

## WAR RESISTERS' INTERNATIONAL

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SPECIAL 12TH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE ISSUE

The 12th Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International was held in Rome from 7-12 April 1966. 120 delegates and observers from 19 countries took part in the deliberations. They included Canada, Japan, U.S.A., Vietnam and Yugoslavia. The Conference was divided into two parts. Part I dealt with the topic "Non-Violence and Politics" and Part II with business matters of the W.R.I. and its affiliates and their work during the next three years. At the end of the first part in which Non-Violence and Politics was discussed the Conference adopted the following summary:

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

In this Conference we have seen no widely held opposing views, but we have observed tendencies to give different emphasis and different priorities to various aspects of resistance to war and to war-making society. Some prefer to use more frequently words like 'pacifism' and 'war resistance'; others are more concerned with words like 'non-violence', while others again have put a greater emphasis on phrases like 'direct democracy', 'decentralisation', etc. We do not think these tendencies are antagonistic but they are different. In this last group we have noted two main responses: those who think they can see the possibility of real present action, as for example, on very different scales, in Yugoslavia and the Factory for Peace in Scotland; and those who do not see how to start.

This third stream of thought has been more prominent in this Conference than previously. Since the last Triennial Conference we have become aware that 1962 was a turning point. From 1945 the Great Powers were preparing for an atomic World War III and we had to limit ourselves to resisting the immediate war threat. Now that the form of this danger has changed we are able to concentrate more on changing the nature of war-making society, and helping to save the new countries from inheriting the evils of the old.

These concepts are new and exciting. Because they are new it is our thinking that is primitive and underdeveloped. What is important is that many of us from totally different societies and backgrounds have independently reached converging conclusions. The basic responsibility for decision must lie with small communities, co-ordinated by leaders rather than by people who issue orders. Orders and commanders are necessary for armies and wars; a peaceful society does not need them.

We must now select a few of the ideas which have emerged from this discussion:

- many people find it hard at first to take on responsibility.
- these concepts will spread only by example.

- it is therefore of first importance that in our own organisations we should work out a responsible democracy in finer details.
- we have been warned of the Italian post-war experience when the need for quick results prevented the development of the genuinely democratic forms which arose spontaneously; and this is to-day a major problem in the developing countries.
- perhaps the most immediate problem is what we mean by leadership. A secretary becomes indispensable and because he is indispensable alternatives do not develop. Paternalism, even if benevolent, must be prevented. It has been suggested that one way to avoid this is rotation of office.

The same principles apply to the conduct of relations between societies. Thus the factors leading to war are resisted on two fronts, both within societies and between them.

We have encountered a feeling that we could perhaps with advantage have heard more about the detailed problems of leadership and organisation in the more successful undertakings, particularly Students Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee, the Yugoslav experience the Factory for Peace in Scotland, the Dutch Pacifist Socialist Party, the Scandinavian Folk Socialist Parties, developments in Sicily, etc. This is particularly important for those in other countries, because the most difficult part of any such enterprise is to start it.

We are very much impressed by the report of the Work Camp in Cyprus which brought together members of the Greek and Turkish communities and it is felt that the W.R.I. should take responsibility for a new type of work camps with similar objectives (starting with a pilot scheme first) in situations of conflict or near-violence. These work camps should have a more or less permanent staff drawn from various direct democracy movements around the world.

We feel that the discussion must continue. It is generally felt that at this stage publication and discussion of concrete experiences is the most important thing, a more useful form of development than establishing new organisations.

In addition to the Conference Summary of the discussions held and in view of the emergent character of the issue, the Conference passed the following resolution on Vietnam:

#### WAR IN VIETNAM

Those of us gathered in Rome for the 12th Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International are united in protesting the brutal war in Vietnam. We begin by sending our greetings not only to the American Sections of the WRI - the War Resisters League and the Fellowship of Reconciliation - but to all sections of the American peace movement, to the religious and intellectual leaders, to the students, to the veterans of other

wars and present-day soldiers who now declare against war, to the handful of courageous political leaders such as Senators Wayne, Morse, William Gruening and William Fulbright, and particularly to those men who have been jailed for refusing to be conscripted.

Because you have spoken and marched in protest, and because in some cases you have accepted prison rather than military service, you have made it possible for us to see "the other America", the one concerned for democracy and for peace. You are the heroes of your country to-day. We greet you with fraternity and count you as comrades in the continuing and world-wide struggle against militarism and violence in all countries and for the cause of democracy, not only in Vietnam but everywhere, both East and West.

We know, however, that the situation is extremely grave. If the protest movement in the United States speaks for the best in America, it does not speak for the majority. We know that most Americans support President Johnson's militarism and that strong elements within the Pentagon desire war with China and see Vietnam as a chance to provoke China into that war.

If such a war should break out, then Vietnam would be not only a moral issue for the peoples of the world, but it would present the danger of a nuclear war and the destruction of human civilisation. Therefore we call upon all our member Sections to consider the following actions within their own countries:

(1) In every case where, under pressure from Washington, national governments are giving token support to the American position on Vietnam, political campaigns must be waged to force those governments to withdraw such support. Even token support permits the American government to tell the American people that the American position has wide support. It is essential for the American people to understand how very isolated the American government is on the issue of Vietnam. In some cases trade unions may be able to mount direct industrial action against American shipping involved in carrying supplies to Vietnam.

(2) We call on our member Sections to seek creative ways of communicating with the tens of thousands of Americans who, as tourists, visit our countries. If pacifists would regularly leaflet every American Express Office in every country, this would be of enormous value. In the best traditions of non-violence such leafletting would not be hostile or anti-American, but would rather seek to communicate our friendly attitude towards individual Americans even as we explain the horror with which the world views the actions of America in Vietnam.

(3) We urge our member Sections in those countries where American troops are stationed to seek, in an active and friendly way, to persuade those troops to separate themselves from the American military forces. We oppose all military forces and, particularly, we oppose conscription. But we realise the moral difference between military service in a nation at peace or even in the army of a nation defending itself against attack (and which, because it does not understand non-violence or because it lacks the courage to defend itself by non-violence,

resorts to violent defence), and an army engaged in a brutal war of aggression against a whole population, including women and children, as in the case of Vietnam.

Under the International Law laid down at Nuremburg Trials, not only the pacifist but also the non-pacifist has a legal obligation to refuse service in a war such as that in Vietnam; a war in which prisoners are tortured and killed, civilian areas bombed, gas and napalm widely used, and the crops deliberately destroyed with chemicals.

As pacifists who believe in the right of every nation to self-determination we have always condemned the military interventions of the great powers into the affairs of the smaller and weaker nations. We sharply condemned the Russian actions in Hungary, the British-French-Israeli action in Egypt, and the French action in Algeria. But the American actions in Vietnam are more terrible, more destructive, more senseless, and more criminal than all of these previous actions taken together.

If in the present situation any American service man should seek release from the American armed forces on grounds of conscience and if, failing to win such a release, he defects from the American forces and seeks political asylum in any country where we have an active Section, we urge the WRI Section in that country to provide all possible protection to such defectors.

(4) We urge our national Sections to seek, either through official actions of their governments or through voluntary actions of their people, to send medical aid and medical teams into all areas of Vietnam, both Northern and Southern Vietnam, in order to manifest in material form the conscience and the compassion of mankind.

(5) We will expect the International Office of the WRI to continue to seek, in cooperation with other international bodies, to mobilize leading intellectual, political, trade union, student and religious leaders whose prestige is such that their voice cannot be ignored by the American political leaders. Also, to continue to take an active part in those non-violent demonstrations which, by their sheer size, force the American government to take note of the growing world-wide opposition to US policy in Vietnam.

Finally, we extend our special greetings to the Buddhist leadership in Vietnam itself, where, under extremely difficult conditions, they have sought non-violent ways to create a government which would represent all the forces in South Vietnam, including the National Liberation Front. We appreciate and support the desire of the people of Vietnam to create a unified nation, free from the military intervention of any external government, East or West.

We are aware that just as American aggression has brutalized the American people, so even the most decent elements within the revolutionary forces in Vietnam are brutalized by a war in which both sides, because they have adopted the method of violence, are forced into acts of terrorism against civilians as well as soldiers.

We appreciate the numerous efforts of the National Liberation Front, through diplomatic channels, to negotiate the withdrawal of American troops. We are discouraged by the dishonesty of the Johnson "Peace Offensive" during which the United States called for peace but refused to discuss a time table for the swift withdrawal of U.S. troops. Despite the Johnson duplicity, we hope the National Liberation Front will continue to seek the negotiated withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. We would hope that such diplomatic actions by the N.L.F. would be even more public and continuous in order that killing on both sides might stop at the earliest possible moment.

Other resolutions passed by the Conference:

#### MAFIA AND THE WORK OF DANILLO DOLCI

The 12th Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International, held at Domus Pacis from 7th to 12th April 1966

- welcomes with respect and admiration the fact that the new Sicilian society has committed itself to fight against the violence of Mafia, and greatly appreciates the work of Danilo Dolci and his group in helping the people to develop this consciousness through non-violent means.
- hopes that the pledge to truth and justice will be increasingly supported by cultural, religious and political groups and by the intervention of the Italian State.
- hopes that this pledge (striving to eliminate a tragic phenomenon which results in bloodshed and oppression - felt even beyond the Italian frontiers) will contribute effectively to the creation of a new democratic way of life whose aim is social and economic evolution.

#### CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN ITALY

The War Resisters' International which unites groups of conscientious objectors from all over the world examined the position of the Italian conscientious objector with special attention during its 12th Triennial Conference held in Rome from 7th to 12th April, 1966.

Bearing in mind that at present four bills concerning the recognition of conscientious objectors have already been presented to the Italian Parliament, that three of these bills have been drawn up by members of Parliament who belong to parties represented in the Cabinet, i.e. supporting the present government's policy, that the ruling authorities have at various times declared themselves inclined to reach a solution to the problem in view of the fact that there are no objections on

principle and that the vast majority of the public from all walks of life and in different ways has expressed itself in favour of legal recognition of the conscientious objector, the War Resisters' International decided to present the President of the Italian Republic with the request that, during the time that it will take for a law for conscientious objectors to be passed, a time lag that in the circumstances will only be caused by a hold-up in the administrative machinery, the Italian conscientious objectors at present suffering imprisonment should be released temporarily. If this were found to be impossible to implement, the request would be that the conscientious objectors be released and transferred to camps which are not of a criminal character. In either case the Italian Parliament would be acting according to precedent already followed in other countries.

The 12th Triennial Conference in its business sessions (11-12 April, 1966) took into account the discussion on Non-Violence and Politics and in view of the work of the International and its member organisations during the coming months and years made the following proposals to the W.R.I. Council:

#### PROPOSED ACTIONS

##### Vietnam:

1. Following on the Resolution on Vietnam passed at the open session of this Conference, we urge that W.R.I. Sections should express to American tourists at American Express and Consular offices in Europe the revulsion many Europeans feel about the war in Vietnam. A leaflet should be made available by W.R.I. to Sections wishing to use it. Sections are also encouraged to produce their own leaflet.
2. The W.R.I. office should arrange a delegation of eminent Europeans to Washington so that they may represent to the American government and people European opposition to the American policy in Vietnam.
3. We urge the Sections of the W.R.I. to follow the initiative of the American peace movement to urge U.S. servicemen in Europe to defect from the armed forces in protest against the war in Vietnam. We also urge sections to aid any U.S. servicemen who do defect, and to press their governments to give asylum to any U.S. defectors who wish to seek asylum in any country.

##### NATO:

We urge that the WRI explore ways of coordinating the activities of its Sections against NATO, and of putting forward to the public a clear alternative both to NATO and to independent national nuclear forces. This alternative should point to the

importance of disbanding both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the urgency of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, should aim at creating an atom-free, and eventually totally disarmed Europe, and a community of nations between West and East Europe. Steps towards disarmament and non-alignment in Europe should be seen in the context of the problems of world disarmament and peace, and should be presented as part of the world struggle for disarmament and a new political and social order.

In order to implement a campaign against NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the W.R.I. should seek contact with the Peace Committees and other groups in Eastern Europe.

The W.R.I. should explore methods of dramatising opposition to NATO, including two suggestions already put forward:

- (a) that Sections organise resistance to any attempt to establish the NATO Headquarters in another country;
- (b) that the W.R.I. head office organise a simulated, or "mock" NATO Conference, with representatives from all NATO countries, which would discuss the problems of disbanding NATO and put forward the kind of proposals the W.R.I. would wish the real NATO conference to debate in 1969.

#### International Peacemaking

The W.R.I. should seek distinctive non-violent approaches to the resolving of tension in crisis situations; these approaches could supplement work undertaken by the United Nations and other organisations. With this in mind the W.R.I. should give careful consideration to experimental projects possibly in either the Dominican Republic, or in Rhodesia. We suggest that the work camp organised last year in Cyprus which was described by Malvern Lumsden at this conference provides a model for a possible W.R.I. project.

#### Conscientious Objection

After having heard of the difficulties of the Italian and Swiss Sections in their struggle to ensure the rights of conscientious objectors, we urge all Sections of the W.R.I. to extend their assistance to Sections still engaged in this kind of struggle.

From its inception the W.R.I. has urged and continues to urge the legal recognition of conscientious objectors throughout the world. As the intensity and barbarism of militarism increases we are impressed by the newest forms of resistance, such as burning draft cards and other forms of civil disobedience. Although we regard open resistance as socially and politically most useful, we support every expression of individual resistance.

We recommend that an International Commission on Conscription be set up to go into all the questions connected with military and civil conscription, and the possibility of building up a world-wide campaign against it. We also ask the W.R.I. to compile a register of young people who would voluntarily offer to

do one or two years of service in any part of the world including their own countries as alternative to Alternative Service.

### Study-Work Camps

We urge the W.R.I. to organise further study-work camps on the lines of those already held at Hôspental in Switzerland and Signa in Italy. The Council is asked to consider the possibility of combining such camps with the proposals also made at this Conference for annual conferences of the W.R.I.

### Organisation of W.R.I.

This Conference emphasises the desirability of decentralising the work of the W.R.I. both to specialised committees and to national sections, in order to spread the work and financial load falling on the international office, and to involve many more individuals and groups in the international activities of the W.R.I. Such decentralisation could cover both the organisation of particular projects, and the preparation and distribution of literature and information.

One specific proposal for increasing the involvement of national and local sections in the international work of W.R.I. was to appoint international secretaries for local sections.

### COUNCIL MEETING

Among other things the International Council of the War Resisters' International at its meeting on the 13th April, 1966 held at Domus Pacis, Rome, decided that:

In connection with the war in Vietnam -

- (a) 2 leaflets, one addressing American tourists outside U.S.A. and the other addressing U.S. troops in Europe, will be prepared in co-operation with and for the use of W.R.I. Sections and other movements willing to co-operate;
- (b) a delegation of eminent Europeans will be arranged to go to Washington;

In connection with NATO -

- (a) the 1967 Study Conference would be devoted to NATO and its future;
- (b) a mass teach-in will be organised as soon as possible at the time of the NATO Council meeting in the same place;



And in connection with Conscientious Objection and Conscription -

- (a) an International Commission on Conscription will be set up and
- (b) 3 Work-Study Camps will be organised in 1966-67 for English, French and German-speaking people

The W.R.I. will be glad to answer enquiries.