

# NONVIOLENCE

# *Today*

This magazine  
is printed on  
recycled paper

- **Jabiluka**
- **Plowshares in Scotland**

- **Theory**
- **Jabiluka Video**

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## Editorial Collective

We hope *Nonviolence Today* will promote nonviolence in a broad sense. It is strictly nonprofit and all editors donate their time and use of personal resources. The editors for this issue were Jan, Janelle and David. We hope you will continue to support our efforts to promote the understanding and practice of nonviolence.

# The Blockade that was Blocked: A Critique of the Jabiluka Blockade

I write this critique of the Jabiluka Blockade from jail, which is both a privileged perspective and limited in terms of research resources. I write in a spirit of action/reflection, hopefully encouraging a movement for peace and justice that celebrates free speech and open debate. I wish to state that my experience (from June 25 to August 9) of the grassroots blockade was largely positive – a lot of good people and good will gathered. I also wish to celebrate the good people who travelled a lot of miles to carry out heroic acts of nonviolent direct action in a hostile political and legal environment.

From as early as the shooting of the Bradbury film on Jabiluka and the internal struggle that plagued its production, an authoritarian leadership was imposed on this blockade. Where this authoritarianism springs from – people's political training, fears (real or imaginary), the paternalism that permeates Northern Territory (NT) institutions – is anybody's guess. The key mechanism of control would be that the blockade of this mine could only be fought within the parameters of it being a solely an "indigenous issue." This was a political struggle within the production of the film, the most significant marketing tool for the blockade. It is a struggle that left its own legacy of alienation. The Gundjehmi Corporation were key to the control of the blockade. The Gundjehmi position was against mobilizing equally on questions of environment and peace against the Jabiluka uranium mine. It was a choice against maximizing opposition and nonviolent direct action against the mine. It was a choice for centralized control and power.

The "blockade illusion" that was then conjured – was that the Mirrar were blocking the mine and that we had been invited to join and support them. This

was basically untrue, the Mirrar weren't intending to blockade or even appear en masse at the blockade. They had given their permission to the Gundjehmi Corporation to initiate legal action against the Jabiluka mine and call others to blockade. The Mirrar were a lot less present to the blockade than the Kookatha had been at Roxby Downs in 1984. There was very little involvement or attendance by Aboriginal people at the Jabiluka blockade. The "blockade illusion" was basically to support the authoritarian control of the Gundjehmi Corporation; control mechanisms ranging from white guilt and sycophancy to expulsion. This authoritarian praxis was also expressed in a control and censorship over any media emanating from the blockade. This was later to mutate into delusions that anti-Jabiluka groups elsewhere (Sydney, Melbourne, etc.) would have to apply for permission from Gundjehmi Corporation in Jabiru before carrying out any anti-ERA/anti-Jabiluka protests in Australia. This megalomania has little to do with indigenous

culture and has a lot to do with the culture of the authoritarian left.

The Gundjehmi Corporation is based in Jabiru, seven kilometres from the blockade camp. Near it was a blockade office staffed by non-indigenous volunteers with little experience in direct action campaigns. Both the staff of Gundjehmi and the blockade office were deeply ambiguous about nonviolent direct action (NvDA). They lacked any explicit nonviolent philosophy or praxis. They didn't seem to value NvDA beyond the initial mainstream media time it bought on any given night. Most of these folks weren't willing to blockade and risk arrest themselves. As events progressed/regressed these folks began to call the shots on direct action. Instead of the office and media collective servicing the direct action, it was the tail wagging the dog. To get permission from (in real terms one particular person in) Gundjehmi to do NvDA one had to go through this inner circle elite at the blockade office (and

whatever spin they chose to put on your proposal). This was further complicated as the key Gundjehmi authority was absent overseas and interstate during the peak of the blockade.

The treatment of the rank and file blockaders as disposable cannon fodder by these two authorities was apparent from as early as the legal briefing at the camp induction. People (thousands of miles from home) were informed, *“Once arrested, you’re on your own!”* The blockade leadership made no attempt to prioritize or generate a praxis of post-arrest solidarity – very few of them appeared at the watch-house or courts in solidarity with rank and file blockaders.

I saw a disaster of future demoralization looming. An experience for the hundreds of young people of a day of euphoric communal resistance, followed by months of privatized trauma back at home as they faced the consequences and a hostile NT state alone. Such negligence risked burning out a new generation of young activists. A few of us began to initiate a culture of post-arrest solidarity – a ritual of *“Presenté”* (calling out the names of blockaders in custody), letters of support to the imprisoned, solidarity vigils, preparation for jail workshops, web sites, transportation back from arrests, deliverance/welcoming back rituals on return to camp, and longer term networking when people returned home with a Darwin court date looming. Other resistance initiatives springing from camp included a continual morning presence at the main entrance (fifteen kilometres away), small group civil disobedience, bail resistance and the two mass arrests in the first half of July.

These mass arrests (98 and 118) significantly stretched the resources of the NT state in terms of police resources, watch-house/jail space, court facilities. The NT state was being put on the ropes by the nonviolent direct action of the blockade.

For no good reason, the second mass arrest was delayed day after day for five days, risking dissipation, compromising security, displaying a lack of respect for the risks people were taking and the tight schedules some resisters were operating

under. The sole Gundjehmi authority would not answer her mobile phone during this period. The action finally went ahead with a mass occupation of the mines work compound and disruption of work on the mine site.

It was around this time that a green bureaucrat (out of The Wilderness Society stables) returned to camp. He had been present at the setting up of camp and had not participated in blockading/ direct action. He had been integral in organizing a major media spectacle (between the two mass arrests) involving high-profile celebrities and 500 of us as backdrop extras. It was a great photo opportunity, but the unwillingness of these celebrities to take a simple trespass arrest must have posed the question to the great unwashed, *“If these well-resourced individuals can’t afford to take a bust, what am I doing here?”* As soon as the Green bureaucrat arrived he started beating the fear drum about how ERA would use the blockade’s militancy to conjure the threat of eco-terrorism. I recall the night 118 of our best people were in the Jabiru police station (designed to house fifteen). This guy getting up at the campfire and attempting to generate hysteria amongst freshly arrived blockaders. I tried to counter him by pointing out that we were beginning to be treated the way Aborigines were by the NT state – accusations of being *“dirty, anti-social and dangerous.”* No surprises there!

Over the following days this guy was able to quickly insert himself into the inner circle elite of the Jabiru blockade office scene – and began making appearances as the *“media spokesman,” “police liaison honcho,”* etc. I believe this guy had the political agenda of killing off the blockade/direct action component and delivering the movement to the ALP. No surprises there either, come to think of it! He was able to gain influence with Gundjehmi and within days actions in the mine’s compound were banned and a complete sell out to the police was clinched. A police protocol was announced that totally surrendered the only tactical advantage the blockade had in its nonviolent battle with the NT state and ERA – the element of surprise. Gundjehmi would now inform the police when

and where civil disobedience would take place and how many police would be needed.

In the following week, the Green bureaucrat presided over a meeting where the entire camp was gathered, children were banned, big sticks were produced by Gundjehmi members and people were threatened with a beating if they didn’t do what they were told (in terms of political practice, social interaction and dress code). The sycophants swooned *“Isn’t it wonderful to be treated as equals by indigenous people!”* These white Australians had gone from mainstream race hatred to sycophantic masochism, totally missing the point of self-respect and mutual respect. Weird stuff indeed – most felt decidedly uncomfortable, many felt happy they were returning home, quite a few jumped ship to Darwin and safer surrounds.

Meanwhile the concepts of blockade/blockading the mine/nonviolent resistance was dead in the dust. On Hiroshima Day, a street theatre was performed at the entry to the Jabiluka mine and a die-in undertaken. During the performance, mining equipment trying to gain access to the mine arrived. Those who were blocking the entrance who weren’t willing to risk arrest moved. Others willing to risk arrest blocking a uranium mine on Hiroshima Day refused to move. They were ordered to move by movement bureaucrats saying the Mirrar wanted them to move. Whether the Mirrar knew they were even there is highly questionable, the control card was played. The blockade was over.

There was no commitment by the leadership to a philosophy, praxis or politics of NvDA. There was no Noonkanbah-like indigenous blockade at Jabiluka uranium mine (only two of the 300 arrested were aboriginal people). Twenty to thirty of us would have come through the peace movements of the 80’s and 90’s (anti-nuclear war/ships/bases, Gulf War opposition and East Timor solidarity). The bulk of those who blockaded and were arrested were young environmentalists. Why Gundjehmi didn’t invest their energies and resources into mobilizing indigenous people to blockade is hard to know.

(Maybe the opposition to the mine wasn't that strong, certainly not evident at the Oenpeli Open Day where ERA propaganda and helicopter rides abounded and anti-uranium T-shirts and conversations were banned! Maybe the locals feel defeated as they did over the Ranger uranium mine in the '70's by a powerful conspiracy of ERA, Northern Land Council bureaucrats and the NT and Federal governments. Fair enough!). Gundjehmi had no real commitment to a nonviolent blockade of the mine. They had been impressed with the media attention, currency and credibility that NvDA (or even the promise of it) would buy. That's about as far as it went!

As someone who has been imprisoned for solidarity actions with aboriginal people in '78, '82, '84, '88 ... as someone who has witnessed many movements co-opted and killed by bureaucrats (ALP, union, green, peace, indigenous, whatever) ... as someone who has organized with Aborigines, Native Americans, Maori, and east Timorese over twenty years ... as someone who has enough self respect and security in their own cultural identity... the only course of action was to respectfully disobey Gundjehmi, Green bureaucrats, ERA and the NT police.

There were many agendas at the Blockade – careerists, holidaymakers, resisters, etc. Treena Lenthall's and my objective was to carry out an act of nonviolent

disarmament of uranium mining equipment and be in solidarity with others nonviolently resisting the mine. I gave three open workshops on "ploughshares" to 150-200 people at the camp that was celebrated by all who attended, and was reported on in "The Bulletin." We originally had permission from Gundjehmi – which was pulled after the Green bureaucrat gained influence. (He told us all we should go home, connect with middle Australia, join and fund raise for ACF and TWS – to pay the wages of folks like him I guess. Thanks, but no thanks!) At no point was their objection to our action on the basis of Mirrar spirituality and culture.

We carried out an act of nonviolent disarmament at Jabiluka uranium mine on the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki (August 9, 1998). In the early hours of that morning we were able to disable a huge excavator, we also poured human blood on the machine and named it with the victim cities of "Nagasaki," "Chernobyl," and "Missan." We then waited for over an hour on top of the machine in prayer to share the experience with ERA employees. We were arrested and have been charged with trespass and two counts of criminal damage and have since been held in Berrimah Prison.

Our written statements of explanation have been banned from camp. The media collective co-operated with ERA and the

cops to cover up the action. Members of the media collective then characterized us to the camp and others as "racist Christian fundamentalists." Sad and pathetic, just another lie on the fire.

Meanwhile, we dwell in Darwin Prison with our indigenous brothers and sisters. We face a hostile court on November 26/27. 300 brother and sister blockaders face the same courts from October to February. We ask for your solidarity and commitment to speak truth to power – however grand or petty that power may be.

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The Mirrar are 27 adults, Gundjehmi is a corporation set up with Ranger uranium royalties to represent Mirrar interests. Gundjehmi employees are not necessarily Mirrar.

An ALP presently led by "Bomber Beazley" who called out the Australian Army on peace protesters in 1989 to protect the US NSA Nurrungar base from nonviolent protest AND "Biggles" Evans who clinched the Timor Gap Treaty with Ali Alitas over champagne, blood, oil and 200,000 East Timorese dead **NVT**

# Confessions Of A Green Blockader

June 22nd - July 10th, 1998

## Background

The following story details one person's experiences at the Jabiluka Blockade in Australia's remote Northern Territory. Jabiluka Valley is adjacent to Arnhem Land, and is situated inside dual World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park. Jabiluka is the site of a shameful uranium mine currently under construction by a company called Energy Resources of Australia. This mine, backed by the current right wing coalition government, is proceeding against the wishes of the Mirrar people - the traditional land owners of the area, the bulk of the Australian public and the entire Australian environment movement. Calls from around the world to stop the project have come from authorities as diverse as the European Parliament and Greenpeace International. As an example of a green-black-white alliance the campaign to save Jabiluka has few precedents in the history of environmentalism. And as an example of white-man's blind greed in action there can be few such extreme atrocities happening in the world today.

As people worldwide are saying NO to the mine, more than a thousand people have already have chosen to put their own lives on hold and make the long journey to that remote part of Australia, in order to campaign vigorously at the site of the destruction. Those people form the Jabiluka Blockade, a camp and protest site supported by the Mirrar people that aims to slow down and stop work on the mine, and raise public consciousness to the immense environmental destruction happening at that place. This story details the dramatic 20-day experiences of a recently returned blockader. It was written with the aim of inspiring others to also now make the journey to the blockade, and become involved in the long and bitter struggle for Kakadu. (See the next article for details on the accompanying video).

## Catapulted

I admit it: I was a green, green blockader. Whilst others might have been on the fabled Franklin, or the bitter Roxby campaigns, I had never been much past the odd student-led protest, or a couple of medium-cool-anti uranium actions. Along with so many others, I had emerged from a decade of apathy and disempowerment - an era where globalisation shouted down my TV cable and my net connection, "Back off nobody- you can't make a difference!

From then on 1998 could no longer be a comfortable and relaxed place of excuses and denial. Never mind that thirty-something types like me should surely be seeking vaunted stability, an acutely balanced portfolio and globs of chunky real estate; never mind that life should be laced with a bitter-sour fighting over this week's corporate flotation or become underpinned by the all important stock market project.

Maybe in the end I had lived in my "home" state of Queensland just one day too long - observing from a situation of political lunacy the "right state" Australia had become. Unlike so many others of my ilk I had actually chosen to follow our dualistic political debacles through the ever decreasing spirals of newsprint and video sound byte. Despite that chillingly-addictive blindness encouraged by prime-time glare I could no longer sit back and watch those spitting, sad old males routinely squandering our sacred planet - laying their parochial mine fields down, abetted by the guiding darkness of putrescent right-wing politics.

In the end I simply could not sit back for one more sunny day boiling over as I was within a foaming, messy green rage, sinking within inordinate levels of disbelief, impossible degrees of sadness, and batterings of present-future shock. The down in the dirt stoush of a remote anti-uranium blockade at a place called Jabiluka felt like some essential right of citizen-

ship, a call towards a territory of emergency that simply could not be ignored. In short; I HAD to be there.

Even the advertising spam merchants had taught me at least one gem of wisdom - that you can never never know if you don't ever ever go. So I paid my \$250 fare, and booked the Jabiluka express going north.

### **Whiling The Miles Away**

Conversations on the Jabiluka charter bus considered the triple insanities of 250,000 years of radioactive waste, last-straw indigenous rights violations and the violent sabotage of our jewel-in-the-crown World Heritage listed national park. Oh and by the way we even swapped stories about life, music, drugs, police, age, sex and soapies. But again and again it was the Jabiluka issue that crammed the aisles with its potency. Here I was now surrounded by apparently almost normal people - young and older, the trendy, the weary, some childlike, others daggy, the smart, the wise, the feminine and the grumpy; but all people who could and would care, and then care enough to act. I guess it was that same passion that was enough to take me away from my comfortable university career, my comfortable artistic pursuits and my pleasant inner city rental, to a campsite we imagined to be laced with uranium dust.

### **Vibes**

I and my fellow bus-load of Melbournians, Sydneysiders, Byron Bayites, Lis-morites and Longreachevians were arriving at a "hot period" in the blockade's history. Having been in place in Kakadu for the previous four months, a base camp had been established on Mirrar land, and a core group, rarely over sixty in number, had developed and maintained a physical blockade at the entrance to the mine site some fifteen kilometres down the road.

The base camp, set just off the road to Arnhem Land, had been set up in ways that could maintain a large number of people in such a remote area both physically and spiritually. With its highly productive and ordered kitchens, meeting spaces, first aid facilities, women's space, pit toilets, showers, and ever busy

chai tent, and its drug and alcohol free environment, the camp's atmosphere was embellished by rhythmical drumming, bands of talented musicians and a range of downright good attitudes. In short we were truly heading for a five star camping and fellowship experience.

### **Us and the System**

However two weeks previously the physical blockade to the mine site had been removed by the Northern Territory's notorious TRG (Tactical Response Group), an elite and hard-nosed anti-terrorist unit being now deployed against the dogmatically peaceful protesters. Work had started on the mine lease, sacred sites had been bulldozed, convoys of trucks had got through to the site accompanied by massive police and security escorts and the protesters were being harassed daily. To add to the electric atmosphere helicopters were being deployed to monitor protesters' every move, listening devices were believed to be eavesdropping on camp discussions, and police moles were suspected in camp.

Furthermore the legal system had begun to incarcerate the peaceful protest-troops in ways entirely unfitting for the supposed "crimes" they had committed. Guilty though these ethically concerned citizens were of cherishing the earth and defending the future, the Territory's notorious mandatory sentencing laws that conferred an instant fourteen days jail for damages against property were being rejigged in front of the protesters eyes. The new argument went that delaying actions caused by protest actions were somehow equivalent to criminal property damage against the mine owners, Energy Resources Australia. Whilst clearly an outlandish claim, and the subject of an ABC TV 7.30 report special and Amnesty International scrutiny, these cases had to date yet to be run through the courts. Meanwhile peaceful protesters languished under bail conditions that confined them to Darwin whilst others wore prison issue clothing and were routinely handcuffed and kept in solitary.

So it was into this unparalleled climate of government-corporation cooperation that I arrived, to be schooled in the Jabiluka protest and civil disobedience movement.

### **Missing The Point**

Whilst police and security forces worldwide have varying reputations for ferocity in their attempts to quell peaceful demonstrations, when the issue under the spotlight is one protested from the heart as well as from the mind, history indicates clearly how people will undergo great suffering in defence of their objectives. Camp Jabiluka was to be no exception.

Hence regular buses originating in Victoria and South Australia were bringing load after load of new protesters up to Kakadu, swelling camp numbers vigorously. Starting when we arrived with a guest list of two hundred people, within a fortnight numbers at the blockade camp were toppling over the 500 mark, with wall to wall tents and convoys of vehicles packing the expansive blockade camp site.

### **Acclimatisation**

We were welcomed warmly by the old-timers and asked to choose between camping "suburbs" as diverse as Camp Crusty, Leafy Heights and Shady Acres. Inside a two hundred and fifty metres radius from the capacious central water tank, and for four dollars a day (including a free breakfast) we had a choice of camping within grassland, trees, open common or termite mound scrub.

That evening we pitched tent in the outer suburbs to the bright glow of distant controlled burning. That night we were introduced to the three dollar vegan meals which were most always excellent, served from massive containers at the camp kitchen proceeded by mandatory rituals of hand and plate washing. There's no place for the squitters in a protest camp after all. Furthermore the camp was declared a drug and alcohol free zone.

A communal campfire became the place to share experience, passion, politics and love under an immaculate starry sky and a growing moon, free from radio, television, electricity or a boozy haze. The atmosphere was one of welcoming and renewal with our new energies surging freely through the camp's open spaces.

## Induction

Every blockader was obliged to attend an immediate full day's induction process - an early introduction to the sometimes apparently endless meeting systems that governed the camp. Induction was a full day procedure where we earned our all important Mirrar Passports (our traditional owner-bestowed entitlement to protest in ways and at places agreed by the Mirrar people). We were also introduced to the idea of affinity groups, eight to fifteen people who met and talked together regularly discussing protest camp issues. In a valiant attempt to construct an anarchistic, or flat-earth style of eco-democracy spokespersons from each affinity group would then participate in the regular camp meetings which in turn through negotiated consensus fixed subsequent policy. Protest decisions were in turn ratified by the Mirrar people. God knows it was a painful procedure and spun out decision making processes into days and weeks. Nevertheless when consensus was finally reached everyone in camp had in theory had been able to have their say. It soon became clear to me that when decisions posed sometimes serious ramifications to individuals personal liberties and financial situations, this often painful inclusivity eventually led to unprecedented levels of collective solidarity.

Through the induction we also learnt about the operation of the vegan kitchen, what to do if and when you were arrested, how to keep healthy throughout all, a healthy respect for the locals (residents of neighbouring Jabiru, tourists and wildlife), the different types of protest actions possible, and so on and so forth. By the end of the day we felt dazed yet informed and overloaded yet enlightened.

## Frustration

For those of us less experienced blockaders the whole way in which these camp processes operated was truly an eye opener. Speaking as a artistic/academic campaigner for utopic eco-democracy, now I was having my chance to see such an organic society in action, and I have to tell you it often drove me insane!

It soon became apparent that a key tension existed between different members

of the camp. Simplistically there appeared to be two clear schools of thought - those who believed that the mine could be stopped by flag-waving protests which through consequent media exposure would heighten the public's opposition to the mine, and those who saw the urgency to actually slow down work by physically obstructing progress of machinery in the Jabiluka lease area and on the approach roads. Whilst these two camps were never quite reconcilable, actions were undertaken which achieved both aims at some times and at other times one of the pair. Exposing both the strengths and the weaknesses of a flat earth democracy where opinion is inclusive and consensus must be achieved, these different world-views often initiated torturous and frustrating process.

## DAGs Lock-On and Be Happy

Arguably the most impressive persons in the camp were those who aligned themselves with, or operated from within, the so called DAGs - the direct action group. The DAGs, who operated under pseudonyms could often be identified often by a generally feral appearance, with matted dread locks, darkened skin, shaved scalp parts and tattoos and their omnipresent green camouflage outfits, suitable for hiding in the bush. Drawn largely from a 20 to 25 year old bush-hardened constituency DAG members operated secretly in small teams engaging in late night huddles around candles far away from the main groups. They routinely planned one, two, three, or four day expeditions into the rugged country inside the uranium mine lease. It was not uncommon for them to disappear carrying heavy lock-on equipment, with shackles locked around wrists and ankles suited to attaching themselves to machinery. Some would fling themselves down in front of moving trucks whilst others would "lock-on" to any suitable piece of mining machinery in order to create a human brake to the process.

For me their courage in leaving themselves locked to the site of the "crime" earned my deep respect. Indeed if these apparently fearless individuals did return they were often battered, bruised or exhausted. However more often they underwent arrest in unseen and remote

circumstances where they described routine rough to overtly violent handling by the TRG forces sent in to cut them free. As an counterpoint example to an urban, disempowered youth schooled on Coke, basketball and vandalism these amazingly empowered young people fuelled their actions on a deep love of the land and a profound respect for the indigenous owners. Many professed their guiding principles as eco-feminist ideals, Deep Ecology, Gaia, Green Extremism or the uncompromising tenets of the international Earth First! movement. Tough eco-warriors though they might appear they could as easily be reduced to heartfelt tears when machinery they had fought so selflessly to retard began carving up the mother earth they battled so hard to defend.

For the uninitiated, DAGs have their own dictionary of terms - these include a tripod: being a three-pronged device made from long poles apparently too dangerous to remove with someone on top. A protesters would then sit upon that tripod in order to block a mine access road. In general a lock-on is a human body attached to an immovable object, be it truck, an old vehicle buried in the dirt, a buried concrete weight or more often a piece of machinery. Lock-ons are best made in inaccessible places such as high up under truck bodies, around axles, on the end of high cranes, or upon a ship's anchor. Such eco-campaigners act in an unashamedly peaceful manner in the declaration that, "*I am more powerful than your dozer, your drilling rig or your backhoe*" and that "*my body says you will have to remove me through force or not at all*". In short it is only the fear of killing another human that retards the proponents of environmental destruction.

Terrifyingly the police's TRG unit who dealt with lock-ons frequently intimidated their minimal respect for human safety and personal damage during the protests. A typical request quoted by one lock-on protester now facing a mandatory jail sentence for criminal damage against ERAs' profits during his two hours of peaceable connection to a bulldozer was, "*if you don't unlock yourself in the next thirty seconds I am going to break your hands*". The secretive and hence often



undocumentable nature of these events, and the subsequent lack of evidence served to compound the situation. Whereas in other states a buddy system is allowed - a person to care for the safety and health of the locked-on companion, the Northern Territory outlaws this basic health and safety practice - promising the same retribution to the buddy as for the lock-on.

### **The Rest Of Us**

Whilst DAG action was definitely for some, as a still green blockader I could not immediately bring myself to participate in such activities. So what then could the rest of us do - those of us too new, too scared, sensible, or conservative to become DAGs?

Camp meetings highlighted for me two rare strengths in the protester's ranks that helped me solve this question. The first was the amazing diversity of ideas and abilities visible within the participant's ranks, and the second was the attitude that prevailed in the camp whereby most people expressed a deep respect for each other's ideas, abilities and wishes. These twin peaks fuelled the expectation that there was no particular expectation on any individual, and that their own wishes and creativity could and would at all times be supported.

Certainly there was much to do on the levels of daily camp administration and upkeep. The camp required reliable and dedicated people to run the information tent, the welcome tent, the legal tent, the first-aid tent keep a twenty-four hour front-gate watch, assist in cooking, help in running the radio shack's vital communications network, looking after the plethora of young kids, run the creative space where banners, flags and props were created, remove the garbage, dig new pit toilets, improve and upkeep the showering facilities, feed the press through the media collective, and so forth.

Whilst I participated in many of these activities I personally felt the need to protest and blockade above all else. Hence I was able to participate in a number of the so called non-arrestable actions. These included marches from the campsite to the lease gate entrance (seventeen kilo-

metres through pristine country) which we regularly started before dawn. They also involved a daily presence at the gate to the mine road (frequently in the thirty degree heat), and a range of other chanting, banner waving, singing and dancing experiences.

### **Loss Leader**

The tension on the camp was inexorably building towards some major event spurred on by these unplugged civil rights abuses and two major perceived camp "losses".

The first loss had occurred a few days before our arrival when a group of trucks accompanied by TRG and police cut a swathe through protesters and made it into the mine site. The operation was accompanied by unprecedented levels of police violence that had stunned the peaceful protesters. One blockader had been flung off the road by the TRG, landing on his head - requiring an emergency flight to Darwin. Chillingly the sergeant in charge of operations refused to call an ambulance immediately. In this incident many others were injured and arrested with police-protester relations irreversibly nose-diving.

The second loss occurred soon after we arrived when a kilometre-long convoy of trucks for the mine site arrived from Darwin under massive police and TRG escort, with multiple helicopters buzzing the sky and snap roadblocks preventing the movement of protester's vehicles. Caught largely unawares the whole camp had about forty-five minutes warning, courtesy of ABC radio. They split quickly into a number of groups, some of whom then hid in the bushes hoping to jump out and enact slow-down/lock-on actions. Others found themselves trapped near the lease gates on what had been a preplanned, non-arrestable action. These people were subsequently forcefully herded like animals by the police for three kilometres down the road in the hot sun, without sufficient water or food.

In the face of such brute force, no substantial lock on or slowing manoeuvres were ever really a practical reality as all attempts were met with increasing levels of ferocity and unashamed heavy-hand-

ed tactics. Throughout this immense police operation TRG forces combed near-by bush with the aid of low-flying helicopter surveillance. Many protesters lying low in the scrub were arrested on spurious charges or simply arrested without charge and held. Most of these charges were later dropped. Arriving as I did after the convoy had passed, I witnessed row upon row of protesters reduced to tears of agony, an image that will stay with me indelibly.

It was commonly thought these two events, although unavoidable, were still great losses for the blockade.

### **Heroic Citizenship**

A feeling was developing strongly around camp that some symbolic attempt now needed to be made to "recapture the mine lease". As a result a mass "walk-on" action was planned over a period of time with the ultimate aim (if possible) of marching into the compound and slowing down work. The action would proceed under the time-honoured principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience - something someone had neatly coined heroic citizenship.

The police as ever seemed to get some general wind of the plan, without getting the timing correct. Hence they reacted quickly by banning all protest gatherings within six kilometres of the mine site and restricting road access; a clumsy move that immediately strengthened resolve. Furthermore they attempted unsuccessfully to impound the rented forty-four seater coach we were using as part of our people ferrying operations.

To suggest that the police were desperately manipulating every law that they could dream up, and in a less than sophisticated manner, would have been a gross understatement. Unfortunately the Territory's frontier mentality, and our absence of professional lawyers meant we became faced daily with a growing range of bizarre police commands that were uncomfortably reminiscent of the infamous riot-provoking British "suss" laws. Favourite weapons employed were a charge of refusing to cease to loiter, trespass on crown land (i.e. being present by the side of a public road) and victimisa-

tion of workers. In general anyone whom they decided might have intent to commit a crime (i.e. any member of the blockade campsite) could expect to face restrictions at any time to where they could walk or drive. We began to understand the concept of a police state and the immense value of civil liberties in the rarefied atmosphere of this far north eastern struggle.

All these factors served to deliver a fast and unprecedented example of camp unity. Where before transporting large numbers of people to the sites of protests had proved an impossible headache of car coordination, now endless convoys of cars, buses and trucks ferried upwards of 300 protesters to the lease edge in double-quick time, all completed an hour before dawn. The sight of convoy after convoy of lights coming out of the black disgorging their packed cargoes of cheering, buoyant protesters was both awesome and emotionally charged. The people formed themselves into a kilometre long convoy that psychologically matched and superseded the heartbreaking truck parade we had been forced to watch impotently several days previously. The unified group then proceeded en-masse to the lease entrance gates, as the flustered, bleary-eyed police officers arrived at the last minute, absolutely unprepared for the events that would follow.

### **Resolve**

At the final moment those willing to risk arrest linked arms into a tight formation and walked, about 150 strong, onto the lease past the impotent police line, and then on and up to the main gates of the inner compound three kilometres down the dirt road across Mirrar country. The morale and power in that group was simply unassailable throwing the police and security forces into flat panic. Their desperation at times caused them to engage in life-endangering driving exploits and plainly dangerous neck tackles on the super-strong group who with its awesome, grounded power, carried the police officers with them resolutely up the hill side towards the mine site.

For many of us it was the first time we had been able to access the Mirrar people's sacred land that we had fought so

long and so hard to protect with them on their behalf. Behind and beneath us as we climbed the hill to the mine site stretched the Majela wetlands, with its plethora of flora and fauna, ideally positioned below the mining-lease area to collect radioactive run-off from a deathly project. Who ever heard of a group so committed to land that they stopped to re-empower themselves from this magnificent view, before marching in silent respectful formation for several subsequent minutes to pay respect to that power?

Three kilometres later of bull dust, singing, vehicle dodging, laughing, cheering, silence and chanting we arrived at the now-locked gates to the inner compound. There under the gaze of workers and exasperated police we sung protest songs such as "Kakadu is Sacred" and chanted "ERA - Go Away!" with spirit, whilst observing periods of silence in respect of the land whose power we could all tangibly feel emanating around us.

As time passed quite surreal group decision making meetings were conducted in front of the police and ERA workers. Interviews were recorded with protest leaders for the ABC TV, SBS, and national radio crews present. Later on an agreement for nonviolent police arrests was struck (safely recorded on film!). People decided on an individual basis whether they would resist arrest by going limp, and finally up to three and a half hours later enough paddy vans arrived from Darwin to take us all away. The affair was throughout festive and peaceful with good humour all round. Indeed some police officers even regained their sense of humour under the quietly ludi-

crous nature of the event, and the clearly profoundly-held nonviolent and peaceable attitudes of the assembled protesters.

Eventually everyone was arrested who had chosen not to leave when a brief amnesty had been offered earlier. (About forty, protesters took this option, supported by those of us who decided to stay). The one hundred and ten of us who finally chose to be arrested in political protest were calmly lead to divvy vans, packed eight to a six seater, and transferred with speed and questionable driving for processing at Jabiru police station.

### **Holding and Waiting**

At first we were put in jam-packed holding cells at Jabiru police station, replete with singing, hugging and cheering protesters. Throughout the subsequent thirty-six hour process we were transferred in coaches and steel seated paddy wagons to two Darwin police stations. (The fabled Berrimah Hilton and Palmerston North). We luxuriated calmly in these concrete, white, brightly lit watch houses, swapping stories, bonding and supporting each of our fellow political prisoners late into the night. Relations with our captors were calm, and the procedure simply became a peaceful, bureaucratic nightmare.

Eventually the bulk of us were released on bail surety of \$500. In a remarkable act of solidarity twenty five women in Berrimah watch house refused to be bailed unless the extreme bail conditions slapped on two of their number, second time-caught protesters, were removed. This negotiation was successful.

### Political Prisoners

Several protesters chose to refuse bail outright as a political protest and were transferred to nearby, heavy-duty remand centres. Some of these people now face jail terms of a month, being kept in solitary confinement and handcuffed: a brutish, ongoing attempt to scare and intimidate. Amnesty International are currently investigating these cases as obvious prisoners of conscience. Support mechanisms for these people was quickly assembled, despite them being allowed only one telephone call and one letter contact with the outside world initially. The whole experience of "zero tolerance" has redefined my appreciation of the role of justice and in whose interests it can be bent double to serve. Rough justice indeed for people who dared to say, uranium is wrong for today, and wrong for future generations.

Philosophically I refused to accept that attempting to stop the obscenity of a mine at Jabiluka could be in any way deemed as wrong: However my love of freedom eventually persuaded me to accept bail rather than to go through with an unpleasant and potentially dangerous incarceration process. However as I write several courageous and highly committed women still remain behind bars awaiting trials, set up to a month a way. At least two are undertaking hunger strike.

### Legalities

Those of us released appeared in Darwin magistrates court for our mention - our time to plead guilty or not guilty. About two thirds of the protesters pleaded not guilty to the charges. (My charges for example were Forcible Entry to Cause Breach of Peace and Victimisation-Employment, Delivery of Goods). Like so many others I decided that I was absolutely not guilty of these charges, and that the actual perpetrators of the crimes were in fact Energy Resources Australia; who were mining uranium in Kakadu against the wishes of the traditional owners, the bulk of the Australian people and to cap it all before the appropriate legal - environmental procedures have been completed.

If these ludicrous charges are not dropped then I will make the long trip back to

Darwin with my fellow protesters. I have been forced to appear on December 7th to simply confirm I am still pleading not guilty, and then appear again on the 21st for my hearing. I am therefore apparently expected to make the 2300 kilometre trip twice in a month, which I can only interpret as a further attempt in crass bullying and subjugation.

In the meantime some legal precedents have yet to run through the courts system, including Mirrar traditional owner and elder Yvonne Margarula's, and Mirrar spokesperson and international lawyer Jacqui Katona's cases - both who have in previous weeks been arrested for trespassing on their own land. (believed to be a unique case). If it is possible to prove (under albeit fatally flawed white-man's law) that it is impossible to trespass on your own land then it may give the rest of the protesters a good case to build upon. Certainly we all possess a Mirrar passport - the authority granted to us by the Mirrar to be on that land. Under that line of reason it may thus be arguable that occupation of that land by ERA, (guarded viciously by the police) was indeed unlawful. As for the victimisation of workers charge, it was dropped for those pleading guilty, and remains according to legal aid a questionable charge.

Regardless of outcome I am regarding this whole legal debacle simply as a flawed bureaucratic process, or an unpleasant artifact and occupational hazard of campaigning.

### Leaving

So that just about tied up my twenty-day stay. As I was leaving Camp Jabiluka was receiving a further morale boost in the form of a visit by Peter Garrett of Midnight Oils fame, Vince Jones the jazz musician, Tom Uren the veteran anti-uranium campaigner and ex-Whitlam era minister, and the entire Mirrar clan, joined in solidarity by 500 blockaders for the biggest ever mass presence in Kakadu national park.

Stirring speeches were made with the lasting impression made by 77 year old campaigner Uren being helped onto the roof of a four wheel drive to deliver a rousing speech.

### Indelible Link

The experience was undoubtedly one of unparalleled intensity in my life, as well as being one of immense privilege - that privilege coming from having the opportunity of meeting such a diverse, yet selflessly committed group of strong, strong people. Whilst the environment movement has foot soldiers this committed, and a spirit and connection to land this rock-sure I believe that enormous odds can and will be overcome. I for one hold an unswerving vision that this mine will be stopped, and that the groundswell of support evident in the 67% of Australian's who oppose the mine (newly released Newspoll) ignites a beacon for change in our dark times of railing racism and deaf-eared right wing governances.

### Home But Not Hosed

Days later, back in the comfortable surroundings of inner city life, I am left with a strange mixture of awe, sadness and yet extreme anticipation. However what I know now is that nothing that the powers that be can do will blunt this kind of heartfelt charge. As the Territory attracts increasingly negative publicity for its brutal systems of rough justice the fight continues in Kakadu unabated and unswervingly.

But that fight is all around - yes it's at the blockade, but it's also around the nation and its resonating throughout the world and inside everyone of us who understands the meaning of land, collective responsibility and a deep care for the future. But then it's also a fight that is strangely free of aggression, violence or fear that marks and mars so many other conflicts. That's why it will continue to confound and subvert the heavy handed and poorly equipped state security systems - systems that simply cannot deflect principled justice for a people called the Mirrar, and for a land known worldwide simply as Kakadu.

In the end it's so very simple: Not in Kakadu. NOT ANYWHERE!

*Kieth Armstrong*

**NvT**

# New Jabiluka Video

Keith Armstrong of Queensland Jabiluka Action Group today announced his latest film, *Interstate Ferals for the Planet - 3 Weeks at the Jabiluka Blockade* (1/2 hr VHS).

Multimedia artist Armstrong said, "*Interstate Ferals for the Planet is the video I made straight after returning from the blockade. It uses footage I shot, plus that collected by other blockaders, as well as excellent footage shown on the television over that period (National news coverage, 7.30 report, etc). I tried hard to capture the great intensity of that experience, including the mass arrests of that period*".

Keith Armstrong's video aims to show what life at the blockade is like, and encourage people to get active on the campaign and/or travel to the blockade. To this end it also uses a range of historic footage portraying some of the major worldwide incidents of nuclear contamination, and disaster. From an Australian perspective it also reminds us of how Labour originally allowed uranium mining in Australia, the commissioning of Ranger, its disastrous predecessors such as the Rum Jungle uranium mine, and the

tragic nuclear tests in the 50's at Maralinga.

Combining a lively contemporary vision, great music and powerful imagery *Interstate Ferals for the Planet* was recently the hit of Qld JAG's film showings at the Brisbane City Hall auditorium.

The video is available at cost recovery rates for \$15 donation per copy. Each video is professionally packaged with a designed colour insert, and includes an essay about the blockade experience.

Keith Armstrong said "*I would like every JAG around the country to have a copy and every other organisation who thinks it could help with their own campaigns. That was why I made it! - out of a passion for this campaign. My only request is that everyone shows it often so that the word can spread!*".

If you are interested please email Keith Armstrong at [k.armstrong@qut.edu.au](mailto:k.armstrong@qut.edu.au) or write to Keith at 18 Agars St, Rosalie Qld, 4064 or tel. 07 3876 2304 (Home) or 0412 749 729 (Mobile).

**NVT**

# Jabiluka Website

The new Jabiluka Website is available at [www.jabiluka.net](http://www.jabiluka.net)

It aims to provide accurate and up to date (as well as background) information on both the national campaign and the blockade camp. It will be an umbrella site providing contact details and links to websites of the various JAG and other groups involved in the campaign. Some of the other contents of the site includes: a library of stills and video footage, legal information, environmental facts, information on the corporate campaign, personal stories from the blockade, a catalog of press articles about the campaign, and a link to the National Petition against the mine.

We encourage anyone running a related website to link to us at [www.jabiluka.net](http://www.jabiluka.net). If you think we should link to your site please send us an email to: [blockade@jabiluka.net](mailto:blockade@jabiluka.net) If you have any content or information which you think should be included in the site please email it to the same address or fax it to (08) 8979 3125.

The website is constantly under construction - therefore please be patient if there are any problems. We will be developing it and expanding it live - [www.jabiluka.net](http://www.jabiluka.net) will be a dynamic site.

Please email [blockade@jabiluka.net](mailto:blockade@jabiluka.net) should you have any further questions.

**NVT**

# Och, Och, There's a Monster in the Loch

Our 10-strong affinity group - "Titanic Trident" - was composed of three active disarmers willing to face serious jail consequences, three disarmers willing to cause damage leading to less severe consequences, a media person, a legal supporter and observer, and two supporters to cover loose ends, gather materials and see that our personal possessions were returned home. As soon as we arrived at Coulport we went to work gathering information about the Trident submarine system. We studied several possible ways of disarming Trident - from its communications systems to its missile loading equipment, from the "towed array" used for sonar communications to the missile launch tubes.

After a week of research we decided on an actual submarine, sitting in the water at nearby Faslane submarine base and decided to approach by water.

Ministry of Defence officers later explained that even the summertime water temperature of the Gareloch is so cold that hypothermia and death happen in just 15 minutes of exposure. Choosing a water approach created an equipment list that took another three days to organise. We were fortunate that one of the other affinity groups had arrived with a selection of wet suits, fins, masks, and snorkels. We found the best fitting suits we could and completed our wardrobe with hammers, hacksaws, flares for emergency, and plastic jugs of tarry goo. Our goal was to beat the missile tubes closed and pour tar into the same tubes so that missiles could not be launched.

#### **Practice run**

We performed a practice run at midnight on a clear and dreamy night across the bay from Faslane on the west bank of the Gareloch. We tested the fit of our wet suits and our ability to withstand the

cold. We swam up the bay studying the ship lift warehouse which the Trident was docked next to. We stayed in the water for 45 minutes and felt as though we could double that time if we had to.

We decided to swim across the entire bay just after midnight three nights later because it was the longest approach and therefore the one they would least expect.

The three active disarmers were Krista van Zelzin, 23, of the Netherlands, Katri Silvonen, 18, of Finland and myself, Rick Springer, 47, of the United States. The other action members of our team planned a fence entry in order to increase our possible success from all sides.

#### **Into the water**

After a special 11:30pm drop-off, we dived down the bank to avoid being spotted by the constant Strathclyde police

patrols. We breathed deeply as we secured our weight belts, fins, hammers, flares and jugs of tar. If our dreams were realised and we were actually successful at disarming the Trident, we expected that we'd be imprisoned at least until our trial and, if we lost, for many years. We entered the water at 11:45pm and a cold chill filled our wet suits as we lay down into the Gareloch. We began swimming to Trident as Katri explained to me that she had never swum with flippers. It seemed all in the Creator's hands now.

At about the centre of the bay Krista pointed out a green light that just appeared on the west bank from which we had come. She also noticed a red light on a boat moving up the side we had just departed. *"They must have spotted us,"* she commented. I told her I suspected the green light was only a vector light, a navigational aid, and the boat was just coincidence, but I became concerned myself when the boat seemed to be turning right towards us. The concern of being run over had been considered and that and the possibility of hypothermia were the reasons we carried waterproof flares.

A bright spotlight was descending upon us. I suggested in a whisper that we take a deep breath and get ready to submerge. I dipped under just as the spotlight hit my head and was amazed to look at my suited body fully lit up under the water, I rarely felt so exposed but as I came to the surface I was amazed to see the 10m cabin cruiser search boat continue on while the diesel engine hummed. Krista and Katri told me that they had come to the surface in the middle of the spotlight. I realised that the spotlight means nothing if there is not someone staring at it and after hours of cruising the bay staring at a spot of light must be mesmerising. The spotlight also destroys the viewer's night vision, so anything outside the light is nearly invisible.

#### **Buoyant and excited**

We began swimming again feeling somewhat more buoyant and excited. The huge ship-lift building loomed ahead for an eternity when suddenly the shadow of the boom surrounding Faslane Bay became visible. The boom, a huge floating

sausage connected to a huge round ball and then another sausage creating the inner bay, was only eighty metres off as a Zodiac inflatable boat came zooming in between us. They shone their search light at the base of the boom but it seemed to me impossible for them to spot a swimmer at the speed they were going. The sea birds resting on the boom squawked and resettled as the boat went by. Our fears of being given away by squawking birds were calmed as we gently approached. I cooed softly like a pigeon and they barely moved as we slid in between the sausage and ball - no netting, no trip wires. We realised that we had made it to Faslane Bay. And there before us - only 300-400m further - was the evil Trident submarine, docked on the right side of the ship-lift. The three of us gently cruised forward out into the bay when Krista noticed three tiny figures standing on the left front of the ship-lift. They were so tiny, I was hoping she was wrong and they would prove to be just garbage on the dock but by the time we had covered half the bay to the Trident, we could see the glow of their cigarettes with each puff. And then they moved. With the tremendous Las Vegas style lighting of Faslane, we could barely conceive that we had not been spotted.

#### **"Bandits on the base!"**

"Let's go for it," urged Krista, and began swimming faster towards the Trident. I slowed down, attempting to size up the situation and also responding to cramps in my calves. I was shivering intensely by this time, my whole body shaking as I decided to swim wide of the ship-lift hoping to stay out of sight range. The women were 50 metres ahead and nearly touching the pilings of the dock when one of the three smokers yelled in a woman's voice, *"Halt! Halt!"* I watched her run across the dock to the right side of the building and grab at a box. When she came over to the edge of the dock her silhouette clearly held a machine gun type rifle. She pointed it down at Katri and Krista and continued screaming conflicting orders. *"Stay there! Come here!"* At the same time more lights came on and a huge loudspeaker system announced in a booming voice, *"Bandits on the base! Bandits on the base!"*

It was only a moment more before the female officer spotted me as I tried to swim around the melee. She pointed the rifle my way but with my wet suit hood covering my ears, her voice was muffled and something told me she wouldn't shoot me as I continued swimming to the Trident. My partners had a better view of the woman with her rifle and remained floating at the bottom of the dock, their feet dangling in the water perhaps only five metres from the end of our goal. I continued swimming realising now that with four or five short underwater bursts, I could slither out onto the surfaced area, next to the rear fin and wings, and perhaps have a chance to take a few delicious whack at the beast before they whacked me. A Zodiac came zooming out of the dark in back of the Trident. They passed me to pick up the women and I made one underwater spurt, feeling my right calf cramping as I did. I surfaced to see the Zodiac coming my way with Krista and Katri on board. I had a dilemma. I could evade the Zodiac and get to the Trident or I could surrender. The nonviolence guidelines are quite dear that, once spotted, running is prohibited, but swimming fast has yet to enter the anti-nuclear movement's nonviolence bylaws.

#### **Destroy your enemy**

There is fine dance that happens in our effort to convert these missiles to farm tools. It is a dance that happens when one human being makes a stand, looks another human being in the eye, and refuses violence. I climbed into the Zodiac and when I stood up, the Navy guard slapped me on the arm and said, *"Well, done man. No one has ever got that close to a Trident before."* I remembered the old adage that "the best way to destroy your enemy is to make them your friend". One friend by one friend we will disarm that Trident. Keep swimming!

*Rick Paul Springer*

from *Peace News* #2429-30, September/October 1998.

**NVT**

# Strengthening Communication in Groups

Communication is essential to the effective operation of groups, in order to arrange meetings, share information, reach agreements and implement plans. Furthermore, improving communication is a way of building the group itself. When we talk of 'groups' we are thinking about grassroots groups seeking to promote justice and equality, but really the same applies to all sorts of others.

There are many potential problems that can adversely affect group communication:

- surveillance, for example phone tapping by security forces;
- infiltration by informers or agitators;
- disinformation: the spreading of false information in order to cause difficulties;
- interpersonal tensions due to different personal styles (common enough even when there are no external threats to the group);
- group dysfunctions, such as domination by cliques, a culture of malicious gossip, unspoken acceptance of abusive behaviours or excessive dependence on particular individuals;
- lack of resources for communication, for example access to email or mobile phones;
- poor communication systems, for example unreliable information about meetings or decisions;
- lack of preparation for communicating in an emergency.

In our own small group with five members, we set out to investigate how to improve communication systems. The initial impetus came from the last item on this list: communicating in an emergency.

Our special interest is nonviolent resistance to aggression and repression, with a vision for society of nonviolent defence as an alternative to military defence. The group is named after Jaroslav Hasek's fictional character Schweik, a soldier who created havoc in the Austrian army dur-

ing World War I by pretending to be extremely stupid. Nonviolent activists may want to cause (nonviolent) havoc among aggressors, but they need to have their own systems running as smoothly as possible.

Communicating in an emergency is obviously vital in many situations facing nonviolent activists. For example, in military coups the first targets are commonly television and radio stations. Sometimes all telecommunications outside the country are cut off, such as after the 1981 coup in Poland and the 1987 coups in Fiji. Activists may wish to alert people targeted for arrest, to call meetings, to organise rallies and to mobilise support in the community and around the world. Their usual communication channels, such as phone and fax, may be disrupted or put under surveillance.

There is much that activists can do to overcome obstacles to communication. Rather than relying on a single channel, such as the telephone, they can practise using several modes, such as face-to-

face contact, email and short-wave radio. They can develop systems that stand up in the face of disinformation and surveillance. They can sort out their ideas on openness, use of codes (such as encrypted email) and the extent of mutual trust. They can develop and practise their skills using simulations.

It soon became obvious to us that different groups will have quite different communication requirements. Members of some groups routinely see each other face-to-face; others only make contact occasionally by post or phone. Some groups operate in the face of serious surveillance and infiltration; others suffer benign neglect. Some groups are harmonious and tightly knit; others are fractured by power plays.

Communication can be strengthened in every group. The question is how. We developed and tried out some exercises that worked well in our group. We describe them briefly here to illustrate the sort of things that are possible. Other groups may want to develop their own

exercises, tailored for their own situation and need.

Here are some principles we think are important for exercises to build communication in groups.

- Exercises should be chosen or designed by group members to be appropriate to the group's situation. There's no single best approach for every group. Exercises should be suited to what the group members think is important.
- Exercises should provide insight for everyone involved.
- Exercises should be fun. This encourages participation and helps build group cohesion.
- Exercises should have a practical purpose, such as preparing for an emergency or making routine communication more reliable.

Well-designed exercises not only strengthen communication: they also strengthen the group.

### **Exercise 1: How would I contact you?**

Aim: to encourage group members to think about how they make contact with each other.

Requirement: most group members should know each other. Everyone should trust one another.

Optimal size: 4 to 8 people. With more than 8, it is probably better to break into subgroups.

Time: 30-60 minutes (10-20 minutes for answering questions individually; the remainder for discussion of answers)

#### **The exercise**

- Each person thinks up a scenario in which it is urgent to have a meeting attended by everyone in the group tomorrow. (Alternatively, the group agrees on a standard scenario.) Some possible scenarios are the unexpected arrest of a group member, report of a dangerous corporate initiative, or government declaration of martial law.
- On a sheet of paper, without discussion, each individual writes down their personal answer to each of the following questions for each other member of the group plus one or two additional people (e.g. friends) who you'd like to attend the meeting. If there are six people in the group, there will then be six or seven answers for each question - twenty-four

or twenty-eight answers in all. (A standard answer sheet makes things easier.)

• After everyone has finished writing down their answers individually, go through questions one by one, comparing answers.

• What is written down is not for circulation. Sharing answers is voluntary. Be careful about private information.

Q1. For each other person, write down what method (e.g. telephone) you'd use to contact them personally to tell them about the meeting - and what method you'd try to contact them personally if the first method wasn't successful.

Q2. Assume that you couldn't contact the person directly. Who else could you contact to help you find the person or pass on a message? (Eg. friends, family members, neighbours.)

Q3. Assume that you still can't contact the person. What activities or locations do you know about which might provide ways to contact them? (Eg. meetings, sporting activities, restaurants, travel.)

Q4. Assume that you still can't contact the person. What do you know about the person that might help explain why they are not contactable? (Eg. dangers, threats, health problems.)

Comment. We've tried this out with ourselves and several other groups. It has always been stimulating. Writing down answers first is helpful so that each person thinks independently. There can be some imaginative responses, such as contacting the rail authority to page someone travelling by train. People may answer Q2 in doing Q1. It doesn't matter. One spin-off is sharing of practical information, such as phone numbers.

### **Exercise 2: When you're not there**

Aim: to encourage group members to think about how they would make contact with each other in difficult situations.

Requirement: group members should know and trust each other. This exercise requires more trust than exercise 1.

Optimal size: four to six people.

Time: 30-60 minutes.

#### **The exercise**

- Each person writes down two to four regular situations (or vulnerabilities) when they might not be easily contactable by others in the group, such as visit-

ing another town, attending a meeting, shopping or driving to work.

- Start with someone's first situation.
- Everyone (including the person whose situation it is) writes down how they would change it to make contact easier (such as carrying a mobile phone or telling someone where you'll be).
- Go around the circle giving answers, finishing with the person whose situation it is.

Comment. After one or two situations, people may start to think more broadly, so it can be useful for a later person to pick a less usual type of situation.

### **Exercise 3: personal contact sheets**

Aim: to build group members' knowledge of each other.

Requirement: group members should have a high degree of trust in each other.

#### **The exercise**

Each person writes down on a sheet of paper how they can be contacted, including:

- address, phone, fax, email, etc.;
- housemates, family, neighbours, friends, etc. (and how to contact them);
- activities, habits, places.

The sheets can then be given to other group members.

Comment. People may feel uncomfortable about providing certain information about themselves or about people close to them. That should be expected and respected. Participation should be voluntary.

Some people will take the initiative to write up their sheets. Others may require more prompting. One option is filling out information at a meeting (have a computer handy).

### **Exercise 4: simulations**

A simulation is like a practise run for the real thing. Simulations can be simple yet be quite informative.

- **Type A.** Each person attempts to contact and/or send a message to each other person, using whatever method they like, noting obstacles and outcomes.
- **Type B.** The group decides on a communication system. Then a message is sent using the system. For example, one system is the chain, where each person



contacts the next - a system that is quite vulnerable to disruption. Another system is asking everyone to look at a notice-board or web site. By trying different systems, the group can choose the ones most effective for the group.

• **Type C.** The group communicates using a "code" of its own choosing. For example, saying "yellow banana" might be used to signify that details should be confirmed with another member.

• **Type D.** The group tries to communicate in the face of disruption or disinformation. For example, the group might pretend that telephones cannot be used, so that contact has to be made using other media.

There are lots of other possible simulations. Anything important that regularly happens, or might happen, is worth simulating. Simulations can be opportunities for involving people outside the group, such as friends and neighbours.

Another way to develop better communication is by studying what others have done, such as systems developed by political prisoners, by oppressed peoples and by the anti-Nazi resistance in occupied Europe during World War II. There are lots of insights available. Our focus here, though, is on what groups can do that is not just educative, but also participatory and fun.

We are still learning ourselves, and would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to share their knowledge and experiences.

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**NVT**

# A Call for Civilian-Based Defense

We're at a special point in time right now. The zeitgeist is ripe for Civilian-Based Defense. In the article, *The Changing Nature of Arms Control*, John Tirman comments that for a good part of our "nuclear history," the cult of the technical - that is, a focus on the scientific and engineering aspects of war and warfare - held our national imagination as we grappled with the many features of arms control: size, scope, capabilities and everything from doctrine, to deployment, to negotiations, to treaty verification. "Today;" Tirman notes, "this focus does persist, but it is being overtaken by more explicitly political approaches."

It is this shift in the prevailing national paradigm, that I believe provides a particularly inviting opening.

Genc Sharp, a prolific author and lecturer on the topic of Civilian-Based Defense, says, "*The dangers and limitations of modern military means - conventional, nuclear, and chemical-biological - are too obvious to need repetition. What has not been clear is what alternative we have.*" Nonviolent Civilian-Based Defense is the alternative I believe to be not only possible but essentially "*our own best chance for survival.*"

My preferred definition of CBD is: "pre-arranged strategic nonviolence in the service of deterrence and defense.

It may be helpful to note what Civilian-Based Defense is not. CBD is not associated with the militia movement. CBD is not antigovernment, nor is it inherently anti-military. It does operate under the assumption that nonviolent defense is far more effective, efficient and far less costly than current military defense strategies. It is not a theology of pacifism - you do not have to ascribe to the belief that nonviolence is morally or ethically supe-

rior to violence. CBD is not civil disobedience in the service of a particular interest.

CBD is not an inane simple answer to a hugely complex question. Clarity about the How and Why of the potential effectiveness of CBD will require vast amounts of research, analysis and policy study. For example, our current military policies assume that, when faced with violent behavior, only the threat or use of superior violence will halt the original violence. A parallel assumption CBD relies upon is that repeated nonviolent

responses to violence tend to reduce or eliminate that violence. This is an assumption that nonviolent activists understand very thoroughly

We know that unbelievable and unwarranted acts of violence against civilians (especially females) have always been perpetrated during wartime. And yet as a nation, we continue to allow ourselves to believe that violence is "necessary" in the face of violence. Riane Eisler, author of *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, looks at our mass media where violence is continually replayed in front of us and she names it as simply a modernized version of public stoning or execution. She considers such public displays of brutality a cultural mechanism which serves to maintain a "dominator" system, rather than a system based on partnerships.

There are many historical accounts of unarmed resistance to invasions and occupations. This information is increasingly becoming available to us as it is being collected and cataloged by scholars, university peace studies programs, and by peace groups. Our long and lustrous human history of nonviolence is being reclaimed. Our recent history of organized nonviolent campaigns (mostly untold in our schools) includes the Civil Rights movement, the United Farm Workers movement, and the Disarmament movement. Here are more examples:

- **India vs. Britain:** From 1930-1947, east Indians utilized nonviolent noncooperation, marches and acts of civil disobedience which resulted in India's independence from a long history of British colonization.

- **Germany vs. Belgium and France:** For nine months in 1923, German civilians creatively noncooperated with occupying French and Belgian troops who had been stationed there after Germany had fallen behind in its reparation payments. Germany believed the occupation to be illegal under the terms of the Versailles Treaty and while their resistance remained nonviolent world opinion was moving toward agreement and support. Transport workers refused to handle trains taking coal to France, operators refused

to drive streetcars when soldiers boarded and shopkeepers refused to sell to soldiers, even closing entirely when troops were off duty. In June 1923, saboteurs blew up a railroad bridge killing ten Belgian soldiers and wounding 40. Favorable world opinion declined, violent reprisals for sabotage ensued and the German resistance ended that September.

- **Denmark vs. Germany:** The unarmed resistance of the Danes by strikes and boycotts against Nazi invaders was mixed with underground violence and sabotage. Danish citizens followed the example of their king and shunned occupying soldiers by leaving public places when soldiers entered. King Christian, on his daily horseback ride, shook hands with citizens and refused to return Nazi salutes. When a swastika was hoisted over a public building the king ordered it down. Nazis stated that any Danish soldier following that order would be shot. King Christian stated "I will be that soldier." And the swastika came down. Eight Danish arms factory saboteurs were executed though Nazi reprisals were certainly less severe in that country than in other Nazi occupied countries.

- **The White Rose Resistance Movement:** A group of German citizens - mostly university students and professors - broke the paralysis of fear in Nazi Germany by their many acts of resistance. They repeatedly typed and posted updated manuscripts of Nazi atrocities and called for resistance from German citizens. Sophie Scholl, a leader in the White Rose, wrote in her diary just days before her execution, "With all those people dying for the regime, it is high time someone died against it."

- **Czechoslovakians in Prague in 1968** spontaneously organized noncooperation with Soviet invasion forces. The Czechs were so successful in winning the hearts and minds of Soviet soldiers they had to be rotated out every two weeks. Five Soviet soldiers were imprisoned for supporting the Czech resistance.

- **Nonviolent student demonstrations in Beijing** held the world's attention in the mid-1980s. Taiwan may soon be looking

at CBD as perhaps its last best hope in its struggle for independence from China. Last year, Albert Lin was elected to Taiwan's Legislative Yuan or Parliament. He campaigned on a platform of adding CBD to Taiwan's strategic defense policy. Student Taiwanese Independence groups continue nonviolence trainings and international outreach.

- **Lithuania and neighboring Baltic states** in 1989-1991, freed themselves from the Soviet yoke and regained their independence through nonviolent resistance and struggle. The English translation of *Nonviolent Resistance in Lithuania, A Story of Peaceful Liberation* is soon to be published.

- **Since 1989, the Balkan province of Kosova** has nonviolently noncooperated with Serbian martial law. Albanians comprise some 90 percent of the population of Kosova and they have strategically boycotted parliamentary elections. The Cabinet is directed from a "government in exile." Albanians speak freely of their parallel administration which runs their own school system, including university, as well as a healthcare system. Some 18,000 teachers and hundreds of doctors are on its payroll. This past December 30, the Protest Council of the University of Prishtina held a Protest Hour in which demonstrators held up a book and a copy of their Protest Declaration outlining their demands for the unconditional release of the university buildings and premises. Nonviolence was maintained despite Serbian police efforts to disperse the protesters. The BBC reported that several student protesters were beaten by police.

- **El Salvador, following a decade-long civil war,** is launching a pioneering effort to establish a sustainable Zone of Peace. Local residents are collaborating to replace a war-induced culture of violence with a culture of peace.

These examples are truly only a smattering of instances where spontaneous nonviolent civilian-based actions have been effective fully or to some degree. What if, rather than depending on spontaneous actions, we were to direct even a portion of our current military budget into strate-

gic planning and training in nonviolent action? We base our national defense and foreign policy on plans for every imaginable form of warfare. What might happen if we invested our energies, imaginations and resources into planning and preparing to wage nonviolent struggle? In 1995, 4.8 million people were either on active duty in the U. S. military or in civilian military-related jobs. Meanwhile, how many U.S. citizens were involved in disarmament? The truth is we don't know! And because we are not told we do not tell our children! These are the stories we must continue to reclaim. There is documentation of more than 50,000 German citizens defying the Nazi government. There are far more of us who understand and act on the power of nonviolence we know.

How do we begin a program of CBD? The process might extend over several years, during which our nonviolent and Civilian-Based Defense capacities would be developed and introduced as one component of the total defense policy. These capacities would be gradually built up and expanded with the military components being gradually phased out and replaced. Naturally, much could be learned in this process and this growing knowledge base would provide the foundation for further steps. Franklin Zahn's book *Alternative to the Pentagon* provides a very creative and thorough imagining of an invasion on the east coast and a CBD response to it.

As for individual citizens, we might begin by asking ourselves several deep and probing questions. If we do believe, "way down deep," that it is "human nature" to be aggressive or violent, on what do we base this belief! Is the Disarmament movement about the business of cultural transformation or do we rather see our work as a means reducing the overall intensity, frequency, and quantity of violence? Have we asked ourselves, as did historian Howard Zinn, "*Why is it that governments have to go to such lengths to mobilize populations to go to war?*" Have we exposed ourselves to texts such as that published in 1995 by Lt. Col. David A. Groomsman titled *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of learning to Kill in War and Society?* Grossman concludes, on the basis of history, studies, anecdotes, and his own lived experience in the military, that most human beings possess an innate instinctive reluctance to kill other human beings.

Consider how CBD might actually become manifest in the U.S.:

1. The adoption of nonviolent action strategies and techniques by the military;
2. The demand from civilians for education and training of civilians in the theory and practice of CBD; and
3. the continued work of the Disarmament community to creatively dismantle the (so called) legal sanctioning of violence that makes up our current national defense and foreign policies.

Another key aspect of what is provided through the work of the Disarmament community is the "firing up" of our collective imaginations about how we all might do CBD when it comes down to the crunch. If we accept the premise that nonviolence can be learned, how might that impact the choices we make regarding what we consider "entertainment," especially if we adopt Riane Eisler's belief that public displays of brutality serve to reinforce our reliance on violence? In his book *Allow the Water*, Leonard Desroches lists the "tools and stages of nonviolence." Self-education is at the top of the list.

Bishop Adolf Proulx from Quebec asks, "Can we conceive of... being condemned to forever make war?... The efficacy of nonviolence in stopping wars has been demonstrated many times, and if we applied as much determination in dying for peace as we do in dying for war, the results would be even more spectacular..."

It is possible to wage peace. Indeed, therein lies our own best chance for survival.

*Colleen McDonald Morken*

From: *Civilian-Based Defense* #9 Late Summer 1998.

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# in back of it all

## What is NONVIOLENCE TODAY?

*Nonviolence Today* is published every two months to help increase the understanding and use of nonviolence. We publish reports and evaluations of trainings and actions, with a view to improving the quality of both. It's the peoples' magazine and first hand participant reports are especially welcome. *Nonviolence Today* also serves an educational role in promoting a theoretical understanding of nonviolence as a political philosophy. There is much diversity of opinion of what that is, but the common ground of agreement is probably that political power

comes from cooperation. If we don't like the behaviour of power holders, then we withdraw our cooperation in sufficient numbers and they will be disabled. Nonviolent action is a technique which has existed throughout history and occurs in all cultures and has been used by an enormous range of social groups. Nonviolence can be applied to activities as widely different as personal growth and national defence. Violence is not necessary for social change and is, in fact, counterproductive to greater freedom, justice and harmony.

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## Notes for Contributors

*Nonviolence Today* exists to promote  
(1) nonviolence as a political theory and  
(2) the study and practice of nonviolent action as a method of social change.

Theoretical proposals and analyses of actions and campaigns that advance these goals are most welcome. We may edit articles to maintain a focus on nonviolence.

We prefer contributions to be sent by electronic mail (see address above) or on a floppy disk, which we will return. Failing that, preferably typed (for scanning), or clear, legible handwriting (if in doubt, please type it). Please inform us of the authorship of any items you send and tell us if they're not for publication.

Photographs are extremely desirable, preferably: (1) clearly captioned on the back; (2) dramatic.

Copy deadlines are at the end of January, March, May, July, September, November.