

CIVIL RESISTANCE AND NONVIOLENCE

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Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Civil Resistance: What should we look towards?
 3. Civil Resistance and Autonomy
- Glossary
Bibliography
Biographical Sketch

Summary

This chapter studies some central points in civil resistance and nonviolent themes, and their relationships. Every human being must develop a culture and action of the “ability to resist the inhuman” in his personal and social life, struggling or being in solidarity with those who are in struggle. Even if these two concepts are interdependent they are not the same. In order to resist well one must reflect about it. In the same way, civil resistance and nonviolence are very close concepts but have different forms and gradations that we try to describe here, according to the space and the time. The chapter analyzes some characteristics of civil resistance actions for offensive nonviolent strategies, especially those that increase the command and basic task of nonviolence: “disobey all inhuman orders that authority gives us”.

In the final part of the text we establish that a constructive and alternative –in many ways nonviolent- new social order is being developed very slowly in Chiapas autonomy zones, with a “duality of power”.

1. Introduction

Civil resistance and active nonviolence are two concepts which are central to the building of our species, which is even younger than we would like to accept. According to Konrad Lorenz, a German ethologist, we current humans could still consider ourselves as the *missing link* – that is, our species’ humanity is still a work in progress, a desire more than a reality. If one pays attention to the number of genocides- the highest degree of inhuman action- which have occurred in recent decades on all continents, and to the fact that a third of the world’s population does not know if it will be able to eat the next day, then perhaps this statement does not sound so far-fetched.

All beings who pride themselves as being human should have the fundamental value of the *ability to resist the inhuman*; he who is *alive*, resists. And he who resists either participates in the struggle or shows solidarity; although both of these concepts are

associated with each other and interdependent, they are not identical. It is not the same thing to participate in the struggle as it is to be supportive of it, as far as a direct relationship or one mediated by an opposing adversary. Another basic relationship between active nonviolence and civil resistance is found in different forms and gradations. Various social sectors are currently planting the need to intensify, update and practice civil resistance, from the different spaces in which organizations and individuals establish their terrain of social struggle. They do this faced with the sudden attacks of current capitalist expansion that must constantly create conditions of war, militarization and extreme violence in order to hold relevance. This resistance to inhumanity has historically allowed substantial steps to be taken toward humanity. It is thus important to carry out a *reversible* evaluation exercise of what has been done up to now, and the possible need for a greater conceptualization of the subject, as well as of creative and effective proposals of action. It is important to remember that reflection is the first weapon that an individual can count on.

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Biographical Sketch

Pietro Ameglio Patella was born in Uruguay in 1957, and became a Mexican citizen in 1997. He completed his studies in History at the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM) and a Masters in Contemporary History in the Autonomous University of Morelos (UAEM). In 1987 he was one of the founders, with base ecclesial and ecumenical communities as well as Gandhian groups, of the Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ) in México, a Latin American organization present in ten countries that works principally with poor communities to promote nonviolent culture and struggle, human rights and peace education. He is the founder and member of the Gandhian Collective “Thinking in a Loud Voice” (SERPAJ-PICASO), that combines nonviolent direct action and research with data bases about social conflicts and militarization processes in México (developed by Dr. Juan Carlos Marín of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentine). He is also founder of the alternative peace education school and workshop “Walking Together: Father Donald Hessler and Ann Choi Wolmar” (1991) in Cuernavaca, where children who live or work in the streets build community solidarity and study to create more human alternatives for their future lives.

He has had a broad range of experience in practicing active nonviolence that include direct actions in Bosnia with “Mir Sada” (1993) and in Chiapas war zones (1994-2006) with human rights denunciations, peace camps, peace belts, solidarity caravans, and other direct actions. He participated in the national ecological civil resistance struggle for saving the Casino de la Selva in Cuernavaca against Costco (2001-2004), and as a result was arrested and incarcerated as a “prisoner of conscience”. He works in peace with the autonomous territories of Chiapas, collaborating with the local indigenous educational promoters to develop a curriculum to include subjects about their cultural and artistic expressions as well as their history of social struggle to be taught within the autonomous school system. He also has been a popular educator in poor neighborhoods of Cuernavaca with adults, young people and children.

Currently he serves as Director of the Humanities Department in the Christian Brothers University of Cuernavaca, coordinating academic, cultural and social volunteer activities. He is the author of several articles on history, peace, conflict resolution and non-violence published in various books. He also often writes for local and national newspapers and reviews. In 1991 he was one of the founders and continues to write for the ecumenical and nonviolent review, “Ixtus. Spirit and culture”. He frequently gives public lectures, courses and workshops in México and other countries (Equator, Guatemala and Spain) on nonviolence, peace education and pedagogical constructivism. He is the author the book “Gandhi and civil disobedience. México today”, published in 2002.