

# ***THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION*** **and the spread of ideas about civil resistance\***

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## ***Difficulties in assessing***

It is difficult for me as the author of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* to assess the role and possible influences of this book, especially concerning the spread of civil resistance. However, this is my assigned topic. The difficulties are not only because of the need to maintain a reasonable amount of objectivity but also because of the problem of my having sufficient information. Additionally, such a book may have had several potential influences and consequences including scholarly, policy, and political ones, as well as the consequences of simplifications and popularizations. Evidences, positive and negative, for these influences and consequences are often inadequately known by the author, and would require independent researchers and analysts.

Of course, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* is neither the first nor the last book about nonviolent action. Earlier studies include those by Clarence Marsh Case, *Non-Violent Coercion* (1923); Bartélemy de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence* (1937 and 1972); Karl Ehrlich, Niels Lindberg, and Gammelgaard Jacobson, *Kamp Uden Vaaben*, (1937); Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (1935 and 1966); Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence* (1939 and 1962); and Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (1958). Major attention was also given to many of the writings and speeches of Mohandas K.

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The terms 'nonviolent action,' 'nonviolent struggle,' and 'civil resistance' are used in this paper interchangeably.

Gandhi for their insights into this technique. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* owes some debt to each of these and many other studies but differs from all of those in significant ways. There were other books on this subject<sup>1</sup> (Adam Roberts, editor, *The Strategy of Civilian Defence*,<sup>2</sup> was focused almost exclusively on the potential of this technique for national defense and Theodor Ebert's *Gewaltfreie Aktion*<sup>3</sup> appeared after this study was already published.)

### **Beliefs and conflicts**

Most of the above titles combined examination of the technique of action with nonviolence as a moral or religious principle, as did my M.A. thesis of 1951 and my early publications. Finally, when working in Norway, about 1958, it became clear to me, however, that the technique and the belief systems were distinct phenomena that therefore merited separate examinations.

All of the publications of the 1920s and 1930s left me with a sense that they were inadequate in presenting the nature and characteristics of the technique of nonviolent action, or civil resistance. It seemed to me that this weakness impeded both the understanding of this technique and the adoption and effectiveness of these means of struggle. I had analyzed principled nonviolence in both earlier and more recent studies. Most of my major further studies have focussed on the technique of nonviolent action practiced for pragmatic reasons.

As belief systems and types of action are distinct phenomena, it is unfortunate that the same single word 'nonviolence' is commonly applied to both

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<sup>1</sup> For references and publication details see Ronald M. McCarthy and Gene Sharp, *Nonviolent Action: A Research Guide*. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997.) In addition, there were many special studies of labor strikes, economic boycotts, Gandhian conflicts, and individual campaigns.

For more recent studies, see April Carter, Howard Clark, and Michael Randle, *People Power and Protest since 1945: A Bibliography of Nonviolent Action*. London: Housmans, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> London: Faber and Faber, 1967 and when titled *Civilian Resistance as a National Defense*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1968 and Harmondsworth, Middlesex and Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1969.

phenomena and to a combination of them. It is preferable, therefore, to use the term 'nonviolent action' or 'nonviolent struggle' for the technique and 'principled nonviolence' for the belief systems.

Consequently working initially in Norway in the 1950s at the Institute for Social Research, I began several individual papers on aspects of nonviolent action. I took a few copies of one of these short papers on about 65 specific methods (with only brief descriptions) to Accra, Ghana, for the Positive Action Conference on Peace and Security in Africa in the spring of 1960. I was amazed at the intense interest shown by delegates from Somalia and South Africa, both still under European rule. This was an indication that descriptive studies could be seen to be relevant in real-world conflicts.

I also outlined an intended future multi-year study on the potential of nonviolent struggle against totalitarian systems. This plan was accidentally published. Major parts of that vast research plan (never fully implemented), with major additional work at St. Catherine's College, Oxford and the Center for International Affairs of Harvard University, became my Oxford D. Phil. thesis (1968). After years of additional work and editing it became the published *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973). As most of you may not have had access to this volume, I will offer a very brief summary of its contents and their origins.

### ***Power as the basis of nonviolent action***

Persons familiar with my earlier work in Norway on nonviolent action had confirmed my own perception that my attempts to analyze the dynamics of this technique were impeded by serious weaknesses in my understanding of political power. Consequently, I sought guidance back in England in studies in political theory and was admitted to St. Catherine's Society, later College, by its Master, Alan Bullock who assigned me to work with John Plamenatz then of Nuffield College, later Professor at All Souls College.

I had thought that I required basic studies in the general field of political theory. However, in light of my interest in resistance movements to

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<sup>3</sup> Waldkirch: Waldkircher Verlag, 1978.

totalitarianism, Plamenatz recommended a focus primarily on power, authority and political obligation. The readings Plamenatz recommended, and some additional ones, enabled me to produce after months of study and analysis, both initial drafts of Chapter One 'The Nature and Control of Political Power' of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* and of Chapter Two 'Social Power and Political Freedom,' (on the role of non-State social groups and institutions) in the book of the same name.<sup>4</sup>

These chapters were primarily rooted in the writings of established political theorists and political sociologists, including Martin Hillenbrand, Robert MacIver, Auguste Comte, T. H. Green, Harold Lasswell, Jacques Maritain, John Austin, Baron de Montesquieu, Jean Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Max Weber, Herbert Goldhamer, Edward A. Shils, Karl W. Deutsch, W. A. Rudlin, Chester I. Barnard, Niccolo Machiavelli, Jeremy Bentham, Georg Simmel, E. V. Walter, Franz Neumann, Jacques Necker, Etienne de la Boëtie, Thomas Hobbes, C. Wright Mills, Alexis de Tocqueville, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels, as well as the insights of a few political actors. There were other readings that I found to be of inferior quality.

Chapter One from *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* identified six sources of political power. As I was completing the next to final chapter on the operation of nonviolent struggle of the first complete draft of that book at Oxford, I was startled that nonviolent coercion was produced by restricting or severing those same sources of power. That confluence brought to nonviolent struggle the basis of potential political realism, and thereby facilitated the development of political policies employing this technique.

Although the theory of the dependence of rulers on the obedience and cooperation of the subjects had earlier been expressed in brief passages by others, such as Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Gustav Landauer, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* presented the fullest analysis to date of that insight and did so on the basis of respected theorists.

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<sup>4</sup> Boston, Porter Sargent Publishers, 1980.

### ***Focusing on reality***

In addition to offering the extended analysis of power, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* contains additional important contents. The initial power analysis is followed by an introductory survey of some of the history of this technique and a review of its major characteristics.

These examinations are not based on reasoning from moral principles to what *should* be actual applications. Instead, as much as possible, these analyses are based on evidence from actual struggles along with some insights from earlier scholars that seemed valid. Accounts of earlier struggles were especially useful concerning economic boycotts and labor strikes. Eight chapters are then devoted to a catalogue of 198 individual methods of action in the technique with definitions and examples. These methods are grouped into classes and subclasses based on their characteristics. They are protest and persuasion, social noncooperation, economic boycotts, labor strikes, political noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention.

The final six chapters of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* analyze the operation of this technique in conflicts with opponents who are able and willing to apply violent repression to counter the nonviolent challenge. Three main mechanisms of change that operate in cases of success (conversion, accommodation, and nonviolent coercion) are presented. (Later, I added 'disintegration' as a fourth mechanism.)<sup>5</sup>

The factors that determine whether a given case fails or succeeds are reviewed. The importance of strategic planning to increase effectiveness is introduced. The book ends with a discussion of the consequences of the use of this technique on the distribution of power in the society.

### ***The published study***

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<sup>5</sup> Gene Sharp, 'There Are Realistic Alternatives' (Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003), p. 14, and Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 2005) , pp. 418-421.

There were problems in getting a publisher and finally in 1973 it was issued only in the United States, by Porter Sargent Publishers in Boston. Despite its great length and although both the author and the publisher were largely unknown, it received about 65 reviews and was pronounced by some to be an 'instant classic.' After the single volume edition sold out, it was re-issued only as three paperback volumes. These have remained in print ever since, some volumes now being in their eighth printing. While there have been some advantages to these separate volumes, I have been uneasy at the separation of the discussions on the power analysis, the methods of nonviolent action, and the dynamics and mechanisms of the technique.

### ***Early political interest***

Although *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* has been far from a best seller, and has not been easily available except in North America, the book has had wide usage, by individuals, study groups, organizations, resistance movements, and at times even defense ministries.

Serious treatment of all these elements of nonviolent action required many words. Although the pages do not include excess verbage, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* is long: 903 pages. This has limited translations and encouraged a few extreme abridgements. For example, in 1987 and 1988, an extreme abridgement in Spanish (78 and 114 pp.) was widely used in Mexico by groups trying to prepare themselves for action in case of another attempt at electoral fraud, and in Chile by opponents of the Pinochet regime. A different English language synopsis, 'There Are Realistic Alternatives' was published in 2003.<sup>6</sup>

Both the 1968 Oxford thesis and the 1973 published version were strictly academic studies with no discussion of possible future applications.<sup>7</sup> However, I

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<sup>6</sup> Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> However, the first complete draft (of three) of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, produced in Norway and at Oxford had contained a final Part on potential applications of the technique that was deleted from the final two complete manuscripts.

had personally hoped that greater knowledge of nonviolent action would contribute to both the use of this technique and to increasing its effectiveness. This hope has seemed, gradually, to becoming realized with the use of the analysis of political power in planning for action in Serbia in 1999 and 2000. Srdja Popovic and colleagues focused on the identified six sources of political power as providing the key to undermining repressive regimes: shrink or sever those sources and the regime is weakened or disintegrated.

### ***Independent resistance movements***

Several important nonviolent struggles have occurred since the publication of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* in 1973 that had little or nothing to do with that book or its analyses. The use of nonviolent struggle had earlier spread simply by knowledge of the practice of such resistance elsewhere, the process of contagion. This occurred, for example, in 1944 with the ousting by nonviolent uprisings of two entrenched Central American military dictatorships, in El Salvador in April and then, spread by imitation, in Guatemala. Also, additional studies about the potential of nonviolent struggle and past applications of the technique (such as the Polish Solidarity movement) have been issued during these years that have been important but have owed little or nothing to *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Similarly, the multiple massive demonstrations in China in 1989 and other cases apparently owed nothing to published analyses of the operation of nonviolent struggle.

Other published studies of the application of nonviolent action have been used in other conflicts. Currently, Robert Helvey's *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking About the Fundamentals*<sup>8</sup> is being widely used, including the original edition and translations.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Helvey, *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking About the Fundamentals* (Boston, Massachusetts: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2004 (176 pp.).

### ***Direct political uses: Serbia***

*The Politics of Nonviolent Action* in full had been introduced by Robert Helvey to the group that became Otpor at the workshop he led for them in Budapest and that later went on to lead the nonviolent uprising that ousted Milosovic as dictator. The most explicit assessment of the influence of this book on the Serbian revolution of October 2000 was authored by Srdja Popovic for Otpor's analytical team. The document was titled 'CANVAS TOTAL INDEX: Serbian Arena for Nonviolent Conflict: An Analytical Overview of the Application of Gene Sharp's Theory of Nonviolent Action in Milosevic's Serbia.' ('CANVAS' is an acronym for the Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies, in Belgrade, Serbia.)

Popovic reviewed the discussion in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* of the sources of political power in any society. They are: authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions. All these are provided by the cooperation and obedience of the population and institutions in the society. Therefore, by withdrawing the needed cooperation and obedience, the power of any regime can be weakened and potentially destroyed. After presenting each source of power, each is discussed for its role in Serbia.

Popovic then wrote that '... Sharp's work offered an astoundingly effective blueprint for confronting a brutal regime while engaging the population into a pluralist, nonviolent struggle for self-liberation.' A footnote to that document reads:

Smuggled into Serbia, Gene Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973) shared the fate of many books in "closed societies": it was read in secret, reproduced cheaply in secret, and passed on in secret. With this citation, an homage is paid not just to its author but to all who have made its present citation possible and those who make free expression of ideas a perilous endeavor are justly condemned.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 8 pp., Belgrade, photocopied, 2001.

### ***Direct political uses: Eritrea***

Just as the Otpor movement in Serbia had prepared a manual for action by their participants, so has the current Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights. The extremely brutal party dictatorship in the Horn of Africa has resulted in a million and a half exiles. Many of these live in South Africa. There they have organized a nonviolent struggle movement for basic change. Their draft manual draws in large part on the Serbian experience and also *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, rather than the shorter more popular *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, that had drawn their interest earlier. Like the Serbs, they are also preparing a manual for their constituents. A very large number of individuals and organizations have been involved in the process, which is highly unusual. The preparation of the 58 page draft of the manual has been discussed in workshops of Eritrean exiles in four cities of South Africa. 'Of course, our project of developing the manual on nonviolent struggle is based from the insight of the handbook produced by Otpor and from Sharp's theory of nonviolent action.' The writings of Robert Helvey and Chee Soon Juan were also credited.<sup>10</sup>

The manual was prepared originally in Tigrina and translated into English. Translations into other languages of Eritrea are planned.

The manual early presents the theory that even oppressive regimes depend on the cooperation and obedience of the ruled population. It then turns to examine why people obey. The seven reasons why people obey that come from the first chapter of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* are presented with discussion of how each reason for obedience applies to Eritrea. Eritrean culture and history are examined for the impact they have on these reasons for obedience.

Given that background, the draft then turns to how the population is going to recover its power and achieve justice, whether by nonviolent or violent means. The classes of methods of nonviolent action are presented, protest and

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<sup>10</sup> E-mail letters to Jamila Raqib from a leader of the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights, February 14 and 28. 2006

persuasion, noncooperation (social, economic, and political), and intervention. These are discussed as they are relevant in the Eritrean context. The mechanisms of change in this technique are reviewed, again in an Eritrean context: conversion, accommodation, nonviolent coercion, and disintegration.

Attention is then given to the contaminants that operate to wreck the operation of nonviolent struggle: violence, disunity, appearance of exclusiveness, presence of foreign nationals within the movement, active participation of military forces in political processes, are presented in the Eritrean context. Also discussed are problems posed by an ill-suited organizational structure, secrecy, and *agents provocateurs*. The draft concludes with an appendix listing 198 specific methods.

The work on this draft of a grand strategic analysis and review of options for the Eritrean struggle continues.

### ***Derivative studies***

Derivative studies that are strongly based on the analyses in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* generically analyze the possible application of nonviolent struggle to certain types of anticipated conflicts or otherwise lead to significant additional scholarly studies.

For example, *my From Dictatorship to Democracy* is a generic analysis of how extreme dictatorships can be destroyed. It was originally written at the invitation of U Tin Maung Win, then editor of the exile paper *Khit Pyaing (New Era)* based in Bangkok and published there in 1993 in Burmese and English. A photocopy copy of the booklet was taken to Belgrade and a Serbian translation was used in the build-up to the 2000 struggle against Milosovic.<sup>11</sup> The application of nonviolent struggle was aimed to restrict and possibly sever the sources of power of the opposed regime. The fact that it has spread to numerous countries in twenty-six languages in print and websites despite an

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<sup>11</sup> Issued by Civic Initiatives in Belgrade in 1999.

almost complete lack of promotion and almost no payment for translations is significant.

Another clear derivative study is *The Anti-Coup* by Bruce Jenkins and myself. This offers analysis of how military or political take-overs can be blocked by noncooperation and defiance, including recommended steps by both governments and civil institutions. Those measures have not yet been adopted in any country.

One important historical study derived from *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* deals with strategically planned resistance by American colonists to British regulations, taxation, and rule from London in the decade before military hostilities in 1775. A few young American scholars initiated what became an eight year project. This focussed on three major nonviolent struggle movements applying economic and political noncooperation and building of autonomous economic and political institutions 1765-1775. These struggles produced de facto independence for most of the colonies before the outbreak of war in 1775. These studies included prominent British historians of the period. They also treated separately factual descriptions of the conduct of the conflict and political analyses of the events, from both the American and British perspectives.<sup>12</sup>

The study *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System*<sup>13</sup> is not a derivative study like the previous ones. It draws of the thinking and work of several other scholars, and especially those participating in the Civilian Defence Study Conference at St. Hilda's College Oxford in August 1964. The book discusses potential applications of civil resistance in deterring and resisting foreign invasions and occupations and coups d'état. Early page proofs of my *Civilian-Based Defense* were used in English or in quick translations in 1990 in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by their independence-minded governments.

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<sup>12</sup> Walter H. Conser, Jr., Ronald M. McCarthy, David J. Toscano, and Gene Sharp, *Resistance, Politics, and The American Struggle for Independence, 1765-1775*. 592 pp. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Princeton New Jersey and London: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Along with their own improvised resistance these means bought them independence despite having been incorporated into the Soviet Union.

### ***Intensive workshops and consultations***

In addition to the printed sources of ideas about nonviolent action, the understanding has also been spread through intensive workshops and consultations. These have been conducted by specially qualified individuals for relatively small numbers of persons, rarely over thirty. It is important to distinguish these workshops from the more elementary “training” sessions that are more widespread and useful but more limited in their objectives.

Our workshops have thus far been conducted only by Robert Helvey and myself, but some given by others may also serve this role. We never give advice on what actions the group should take. That is partly because the consultants do not know the identified society and situation in depth. Instead, we emphasize learning in depth about the workings of nonviolent action, the strengths and weaknesses of the opponents and the grievance group (perhaps by using the strategic estimate guide), and encouraging the ability of participants to think and plan strategically.

These were initiated by Robert Helvey with a concern for Burma and have been conducted by either him or myself, on occasion by both together and more often singly, at times with an accompanying colleague. These workshops have rarely included required readings, but have been more often conducted by extensive oral presentations and discussion. These have at times been introductory and at times advanced. The content of workshops has usually been prepared by the presenter for the particular occasion. At times the workshop presentations have been intended to provide a rapid introduction of more extensive printed materials. At other times the presentations have been designed to provide insights more advanced than available in printed materials.

Believers in principled nonviolence can become skilled strategic planners of pragmatic nonviolent struggle at the same time that they maintain their personal beliefs. However, this is dependent on their gaining the same types of

knowledge as is required of anyone else to develop such skills and their not assuming that their personal convictions provide answers to all problems of a struggle movement.

The focus of these workshops has been primarily on the development of understandings on the grand strategic or strategic level, as distinct from the more limited tactical and event focus. For example, they did not primarily focus on how to handle physical attacks from the opponents' agents of repression and how to deal with arrests and imprisonment. Instead, these workshops have included advice on how to prepare strategic plans for future campaigns. Such workshops have been thus far conducted for opposition groups from Serbia, Burma, Tibet, Venezuela, and Belarus. Clearly, the most successful of these was the one provided by Robert Helvey in Budapest for Serb youths that became Otpor.

***'First, do no harm'***

A word of caution is needed, however. Not everyone who wishes to increase the use of nonviolent struggle or to make the application effective should conduct workshops like these. The leaders of these workshops should be very highly qualified in their knowledge of such situations and the workings and practice of nonviolent struggle and in strategic planning.

The Hippocratic oath of medicine needs to be applied to workshops about nonviolent action: 'First, do no harm.' Attempts to provide workshops and consulting can do harm. It is sometimes better to make no attempt to provide workshops or to offer consulting at all, and to leave the group to its own devices. At times it can be better to provide access to available quality published resources than to offer them an inadequate type of in-person workshops, educators, or advisors.

In order to reduce the occasions in which groups facing an anticipated conflict receive inadequate information and unwise advice, it is desirable to utilize only very highly qualified consultants, and do what is possible to disseminate the needed knowledge and understanding. Much of this is available at present.

Published recommendations are also now available on how to formulate strategies for particular campaigns.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Films and new communication technologies***

Another useful contribution to spreading understanding of the actual practice of nonviolent struggle in individual cases and preserving the historical record, has been the production of films about the application of nonviolent struggle. A prime example of these has been 'Bringing Down a Dictator' about the Otpor struggle against Milosovic, produced by Steve York and Miriam Zimmerman.

Various developments in communications technology have in recent years been greatly facilitating the spread of ideas and information world-wide. This has supplied access to information about nonviolent struggle to populations whose rulers do not appreciate this development. New technologies have also facilitated communication among dissenting populations and the sharing of information with the outside world. Naturally, highly undemocratic regimes are unhappy with these developments and seek means to control or halt them. Their means, however, have proven to be inadequate. These types of technologies are constantly developing and innovating so that reliable analyses and recommendations for their use by groups facing conflicts must also continue to develop and expand.

### ***Hostile reactions***

It should not be assumed that if credible information about nonviolent struggle becomes readily available to the previously weaker side in a conflict, or if that group may even adopt this alternative, that the dominant group will welcome such moves. Quite to the contrary, there have been important evidences that oppressive regimes are sometimes alarmed.

These evidences are more recent than Viceroy Lord Irwin's address to both houses of parliament in New Delhi on July 9, 1930, speaking against the

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<sup>14</sup> See Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, Part Four and Appendix A.

current civil disobedience movement. He denounced the movement as 'unconstitutional and dangerously subversive.' It was, he said, 'the application of force under another form . . . ' Therefore, he continued, ' . . . we must fight it with all our strength.'<sup>15</sup>

In 1995 and 1996 the Burmese military dictators (called the SLORC<sup>16</sup>) many times in newspapers, radio, and other means of communication denounced 'political defiance' and particularly the recent booklet *From Dictatorship to Democracy* that was smuggled into Burma from Thailand. Translated editions in Karen, Chin, Jing-Paw, and Mon were soon available. SLORC newspapers, state radio, television, and newspapers repeatedly warned the dangers of the use of these opposition methods.<sup>17</sup>

The writer in the English language SLORC newspaper *New Light of Myanmar* in July 1995 in a series of articles warned that success by political defiance (nonviolent struggle) would mean chaos, internal war, and anarchy, and denounced Robert Helvey and myself by name. The writer charged that I was 'an American spy' and 'may be a Communist.' The writer, Naw Rahta, wrote that the predominantly nonviolent uprising of August 1988 had brought Burma near to disintegration and collapse. His article of July 4, 1995 included specific information about the methods of struggle listed in my *From Dictatorship to Democracy* along with inserted comments about violent and destructive methods. Both *New Light of Myanmar* and the military newspaper *The Mirror* on July 5, 1995 carried Article 21 in the series with additional accusations against political defiance and myself:

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<sup>15</sup> Gene Sharp, *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960), pp. 168-169.

<sup>16</sup> State Law and Order Restoration Council.

<sup>17</sup> See Gene Sharp, 'Burmese Dictatorship Attacks Nonviolent Struggle and its Advocates, February-July 1995.' photocopied manuscript, 20 pp. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1995). Also, Gene Sharp and Robert Helvey, 'SLORC Denunciations of Political Defiance by official publications and broadcasts June-December 1996.' photocopied manuscript 38 pp. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997).

Although political defiance is said to be nonviolent, it is the conspiracy that will lead to violence and anarchy to disintegrate the Union. If the State Law and Order Restoration Council was a weak and stupid government, it would not be able to withstand the attacks of political defiance. The Union would be disintegrated.

Following the denunciations in SLORC newspapers and broadcasts, there was an increased demand from inside Burma for this publication. A new printing of 15,000 copies was prepared to meet that need.

An article in *New Light of Myanmar* on June 4, 1996 referred to 'the paper titled "From Dictatorship to Democracy" that is a masterminding writing of American tout Gene Sharp.' The writer explained: 'Political defiance means to deliberately defy government influence in political, social, and economic sectors.' That was obviously not a welcome prospect for the military dictators.

The regime has not lost its hostility to political defiance. Around the beginning of 2006 two men were sentenced to seven years imprisonment each for merely having a copy of the Burmese language edition of *From Dictatorship to Democracy*.

It is widely assumed that articles critical of political defiance and the National League for Democracy are written by members of the Directorate for Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI) who are given a *nom d'plume*.

In Russia, roughly between 1998 and 2005 four independent translations of *From Dictatorship to Democracy* were made and issued, but none had received or followed our translation guidelines to ensure quality and accuracy in terminology. When notice was received that a fifth translation had been prepared, Jamila Raqib of the Albert Einstein Institution had all five evaluated to determine which translation was the most accurate and only needed limited improvements. That could then become the standard Russian translation.

While the fifth translation was being printed at the state publishing house, an FSB officer (Federal Security Service, successor to the KGB) visited the printing house. He examined the book and demanded that the printing be stopped. "This is a bomb," he declared, referring to the book. The manuscript

was then taken to a private publisher outside Moscow and the printing proceeded.

There was no official reaction to the book and no known pressure on the bookshops selling it. However, in an alarming coincidence after the presentation of the book on June 14, 2005, two bookshops that were the main partners with the publisher (Novoe Izdatestvo and United Civil Front) and which had been selling the most copies burned. Bilingua, both a well-known bookstore and café, burned, destroying all its books. The fire was reportedly caused by an electrical short circuit. Also, Falanster, a bookshop selling unofficial and opposition literature of various types, was set afire the night of July 22, 2005, by a grenade or Molotov cocktail being thrown through the shop window. All books on its shelves were damaged.

As of February 2006 about 1,500 printed copies had been distributed, primarily by the Oborona and Moscow: Free Choice groups, and about 500 through bookstores.

The 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, Beijing and hundreds of other cities are far behind us, but the Chinese regime's worry about nonviolent protests has not ended. In a report from Beijing by Joseph Kahn about two dissident lawyers, he wrote in February 2007:

'In internal party speeches, Mr. Hu [President Hu Jintao] has called on officials to guard against "color revolutions" of the kind that swept Central Asia and Central Europe, which officials here attributed to a potent combination of civic and social organizations and foreign forces.'<sup>18</sup>

### ***Another option***

In facing the future, and preparing for it, there is another option in place of improvisation and spontaneity: deliberate steps to increase the effectiveness of nonviolent action. This option requires increased understanding of its major characteristics, capacity, requirements, and strategic principles. This makes possible wise strategic planning—that is identifying the characteristics of the

present situation, what needs to be done, why, when, and how to do it, and how to counter the opponents' actions and repression.

Beneficial changes in the conditions of the conflict, and in the relative power of the contending groups, can be produced by actions of the nonviolent struggle group. These can be achieved principally through the skillful choice and application of wise strategy. Wise strategy can greatly increase the effectiveness of nonviolent struggle and its capacity to undermine oppression.

Strategic nonviolent struggle can be targeted to apply the strengths of the resisting population against the weaknesses of the opponents in order to change power relationships. The oppressed population can be strengthened, the domination can be undermined, and highly repressive regimes can be weakened, and even disintegrated. As the population's strength grows, it becomes possible for them to move from defeats, to initial small victories, to large successes.

Now, some social scientists and strategists operating with the most meager resources—this is a problem—are attempting to study this technique and to learn more of its nature, its dynamics, its requirements for success against various types of opponents, and to examine its future potentialities in order to resolve individual grave problems realistically.

### ***The potential of continuing studies***

The major elements of these studies need to include the following:

1. Dissemination of the realization that nonviolent struggle is an important contribution when people face acute conflicts.
2. Research and analysis can give us increased understanding of the workings and dynamics of nonviolent struggle.
3. Strategic planning is extremely important in efforts to make an anticipated nonviolent struggle as effective as possible.
4. Policy studies are also helpful in dealing with several important types of conflict situations. The planned and prepared substitution of nonviolent action for violent means has been recommended for the following purposes:

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<sup>18</sup> *New York Times*, February 25, 2007, p. 10.

- Dismantling dictatorships;
- Blocking new coups d'état and preventing new dictatorships;
- Defending against foreign aggression and occupations;
- Lifting social and economic injustices;
- Developing, preserving and extending democratic practices and human rights;
- Incorporating in additional ways nonviolent means into democratic societies; and
- Preserving the existence and ways of life of indigenous peoples.

Major progress has already been made in developing such policies and the broad means of action required for them, such as civilian-based defense against aggression, blocking coups d'état, and disintegrating dictatorships.

### ***The responsibility continues***

In the future, as in the past, nonviolent struggle may be used for objectives that many of us would not support. Even that is a major advance.

As nonviolent struggle spreads, it is incrementally replacing reliance on violence and war and also is empowering people who have often felt helpless before the violence of their oppressors.

Much has already been done to advance the knowledge and application of nonviolent struggle. A great deal more remains to be done.

The expansion of knowledge of civil resistance and the spread of the ideas and capacities of this technique can greatly enlarge our understanding of our world, its nature and problems, and the options available to us.