PRINCIPLES OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION

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The theme "principles on non-violence" is a broad one. It has to be limited, and I am concerned with some very particular points. To be specific: what is the relation between the parties in the conflict under which non-violence might have the highest, and by implication the lowest, probability of success?

By "relation", then, is meant something very familiar to psychologists, social psychologists and--although less so--to sociologists; and almost not at all to political scientists for a reason which is not so hard to understand. I am thinking of how the other party is regarded: Is the other party human or non-human? In either case, friendly, neutral or unfriendly? This gives us already six combinations, and they are all of them rather important for anyone who wants seriously to discuss the efficacy of non-violence.

We start with the second dimension of friendly versus un-friendly, protagonistic versus antagonistic. This is clearly related to harmony vs disharmony of interests, which is not quite the same as cooperation vs conflict. Harmony and dis-harmony are more latent, objective characteristics that the ob-server might conclude exists. Cooperation and conflict are also patterns of behavior. When the relationship is cooperative the parties at least think that they get more out of it than by not cooperating; with the relationship conflictuous there is obvious-ly, somewhere, some competition for scarce goals. And it stands to reason that under these relationships the other party may be seen

a friend or a foe.   There is a mental projection of the social

situation.

But there may also be a social projection of the mental

situation: attitude may precede behavior.   The other party may

simply be seen as antagonistic; with or without reasons that a

third party might recognize as sufficiently well founded. And

the behavior, consequently, becomes hostile.

Between friends, then, gentle forms of non-violence may be

more than sufficiently persuasive.   There is a rich spectrum of

resonance to play on.   There are memories on both sides of coop-

eration and the fruits of cooperation.   Partly wounded relation-

ships may easily be healed.

Between foes non-violence could also work, although certain-

ly with more difficulty.   More has to be done to evoke in the

spirits of either side images of a cooperative future.   Action,

even very direct   action, of non-cooperation and civil dis-

obedience, may be needed in order to make very clear which

structural relations are absolutely intolerable.   Positive and

negative action have to be combined.   However, we have from

history so many examples of how this can work effectively that

we know the question "does non-violence work" is not only mean-

ingful, but can be answered affirmatively--in many cases.

The difficulty arises when the other dimension indicated at the very beginning is picked up and explored: human vs non-human. The whole theory of non-violence is based on the idea of recognizing the human being in the Other, appealing to that human being not only for compassion with one's own plight, but also for self-interest in a better future, to be enjoyed together. But what if a process of dehumanization has taken place, already ruling out the Other as a partner?

Let us first note how insufficient the old instrument of the social scientist in this connection, the concept of "social distance" appears to be. The concept makes no distinction between the element of hostility and the element of dehumanization. The classical Bogardus Scale, characteristically developed in Lebanon measures how closely one can imagine to relate to somebody else, up to and including marriage. But at high levels of social distance the scale puts together what conceptually certainly should be kept apart: the enemy and the non-person.

The conditions for dehumanization, and implicitly also for rehumanization, are different from the sociological and psychological conditions underlying antagonistic relations. An enemy may still be fully recognized as a human being, only as an evil one, even dangerous. The conditions for dehumanization are probably more found in religion and history.

Some religions unite, others divide. Some religions fill all human beings with "that of God", besoul them and even see humans as a part of nature which is also besouled; other religions do just the opposite. They may start by separating humans from nature, defining man as a chosen species. A next step would be to define males as the chosen gender. Then comes the definition of certain nations as the Chosen People. Next step might be the definition of the believers, meaning the true believers, as chosen persons. On top of this there may even be some professions (such as the religious professions linked to religious institutions, the military and business men) as chosen professions. And in the wake of these differential distributions of godliness, which then gives the true meaning to being human, would follow ecocide, patriarchy, nationalism, cruelty to non-believers and legitimate exercise of all kinds of direct and structural violence associated with church, military and economy.

The basic point here is that when somebody is chosen somebody else is unchosen. And from that there is but a short step to the idea that those who are unchosen by God may be chosen by somebody else, by Satan. At that point the process is probably completed: the Other is deprived of personhood and hence a possible object of any amount of cruelty. They are simply not seen as human beings, in some cases not even as vermin--simply not seen at all. And in still other cases as the instruments of Satan.

Another source of dehumanization may be history, and particularly dramatic history, history of the type that inflicts traumas on others. That people inflicting traumas on others are seen as non-human goes without saying; the victims may also need this in order to express and explain their own calamity. But this also holds the other way: the victims may be seen as non-human by those inflicting the traumas in order to justify their own action, and for fear of a counter-trauma, revenge. "These people are very dangerous, one day they may come back and do the same to me as I did to them".

And, if in addition they are seen as antagonistic in the way mentioned above the stage is certainly set for a rather bad relationship. One example of that was the Vietnam War. Or--was it really the Vietnam War? Or, was it between Washington, D.C. and the "Vietcong", the "gooks", "Charlie"? Over a tremendous social distance? And if so, how come that the war ever ended?

2. Dehumanization and the Theory and Practice on Non-Violence

Have a look at the following from the Pentagon Papers (as

published by the New York Times), commissioned in 1967 by Robert

McNamara, completed in 1968 and revealed to the world in that

very courageous act by Daniel Ellsberg in 1971:

> After Tet offensive in February 1968, Clifford,
> new Secretary-designate convenes high-level group
> to draft policy recommendation, and notes that
> further U.S. escalation will make it
>
> "difficult to convince critics that we are not
> simply destroying South Vietnam in order to
> 'save' it....This growing disaffection is accompan-
> ied, as it certainly will be, by increased de-
> fiance of the draft and growing unrest in cities
> because of the belief that we are neglecting domes-
> tic problems, runs great risks of provoking a
> domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions." (p. 601)

McNamara (Secretary of Defense)/McNaughton (Assistant Secretary

of Defense) recommendations of May 1967:

> "A feeling is widely and strongly held that 'the
> Establishment' is out of its mind....Related to
> this feeling is the increased polarization that
> is taking place in the United States with seeds
> of the worst split in our people in more than a
> century." (p. 535)
>
> And then a joint paper argues against reinforcements
> "emphasizing the increasing popular discontent
> with the war among the American public." (p. 537)

The question to be explored is one which will occupy historians

for a long time to come: what made Washington, the center of

one of the most aggressive war machines in this century, finally

decide to withdraw from the killing in Vietnam, and Indo-China

in general?

Several answers can be produced. According to rational
calculus wars have to be evaluated using cost-benefit analysis.
The benefit, to impose the will of Washington on Vietnam, proved
to be elusive. But that does not mean that the war was called
off simply because Washington did not obtain what it wanted, in
other words lost the war in that particular sense. There could
be very many other reasons for continuing the war. Thus, there
could be "light at the end of the tunnel": the war might be "won"
next year, the year thereafter and so on. More importantly: to
pull out meant defeat, capitulation--a nation with stature of the
United States of America does not submit to others; others submit,
unconditionally, to the US. Not only non-benefit, but unacceptable costs.

But then there were other costs. There were costs to the
enemy, the Vietnamese North and South--and it is telling evidence of the
level of US   dehumanization of the Vietnamese that it is not
very clear how many of them were killed, not necessarily directly
by the Americans, but indirectly, in conjunction with US partici-
pation in the war. Two million may be a fair estimate. Maybe
one million were killed before that in conjunction with the
French participation; and before that again two million Vietna-
mese starved to death by the cruel French effort to reconquer
Indo-China as a colony after the Vietnamese had liberated the
country from Japan.only to see the British take over South Viet-
nam and the Chinese (Chang Kai-shek) do the same with North
Vietnam. The suffering of the Vietnamese were of holocaust pro-
portions. The ability to identify with the Vietnamese in the

west, including the western media, had been practically speaking
nil. Those who argued against the war argued more against
Washington than in favor of Vietnamese people, of hatred more than
compassion.

As a matter of fact, I would argue that if 20 million
Vietnamese had been killed the cost-benefit equation would have
looked almost exactly the same. That equation was simply in-
sensitive to Vietnamese suffering. To those who find that re-
mark cynical let me retort that I did not detect any particular
change in Washington attitude when that number leapt, by a factor
of 10, from 200 thousand to 2 million, or when it jumped from
20 thousand to 200 thousand, or from 2 thousand to 20 thousand.
Why should suddenly moral sensitivity play a role when no such
responsiveness had been detected at earlier stages?

The next argument would be, of course, that even if
Washington was not sensitive to the killing on the other side
it was sensitive to the killing of its own soldiers, the famous
58 thousand immortalized on the black wall in Washington, D.C.
Again the same argument can be made: where is the break-off
point? These are mainly young, working class boys, 25% of them
black. Everybody higher up in society, right wing, left wing or
in the middle, hawks, doves or whatever, had managed deferment
one way or the other. But no single son of any major US
politician in the Legislative or Executive branches was killed
during the war. There was no direct, immediate, unbearable pain

launched straight in the heart and the brain of the war machine.
In short, I would argue that Washington would be willing to take
more of that provided the suffering involved could be displaced
downwards in U.S. society, and outwards, away from Washington.

Let us then go to the third level as indicated by the quotes
above. We hear the pattern of argumentation: it is a nation
divided against itself. How true! And the key sentence is, of
course, "the increased polarization that is taking place in the
United States with seeds of the worst split in our people in more than
a century". In more than a century: the Civil War had ended
102 years before. The war was not mainly over slavery, it was
over the word "united" in USA. The specter of a USA so seriously
divided that it is no longer governable from its very center was
haunting the decision makers, and I think the argument can be made,
and will be increasingly made, that this is what ultimately lead
to the withdrawal from Vietnam and the first resounding defeat of
the USA in its short history.

The acts and facts referred to in the brief quotes are that
of resistance, all of it nonviolent. Against Washington, D.C. was
posited CD, civil disobedience--with possibilities of massive
desertion, tax refusal, marches on Washington, perhaps millions
and millions of people posing a real threat to the capability of
the police forces to contain the demonstration. One million
people can be contained; 20 million not when they are all over and
start filling Pennsylvania Avenue,   circling the Capitol it-

self. People's power, in other words.

So what I am arguing is simply this: the end to the Vietnam
War was brought about to a large extent by nonviolence, but not
by the Vietnamese people although the self-immolation of Buddhist
monks in the pagodas must have played some role. It was brought
about by people closer to Washington, their own people, with the
credible threat of making the country ungovernable. Maybe it
could be argued that Washington erred in its judgment of how
seriously the house was divided against itself; if it erred
we might perhaps argue that it erred, for once, in the right
direction: the direction of something peaceful. Maybe there
was not that much of a threat, that the US population was more
civil than disobedient to put it that way. But it worked.

However, regardless of how that may be, the argument now to
be made is as follows. Nonviolence works, but not unconditionally.
It works better the shorter the social distance. More particular-
ly, when the other party has been successfully dehumanized in the
mind of the oppressor civil disobedience may only be seen as queer,
strange behavior, uncivilized rather than civil in its disobedience,
something to be expected from uneducated savages, in humans
and whatnot. It is when your own start reacting the same way,
sending a forceful signal that we are not tolerating this any
longer, that cords of responsiveness are being touched. Non-

violence in general, and civil disobedience in particular, is supposedto work by "stirring sluggish consciousness" (Gandhi), by making the oppressor aware of the amount of suffering he has brought upon the oppressed. But if the oppressed are seen as dangerous, as capable of inflicting suffering on oneself this no longer works; if in addition they are dehumanized as "Asiatics" who value life less than westerners and consequently suffer less when they are deprived of their sons, brothers and fathers in battle the situation becomes even worse. There is little or no resonance since there is no common humanity. "In the longer run" that humanity might be evoked. But unbearable, unbelievable, unfathomable suffering of European Jews evidently did not have that effect on the Nazis, and those six million victims who did not defend themselves violently, nor nonviolently for that matter, but certainly were exposed to the most horrendous suffering, constitute a "long-run" more than long enough.

Conclusion: it is not obvious that the nonviolence against an oppressor is primarily the task of those oppressed. They certainly have not only the right but also in a sense a duty to resist. But if their resistance is an invitation to even more brutal oppression the question can very legitimately be asked: what are the alternatives? One answer is very well known: violent instead of nonviolent resistance from below. That answer is unsatisfactory to the believer in nonviolence. Hence, a much better answer is the one that I am leading up to in this paper:

nonviolence, to destroy the oppressive structure, but from others than the victims themselves; _for_ them, _on behalf of_ them, partly also _of_ them, but not primarily by them.

If there is some truth to the proposition that Washington lost the war against Vietnam not in the streets of Vietnamese cities or their jungles but in the streets of the US, then we have a general key to the question: who, then, shall fight nonviolently? Those whose active or passive cooperation with the oppressor is needed for the oppressor to oppress. And/or: those who are sufficiently close to the oppressor, still seen as human beings by them, to touch the human nerve in them, if not in sympathy with the victims at least in response to the demands put upon them by the intervening/interceding group.

Let us take that argument and try it out on some famous conflict situations, many of them known from the history of non-violent struggle in this century, some of them from the history of the future.

Let us start with the Gandhian struggle in India. It is often argued that Gandhi had such a humane, civilized antagonist, the British. Not at all. The suffering the British had brought upon untold millions in India through their economic policies, literally destroying the handicraft tradition of the country in order to be able to market their own textiles, is precisely that:

untold. That suffering did not stir any sluggish consciences although there are traces in the parliamentary reports. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the general standards of living in India and England were about equal, from top to bottom-- meaning low at the bottom in both places. One hundred years later the level of misery had increased considerably in India, not in England. Some of the British oppression was direct, some of it was indirect. In either case it was ruthless against resistance from below, and it is probably rather safe to say that the de-humanization of the Indian masses in the mind of the British had come extremely far.

But between those masses and the British oppressors there were several layers, two of them particularly important. One was, of course, the layer of which Gandhi was one outstanding example: educated, urbane, talking English better than the oppressors (who were often fairly vulgar types) with a history of what the British would recognize as "civilization", at least three times as long as what the Britains could muster. Their color was wrong, their manners were strange. But they were un-deniably part of the human species as seen from London.

And then there was the next layer closer to the British rulers: the opposition inside Britain itself, Christian, labor party, perhaps women more than men. One might even talk of a continuum of nonviolent opposition to the British raj: from the silent suffering of the millions uncounted, unreported by the

logic of western capitalism and imperialism, blind to structural
violence, via various layers of Indian "public opinion"
into British "public opinion", ultimately touching the hearts and
the brains of the solid, hardened nucleus of British imperialism.
All of this happened, needless to say, in a context where violence
was also around the corner. Starting with the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857,
very clearly expressed in the Indian National Army (INA), related
to Japanese war efforts, and with the clear threat of guerilla
action all over the country one could argue that nonviolence gave
the British an idiom in which they could surrender with honors.
They could celebrate their own humanity in the process instead of being
faced with the verdict of a merciless history that would not only
count their killings if they had reacted more violently, but
also their inhumanity. The British managed to come out of it
relatively clean, thanks to Gandhi and his civil disobedience, and
thanks to the British who fought the same struggle inside Britain
herself, on behalf of India.

In no way does this kind of theory detract from the signifi-
cance of nonviolence. What the theory does is to put nonviolence
in a structural and historical context, in other words to try to
make it more realistic. There is an implicit critique of the
Gandhian assertion that nonviolence can bridge any gap in social
distance, in dehumanization. However true the theory may be in the
long run, a better theory is needed capable also of handling the
problem of extreme oppression in the shorter run.

But at this point it may be objected: for sure, that would not work against the Nazis in Germany! The interesting point is that it did; there are empirical facts demonstrating this--taking the floor out of this pattern of argumentation. I am thinking, of course, of the famous incident February 1943 when the German wives of German Jews who had been arrested, as the last to suffer their fate, in Germany gathered outside Gestapo headquarters shouting, nonviolently, to get their husbands out--and they were released! (The clever of them then went into hiding, the less clever thought they were safe and went back to their jobs and after that Gestapo did not repeat the same mistake of arresting all at the same time but took one after the other--to their fate.)

Would it have mattered to the Nazis if those Jews had exercised the most skillful gandhian nonviolence after they had been arrested? Hardly. The social and personal alienation had gone too far. Much more would be needed to bridge that spasm.   But there was still responsiveness to those German, here meaning Aryan, wives, just as there had been responsiveness to the German Christians who had pronounced themselves clearly and acted against the euthanasia Program. In other words, over a smaller gap in social distance, with less dehumanization, nonviolence worked--even a simple, primitive one measured by Gandhian standards.

What about South Africa, to engage in the history of the future? What about those Chosen People down there, the Boers who

since 1652 have regarded themselves as the outpost of civiliza-
tion on the black continent, today conveniently transforming their
stand from being in favor of the white race to being against
communism? How would they react to a black march on Johannesburg,with
thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions? I am afraid of the
answer: with machine guns, not with tear gas. Sooner or later
this may lead to the ultimate in violence. One highly credible
scenario has been   put forward by William Clark in his book
Cataclysm, an atomic warhead smuggled into the country, exploding
down there, in the mines, under Johannesburg incidentally--making
the mines unusable and Johannesburg uninhabitable.

But according to the theory indicated above there is another
answer: nonviolence by the whites. I am thinking, of course, of
the English speaking whites, so called Liberals--and the moderates
among the Afrikaans speaking whites. Is it not very convenient
for them to accept the partly Marxist,but not only Marxist,dictum
that the liberation of the working class, the underdog, the black
man has to be the task of the working class, the underdog the
black man and woman themselves? Does that not detach them/us
from the cycle of social responsibility by putting us outside as
objective spectators, waiting for the battle to take place? If
the leadership in that essentially fascist structure is more re-
sponsive to whites than to blacks, and most responsive to the
whites close to them, is it then not simply the moral duty, to the
court of humanity in history, for those people to act rather than

to demand of the blacks that they shall prostrate themselves, lay

down their bodies to absorb the bullets of the South African bullies?

Could they not have some of the courage of those German wives?

The risks are considerably lower since the harshest reprisals would

probably not be meted out against them. There are some human costs

involved since they are inhabitants of the same house they will be

divided against themselves, not the people living in the basement

or in the shacks surrounding that house. For the white person to

turn against his white brother and sister is also to turn against

himself; for the black person the social risks are considerably

higher, but the internal human risks much lower.

And exactly the same argument can be made in connection with

another structure left behind by the British of exactly the

same kind: the Israeli/Palestinian controversy in post-1967 Israel,

but actually also for the Israel inside the Green Line. In

other words, the argument made here goes beyond the debate of whether

the Palestinians should fight for the right to their own homeland,

holy or not, violently or nonviolently. The stand taken here is that

nonviolence is the ethically correct position and in addition the

one most likely to bring about what is wanted and needed: libera-

tion. The issue brought up here is who shall fight nonviolently.

And the point made is "not only the Palestinians, also the Israelis"--

nd everybody else for that matter, against the hard nucleus of

those in favor of occupying somebody else's land, a nucleus

particularly located in Jerusalem/Tel Aviv and Washington/New York.

The point made can probably be strengthened by bringing up some more examples. And the examples always have the same structure, increasing responsiveness with decreasing social distance.

Thus, look at the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Montgomery, Alabama, 1956. Rosa Parks refuses to move from the seat in the "white section" on the bus. She is arrested, and the movement associated with the name of Martin Luther King, Jr. gets off the ground. It is legitimized by the Supreme Court decision of desegregation "with all deliberate speed" of May 17, 1954, two years before, a decision concerning the school system. What becomes evident is that there is nothing automatic in this process at all: there are so many counties in the southern states; there are so many social functions to be desegrated, from schools, buses via lunch counters to anything. This is not a play of dominoes: if one falls the others do not necessarily follow suit.

And yet there is no doubt that substantial gains were made in the 30 years to follow. There was a nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, and there is some relation between the two although it is not quite obvious exactly where and how those arrows indi- cating causal flows in a diagram of structures and processes would be drawn in historical hindsight.

My guess, guided by the hypothesis explored above, would be that white supremacists, most of them in the southern states, some of them in Washington and not necessarily from the South, were

able to tolerate a considerable amount of unviolent and nonviolent
suffering born by the black population. What made them act, inter-
vene, intercede on behalf of the black and in their favor was
probably first of all that the movement was not limited to blacks.
Whites participated and brought the black peoples' condition
closer to the white hearts, or at least their brains (including
the fears they had) and second, that the movement threatened to
spread beyond the southern states, into Washington, D.C. itself.
It is like classical physical theory: for something to move some-
thing there has to be proximity in space and time. If nothing
physical can be seen there has at least to be a field through
which energy is communicated. Black people suffering nonviolently,
making their plight. evident, touchable, speakable, would not be
enough. Nonviolence has to be communicated from group to group
until it reaches the nucleus of the structure challenged through
civil disobedience. And the field through which this operates
is not spatial distance but social distance; via social proximity
this age-old principle in physical theory can be translated into
social dynamics.

Age-old principle--but that principle is now breaking down!
In (very) modern physics cause-effect relations are postulated
across enormous gaps in space, and yet there is no intermediate
"medium" through which the causal "flow" passes. Maybe this is
what Gandhi believed in; maybe in that sense he is much more
modern than what is postulated in these pages. But belief is one
thing, what works is another.

However that may be, let us turn to what happened February 1986 in Manila, the Philippines, for another example. That the Philippine bourgeoise has an almost endless capacity to tolerate the suffering and the bottomless misery in their urban and rural slums and proletariats seems today rather well proven. I do not think there is any particular difference between the old and the new regime in that connection: after all, it was under the new regime that the police outside Malacañang Palace in Manila really started shooting and killing nonviolent demonstrators, peasants.

But there was a change in the regime. Marcos was ousted, Aquino came in--presumably on a platform more responsive to democracy and to the plight of the people. People Power was the slogan. But were they the poor in the outlying provinces, or a mix drawn from Manila? There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of those who engaged in nonviolent demonstrations and actions. And it worked: not only the Marcos forces, but also US hardliners who did not see the new opportunities with the Aquino regime (that Enrile and Ramos were part of it should have reassured them, though). The problem: the Manila bourgeoisie acted, nonviolently, in the name of the people. They win--and the flagrant injustices of Philippine society remain by and large the same.

And that leads us to the final point: the negative aspects of the theory and practice of nonviolence explored above.

3.   Conclusion: an evaluation

I think the argument can be made that third party inter-
vention from somebody closer to the oppressor can stay the hand
of the oppressor better than the nonviolence from the oppressed
themselves--generally speaking. Social distance/dehumanization
is a key variable. But, the question remains: is it absolutely
obvious that the end result would be in favor of the oppressed?

The reader will find on the next page a table listing all
the cases that have been explored in a symmetric manner, indica-
ting in two cases that there are two levels of intervening parties.
not only one--a four tier theory as opposed to a three tier theory.
The general theory then reads as follows: the in-between party
intercedes on behalf of the oppressed, against the oppressor.
There is an alliance born out of human sympathies/empathy with
the oppressed, strengthening the struggle of the oppressed, weaken-
ing the oppressor. And some transformation does take place.

But any social scientist would immediately ask the question
that the politically minded person already would know in his guts:
what about an alliance between the oppressor and the in-between
parties? Could it not be that the intervention is not so much on
behalf of the oppressed as on behalf of the intervening party it-
self, to save it from going down the drain together with the op-
pressor if the oppressed should really be able to rise en masse,
and turn the structure upside down? Is it really compassion with

TABLE 1.   Nonviolence, social distance and dehumanization

	Vietnam War	India Swaraj	Nazi-Germany	South Africa	Israel/ Palestine	Civil Rights	Philippines
Oppressor	Washington, D.C.	London	Gestapo, Nazis	Boss, Boers	Jerusalem	Washington, D.C.	Malacañang
In-between	US People	Other Britons	German wives of German Jews	Other South Africa Whites	Other Israelis	US Whites	Manila Bourgeoisie
	US Soldiers	Gandhi, High-caste Indians					
Oppressed	Vietnamese People	Indian poor Sudra, pariah	German Jews	S. Africa Blacks	Palestinians	US Blacks	Philippino poor, proletariat

the oppressed or deep compassion with themselves that is the
driving force? The whites in the US even risking their lives
on behalf of Civil Rights for the blacks in the South are
perhaps less to be doubted. But what about the college educated
in the US in the Vietnam era saving their own lives, not only by
draft dodging, but also by contributing to ending the war? Did
they really feel any compassion for the two million Vietnamese
killed? Is there any particular evidence in what they did after-
wards to demonstrate that this was the case? Or, did they trans-
form the conflict from being between Washington and the Vietnamese
people to an intra-American conflict, depicted in two not so different
ways in the otherwise different movies Rambo and Platoon? A
movie to the right and a movie to the left, but very similar in
the glaring, telling absence of the Vietnamese!

So this is where Marxist theory enters again: the libera-
tion of the working class will have to be the task of the working
class. However much that may serve as an excuse for the Marxist
intellectual to step back, waiting discreetly until the revolu-
tion is over, then to return on the scene as Minister of Planning--
there is also some truth in it. The fruits of the struggle may
be picked by the intervening group, not by those who need them
most even though the social transformation that follows in the
wake of the struggle also to some extent benefits them.

Gandhi must have had something of the same in mind when he
so much insisted on total identification, not only attitudinal

but also behavioral, to the point of immersion in and with the oppressed, as a condition for struggle "on their behalf". Nobody shall come from the outside saying "you have an interesting conflict here, why don't you let me solve it for you!" A conflict is something too important to have somebody else take it away for their own enrichment. Only through participation is the experience gained, and the right earned to partake of a transformed social order. If somebody else does it, and even at risk to themselves, one day they will claim that right.

However, the social distance may be too much; the dehumanization process has come too far. Hence, the long term approach would be struggle against the sources of dehumanization, bridging gaps within and between societies. And the short term approach would be to mobilize the in-between groups, have them act out their political conscience and consciousness on behalf of those too far down and away to have an effective voice. And yet: to have human ties solidify that political cooperation.

And from that we could continue. Whose task   to stay Washington's ruthless aggression in Nicaragua? Above all the US people, in massive demonstrations, thousands, hundreds of thousands of students for instance, particularly from elite universities of "excellence"--descending on Washington rather than on their junior papers and senior theses. That they do not do so speak loudly of the moral caliber of this generation.

And who should stay Moscow's ruthless land in Afghanistan? Above all the Soviet people, like the US people misled about the true nature of   aggression but at least counting the dead in their own families, not among foreign mercenaries doing the job for them. That they do not do so speaks loudly about the quality of their system.

So--there is some distance to go. In the meantime the search has to be on for the better understanding of the conditions for nonviolence to work.