolence with Africans who have broad knowledge of their own circumstances and history to hammer out more creative and hopeful patterns of meeting conflict and establishing a healthy society. This should be done preferably at the request of African leaders who lean towards our approach.
3. People to people technical training and assistance. The possibilities of a nonviolent society are often swept away at the very beginning of independence because the leadership sees no way to meet the immediate crying needs of its people, except through attempting a precarious balance between aid from the Great Powers and the economic, political, social and cultural independence of its people. Often through no evil intention of anyone the balance is lost because of the effect of Great Power aid – occasionally in spite of itself. There are small groups of our people all over the world, or people sympathetic to us – more particularly in Denmark in terms of our own contacts – who have an approach to technical aid and assistance which allows for a maximum of retention of the human aspects of the indigenous society, mutual education and a protection against domination.

In general, the WRI should be able to offer a qualitative person to person, small group to small group contact, which would make contributions to nonviolence in the non-Western world in a quiet, effective way.

Bill Sutherland

## **WRI and the Third World**

### **Introduction**

The term Third World had some meaning when it was coined, but today it conveys nothing much of importance. As far as development is concerned, most countries of the world are developing countries, enough even to satisfy the basic need of their people, and others are developing in a distorted way leading to collapse. A few countries of Asia, Africa and South America – the so-called third world – belong to the latter category fast catching up to join the top layer. There are countries in Asia, for instance, which have adequate resources and actual wealth, but for some reason or other have not been able to eradicate poverty. The same can be said about countries such as the United States of America which belong to the top layer, but the poverty they continue to have is dismaying.

For the purpose of this paper the term third world is not being used to connote anything related to development. It is being used to mean the people who do not find themselves in the mainstream of world power politics, on account, either of the racial gap which divides the world into two blocks, or for their inability to control the centres of power related to economic conditions and the racial divisions interlocked, although the two also have their internal dynamics.

### **The Background**

Council – It was in 1946, twenty-five years after its founding that some non-Europeans were taken on the WRI Council, with one exception from Palestine (Hans Kohn, 1925–28 and 1931–34), but he was from Europe. The 1946–48 Council had on it three Latin Americans (Jorge Rio de la Loza and José Brocca from Mexico, Jacques Savasy from Argentina) and Nathan Chofschi and Avraham Lisavoder from Palestine and Samar Sen from India. Except Samar Sen the five others were not returned to the Council after 1948. Rajendra Prasad, who was a colleague of Mahatma Gandhi and had attended a Council meeting much earlier, was elected Vice-Chairman in 1948. He remained in that position only for a short period as he became the President of the Indian Republic in 1950, and he resigned from the Council as a matter of conscience. Samar Sen continued on the Council until 1947, when another Indian, Banwarilal Choudhri, was elected. Narayan Desai of the Indian Shanti Sena replaced Banwarilal in 1963 and continued until 1972, when Janaki Tschannerl, an Indian living in the United States of America and later in Tanzania, was elected; she served on the Council until 1975.

In 1962, a few months after the resignation of Arlo Tatum, as General Secretary, Devi Prasad, an Indian was appointed to that position with Tony Smythe, an Englishman, as co-General Secretary. Tony left the WRI in 1964 and Devi continued as General Secretary until 1972, after which he served as Chairman from 1973–75 and as a Council and Executive member until 1979. The only other non-European to be elected as a Council member was a Vietnamese, Vo Van Ai, living in Paris. There were Council Members from Israel and Senegal (Joseph Abileah 1960–66, an Israeli of German stock; Uri Davis, another Israeli of English stock 1972–75; and Pierre Martin 1957–69, a French citizen who moved to Senegal in 1965 or thereabout. One hundred and eighteen or so people were either elected or co-opted to Council during the last fifty-four years; some served for only one term and some were elected repeatedly. The above account does not include those members who were appointed by the Sections as representatives on the Council after 1969, when Sections were given the right to appoint a representative each, having the same status as that of elected members. Significantly enough, neither the Indian Section nor the Israeli Section appointed anybody for a full term or even for one full year.

### **WRI Sections and the Third World**

In the late forties and fifties a couple or so Sections were formed in South America, only to have a short life. Later, in 1962, an organisation in Argentina (Fraternidad Esoterica Gnostica Latinamericana) was affiliated to the WRI. As far as WRI HQ were concerned it remained only on paper until 1972 when it was removed from the list – after the Secretary found on his visit to Argentina that the organisation no longer existed. In 1959, after a special visit of Arlo Tatum to Nigeria, the Nigerian WRI group was formed and affiliated with the WRI as a Section. Unfortunately hardly anybody in the group knew what the objectives of the WRI were. This was evident from some of the letters the WRI office received from their members. For example sometimes they asked for things like cameras, or for opportunities to visit Europe. Once a member wrote asking if the WRI ‘could help by inviting the Portuguese to go and establish trading centres in their country’. The group became something of a joke at the WRI office. At the same time it also showed that the WRI had little to offer as far as their basic problems were concerned, but for them the WRI was an organisation of the rich Europeans, ex-colonials who were there to distribute money to the poor. In other words, they saw the WRI as a charity meant to help the ‘backward’ people catch up with the western nations. The Nigerians were not able to interpret their own problems in relevant to any situation other than the war and disarmament related situations of Europe and North America. The so-called Nigerian Section had to disappear from the map of the WRI in 1965. At one time there was a WRI group in Ghana, formed probably under the influence of Bill Sutherland of the War Resisters League of USA. The Council had to take it off



the register in 1965, because they were convinced it had ceased to exist.

In Asia the Israeli group has been one of the most active ones. Its members have been struggling for conscientious objection to military service to be recognised as a constitutional right of every citizen. Most Israelis, at the beginning were Europeans – culturally, politically and industrially. They have to submit to military conscription like most Europeans, not only on paper, as it is in many Third World countries, but in an active manner. The situation in Japan is different. The WRI Section there was founded by a small group of anti-militarists, anarchists and Esperantists. Although there has not been conscription in Japan since the Second World War, their struggle is fundamentally anti-militarist. It is against the presence of the USA militarism in their country and against the trend of the Japanese establishment towards returning to full-fledged military power. On account of the country being the focus of anti-atom bomb campaigns, and for the reasons mentioned above, the activities of the peace movement in general and the WRI in particular, have been similar to the activities of the Western anti-militarist movement. Yet their contact with the WRI has never been one of active cooperation.

The Indian Section, called Shanti Sena Mandal, was affiliated to the International in 1969, when there were already two WRI groups in India: the Hyderabad Group and the WRI-India Group. Although at the time of the 1960 Triennial Conference, which was held in India, the Hyderabad Group was in existence, nobody at the Conference felt its presence. As far as I know it had a mailing list of a couple of dozen people, who had signed the Declaration some time in the past but who had no activity of the WRI sort – not even meetings. The WRI-India Group was formed at the Triennial Conference. It started with a good mailing list and a number of full members, most of whom were active within the Sarvaodaya movement. They soon discovered that apart from what they were doing as individuals within the Sarvodaya movement, there was not much they could do as a WRI Group. It remained only on paper as a group except for meeting a few times, until it was merged with Shanti Sena Mandal in 1970. The Shanti Sena has been a strong and active body working for peace and reconciliation between different communities and for nonviolent social change. It has never been projected as anti-militarist movement. However, its work has strong anti-militarist implications. Despite this commonality, the WRI and the Shanti Sena have not been able to establish close cooperation with each other. It seems that the gap between the two is due to the hesitation of the Shanti Sena to define its policy as clearly anti-militarist, and the hesitation on the part of the WRI to openly declare itself as Nonviolent International.

To sum up: Out of a total of thirty countries from which Council members were elected or co-opted, or where some of them lived, six countries were of the third world. Members who came from three of these six countries were either Europeans or North Americans, and from two or three others; each person was elected for just one term of three years. Only one country had someone or other on the Council continuously from 1946 until 1979. As far as the Sections were concerned the picture is not any more encouraging. And, in spite of the fact that the WRI Council has always been keen on relating to the people of the third world and had been making efforts in that direction, it did not succeed in making a breakthrough.

#### **Intentions and Efforts to Relate to the Third World.**

In a paper submitted at the 16th Triennial I had tried to show what kind of contacts the WRI had with the work of Mahatma Gandhi, and in what way the contact continued after Gandhi's death. For instance, one of the highlights of the 10th Triennial (1960) was the prospect of building a World Peace Brigade (WPB), an international version of the Shanti Sena. The WRI called a world conference and founded the Brigade in 1961–62. However, at the same time it made it clear that it will have nothing to do with the actual working of the WPB.

At the Gandhigram Triennial Bayard Rustin suggested that the WRI headquarters should be shifted to India. Arlo Tatum, WRI General Secretary, also made the same suggestion, but the

Council promptly rejected the proposal. It did, though, agreed to 'bear in mind the Conference instruction to investigate the possibility of transfer a branch or a field worker in Asia'. Arlo Tatum, who had spent six months in India to make preparations for the Gandhigram Triennial, had felt the need for some sort of radical change in the WRI set-up. When he saw that the leadership of the International was against the proposal he resigned as Secretary of the International. In a long term statement to 1961 Council he said: 'I feel it increasingly imperative for the WRI to shed its European/Anglo-Saxon orientation with its concentration on refusal to military service. Many WRI members share this concern . . . but I do not consider the alternative proposal before the Council to be addressed to the basic problem. It is true that had my suggestion been accepted I would not now be resigning.' The 1962 Council meeting discussed and approved the alternative proposal. But even that was not implemented.

At the same meeting three memoranda were submitted, two on Africa by Pierre Martin and Jean van Lierde and one by me on the future role of the WRI and the 'third world'. Bill Sutherland and Bayard Rustin, both black Americans, and Jean van Lierde, who had first hand experience in Patrice Lumumba's Congo, gave a great deal of information on the situation in Africa. The minutes of the meeting recorded: 'It was realised that the situation in Africa was so different from that which we had experienced in the countries of European culture and tradition that new methods of operation would be necessary. Individual declarations and membership organisations were often unsuited to the conditions of Africa and similar countries, and need for flexibility was emphasised. It was recognised that it would be necessary to work through indigenous movements and native leaders rather than attempt to impose upon them European techniques and organisations. The same principles of action would apply to the countries of Asia and Latin America.' The Council also decided to organise a world youth conference on nonviolence and socio-economic change. It was held in France in 1963 and tried to project a global perspective.

In the list of priorities at the 1964 Council meeting Africa was the last item. The 1965 Council took a favourable stand on the following three proposals: 1. To contact European pacifists living in African countries and ask them to form European based groups there. 2. To contact students from African and Asian countries studying in Europe, who would go back to their countries in due course and introduce pacifist ideas. And 3. To produce literature in other languages. The spirit of these proposals was to have some sort of a pacifist presence in those countries. No doubt, the Council was becoming more aware of its concern about it. For instance, at the 1967 Council meeting much interest was shown in the proposal for holding a conference in Africa on the question of finding new methods of revolutionary change based on nonviolence. The Council asked the Sections and Council members to 'send the HQs the names and addresses of persons and institutions who they thought would be interested'. Despite all this awareness, concern and interest the conference never took place.

At the Haverford Triennial in 1969, several commissions were set up to discuss topics such as Latin America, Africa, Biafra, Vietnam, WRI and Social Action, pollution, etc. These commissions gave admirable statements. The 1970 Council meeting in Belgium discussed the question of development. The International celebrated the Gandhi Centenary year by organising two seminars jointly with the World Council of Peace, one in Budapest and the other in London. One of these Seminars was on the problem of development.

At one stage, in early 1970, both the Executive and the Council felt that sending *emissary* to the third world might open their doors to the WRI. Unfortunately, for some reason or other this idea too did not materialise. The Lübeck meeting of the Council in 1972 recorded: 'Because of practical difficulties Vo Van Ai's tour of South East Asia had to be cancelled.' Again in 1974, the Council discussed *Programme Development* in the Latin American, African and Asian Countries and made an impressive list of recommendations. But none of the decisions could be implemented. The minutes of the Natoye Council meeting in 1977 expressed its concern about

Human Rights in Latin America particularly in regard to the arrest of Adolfo Esquivel of Servicio, a nonviolent co-ordinating body for Latin America set up in 1973. The extended Council meeting in London in 1978 heard about the post-Emergency situation in India, but there was hardly any discussion about the WRI's role in such situations.

In short, the International has not succeeded in reaching the *third world*. But it is encouraging that some kind of discussion and in some degree action goes on on individual levels and in informal groups in which a few WRI members on the Council keep it – the Council – conscious about the issue.

### **Hang ups and Limitations**

What are the stumbling blocks and limitations within the WRI which make it irrelevant for the people of Asian and African countries, in spite of all the good intentions and sincere efforts it has been making for so many years.

It is one thing to be able to grasp the real issue, to get rid of hang-ups, and be prepared to build working relationships with the spirit of togetherness. Unfortunately some facts of history make it extremely hard, if not impossible, for the Western world to understand the peoples of Africa, Asia and the non-European races; and for these people to relate to the Euro-American world. It seems that some of the reasons are based on the cultural and philosophical differences between them, and their colonial experience of over three centuries.

Apart from the above factors there are some practical hurdles which add to the problem. For instance, the physical distances between the WRI office and the countries of the third world, and the tiny budget on which the WRI operates. Whatever may be the causes, the leadership of the Movement gives only these two reasons to explain their inability to reach the people of those regions. However, a close look into the problem will show that both these difficulties are not insurmountable.

Take for instance the example of the project Operation Omega. It was not easy to raise funds for the project, but eventually there was ample of it donated by people who had never given anything in the past for such projects. It was possible for the simple reason that the people who were involved in it were passionately concerned about the brutal invasion the Pakistan regime had committed on the people of Bangla Desh. On the other hand the organisers of the project would have in any case gone on with some imaginative action even if so much money had not been found.

Isn't it a fact that when money is considered as the major force behind actions by organisations, which have no direct or indirect support from the establishment or other centralised bodies, they fail to act, or their actions remain limited in scope. To put it differently, if an organisation is committed to action it will either succeed in finding the resources or will manage to evolve decentralised methods for both organising the project and for funding it.

This is not to say that limitations of funds and distances are minor factors or can be ignored while planning actions. They are real problems and must be faced, whether it is a matter of action relating to the third world or in our own back yard. Let us be reminded that the project Support Czechoslovakia involved considerable amount of expenditure, and though it was not easy, the money was found. The basic problem, therefore, is not monetary or of geographic distances. It is of analysis and policy and commitment. We should find the roots of the problem.

### **Historical factors**

The colonial experiences of both the rulers and the subject nations are much to be blamed for it. The colonial powers developed a sense of superiority on account of their material advancement in acquiring wealth and military power and skill. A similar process, though in reverse, took place among the ruled societies. They developed an inferiority complex. The superiority complex of

the white expressed itself in the form of 'we know better; we know what is wrong with the world, including you'. The subject peoples started looking at the world, including themselves, with the eyes of the white. So much so that they considered the early European scholars of the oriental philosophy and literature as greater authorities than the scholars of their own countries. Instead of getting rid of this complex the people of Asia and Africa remained victims of this psychology even after they gained political independence. It is only recently that they have started questioning some of the western concepts. In India, I know a large majority of the national and regional planners apply western theories in their programmes of development and education.

It has been observed that national and racial psychology is always reflected in the thinking of all sectors of the community. This colonial psychology has been greatly responsible for preventing the establishment of any tradition of creative dialogue between the Euro-Americans on the one side and the people of the third world on the other sides. As for the WRI, its leadership has found itself torn between the colonial hang-ups and the realisation that 'the situation in Africa was so different from that they have experienced in the countries of European culture.' At the same time the third world people have not been able to sit with white pacifists as equal partners in the endeavour to build a global movement for nonviolent social change.

#### **Philosophical factors**

In spite of the various interpretations and explanations of pacifism as a way to build a peaceful and un-exploitative society (Tolstoy, Bart de Ligt, et al), the approach and work of the WRI, until the early sixties, had been limited to anti-militarism and disarmament. Even in recent years the wider implications of pacifism have been a subject of only theoretical discussion.

In countries of Asia and Africa a large proportion of national income is spent on armaments and maintaining armed forces, yet the pacifist argument against militarism hardly concerns the masses of people or even the youth that make up their countries' military forces. Although argument in favour of disarmament makes some sense to their intellectuals, it remains very low on their list of priorities. Refusal to military service is too 'western' a concept, and in the background of mass unemployment it does not attract the youth. Naturally their only concern, even before becoming eighteen years of age, is to find a job whatever it may involve in terms of work. Moreover, service in the military is considered more prestigious than manual work. So, for the masses of people in those countries pacifist ideology is an item of luxury, which they will be able to afford only when their countries have developed like Europe and North America.

Some people of the third world rightly ask, 'what have the pacifists achieved in their own countries? Have they succeeded in reducing the size of their armies, let alone bringing an end to militarism?' The image of pacifists in their mind is that of people who enjoy the comforts of modern technology and who talk of freedom of conscience only against military service and do nothing against exploitation. In contrast to this, the argument for a nonviolent reconstruction of industry and for building an egalitarian society arouse their interests in movements which work for an alternative society.

#### **Cultural Factors**

Organising conferences, seminars, consultations etc is a typical western institution. It does not suit the traditional Asian and African way of life. Yet, it is ironical that many Asians and Africans look forward to such events. Naturally, individuals with contacts and some push in them find it the best opportunity to travel abroad. It is a great experience and makes them important in their own circles at home. But as far as building a worldwide movement concerned, participation of third world people in the WRI conferences has contributed nothing of substance. The most that has come of it is sharing information, which can be and often is available through good journalism. The same applies to the participation of Europeans and Americans in international 'events'

held in third world countries.

The sad fact is that on conceptual levels these two worlds are very different and that it is hard for them to understand each other or establish a dialogue or communication of the spirit. After a 'successful' consultation held in 1971 in Holland, a well-known Vietnamese priest said to me: 'I have been taken to hundreds of places; I have talked to thousands of people in public meetings and in private gatherings. I have spent much time with people in Europe and North America, but I am sad to say that not many people have been able to understand what I have been trying to communicate. Our languages are different and our worlds, it seems, are not the same.' I had no difficulty in believing what this extremely gentle monk told me. I know that some people in the West have also felt in the same way. I do not know its dynamics, nor do I know the answer. But I am sure that such a bridge can be built, for the crisis is the same for all women and men of the world. It is a struggle to be liberated in every sense of the word. And liberation should be the same for the Asians as it is for the English. There is so much in common in humanity that there is no need for despair. But we must find the way to act as free and equal partners in the struggle for freedom and equality. Can the following proposals become the beginning?

- 1 The WRI must not only be an anti-militarist and anti-armament movement but also be a movement for nonviolent social change.
- 2 The WRI headquarters should act as an information and action centre for human rights. There can be different people working on human rights, issues of different regions of the world – collecting information, disseminating it and encouraging action whenever and wherever it is necessary. Let us be optimistic that volunteers will be found to do this kind of work. The question should not be avoided by saying that there is already an organisation working on these issues, because the question of human rights has to be tackled in different ways by different bodies, hopefully with maximum consultation and cooperation.
- 3 A world panel of committed and experienced individuals, who can be asked / requested to go to special crisis spots for obtaining information, meeting people involved in the crisis, and possibly for acting with a third party approach on behalf of the WRI as a worldwide peace force.
- 4 WRI should have sections dealing with the question of development, energy and disarmament. Its responsibility would be to collect information/data, publish educational material based on the above, and to organise campaigns.
- 5 Every alternate Triennial Conference of the WRI should be organised in a non-European-North American region. The International should not be forced by those who may not be interested in the 'long march' or who may not have time for such *romantic* ideas.
- 6 Some actions regarding the third world should be organised in the Euro-North American centre of power. These will create a strong sense of solidarity and togetherness.
- 7 WRI should give up its structure, which is based on national Sections. Nation-state had no place in the WRI. It is now the time to change the organisational structure in such a way that nations are not longer our basic units.

Devi Prasad

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1 WRI Sonntagsberg Conference 1928

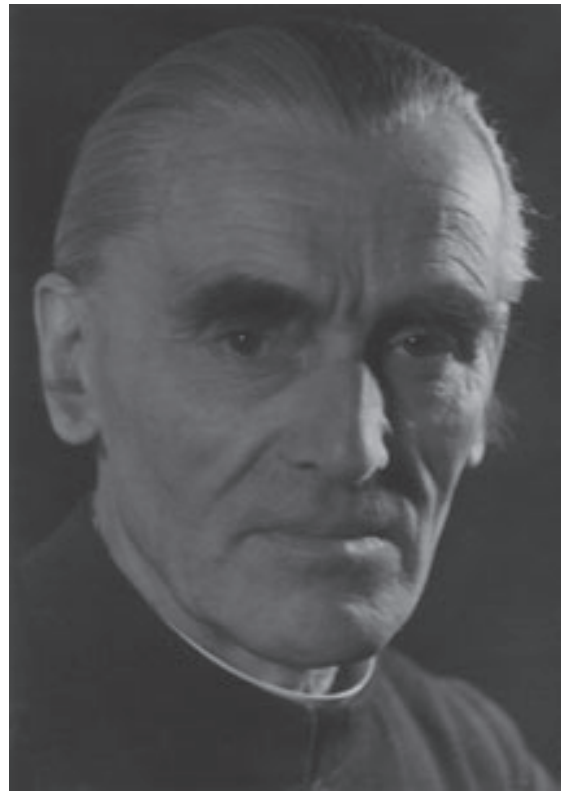


2 No More War  
Movement  
demonstration  
in Berlin  
July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1922





2 Pierre Ramus, Austrian, who died at sea while escaping from Europe



4 Professor Ude, Austrian





6 WRI held a rally in Hyde Park, London shortly before the Second World War in 1939





INTERNATIONALE DER KRIEGSDIENSTGEGNER  
L'INTERNATIONALE DES RESISTANTS CONTRE LA GUERRE  
WAR RESISTERS' INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNACIONAL DE KONTRAMILITISTOS

**BULLETIN, No. 1**

*DECLARATION:*  
*"War is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of War and to strive for the removal of all the causes of War."*

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This Bulletin will be issued from time to time as the occasion offers. It will be published in English, French, German, Russian and Esperanto, and will be sent to all affiliated groups. The object is to provide information. Subsequent issues will be devoted to more detailed news.

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