

# Critique of Nonviolent Politics

## From Mahatma Gandhi to the Anti-Nuclear Movement

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## **Preface (2002)**

*Critique of Nonviolent Politics* may be the only comprehensive critique of nonviolent theory that has been written. I wrote it between 1980 and 1984, while living in Berkeley, California. Since 1977, I had been active in the movement against nuclear power and weapons which, in California, focused its protests at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant near San Luis Obispo, and at the University of California's Lawrence Livermore Labs where nuclear weapons are designed. Nonviolence was the prevailing political theory in the movement, especially in the "direct action" wing which organized mass blockades and occupations at nuclear facilities. Nonviolence informed our tactics and strategies, our group processes, and our general ethos and outlook.

As I engaged in the movement, I was drawn to nonviolent theory and became an avid student. In early 1980, I began a writing project--a positive explanation of nonviolent theory to serve as a guide for anti-nuclear activists. The project would also help to clarify my own developing political philosophy. My working draft was soon challenged by a politically astute friend, who introduced me to Marxism. While grappling with these ideas, I remained active as an anti-nuke activist but became critical of various movement practices that were influenced by nonviolent theory. I also encountered books by Indian historians who pointed out the elite biases in Gandhi's thought and practice. A year after embarking on my positive nonviolence guide, I was writing instead a full-scale critique of nonviolence. By 1984, when I set the project aside, I had written a book-length treatment. In 1996, I extracted the document from very old computer disks and did some editing. I dropped a concluding chapter on anti-nuclear strategy, adding in its place a new epilogue. But the document remains largely as originally written.

## **Preface (1984)**

Nonviolence is a model of social change rooted in religious pacifist teachings and fashioned into a mass protest technique by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and A.J. Muste. Today, the tradition is carried by anti-nuclear groups committed to nonviolent direct action. Tens of thousands of protesters have applied the Gandhian technique of mass civil disobedience at nuclear facilities and military bases in Europe, Australia, the U.S., and Canada. Most of these protests are guided by nonviolence codes of conduct and a nonviolent philosophy.

My own introduction to nonviolence came in 1977 when I joined the anti-nuclear movement in Southern California. After a period of fascination and learning, I became a doubter and finally a firm critic of nonviolent philosophy. The reasons for my change were twofold:

- 1) I discovered that Mahatma Gandhi, the father of modern nonviolence, was not the progressive leader hailed by nonviolent advocates. Rather, Gandhi closely controlled the movements he led, opposed independent movements of workers and peasants, and sought to counter the revolutionary potentials in India. Gandhi's nonviolent doctrine was integrally tied to these aims.
- 2) I began to recognize problems in the anti-nuclear movement's processes and strategies which hindered its mass organizing efforts. I traced many of these problems to the influence of nonviolent theory.

It became clear to me that there is a need for critical discussion of nonviolence as a model for social change, and I decided to write this book as a contribution to that discussion.

Nonviolence is an attractive philosophy for people dedicated to social justice, and especially so for peace activists working to stop the violence of the military machine and its nuclear buildup. Longstanding pacifist groups such as the War Resisters League and the American Friends Service Committee have for decades provided support and leadership to peace and disarmament efforts, draft resisters, conscientious objectors, and civil rights strugglers. There is much in their history and present work in which nonviolent activists can, and do, take pride.

At the same time, there are problems in nonviolent political theory which can hinder the work of activists. Nonviolent proponents have misread and distorted history, exaggerated the accomplishments of nonviolence, and been slow to recognize the problems nonviolent theory has posed for people's movements. The drawbacks of the nonviolent model of change are suggested most dramatically in the campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi, and seen also in today's anti-nuclear movement. While the scope of this book is limited to these two cases, future studies might apply a critical eye to other movements guided by nonviolent philosophy such as the U.S. civil rights movement.

I hope this book's critique will be a helpful, provocative challenge to the nonviolent community, while contributing to the progress of the anti-nuclear movement. Part I examines major problems in nonviolent political theory. Part II explores the political history of Mahatma Gandhi, the century's most influential practitioner of nonviolence. Part III looks at the impact of nonviolent philosophy in the direct action/civil disobedience wing of the anti-nuclear movement.

Certain groups and individuals figure large in my critique of nonviolent theory, whether because of their influence or because of their many writings on the subject. The first is Movement for a New Society (MNS), a nonviolent training network with a small press, New Society Publishers, based in Philadelphia. MNS, along with the Quaker-connected American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), has played a particularly large role in bringing nonviolent theory and consensus decision making to the U.S. anti-nuclear movement. The War Resisters League (WRL) is one of America's largest pacifist organizations, has been active in anti-militarist movements since its founding in 1923,

and is currently active in campaigns against nuclear weapons. Gene Sharp, a fellow of Harvard's Center for International Affairs, is probably today's leading theorist of nonviolence. He has written several systematic studies, of which his three-volume *Politics of Nonviolent Action* is most notable, and he is widely cited in the nonviolent literature. Of course, Mahatma Gandhi is an important reference throughout my book as both a theorist and activist.

\* \* \* \* \*

There were two "Reigns of Terror" if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the "horrors" of the minor terror, the momentary terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold insult, cruelty, and heartbreak? What is swift death by lightning compared with slow death by fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by the brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by the older and real Terror--that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves.

Mark Twain

## Chapter 1

# Nonviolent Philosophy

Life must be saved by nonviolent confrontations and by what the Quakers call "bearing witness."...We must obstruct a wrong without offering personal violence to its perpetrators.

Greenpeace<sup>1</sup>

Aggression, conquest, and brutality are the defining masculine characteristics. War, feminists believe, is a function of masculine (phallic) identity.

Andrea Dworkin<sup>2</sup>

Nonviolent philosophy comes in many shapes and sizes, from simple opposition to war, to belief systems encompassing a total way of life. Some pacifists\* are concerned mainly with individual resistance to war, such as refusal to pay war taxes; others emphasize mass action and radical changes in society; still others are non-political but pursue personal or spiritual growth.

This treatment addresses the more radical schools of pacifism, though it certainly applies to other forms. In particular, it critiques the theory of nonviolence evolved from the Gandhian tradition and which guides the direct action anti-nuclear movement.

Radical pacifist theory includes three main elements, the first being its opposition to violence. Some activists reject only certain types of organized violence, such as war or violent revolution. Gene Sharp regards this attitude as a "minimum" for pacifists. He defines pacifism as

the belief systems of those persons and groups who, as the minimum, refuse participation in all international or civil wars or violent revolutions, and base this refusal on moral, ethical, or religious principle.<sup>3</sup>

Others renounce all types of violence absolutely. Janey Meyerding, a feminist pacifist, supports the absolutist position:

Pacifism is opposed to violence in all forms, including physical, emotional, intellectual, and economic coercion, because violence denies the value of its victims' lives.<sup>4</sup>

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\* *Nonviolence* and *pacifism* are used interchangeably herein. Some prefer to distinguish between them.<sup>5</sup>

The second element of radical pacifism is its espousal of broad social changes and opposition to all forms of oppression, including capitalism, sexism, and racism. For example, the War Resisters League opposes war and violence

while at the same time working to remove the causes of war. That means we also oppose economic exploitation, racism, sexism, heterosexism, repressive governments, imperialism, capital punishment, and whatever else may be at the root of war or in itself destroys life.<sup>6</sup>

Many pacifists regard their radicalism as an extension of their opposition to violence. Violence, in this view, refers not only to the inflicting of physical injury, but to the "social violence" of poverty, discrimination, destruction of the environment, and other types of injustice.

The third feature of nonviolence consists of a certain philosophy of human relations and model of struggling for change. Some of its essential points are:

- There is an underlying unity and connectedness between all people.
- Reconciliation and persuasion are more effective than brute force as a means of resolving conflict.
- Means are inseparable from ends; evil means lead to evil ends.
- The power of rulers depends on the obedience and consent of the ruled. When we refuse to obey, the rulers' power crumbles.

### **Nonviolent Philosophy in the Anti-Nuclear Movement**

While anti-nuclear activists may subscribe to a wide range of philosophies, nonviolence clearly predominates within the movement's direct action groups such as the Clamshell Alliance in New England, California's Abalone Alliance, and Washington's Crabshell Alliance. For many, nonviolence is less a well-defined belief system than a general *feeling* that violence is wrong, and a moral code which stresses the virtue of taking a personal stand against injustice--"putting one's body on the line"--while remaining open and friendly toward one's opponents. But a philosophy is well articulated by a number of activists. The *Survival Guide* published in 1980 by the Mobilization for Survival, a national anti-nuclear umbrella organization, gives a representative statement:

#### Why Nonviolence?

Nonviolent action is an active way to confront and challenge injustice through organizing people's power. It is an alternative to passivity or violence.

Public attention is brought to bear on a crucial issue.

It keeps our means consistent with our ends.

It is a way to be open to the humanness of our opponents, while disagreeing with the institutions they represent or the attitudes they hold. This makes it possible for people to change.

Aspects of Nonviolence. Nonviolence is...

An active positive force.

A willingness to accept suffering, but not inflict it on others.

A friendly, open, caring attitude towards allies and opponents alike.

Calling upon the humanity of the opponent.

Search for the truth (*Satyagraha*: truth force).

Not limited to actions alone, but part of the tone of all our activities, meetings and relationships.<sup>7</sup>

The nonviolent "way of relating" holds sway at the movement's nonviolent training sessions, which are required for all who participate in civil disobedience; in blockade handbooks, which best express the political beliefs of the movement; at conferences and affinity group meetings; and at the blockades and protests themselves. As the *Survival Guide* statement suggests, nonviolence is seen as both a tactic and a philosophy. It is a model of caring relationships, a pathway to spiritual enrichment, and a political method for achieving a peaceful world.

In fact, many of the claims of nonviolence are overblown and must be reconsidered. Certainly, nonviolent tactics are the proper course in the anti-nuclear movement and in the vast majority of social movements and struggles. Even in the context of violent government repression, nonviolent protest has value and applications. But there are also circumstances--notably, circumstances of harsh repression--where strict adherence to nonviolence may not be a proper course, and where armed resistance is needed. As for nonviolent philosophy, its vision of a cooperative, peaceful world is certainly worth preserving. But the theory is troubled by moral dogma and mechanical logic. History has been misread; success is claimed for nonviolence where failure occurred. A rigidity has developed in the way peace activists think, impeding their ability to consider new ideas and fashion strategies within changing social contexts. The following chapters offer a critical analysis of nonviolent theory.



## Chapter 2

# Moral View: Violence Itself Is Wrong

Violence itself is an evil, a poison which corrupts whatever it touches.  
A.J. Muste<sup>8</sup>

Pacifists oppose violence on moral grounds, practical grounds, and typically both. We will consider the moral position in this chapter and the practical position in chapter 3 and beyond. While this book attends more to practical than moral considerations--as does the bulk of modern nonviolent literature--I believe it is the moral principle that drives pacifist and nonviolent thought. The idea that killing is inherently immoral, that human life should never be violated, is what inspires many pacifists to become pacifists. Let us regard again how Gene Sharp defines pacifism: the belief systems of those who, at minimum, refuse to participate in war or violent revolution and "base this refusal on moral, ethical, or religious principle."

Those speaking most squarely on the inherent evil of violence have been religious pacifists. "Christianity sets forth a system of absolute moral values," held Martin Luther King, Jr., "and affirms that God has placed within the very structure of this universe certain moral principles that are fixed and immutable."<sup>9</sup> Gandhi, according to Raghavan N. Iyer, believed similarly that "the whole world is governed by the law of karma, that there is a moral order (rita) at the heart of the cosmos."<sup>10</sup> Those who break this moral law risk the wrath of God, according to the religious view, and may be deprived of a heavenly afterlife. "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," the Bible warns (I John 3:15).

If, as King averred, God's principles are "fixed and immutable," then we would need to inquire about the existence of God or the interpretation of God. Clearly, King's pacifist interpretation of the Bible is not universally shared by Christians. Debates on the existence or interpretation of God are beyond the scope of this book, however.

Pacifist morality may also be secular, deriving from a deeply felt respect for life or the related belief in the oneness of humanity. As Theodore Paullin writes, "The pacifist has such respect for every human personality that he cannot, under any circumstances whatsoever, intentionally inflict a permanent injury either physically or psychologically."<sup>11</sup>

## Challenging Pacifist Morality

The secular moral view faces ready challenge: If human life has value, should it not be defended when necessary? If a Hitler threatens genocide of a people, is not armed self-

defense a moral response? Pacifists can be creative and vigorous in defending against such challenges. For example, they will point to cases of nonviolent resistance to the Nazis. But life experience itself often creates tension for the pacifist moralist, and many will contradict their espoused principles in practice. Gandhi declared, "I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes."<sup>12</sup> Yet, he recruited Indians to fight for the British during World War I, and supported violence on other occasions as well (see part II). Likewise, King's nonviolent principles didn't prevent him from demanding federal troops or (in Chicago) police protection for civil rights demonstrations (see chapter 7). During World War II, thousands of American pacifists threw their support behind the war against Hitler, many abandoning their pacifist beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

The spread of armed liberation movements in third world countries poses a particular challenge to radical pacifists today. The causes have just aims--democracy, equality, basic freedoms--while facing the cruelest repression. Are their methods immoral? Some pacifists condemn the violence outright.

It is absurd to talk of revolution without nonviolence because all violence is reactionary, causing the exact conditions it intends to destroy.

Ira Sandperl<sup>14</sup>

The stance of others is more subtle. While not endorsing armed struggle, they do make a distinction between the violence of the oppressor and of the oppressed.

Clearly we have to distinguish between the violence of the current regime in South Africa--which is criminal--and that of those struggling against it--which, by contrast, is tragic....

While we do not support the violent means used by some movements, we do support their objective in seeking liberation from oppression.

The greatest single contribution we can make to liberation movements is not by becoming entangled in the debate over whether or not such movements should use violence, but by actively working to bring an end to colonialism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.

Ed Hedemann<sup>15</sup>

To their credit, many pacifists actively support liberation movements by working against U.S. military intervention. And, as Ed Hedemann of the War Resisters League points out, American activists need not become entangled in the debate over the violence of such movements. But bypassing the debate does not resolve the questions about nonviolent theory posed by liberation movements. Nor could the debate be easily avoided if one currently lived in El Salvador and were active politically. Advocating nonviolent principles could place one at odds with the popular armed movement; it is questionable

how fully one could support the movement's liberation objective while opposing its means.

### **Pacifism and Situational Morality**

The notion that violence is *inherently* evil is problematic because it assumes that a violent act may be judged apart from its circumstances, intentions, or consequences. By the moral logic of many pacifists, it would be an evil act to kill one person to prevent that person from killing ten or a thousand persons:

An ultimate moral principle is not to be trifled with. For the pacifist, violence to human personality, even in political struggle, is ruled out because it is ethically unrighteous--period.

Mulford Q. Sibley<sup>16</sup>

Sibley's terms such as "ultimate" and "ruled out...period" underscore the absolutist character of his ethics. (King's "fixed and immutable" formulation is similarly absolutist.) Modern society widely and rightfully rejects absolutist morality, favoring instead a situational morality that judges acts in light of circumstances. Our courts of law practice this daily. An individual who commits an assault may appeal for leniency by arguing that the assault was provoked, or by pointing out that s/he has no history of violence. The law considers killing in self-defense to be "justifiable homicide." Even where the use of violence is beyond dispute, a court takes into account the facts and circumstances surrounding the violent act in rendering its judgment.

A progressive morality must be situational, must assess political actions based on the needs, circumstances, and choices available to a given movement, rather than invoking absolutist standards. Hedemann embraces situationality when he distinguishes between the violence of oppressor regimes and the violence of those opposing such regimes. At the same time, Hedemann objects to the armed movements and calls their methods "tragic,"

while apparently having little knowledge of the movements in question--in South Africa, in Central America--and offering no strategic alternatives.

The modern tendency has been to emphasize the practical benefits of nonviolence, and ineffectiveness of violence, rather than intrinsic moral advantages. But many "practical pacifists" are nonetheless influenced by the belief that violence itself is wrong. For example, Gene Sharp, a leader of the "pragmatic school" of pacifism, is critical of those who rely on "moral injunctions against violence and exhortations in favor of love."<sup>17</sup> The nonviolent approach must be "investigative, analytical, rigorous, and hard-headed," he says.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Sharp personally subscribes to "nonviolence as a principle" and "philosophy of life."<sup>19</sup> This principle involves "an ethical imperative" and is distinguishable from the view of those who accept nonviolence for tactical reasons but who might use violence if circumstances demanded it.<sup>20</sup> While Sharp lays stress on the

practicality of nonviolence, his principled beliefs imply that remaining nonviolent is a moral imperative whether it is practical or not.

MNS co-founder George Lakey, also identified with the pragmatic school, suggests that "we do not know what will happen whatever course we choose," and concludes: "We know the quality of the act of killing, and we know the quality of the act of nonviolent noncooperation. This provides a realistic basis on which a person can choose."<sup>21</sup>

If one does believe in the inherent evil of violence, it is hard to imagine this not affecting one's assessment of the practical merits of violence and nonviolence. Rather, one's theories, strategies, and reading of historical and current events are likely to be shaped to support one's moral presumptions. This type of bias in fact weighs heavily on nonviolent thinkers. The same mechanical approach that morally condemns violence in separation from its context emerges in every area of nonviolent political theory.

## Chapter 3

# Practical View: Violence Begets Violence

If we wish to achieve a society without wars, violence, and injustice, then it is counterproductive to use wars, violence and injustice. What we do and how we do it determines what we get. Nonviolence is rooted in the understanding that ends and means are fundamentally linked.

*War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*<sup>22</sup>

As Gene Sharp points out, pacifists cannot rely on "moral injunctions against violence and exhortations in favor of love." The pacifist case against violence is hence widely argued in practical terms. The most important practical argument is that "ends and means are fundamentally linked," that violence leads to further violence and injustice. Demonstrable proof is readily at hand: walk down the street and spit on passersby, and you're bound to evoke a violent response. Go to a peace march and throw rocks at police, and you'll be beaten and jailed. Organize a guerrilla force of five hundred and try to capture the White House, and troops will be dispatched to mow you down. The United States stockpiles nuclear weapon after nuclear weapon, and Russia and other countries respond with like stockpiling. Violence, in all these situations, leads to violence.

On the other hand, there is equally compelling evidence that readiness to defend oneself, or a well-considered violent act, may reduce or eliminate further violence. For example, as any schoolboy knows, a bully can often be deterred only by violence or the threat of violence. I learned this in my junior high school days, when a bully picked on me almost every day, shoving me and throwing me elbows during sports. I tried to reason with him, but he wouldn't listen. One day I decided enough was enough, and threw myself at him with everything I had. I wasn't much of a fighter and got beaten pretty fast, but it was worth it. He never picked on me after that day.

Bullying organizations, like bullying schoolboys, may also be restrained by violent resistance. During the 1960s, blacks in the South sometimes found that armed resistance was the only way to survive the bullying tactics of the Ku Klux Klan. They achieved notable success in Jonesboro and Bogalusa, Louisiana, where the KKK had regularly beaten and harassed them. The blacks in these towns organized the Deacons for Defense, which provided armed patrols to guard blacks and civil rights workers. The Deacons made it possible for blacks to live in safety and to have self-respect. Martin Luther King and other nonviolent leaders criticized the Deacons for their violent methods, but as a member of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) put it, "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have the nerve to be driving around right now. People who say they are destructive seem to forget that they are protecting lives here."<sup>23</sup>

The belief that violence begets violence is based, in part, on a misreading of history. When violent revolutions fail to produce peace, democracy, and justice, nonviolent advocates frequently blame the violent methods of the struggle. They minimize the evidence of progress made by some revolutionary governments in alleviating the social violence of grinding poverty and brutal dictatorship. They also fail to take into account the circumstances in which most revolutions have taken place: poverty, illiteracy, economic despair, international threats and blockades, and raging internal conflicts. To ignore these factors while asserting that violence produced tyranny serves to limit our understanding of history and precludes our drawing lessons from past struggles for justice.

### **Nicaraguan Revolution**

Consider, for example, the situation of Nicaragua since the armed overthrow of Somoza in 1979. Under the Sandinista government, the violence of Nicaraguan society--both physical violence and social violence--has been substantially reduced. According to Amnesty International, the torture and terror of the Somoza era is no longer in evidence, and capital punishment has been abolished.<sup>24</sup> The pall of fear instilled by former dictator Somoza's National Guardsmen and police network has disappeared. Visitors to Nicaragua have observed a prevailing sense of hope; people are working hard to rebuild their country.

In addition, the more general social violence that affects people's daily lives has lessened. While impoverishment is still general--Nicaragua has been one of the poorest countries in Latin America despite its rich agricultural land--a concerted effort is underway to relieve hunger and disease. Over 40,000 landless rural families have received land to grow food. Production of crops is up and overall food consumption has increased by 40 percent since before the war.<sup>25</sup> The government has launched huge vaccination campaigns and built new hospitals; many Nicaraguans are receiving medical help for the first time. Hundreds of new schools have been built and a massive education campaign reduced the rate of illiteracy from 50 percent in 1978 to 12 percent in 1982.<sup>26</sup> In terms of political freedoms and democratic process, the country is far from the ideal of a democratic socialist society. Yet, the level of public political debate and community participation goes far beyond anything that existed before the revolution. The Statute of Rights and Safeguards, adopted on 21 August 1979, guarantees the basic rights of due process and freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and the press. By most reports these rights are genuinely upheld, although there have been restrictions and censorship in response to the real threat of counterrevolution. On the whole, human and civil rights are more widely respected in Nicaragua than in most Latin American countries, and certainly more than they were under Nicaragua's past rulers.<sup>27</sup>

The Sandinista revolution was based on lofty socialist ideals: production for human needs rather than profit, equal distribution of wealth, and democratic worker control of the economy and the nation. Despite strides made by the Sandinistas, the concrete situation

in Nicaragua poses major roadblocks in the achievement of these ideals. First, Nicaragua is not economically self-sufficient. It relies heavily on international capital and trade and is extremely vulnerable to economic pressures and threats that the U.S., its allies, and international financial institutions will withhold assistance and loans. The government has been forced to work in coalition with Nicaragua's bourgeoisie or face a mass exodus of financial capital and technical expertise from the country. Hence, while some private firms have been expropriated, 60 percent of the nation's economy remains privately controlled. Political power lies with the Sandinistas, but the bulk of economic power is held by the capitalists, and the conflict between them is ever present.

Second, Nicaragua is extremely poor and underdeveloped, and still suffers the ravages of the insurrectionary struggle and the 1972 earthquake. As a result, problems of illiteracy, hunger, inadequate housing and health care are still severe. Industrial workers are demanding better wages and settlement of various work-related grievances; peasants and rural workers are demanding that their basic needs be met. The government, with limited resources and a very critical shortage of skilled technicians and administrators, fights an uphill battle to reconstruct the economy amidst these varied and often conflicting needs.

Third, military and political pressures plague the Nicaraguan government. Forces for counterrevolution are organizing quietly within the country and more blatantly outside the country. Somoza's National Guard (Somocistas), which fled to nearby Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, is being covertly assisted by the U.S. government, according to an exposé in *Newsweek*, 8 November 1982. The U.S. is providing equipment, guerrilla training, and military advice. Border attacks into Nicaragua are becoming regular.<sup>28</sup> Fred Landis, in *Science for the People* (February 1982), reports also that U.S. CIA operatives are working covertly inside Nicaragua, influencing the media in hope of destabilizing the country and promoting a right-wing coup as was done in Chile, 1973.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, Nicaragua faces an internal rebellion. More than 2,000 of 75,000 Miskito Indians, a minority group in Nicaragua, are involved in anti-government fighting, with encouragement and logistical support from the U.S., the Somocistas, and the Honduran military. An historic enmity exists between the Atlantic coast Indian peoples and the *españoles* of the Pacific coast. The rebels, who regard the Sandinistas as a threat to their traditional autonomy and culture, have valid concerns. For example, there was rightful resentment when the government began teaching literacy in Spanish rather than in the Miskito language. The Sandinistas have been self-critical of this and similar errors, and are developing more sensitivity toward indigenous cultures. But the cultural and political tensions remain, and enemies of the government have been able to exploit these conflicts to win some Miskitos to the counterrevolution.

In January 1982, the Nicaraguan government evacuated some 8,500 Miskitos whose villages near the Honduran border were being attacked. The Reagan administration and U.S. press raised a torrent of accusations that the Sandinistas were brutalizing Miskitos and forcing them into concentration camps. But the International Indian Treaty Council and the American Indian Movement, which have sent delegations to the area, conclude

that the evacuation was justified, that living conditions in resettlement villages are better than those in the old villages, and that the Miskitos and other indigenous tribes overwhelmingly support the government.<sup>30</sup> Differences and problems remain, however, and the armed opposition of some Miskitos is a hurtful thorn in the side of the revolution.

With attacks from many sides, combined with the pressing need for increased production to provide people's basic necessities, the Sandinista government has invoked partial censorship over press and radio and imposed strike bans. Although the atmosphere remains generally free, with much open debate and criticism, some government critics have been harassed and arrested.<sup>31</sup> The potential clearly exists for the Nicaraguan revolution to degenerate into a bureaucratic state, but this is not the only possibility. Nicaragua's future and its potential for democracy are closely tied to the larger regional struggle against American imperialism and the local regimes which support U.S. corporate interests. While Nicaragua is a troubled country, the overall humanity of the post-revolution and its real benefit to the country's poor majority do not support the violence-begets-violence formula.<sup>32</sup>

### **Russian Revolution**

The difficulties in Nicaragua are typical of those besetting revolutionary governments in this century. In fact, many have faced more extreme conditions. The Russian revolution, which was built upon highly democratic workers' soviets (councils), immediately confronted a complex of problems including:

- the devastating effects of World War I (Russia bore the heaviest costs of the war, including 2 1/2 million lives)
- a prolonged and vicious civil war
- capitalist sabotage of production and breakdown of the railways
- an economic blockade from the West
- a shortage of raw materials
- the failure of expected worker risings in post-war Europe, which increased Russia's political and economic isolation

The combination of these factors led to economic collapse. Hunger, epidemics, and lack of fuel against the cold took an estimated 9 million lives--10 percent of the Russian population--from 1917 to 1921. Cases of cannibalism were discovered. Workers were physically exhausted. The potential for the 1917 revolution was limited from the outset because its organizational base--the industrial workers involved in the democratic milieu of the soviets--represented only a small fraction of Russia's largely peasant population.



By the early 1920s, even this small working class had become dispersed and no longer constituted a coherent social force. Many of the politically most advanced workers gave their lives in the civil war or took up posts in the new administration. Others fled to the countryside in search of food or work, or became traders in the growing black market. Isaac Deutscher in *The Unfinished Revolution* observes the dilemma of the Bolsheviks, who found themselves the revolutionary vanguard of a class that had physically and politically faded out:

The idea of Soviet democracy, as Lenin, Trotsky, and Bukharin had expounded it, presupposed the existence of an active, eternally vigilant, working class, asserting itself not only against the *ancien régime* but also against any new bureaucracy that might abuse or usurp power. As the working class was not bodily there, the Bolsheviks decided to act as its *locum tenentes* and trustees until such time as life would become more normal and a new working class would come into being.<sup>33</sup>

By the late 1920s, the economy and industrial working class had begun to be revived. But in the meantime, without a power from below to prevent it, the bureaucratic course of the Bolsheviks had grown irrevocable: a new ruling class was entrenched.

The subsequent mass killings under Stalin and the continuing authoritarianism in Russian society has made that country a common reference for pacifists asserting that violence begets violence. But the experiences of Russia, Nicaragua, and other revolutions suggest that the problems of building a better society in post-revolutionary countries have been more complex than most pacifists have recognized. Gene Sharp in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* speaks of the "causal connection between the use of political violence and the increased centralization of power in the government."<sup>34</sup> But neither here nor in other writings does Sharp consider the concrete obstacles faced by specific revolutions.\*

In their attempt to explain revolutions in terms of "means and ends," nonviolent theorists take the means and the ends out of their contexts; the post-revolutionary society is regarded as an historical and political island. Centuries of entrenched class antagonisms don't suddenly vanish at the instance of revolution. History does not begin anew. The balance of power has shifted and attempts will be made to construct a new type of society. But the conflicts of the old order still remain--both among the masses and within the revolutionary leadership. When a struggle includes national liberation from

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\* Many a nonviolent writer has claimed, like Sharp, that violent revolution leads to tyranny or to related evils without exploring the conditions surrounding the revolutions in question (and often ignoring the human gains made). See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963); Dave Dellinger, "The Future of Nonviolence," in *Nonviolence in America*, ed. Staughton Lynd (1966); Susanne Gowan et al., *Moving Toward a New Society* (1976); Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (1959); George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (1973); Mulford Q. Sibley, *Political Theories of Modern Pacifism* (1972).

imperialist rule (e.g., China, Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua), the problems of the liberated country are compounded. Threats from the ousted foreign power, both economic and military pressures, are a continuing reality. The pacifist dictum that "armed struggle leads to tyranny" fails to take such complications into account.

A balanced evaluation shows that armed revolutions, while not achieving democratic socialist ideals, have won immense gains for hundreds of millions of people. The Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions went far beyond the societies they replaced in terms of meeting basic needs such as food, health care, literacy, full employment. While the major revolutions produced bureaucratic regimes, others have made egalitarian gains or are attempting them.<sup>35</sup> If we measure the social violence (poverty, exploitation, injustice) before and after revolution, it is arguable that violence has *reduced* violence, at least in some instances. Where tyranny still prevails, one must look at actual conditions and events to discover the reasons. The predominant pacifist explanation, that political violence is the root of the problem, doesn't address historical contexts.

Sensitive assessments of revolutions are crucial in helping activists develop effective strategies for social change. The common pacifist generalizations--e.g., "Our experience with modern violent revolutions should make us seriously doubt that systematic killing of human beings can bring about fundamental changes"<sup>36</sup>--are not helpful for those struggling to make socialist or cooperative solutions credible in the U.S. Such over-simple analysis discourages thoughtful consideration of the processes of struggle and change. It also tends to reinforce our country's knee-jerk anti-communism (and is perhaps influenced by such ideology) which regards the non-capitalist world as a collection of evil dictatorships and rejects any further inquiry. Although some pacifist writers have treated revolutions in a more sensitive manner,<sup>37</sup> the violence-begets-violence formula remains a fundamental of nonviolent theory.

### **Does *Nonviolence* Beget Violence?**

Many in the anti-nuclear movement believe that one can avoid brutal response from the police by acting nonviolently and friendly. This belief is reinforced by the fact that the movement has yet to face significant repression. But the relatively mild treatment of blockaders by police (in the U.S. movement) may not be due to our nonviolence per se. Rather, the movement has not yet posed a sufficient threat to require repression. Any violent or nonviolent movement that seriously challenges the ruling powers is likely to evoke violent retaliation at the hands of the state. India's nonviolent independence movement, the U.S. civil rights movement, many strikes by organized labor, and countless other nonviolent campaigns through history have met brutal retaliation.

Many theorists acknowledge that nonviolence, when effective, can bring repression. Faison and Irwin write:

Nonviolent action...does not rely on the good will of the opponent but instead is designed to work in the face of determined opposition or violent repression....It requires a willingness to take risks and bear suffering without retaliation.<sup>38</sup>

The same view is taken by Sharp:

Nonviolent actionists who know what they are doing will not be surprised at the repression inflicted by the opponent.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, nonviolent theorists speak much more on violence begetting violence than on *nonviolence* begetting violence. Are they not being inconsistent? Such theorists would claim consistency: although both methods elicit violence, they argue, violent protest begets the greater violence--therefore nonviolence *reduces* violence. Barbara Deming explains this reasoning in *Revolution and Equilibrium*:

Battle of any kind provokes a violent response--because those who have power are not going to give it up voluntarily. But there is simply no question that--in any long run--violent battle provokes a more violent response and brings greater casualties.<sup>40</sup>

Several nonviolent theorists (Deming; Sharp; Oppenheimer and Lakey<sup>41</sup>) have compared the results of two successful campaigns against British colonial rule--the armed struggle of the Mau-Maus in Kenya and the nonviolent campaign in India--in an attempt to show that violent struggle results in more casualties than does nonviolent struggle. The nonviolent Indian movement resulted in fewer deaths and injuries than did the armed Mau-Mau uprising, they maintain. But they fail to take into account the communal holocaust that occurred when India was partitioned, the India-Pakistan wars which followed, or the miserable conditions in which the majority of Indians continued to live. (As discussed in chapter 16, Richard Gregg in *The Power of Nonviolence* also fails to recognize these results.) When the long-run casualties of India's campaign are considered, Indian nonviolence likely resulted in greater violence than did the violence of the Mau-Maus. To compare the "violence-begetting" of different protest methods, one must take into account the entire context and long-run impact of the struggles.

Many additional comparisons suggest that violence causes *less* long-run suffering than nonviolence. Consider China and India. Both conducted national liberation struggles in post-war Asia; both were heavily populated, largely by peasants. China's struggle was violent; India's, mostly nonviolent. In the aftermath, the Chinese people are living relatively healthy lives while most Indians suffer in squalor. Or, compare Chile to Nicaragua. Chile's President Allende attempted to achieve socialism without arming the people; the Sandinistas armed the people. Allende was overthrown amidst massive terror, and was replaced by a ruthless dictatorship. In contrast, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were victorious, the Nicaraguan people are reaping benefits (though hardships continue), and their future may be improved. Where armed struggle is more effective than

nonviolent struggle in challenging brutal systems, one must ask which method is truly the more humane.

In some situations, violence or a mixed approach may cause less suffering than a strictly nonviolent strategy. In other situations, however, the reverse is true. Many movements--among them, the U.S. anti-nuclear movement--would be totally crushed if they resorted to arms. The problem is that proponents of nonviolence often make no distinction between means that are now appropriate and means that might be needed in some future situation. They seek the "ultimate truth" to determine once and for all whether violence or nonviolence is the better way. But the ultimate truth is that what is needed depends on the circumstances. Movement strategies should derive from the study of actual conditions, not from easy maxims such as "violence begets violence," "nonviolence begets violence," "this method gets more casualties, that method gets less. The method that begets the least violence, in the long run, is that best suited to the situation.

## Chapter 4

# Nonviolent Theory of Power

Despotism could not exist if it did not have fear at its foundations.

Gene Sharp<sup>42</sup>

[Referring to India's millions]: We have to dispel fear from their hearts. On the day they shed all fear, India's fetters shall fall and she will be free.

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>43</sup>

A questionable moral principle is the first "weak link" in nonviolent theory. A faulty view of means and ends is the second. The third is a proposed new understanding of political power. Espoused by Gandhi and many others,<sup>44</sup> the theory is systematically set forth by Gene Sharp in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*:

A ruler's power is dependent upon...the degree of obedience and cooperation given by the subjects. Such obedience and cooperation are, however, not inevitable, and despite inducements, pressures, and even sanctions, obedience remains essentially voluntary. Therefore, *all government is based upon consent*.<sup>45</sup> (emphasis in original.)

The power of rulers is based on people's obedience, according to the theory; if people refuse to obey, the rulers' power begins to dissolve. This being so, then "Why do men obey?" asks Sharp; and he lists such reasons as habit, fear of sanctions, moral obligation, self-interest, and absence of self-confidence among the subjects. Highlighted in Sharp's study, and also in Gandhi's analysis cited by Sharp, are fear and feelings of powerlessness:

*Why* have people not long since abolished oppression, tyranny and exploitation? There appear to be several reasons. First, such victims of a ruler's power usually feel helpless in the face of his capacity for repression, punishment and control. These feelings of helplessness arise from several causes....<sup>46</sup>

This view of power, which is influential in the anti-nuclear movement and among many nonviolent thinkers today, is built on undisputable truths. People do indeed cooperate with social systems that oppress them, and fear and submissiveness often keep us from fighting back. But nonviolent theorists have a simplistic approach to these issues.

If people fear the consequences of disobedience or feel too powerless to challenge authority, their feelings may be *justified*. The young man really may end up in jail if he

refuses to comply with his draft notice. The tenants really may be evicted if they protest a rent increase by withholding their rent. In many situations, disobedience is simply not an effective or viable option. In fact, at society's key point of obedience--the workplace--refusing to perform is *rarely* a viable option. An aggrieved worker who launches a one-person sitdown will likely be fired; and then that worker, to earn his/her keep, must obey some other employer. Sometimes a group of aggrieved workers may effectively disobey by going on strike; but, win or lose, they must return to obeying their employer when the strike is over.

It is true that if there were a revolutionary strike in which people seized the factories, beat off the military, and established a new society based on democratic collective ownership, then people would no longer be forced to obey a ruling clique. But such a revolutionary strike, if it ever comes to pass, will not be in any near future. At least in the U.S., it will take years, probably decades, of effective movement-building and social change to make viable such radical departures.

Given a status quo where people must obey to survive, and where the prospects for overthrowing corporate tyranny remain for the far future at best, the nonviolent theory of power is problematic. A ruler's power may rest on people's obedience, but that obedience is in turn a response to institutional and political conditions that delimit our options. Casting aside fear and overcoming feelings of powerlessness may help us become better organizers, but this alone does not change the social system that requires obedience for our survival.

Sharp and similar theorists must look beyond simple assumptions about the causes of obedience, and examine more carefully the conditions that shape people's behavior and thought. The nonviolent power theory seems to assume that conditions are always ripe for mass disobedience, and that people need simply to rise above their fears. The constraints on people and movements are minimized. Sharp, for example, seems quite unfamiliar with the constraints on today's labor movement:

In a labor strike...under normal conditions in Western countries today, as long as the men stay away from work, their chances of success are high. They usually have some form of financial assistance to help them through the strike. The chances of severe repression by the police or the military are now slight. Strikebreakers are rarer than before.<sup>47</sup>

Sharp's assessment, even at its publication in 1973, is far from accurate. The labor movement has been weakening for years; in the U.S., union membership has dwindled from 35 percent of the workforce in the 1950s to just 20 percent in 1980. Attacks by police, along with court injunctions restricting picketing, are often seen in U.S. strikes, particularly where the strikers try to stop production or block strikebreakers. The tiny strike funds are rarely sufficient to support strikers' families; economic survival is a primary problem in any lengthy strike. And far from Sharp's claim of strikebreakers being rare, almost every strike nowadays is threatened with defeat by strikebreakers.

Hence, even where workers are quite prepared for action, their prospects for victory may not be bright. Twelve thousand striking air traffic controllers in 1981 could not stop President Reagan from firing them all, though many were quite fearless and militant. This is not to promote doom and gloom--there are always points of resilience, fightback, and hope in the labor movement. But our understanding of why people obey must be based on a sober analysis of conditions. Followers of nonviolence who are busy organizing in their communities and workplaces are certainly aware of the difficulties faced by movements, and of the circumstances that make it hard for people to stand up and resist. But their political theory may impede them.

An important (but sometimes hidden) feature of nonviolent theory, which we will discuss at greater length in the next chapter, is its reliance on people's ability to sacrifice and suffer. The pacifist rejection of self-defense--when social movements encounter violent repression--seems to acknowledge not at all the survival drive that motivates people. Likewise, the nonviolent theory of power minimizes the imperatives of survival that keep people obedient to employers and governments. People are merely burdened with feelings of fear and powerlessness, is the assertion. Hence, the fearlessness of protesters, and their readiness to suffer for disobeying, becomes a cornerstone of nonviolent struggle. As Sharp writes: "Once there has been a major reduction of or an end to the subjects' fear, and once there is a willingness to suffer sanctions as the price of change, large-scale disobedience and noncooperation become possible."<sup>48</sup>

Most people want to live and prosper, not sacrifice and suffer. Political strategies should be shaped with this understanding. Where disobedience and lawbreaking, with attendant risk and sacrifice, are necessary to achieve movement goals, organizers should emphasize contexts that minimize risks--such as the safety of large numbers and a strong organization--rather than emphasizing the sacrificial capacity of participants. Where movements must operate under harsh repression, armed self-defense must be an option.

While nonviolence is widely offered as an affirmation of life, nonviolent protesters are ultimately expected to disobey and suffer the consequences. The implications were recognized by Gandhi: "Just as one must learn the art of killing in training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence."<sup>49</sup>

## Chapter 5

# Voluntary Suffering

I have...ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering.

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>50</sup>

Suffering, risk, and sacrifice are inevitable ingredients in a process of social change. A community activist may risk alienating friends, family, neighbors, or may draw hostility and harassment from those opposing the movement. A worker activist may upset the boss, face disciplinary measures, lose a job. Activists in repressive societies face even greater risks including imprisonment and threats to life and limb. Organizing strategies must imagine how large numbers of people will be convinced to accept the risks of political participation, must work to enhance safety and minimize risks without compromising political effectiveness, and must sustain the commitment of activists for the long term in spite of the sacrifices involved. Our approach to these complex issues will be guided by our wider political philosophy. It is my contention that nonviolence, as a model of social change, overrelies on people's ability or willingness to sacrifice and suffer. Many of today's nonviolent advocates would object to the centrality of voluntary suffering as found in Gandhi. Surely, Gandhi's role as a spiritual leader allowed him certain liberties in hailing the "ancient law of self-sacrifice." But I propose that voluntary suffering is central to the nonviolent model--or at least many versions of it--and the importance of voluntary suffering in nonviolence may be greater than some theorists wish to acknowledge.

### The Unique Element in Nonviolent Theory

The activity of today's social movements, at least under constitutional democracies, is overwhelmingly nonviolent. Nonviolent tactics are embraced because they are practical. A *philosophical* commitment to nonviolence is not typical among progressive movements generally, as it is among anti-nuclear and peace constituencies. If our non-pacifist movements operated under repressive tyrannies, where dissent is not allowed and peaceful protests regularly attacked, many would consider the use of arms or a mixed violent-nonviolent strategy. Hence, *what distinguishes the nonviolent model of change from other progressive models is its commitment to remaining nonviolent under repressive circumstances.* Or to phrase this another way:

The unique element in nonviolent theory is not that it proposes nonviolent action (since all kinds of activists propose nonviolent action) but rather that it



remains committed to nonviolent action when many reasonable people would consider armed action.

There are, of course, other distinct features of nonviolent philosophy, which are addressed throughout this book. But this particular distinction is perhaps the fundamental one.

How does nonviolence work in the face of repression? The model relies on courageous suffering of protesters employing what Richard Gregg calls a jujitsu effect.<sup>51</sup> The more the government attacks nonviolent resisters, the more public sympathy turns against the government, and the greater is support for those being attacked or jailed. Eventually, police or troops assigned to carry out the repression are affected by the defiant, yet nonaggressive stance of protesters. Barbara Deming, in her 1971 essay on nonviolent revolution, describes the events that ensue:

Our actions provoke more and more thought on [the police or soldiers'] part, and the actions of those in power appear to them not only less and less justified, but also less and less in their interest. They begin to withdraw their approval and their cooperation. As a result, the amount of violence that can be mounted against us diminishes. The assaults upon us--instead of escalating, as in conventional battle--gradually de-escalate.

Much too gradually. They will continue long after one would like to think that they would have to end. For there is a lag between the time people begin to feel that they are doing the wrong thing and the time they actually manage to stop doing it. But, as we gain allies and our adversaries lose them, the violence does finally subside. Here is one reason that nonviolent struggle, so often termed impractical, is in fact the most practical mode of struggle. We suffer far fewer casualties.<sup>52</sup>

Voluntary suffering is most pronounced when nonviolence operates under repressive circumstances. But what about nonviolence under constitutional democracy, where repression is not normally at issue? Are voluntary suffering and jujitsu part of nonviolence in those circumstances? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Movements influenced by Gandhian nonviolence widely make voluntary suffering their centerpiece through civil disobedience, a practice that we explore in chapter 20 with regard to the anti-nuclear movement. However, where movements restrict themselves to permitted forms of rallies and marches, then clearly voluntary suffering is not part of the program. Nonviolent theorists are not of one mind on these matters. At the same time, mass jail-going tactics have played, and continue to play, a key role in movements guided by nonviolent philosophy.

The repression issue should not be completely dismissed even under constitutional democracies. Circumstances change. For those of us who identify with the radical left, repression must enter our long-term calculations, whether we are pacifist or non-pacifist.

Creating a healthy world--free of economic exploitation, poverty and hunger, militarism, environmental abuse, repressive governments, racism, sexism, heterosexism--will require, among other things, the removal of ruling classes and capitalist systems, and their replacement with democratic, egalitarian alternatives. Assuming that we could build a majoritarian movement favoring such goals (and perhaps there will be a day when the values of the 1960s return with greater force and better vision) few believe that the movement could implement its agenda without confronting major government repression.

Radical pacifists envision achieving fundamental change through a nonviolent revolution, based on general strikes and other forms of noncooperation, weakening the ruler's military through fraternization and alliances with rank-and-file soldiers, the building of alternative institutions and popular centers of power. The most definitive writings to date on nonviolent revolution are by George Lakey and other members of Movement for a New Society.<sup>53</sup> Lakey and similar theorists have yet to seriously address how a nonviolent revolution would be sustained against government repression. But their work implies a key reliance on voluntary suffering as offered by Deming, with its jujitsu effect undermining the government's repressive capacities.

### **Voluntary Suffering Can Work But Has Its Limits**

The dynamics of voluntary suffering and jujitsu in nonviolent protest are genuine and have proven effective in social struggles around the world, including in today's anti-nuclear movement. Nonviolent theorists have even identified historic cases where nonviolent noncooperation proved effective against military coups or military occupations. There is danger, however, in the manner that such cases are interpreted and used. Nonviolent theory assumes that the potentials of nonviolence are (virtually) unlimited, that a well-organized and well-trained army of nonviolent activists can prevail over the most repressive regime--since any regime ultimately relies on the cooperation of those it rules over. Along with this conviction comes a propensity among nonviolent theorists to minimize factors that may have allowed nonviolence to succeed in specific contexts, and to infer that what worked in one context may apply in all contexts. There is also a tendency of nonviolent historians to treat events out of context in a manner that exaggerates the accomplishments of nonviolence. For example, Gene Sharp cites the undermining of a military coup in Germany by a "nonviolent general strike" in 1920:

The rightist coup d'état (or Putsch) against the young Weimar Republic of Germany was defeated by nonviolent action. This action was launched in support of the legitimate government after that government had fled Berlin....The case...illustrates the point that nonviolent action may be used to defend and preserve a regime or political system as well as to oppose it.<sup>54</sup>

Sharp's argument in this case is based on erroneous evidence and a misinterpretation of the strikers' goals. The "nonviolent action" to which he refers was largely an *armed* worker uprising; and many groups attacked Wolfgang Kapp's military regime not simply

to restore the Weimar Republic, but to overturn the country's power structure. To this end, armed strikers (well-organized armies in some regions) took over towns and often established rule by workers' councils. But the revolutionary movement was ultimately defeated. Kapp was forced to resign and was replaced by the Social Democratic government which worked in alliance with right-wing parties and the traditional ruling circles of Germany. The restored government declared martial law and brutally suppressed the workers' movement. Many strikers were executed or imprisoned, while their defeat laid the basis for renewed power of right-wing forces and the eventual rise of Nazism in Germany.<sup>55</sup>

In another misleading case, George Lakey and Patricia Parkman describe the downfall of El Salvador's General Martínez in 1944 as an example of how a ruthless dictator can be "overthrown by the essentially nonviolent revolt of unarmed civilians."<sup>56</sup> But this was a limited victory for nonviolence, as military rule simply continued with new faces. Upon leaving the country, Martínez placed the presidency in the hands of his trusted minister of war, General Ignacio Menéndez. Menéndez was followed by a succession of other military leaders who had also served under Martínez.<sup>57</sup>

In more recent history, some pacifist writers have argued that the 1979 overthrow of the Shah of Iran, achieved mainly through unarmed demonstrations and strikes, illustrates the possibility of fundamental change through nonviolence. Iran's predominantly "nonviolent revolution" should bring us to "re-think our basic assumptions about the nature of change," proposes Lynne Shivers in *Tell the American People*, an MNS anthology published in the wake of the Shah's overthrow.<sup>58</sup> But the "nonviolent revolution" replaced one repressive regime with another. Since he came to power in February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini has developed an extremely hierarchical rule, denied democratic rights, and brutalized government dissenters. The number of political prisoners had reached 40,000 by April 1982. Prisoners have been tortured and women are brutally raped before being executed. In 1982, the regime officially admitted that 3,000 individuals had been executed; but according to the Mojahedin, the largest opposition group in Iran, the real number executed was 13,000.<sup>59</sup> The MNS anthology was published just a year after Iran's revolution, and its contributors could not foresee the repression that would ensue. The work is not unusual, however, in making misleadingly large claims for the achievements of nonviolence.

Nonviolence works best where governments, for historic contextual reasons, cannot sustain prolonged repression. Conversely, where governments attack campaigns over long stretches of time, nonviolence encounters the greatest difficulty--campaigners become too beaten or demoralized to continue, or in some cases turn to violent self-defense. In leading India's movement against British rule, Gandhi was regularly disappointed because the masses were unable to maintain "nonviolent discipline" in the face of government brutality. The few thousand specially trained satyagrahis tended to take their blows without complaint. But the hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers who rose up in struggle did not favor peaceful suffering and preferred to defend themselves when under attack. Gandhi and his colleagues did not offer the Indian people

an organized strategy for defending themselves. Hence, the colonial government was, by and large, able to contain Gandhi's movements through a combination of arrests and beatings (see Part II).

The 1960 South Africa antipass<sup>\*</sup> campaign offers a clear example of what can happen when a movement depends for its success on the courageous suffering of a few winning the sympathy of the masses, rather than developing a solid organizational base and a more practical long-term strategy. During this nonviolent campaign, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) leadership under Robert Sobukwe adopted a "no bail, no defense, no fine" slogan. The plan was that PAC leaders would leave their passes at home and offer themselves for arrest. The leaders believed their heroic example of self-sacrifice would inspire the masses to suffer for the cause of liberation. But the government cracked down hard. On 21 March 1960, the first day of the antipass campaign, the police shot at a crowd of unarmed protesters at Sharpeville, killing sixty-seven. Police swoops netted activists down to the third and fourth layer of contingency leadership. PAC headquarters in Johannesburg was left in the hands of the organization's office manager. The organization rapidly fell into a state of total disarray from which it did not recover for years. The popular response to PAC's call on 21 March had been disappointing. While Africans indeed sympathized with the intentions of the campaign, suggest historians Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter, most did not have faith in the practical prospects of victory. South Africans had a long history of defeat in similar efforts, and PAC had done little to promote confidence in its organizational strength and prowess. In April, both PAC and its rival organization, the African National Congress, were outlawed and forced to go underground.<sup>60</sup>

The difficulty of maintaining a nonviolent struggle in face of concerted repression is too often minimized by proponents of nonviolence. The failure of nonviolent campaigns has been attributed to the "lack of discipline" of protesters and their inability to withstand suffering, rather than to inherent problems involved in a movement that does not defend against repression. "In nonviolent struggle," writes Sharp in explaining the failure of PAC's 1960 antipass campaign, "when the opponent applies repression and increases that repression, to have a chance of victory the nonviolent actionists must have the strength to persist and court the greater penalties for their defiance. If they lack sufficient strength to do so, *the fault is not in the technique but in the actionists themselves.*" (emphasis mine.)<sup>61</sup> Sharp's faith in nonviolence leads him to blame the actionists, rather than question the technique. As with Gandhi, Deming, and other theorists, Sharp's nonviolent framework ultimately relies on voluntary suffering as key to success under repressive circumstances.

Of course, those involved in violent movements also incur suffering and risk to life--but with an important difference. Armed movements such as those in Central America try to defend the lives of participants. With nonviolence, on the other hand, people are expected

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<sup>\*</sup> Blacks in South Africa were, and still are, required to carry passes in order to travel to different towns and localities.

to face repression with the courage of martyrs. Popular movements usually resort to arms only when harsh repression threatens a nonviolent movement. This is true in El Salvador today, where public protests are broken up with guns and riot gear, worker and peasant organizers are arrested and tortured, and rural villages are brutally massacred.<sup>62</sup> To expect Salvadorans, under such intense attack, to continue their struggle for justice nonviolently seems neither realistic nor humane.

The limitations of nonviolent voluntary suffering have been seen within constitutional democracies as well. In the U.S. civil rights movement, King's emphasis on non-retaliatory suffering and love of one's enemies had little attraction for lower class blacks, particularly those in Northern ghettos. Manning Marable observes that the riots and Black Power slogans which arose in the mid-sixties were signs that King's nonviolent tactics had begun to lose appeal. "Young black students in SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and even some of King's oldest followers were tired of going to jail, being abused and shot."<sup>63</sup>

A consistent shortcoming in nonviolent theory and nonviolent histories is the absence of a class perspective. While we will not attempt here an exposition on class theory, it might help nonviolent theorists to consider what distinguishes a ruling *group* from a ruling *class*, and to consult studies such as those by William Domhoff on the U.S. ruling class.<sup>64</sup> A ruling group or ruling government is not the same as a ruling class but is normally the *representative* of a ruling class, the latter remaining largely hidden from public view. When particular governments become too unpopular, or face mass resistance, it sometimes serves ruling classes to concede changes demanded by the resistance--e.g., removal of a despot, holding of elections, social reforms--provided such changes do not include the ruling class surrendering its wealth and power. However problematic may be the work of nonviolent historians, my own reading is that nonviolent action has enormous potentials for progressive social change that can include challenging and overturning tyrannical governments. But whether nonviolence, alone, has the potential to oust a ruling class, and to carry out the kind of fundamental change discussed earlier in this chapter, should at the very least be a question in our minds. Programs that include the removal of ruling classes involve change on a much higher order than governmental change, and the depth of resistance will be much greater.

### **Torture and Brutality**

Voluntary suffering becomes a less attractive strategy when one considers the capacity of ruling elites, when their power is threatened, to resort to terror and torture. Penny Lernoux in *Cry of the People* tells of widespread torture of political prisoners under several Latin American dictatorships. Father Tito de Alençar, a young Brazilian priest whose plight was documented by the U.S. Catholic Conference in 1970, describes his treatment during four months in a Brazilian prison:

I went on denying and they kept giving me electric shocks, kicking and beating me in the chest with rods and their hands.

Captain Albernaz then made me open my mouth "to receive the Eucharist." It was an electric wire. My mouth swelled so much that I was unable to speak....

The question was renewed to me to make me confess to holdups: again electric shocks, punches, and kicks on the stomach and genitals. I was beaten with hard little boards, cigarette butts were extinguished on my body. For five hours I was thus treated like a dog....

I couldn't sleep in my cell. The pain kept getting worse. My head seemed three times larger than the rest of my body. I was haunted by the thought that my brothers would have to go through the same sufferings. It was absolutely necessary to end it all. I was in such a state that I didn't feel capable of suffering more. There was only one way out--to kill myself!<sup>65</sup>

Alençar went on to slash his wrists but was revived in the prison hospital. He hanged himself following his release from prison. The story is not exceptional, but one of many thousands. During the reign of terror following Argentina's military coup in 1976, according to statistics compiled by Amnesty International and church groups, "approximately twenty thousand people had been detained or had disappeared by July 1978; at least twelve thousand political prisoners were in prison or in concentration camps in September 1977....Political killings were averaging seven a day in 1977." Torture was automatic for anyone arrested, according to a spokesman for the World Council of Churches.<sup>66</sup>

The nonviolent approach of "filling up the jails" runs into obvious problems under such conditions. As a Brazilian priest observes: "It isn't just the fear of arrest that prevents the people from protesting. It is the knowledge that their bodies and minds will be subjected to such excruciating pain that anything, including death, is preferable."<sup>67</sup>

A minority of nonviolent proponents concede the futility of nonviolence as a method to bring about fundamental change in very repressive countries. They claim, however, that in the U.S., where conditions are milder, nonviolence can and must be the way to achieve deep social change. For today, they are correct; violent methods are not generally appropriate. But requirements may change in the future, particularly if we succeed in building a mass movement that seeks fundamental change and contends for power. There is good reason to believe that a nonviolent revolution in the U.S. could be met with a repressive campaign no less brutal and torturous than those in Latin America, South Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

First, the most brutal dictatorships in the world are heavily subsidized by the U.S. The role of the CIA in overthrowing Allende's progressive government in Chile and in replacing it by General Pinochet's dictatorship was fully documented by the U.S.

Congress.<sup>68</sup> Many of the military officers staffing repressive regimes in Latin America are trained in U.S. institutions such as the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone; to date, more than 200,000 have been trained.<sup>69</sup> While the U.S. prefers passing to local regimes the dirty work of keeping the discontented in line, this is not always done. Few wars can equal the atrocities and the massive slaughter of civilians (estimates of civilians killed or injured range from 1 to 2 million) carried out by the U.S. in Vietnam.<sup>70</sup>

The U.S. government has not been reluctant to promote the use of torture in other countries and would probably be willing to employ the same techniques domestically if it were deemed necessary to quell a significant movement. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman in *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* provide a chart showing twenty-six countries which receive heavy flows of U.S. economic and military aid and which used torture on a systematic basis in the 1970s.<sup>71</sup> "Much of the electronic and other torture gear is U.S. supplied, and great numbers of client state police and military interrogators are U.S.-trained," according to Chomsky and Herman.<sup>72</sup> "During the Vietnam War, the United States supplied funds and technology for Tiger Cages, interrogation centers, and electronic and other equipment used for torture....SAVAK, the Iranian secret police noted for its sadism and frequent use of torture, was set up by the CIA in 1957, and the military officers who ran it from its inception received special training at the Marine base in Quantico, Va."<sup>73</sup> With considerable documentation, Chomsky and Herman conclude that if we look beyond government propaganda about human rights, "Washington has become the torture and political murder capital of the world."<sup>74</sup>

Would the U.S. government dare to apply terror and torture domestically as it has done abroad? We do not know. But we should certainly not make assumptions. A U.S. capacity for domestic repression was suggested in the 1960s, with brutal police attacks on civil rights demonstrations in the South, and police or National Guard attacks on anti-war protests throughout the country. Recent anti-nuclear blockades at Diablo Nuclear Plant and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California have been met by small armies of local police and state troops, complete with helicopters, automatic rifles, and an assortment of riot-control paraphernalia. Had the blockades been a great deal larger, clubs and tear gas may well have been used to disperse protesters, as happened in several European anti-nuclear protests (see chapter 20).

## **Feminist Pacifists on Suffering**

For wimyn, self-love is what is called for. Most of us know all about self-sacrifice and do not find it powerful. People who are in the category of aware "oppressors" are the ones who need to learn about self-sacrifice.

Judy Costello<sup>75</sup>

The nonviolent notion of suffering poses special problems for women, who for centuries have been expected to sacrifice for others. Feminists struggling to throw off their traditional roles may understandably be troubled by a philosophy which calls for voluntary suffering. Feminist pacifists grapple with such issues in a 1982 anthology, *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*. Their answer is to distinguish between "voluntary" and "involuntary" suffering. Nonviolent suffering is acceptable, may even be a positive experience and source of strength, if it is freely chosen.

Oppressed people who know their own strength can choose when they want to be self-sacrificing or nurturing.

Judy Costello<sup>76</sup>

Am I free to make a sacrifice of my own choice, or am I forced to make a sacrifice that men decide for me? I insist that women be free to make their own choice, of course.

Lynne Shivers<sup>77</sup>

Whether or not to suffer is not the issue. How to suffer and what choices we have are issues. What we can learn from suffering hardship and what that learning offers our personal and political transformation are issues.

Eleanora Patterson<sup>78</sup>

These writers attempt to reconcile nonviolent suffering with feminism on the basis of "free choice," but they overlook some important issues. The first is a major insight of feminism--that the choices available to women are limited by the structures of patriarchal society. For example, a woman who marries young, has babies immediately, and spends her adult life in the confines of the kitchen is not necessarily acting out of free choice, but may be carrying out a role society has taught her. Of course, the rise of the feminist movement has helped open new roles and options for women; but many women's choices remain constrained nonetheless.

Similarly, people who are moved to protest poverty, racism, or nuclear threats are limited to the choices made available to them by the movements. If the movements offer only an option to sit peacefully in the streets getting bludgeoned with police clubs or fire hoses--as was sometimes the case in the U.S. civil rights movement--how voluntary can protesters' suffering be said to be? How free is their choice? Of course, people are free to join or not join protest actions. Nevertheless, movement organizers who urge public participation carry a large weight of responsibility for the options made available to protesters.

Secondly, the *Reweaving the Web* contributors do not consider the potential limitations of a nonviolent movement, for women and men alike, under repressive conditions. When a large movement contends for power, violent repression can be expected, and voluntary suffering is put to an extreme test. Gandhi was naive in his belief that people have an infinite capacity and willingness to accept suffering without retaliation or defense. But he



was realistic enough to recognize nonviolence as a technique which, in many circumstances, required just that. Feminist pacifists who advocate voluntary suffering, and who regard suffering as a source of strength, may not have fully examined the extent of the sacrifices which could be required. Villagers being terrorized in El Salvador, or persons who have been tortured such as Tito de Alençar, would probably not find attractive a strategy of voluntary suffering.

Reliance on suffering is a crucial problem in the nonviolent model of social change. Some pacifists with whom I've discussed this issue say they do not agree with the strong dependence on suffering and sacrifice within the Gandhian tradition. At the same time, these pacifists acknowledge that movements attempting radical change will likely face severe repression if they become successful. This leads to a sticky problem. If one does believe in working for radical change, and yet also believes that social movements must remain nonviolent, it is hard to conceive how such an approach can avoid heavy reliance on suffering. Advocates of nonviolence need to address this question squarely.

## Chapter 6

# Common Nonviolent Arguments

Nonviolent theorists offer a wide range of arguments for a generalized opposition to violence and generalized support of nonviolence. This chapter speaks to some of the most common statements. The aim here is to not only critique the individual positions, but to point out certain links and patterns within pacifist thought. Among the notable tendencies are:

- utopianism--pursuing ideals without respect to reality
- mechanical thought--seeing things as ordained and unchanging, not looking at contexts
- ignoring historical evidence that contradicts pacifist ideas

### 1. Nonviolence Appeals to the Humanity of the Opponent

A central idea in nonviolent philosophy is that goodwill, friendliness, and willingness to accept suffering without retaliation will open the opponent's heart to the concerns of protesters. Nonviolence "is a way to achieve justice through seeking to change, rather than conquer, the antagonist," writes Ed Hedemann of the War Resisters League. "In a violent struggle, the adversary is put on the defensive, reacting out of resentment and desperation." If instead we "show a respect for their lives they are less likely to react out of fear and more likely to listen to us."<sup>79</sup>

Hedemann's professed goal to "change, rather than conquer, the antagonist" speaks to the "harmonizing" ideal in pacifist thought. There are certainly a wide range of campaigns where dissenters can gain access to people in power, sometimes persuading them, and it often makes sense to attempt such conversion through petitions, meetings, negotiations. Labor unions work out grievances with employers; community groups win endorsement of their proposed reforms from local politicians. But it is also widely the case that conversion is out of the question. Veteran anti-nuclear activists, for example, know well the futility of trying to persuade nuclear industry leaders to shut down the nuclear industry. The harmonist ideal in nonviolence can sometimes lead activists to unrealistic expectations and unwarranted trust of people in power, as Gandhi illustrated on many occasions (see part II). A harmonist-influenced movement may, in its effort to appeal to government authorities, adopt strategies that compromise or deemphasize the movement's organizing capacities. Pacifists differ in the degree to which they seek or expect "nonviolent conversion." In practice, the success of nonviolent protest typically relies on *coercing* opponents, through political or economic pressure, more than *converting* them. Many theorists--including Sharp, Lakey, Steihm, and Hedemann himself--recognize the coercive power of nonviolent action.<sup>80</sup>

At the level of systemic and anti-capitalist change: conversion would have to play a key role within revolutionary circumstances. Not that we would expect many members of the ruling class to willingly forfeit their wealth and embrace the revolution. But the troops on whom the ruling class relies must necessarily be won over in large numbers for a revolution to succeed. In fact, a wide range of movements operating under repressive circumstances depend--at least in part--on the conversion of troops and police. Such is true whether the movements are based on nonviolent action, armed action, or a mixed strategy.

Here, nonviolent theorists hold that troops are more likely to sympathize with resisters and disobey their superiors' orders if the movement is a nonviolent one. Sharp writes: "There is good reason to believe that mutiny is much more likely in face of nonviolent resistance. The troops or police do not face injury or death from the 'rebels' and they must decide whether to obey orders to inflict severe repression against *nonviolent* people."<sup>81</sup>

Sharp's claim is questionable. While there are historic examples of soldiers or police refusing orders to repress nonviolent protests, such occurrences are not the norm. It is more often the case that police and troops, when ordered to do so, beat nonviolent protesters, and they sometimes beat them with cruel vigor.

Even where troops *have* refused orders to attack nonviolent protests, these tend to be exceptional moments within a larger context of repression. Illustrative is the famous episode on 5 May 1963 during a civil rights campaign led by King in Birmingham, Alabama. Safety Commissioner "Bull" Connor ordered firemen to turn on their hoses, and police to turn loose their dogs, on a group of black marchers. The firemen and police refused the order and the march continued to its completion. However, in the days before this event, protesters were battered by police sticks, dogs, and pressure hoses; and in the two days following, police violence became more severe, reaching its peak in the campaign. (Nor did protesters take this abuse sitting down but fought back with bricks and bottles.)<sup>82</sup>

While disobedience of government troops during nonviolent campaigns is atypical, mutinies and defections are actually commonplace during armed revolutions. The struggles in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua were all aided by demoralization and defection of government troops. The Russian revolution was notable for being nearly bloodless, as the Bolsheviks enjoyed wide sympathy among the rank and file of the army and navy, who offered little resistance to their takeover in October 1917.<sup>83</sup> (A bloody civil war did ensue later, when supporters of the ousted ruling class sought to regain power.)

Pacifists warn that violence pushes opponents toward resentment and desperation; but such is not always the case. A determined armed movement may win respect and admiration from soldiers on the other side, particularly where its aims and methods

appear justified. Again, the best illustrative case is the Russian revolution, whose key to victory was not armed power as such, but the fact that the Bolsheviks and other left parties had organized among the soldiers and sailors and won them to their cause politically. When armed workers and sympathetic garrisons prepared to take power in Petrograd, the ruling Provisional Government ordered troops who were fighting at the front against Germany, and who were presumed to be more loyal to the government, to withdraw to Petrograd to put down the gathering revolution. But even many of those troops were not cooperative, as indicated by a member of the Third Cycle Battalion, who addressed the Congress of Soviets session on 25 October 1917:

Until just recently, we served on the southwestern front. But a few days ago, upon receipt of orders by telephonogram, we were moved northward. In the telephonogram it was indicated that we were being moved to defend Petrograd, but from whom--this was not known to us....Along the way we were bothered by the questions: Where? Why? At the station of Peredolsk we held a short meeting in association with the Fifth Cycle Battalion in order to clarify the situation. At this meeting it turned out that among all of the cyclists there could not be found one person who would agree to act against brothers and spill their blood. And we decided that we would not obey the Provisional Government. They, we said, are people who do not want to defend our interests but send us against our brothers. I declare to you concretely: No, we will not give power to a government at the head of which stand bourgeois and landowners!<sup>84</sup>

While conversion of troops through political persuasion is fundamentally important, rebels who inflict heavy losses may demoralize government forces and wear down their willingness to fight. In Vietnam, the stubbornness of the National Liberation Front wore down American soldiers to the point that the U.S. could no longer rely on its ground forces. It is worth noting that defections generally increase when it begins to appear the revolution may succeed. This is because the soldiers, like everyone, are looking out for their own welfare and survival. If the resistance is going to be victorious, then government troops have more to gain by supporting it. But if the movement is clearly headed for defeat, then the troops are better off obeying their officers. Should the resistance fail, the disobedient troops face a probable court martial and sometimes execution.

The claim that nonviolent resistance, because it is less threatening, is more likely to win over the opposition ignores the concrete predicament and options faced by soldiers and police. When we consider these, it becomes evident that gaining support of government forces depends less on being nonviolent per se than on our power of political persuasion, our choosing methods appropriate to the context, and our building a movement with convincing prospects of succeeding.

## 2. Nonviolence Wins More Public Support

In a struggle between a violent person and a nonviolent resister, if there are any onlookers or a public that hears of the conflict, the nonviolent resister gains a strong advantage from their reaction. When the public sees the gentle person's courage and fortitude, notes his generosity and good will toward the attacker, and hears his repeated offers to settle the matter fairly, peaceably and openly, they are filled with surprise, curiosity and wonder.... Sooner or later his conduct wins public sympathy, admiration and support, and also the respect of the violent opponent himself.

Richard Gregg<sup>85</sup>

Proponents have maintained that a nonviolent response to government repression not only appeals to the opposition but also wins greater sympathy and support from the public at large than does a violent response. Yet history provides abundant examples of violent uprisings winning mass sympathy, support, and participation. None of the armed revolutions and anti-colonial struggles of this century could have succeeded without the massive popular support they received. Observe the international support given in recent years to liberation struggles in Central America and Southern Africa. Some of the finest victories of the American labor movement have involved rallying public sympathy and support behind strikers who fought violently against police attacks. Examples were the three great city-wide strikes in 1934 in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Toledo. Each won broad public support and each involved workers violently defending their picket lines--combined, of course, with nonviolent actions as well.<sup>86</sup>

If one's cause is clearly just, it isn't necessary to suffer peacefully the brutalities of the government in order to win popular support. To fight violently in defense of one's life, one's home, or one's freedom is a widely respected human right. In fact, where a movement faces heavy government repression, people may more likely join the struggle if resisters are fighting to defend their lives rather than allowing themselves to be beaten and punished. A campaign which emphasizes voluntary suffering may alienate rather than attract public support and participation.

The question of which method will draw greater public support is an historical one: it cannot be answered in the abstract. Often, violent action would be a disaster; at other times, refusal to use violence may be disastrous. It depends on the situation. Just as with converting government troops, the best way to win the hearts of the people, besides convincing them our cause is right, is by choosing an historically appropriate strategy and showing people we can succeed.

## 3. Violence Doesn't Mix With Nonviolence

Nonviolent adherents tend to view mass movements in either/or terms: either it's a violent movement or it's a nonviolent movement. That a social struggle might need to act flexibly, to use violence in some situations and nonviolence in others, is widely rejected by nonviolent theorists. "Violence simply does not mix with a nonviolent campaign," says MNS writer William Moyer in *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*. "Nonviolent discipline must be absolutely maintained. Any acts of violence by participants will undercut our effectiveness."<sup>87</sup> It is true that the use of violence would be counterproductive in the present U.S. anti-nuclear movement. But Moyer is not referring to a specific movement in a specific historical situation. He is saying violence *in general* does not mix with a nonviolent campaign.

A glance at history shows this pacifist assertion to be mistaken. Workers have countless times used violence effectively in primarily nonviolent struggles. In the 1934 strikes already referred to, picket lines and rallies were mainly nonviolent, but strikers also defended themselves with violence when needed. The famous 1937 sitdown strike at the General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan, has been hailed by pacifist writers as an exemplary nonviolent action.<sup>88</sup> Yet violence played a crucial role in the success of that strike. Sitdowners defended the plant against police attack using fire hoses and throwing bottles and car parts. Strikers on the outside fought with sticks and bottles to maintain the picket line. A turning point in the strike was the surprise takeover of Chevrolet No. 4 plant; strikers threatened non-supportive workers and drove off company police with pistons, connecting rods, and fire hoses.<sup>89</sup> Coal miners in the U.S. have for years successfully mixed violence and nonviolence in their strikes. The big coal strike of 1978 included numerous marches, rallies, and other nonviolent tactics. But strikers also fought with police, intimidated strikebreakers, and forced scab trucks to dump their coal. The miners achieved only a stalemate in the 1978 strike, but they were able to stave off a major defeat against the combined opposition of the coal operators and the government.<sup>90</sup>

Not only has violence often been used effectively in struggles that are mainly nonviolent, but nonviolent protests have also played an important role in armed revolutions. The armed struggle in Nicaragua would probably have never succeeded had it not included mass mobilizations through general strikes and countless local campaigns involving boycotts, nonpayment of taxes, student strikes, demands for constitutional rights, etc.<sup>91</sup> Wilfred G. Burchett describes a variety of nonviolent protests and tactics used by Vietnamese peasants to support the guerrilla effort during the Vietnam War. A popular and effective tactic involved mobilizing tens of thousands of peasants, along with their pigs and buffalo, to occupy major towns and district centers. With the streets totally paralyzed, the people would demand of the government an end to the "mopping up" operations in which villages were burned and crops destroyed.<sup>92</sup>

In many struggles, violence and nonviolence have been so organically mixed that it would be inapplicable to label the movement as either violent or nonviolent--people are just fighting to improve their lives using whatever means they must use. Nonviolent proponents such as George Lakey, who claim that violence and nonviolence shouldn't be mixed because violence alienates public support, justifies government repression, reduces

the size of the movement, and so on,<sup>93</sup> speak without regard for historical contexts. They set up abstract truths which apply in some situations but not at all in others. Surely, violence is not suited to most of our movements today (though exceptions can and do emerge in the labor movement, in land-related struggles involving farmers or Native Americans, among blacks organizing self-defense against white racists). But the general necessity for nonviolence should not lead us to a rigid stance that cannot adapt to different movements and changing circumstances.

#### **4. Secrecy Hurts the Movement**

Pacifism's moral rigidity extends beyond questions of violence or nonviolence. For example, driven by a principled commitment to honesty and openness, many nonviolent advocates oppose secrecy in social movements. A variety of practical arguments have been forwarded. Gordon Faison and Bob Irwin of MNS hold that "secrecy results in inefficiency, authoritarianism, and mistrust simply because of the need to cover up much of what is planned from our allies."<sup>94</sup> Sharp warns that when a nonviolent movement attempts to maintain secrecy, "fear that secrets and plans will be revealed and that personnel will be captured permeates the movement; this leads to a kind of degeneration, demoralization and weakening which inevitably tends to undermine the movement."<sup>95</sup> Hedemann says that "secrecy generally runs counter to our intentions of building an open and honest society."<sup>96</sup>

The above writers' opposition to secrecy underlines the more general problem of utopianism in nonviolent theory. Their strategy and tactics are based on abstract ideals--"we would like to be nonviolent"; "we would like to be open and truthful"--rather than in response to specific applications and conditions. While honesty and openness toward the opposition are the appropriate mode in many movements and campaigns, many others would be trounced if they had to be open and truthful with the opposition. When such is the case, an abstract call for non-secrecy can become a dangerous dogma. For example, in 1932 a wave of opposition had swept India as the British colonial government intensified its repressive policies. Although declared illegal, the Gandhi-led Indian National Congress issued orders against secrecy in accordance with nonviolent principles. As a result, the major coordinating organization for national resistance was unable to hold meetings, its leaders were arrested, and the people's mounting spirit lacked a corresponding organizational apparatus. The resistance inevitably became scattered and petered out. Gandhi's "Quit India" campaign in 1942 met a similar fate for similar reasons.<sup>97</sup>

The need for secrecy, however, is by no means limited to campaigns under repressive regimes. A broad number of struggles in the U.S. today demand the use of secrecy on various levels. And the nonviolent arguments about secrecy breeding fear, mistrust, and authoritarianism are generally irrelevant in these efforts. The most common area where secrecy is essential is in workplace organizing. Organizers on the job who fail to practice discretion and confidentiality can invite the wrath of management. Ringleaders can be

singled out and harassed or get fired on a flimsy excuse. Union drives, health and safety campaigns, struggles against speedup or management harassment all require the safety of closed meetings and secrecy from the employer. If protest actions are planned, workers may want to notify management to give them a chance to meet worker demands and avoid trouble. But other times, where the employer might prepare countermeasures, it is best to keep quiet until the action. In any case, a general policy of honesty and openness toward the employer would be devastating for most on-the-job organizing.

Secrecy is also often required in community organizing and city politics. A friend of mine active with the Berkeley Tenants Union in Berkeley, California, describes the importance of discretion when organizing tenants in a particular building or block. Especially in the early stages of a campaign--for housing improvements, stopping evictions, fighting rent hikes, starting a tenants union--people need to feel safe going to meetings. Many landlords are not hesitant to carry out reprisals against activist tenants.

Berkeley rent control advocates in 1982 won a major victory over landlords, passing a strong rent control measure and defeating a landlord-backed initiative. The campaign involved a lot of guerrilla-type tactics--tearing down signs and sabotaging each other side's outreach efforts. In the early morning of the election, some friends of the tenants' union went to the pro-landlord campaign office and filled the lock with Epoxy glue. It worked great. The landlord people lost precious hours of election day trying to get into their office where their signs and leaflets were stored. Secrecy on the part of the tenant activists was of course a must. Some nonviolent activists might consider such tactics unsavory, but they aren't near as unsavory as the rent gouging, arbitrary evictions, and other abuses perpetrated by landlords against tenants which the landlord initiative sought to protect.

Nonviolent theorists have argued that attempts at secrecy are ultimately futile against resolute opposition. Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey write that determined opponents "will plant 'informers' and/or modern electronic devices in such a way that your activities will be an open book. You may as well open the book and be fully honest about your plans to begin with. You should try to plan tactics...which do not depend on secrecy for their value."<sup>98</sup>

Again, the writers are thinking in terms of ideals, without respect to specific conditions. A movement must operate within circumstances not of its own choosing. If those circumstances demand some measure of secrecy, then it would be foolish and self-defeating to "open the book and be fully honest" because of the danger of spies and bugs. The movement simply must deal with the spy problem as best it can. There is room for creativity. During the 1937 General Motors sitdown, the crucial takeover of Chevrolet No. 4 plant involved a slick maneuver on the part of strike leaders. A meeting was arranged, to which known company spies were deliberately invited. A plan for a sitdown the next day at Chevrolet No. 9 was announced. As expected, company guards had been tipped off and shifted from the No. 4 to the No. 9 area. In the afternoon, some workers sat



down at No. 9, company guards rushed in, and a diversionary battle began. Meanwhile a few hundred workers marched into No. 4 and shut the huge plant down.<sup>99</sup>

Many movements today have little or no use for secrecy. However, rejection of secrecy should never become an absolute policy or a dogma, even in the anti-nuclear movement. As an example, preparations for the 1981 blockade/occupation of the Diablo Nuclear Plant included local activists in San Luis Obispo sneaking onto the Diablo property to cut out trails and design a map of the site. The trails and maps came in handy for many groups who chose to occupy by the overland route. Readiness to adapt to changing circumstances and needs of the movement should always hold priority over any commitment to honesty and openness toward opponents.

## **5. A Violent Revolution Could Not Succeed in the U.S.**

With the overthrow of dictatorships and visible improvements in people's lives accomplished by armed struggle in several third world countries, a number of nonviolent radicals in the U.S. have taken a new position. "Yes," they admit, "violence has done some good in the third world, but armed struggle could never work in this country. We in the U.S. must commit to a nonviolent revolutionary strategy." In addition to traditional points, such as that violence will tend to beget further violence, nonviolent writers have put forward two notable reasons for opposing revolutionary violence in the U.S. First, they contend, Americans would not support a movement that uses violence. Second, even if widely supported, a violent strategy would fail because the U.S. military is too powerful.

### ***Would Americans Support Violence?***

MNS members Susanne Gowan et al. in *Moving Toward a New Society* observe a "declining legitimacy of violence." They see "no evidence that the masses of people can or will be mobilized to use arms."<sup>100</sup> Dave Dellinger writes similarly of "the genuine abhorrence of violence in the hearts of the American people."<sup>101</sup> Many pacifists seem to find comfort in the belief that the world is following in their footsteps and beginning to renounce violence. But this is happening neither in the world as a whole--as wars and popular revolts continue to rage--nor in the U.S. in particular. Violence has long been regarded by Americans as a necessary part of life. The fact that killing a person to defend one's life or one's family is considered morally legitimate, and the law of the land supports this, is one expression of the acceptability of violence in American culture. American workers have been among the most violent in the industrialized world. The history of organized labor is brimming with examples of workers defending their strikes with sticks, fists, and guns. World War II saw Americans respond with spirit to the government's call to beat off the Nazis. Certainly, most Americans would endorse the armed defense of our own country in the event of a foreign invasion.

There is little to suggest that violence is currently losing legitimacy in America; in fact, the reverse may be true. Movies that glorify violence such as *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Rocky*, and *Superman* draw record-breaking audiences, while crime dramas and violent-oriented TV programs enjoy similar popularity. The popularity of violent programs is hardly a healthy trend, and many believe that it contributes to the level of violent crimes. Still, it does suggest that violence itself continues to hold acceptability in the eyes of most Americans.

Gowan et al. see "no evidence that the masses of people can or will be mobilized to use arms." There is no pressing evidence that the masses are ready to struggle by nonviolent means either. One can find clues, however, that the American potential for mass mobilizing does exist. The militant history of the labor movement, the breadth of the sixties' black and anti-war movements, the social power of the feminist movement, the current vastly growing disarmament movement all point to the country's political capability. A more quiet but equally powerful evidence is the deep anger and discontent that grows from the oppressive grind of the workplace, from growing unemployment and poverty, from police brutality in the cities. Americans indeed have the potential to organize. And, considering the record of violent struggle of workers, farmers, Native Americans (e.g., the centuries-long fight for their land against white aggressors; Wounded Knee), and blacks (e.g., Deacons for Defense, the sixties' riots), it is clear that most Americans would be willing to pick up the gun if deemed necessary.

### ***Is the Military Too Powerful?***

A crucial obstacle to violent revolution in the U.S., assert Gowan et al., is

the massive military power of the state and the constant refining of technology (electronic sensing devices, for example) which facilitates repression....

It is far from clear where the [movement's] military hardware would come from as the struggle advances from homemade and seized weapons to a higher level. Strategy for protracted guerrilla struggle expects a final state of war, as in China or in Vietnam. At that point a massive arms supply is necessary. From where would the arms come? From outside sympathetic nations? The role of the Soviet Union in power politics is not reassuring, nor the support of China to the bloody dictator Yahya Khan of Pakistan against the people of Bangladesh.<sup>102</sup>

Ability to take on the state's military force is certainly a central question for any revolutionary movement, whether violent or nonviolent. At the same time, the immense power of a popular movement should not be underestimated. As Malcolm X observed in 1964:

The oppressor always points out to the oppressed, "The odds are against you." When Castro was up in the mountains of Cuba, they told him the odds were

against him. Today he's sitting in Havana and all the power this country has can't remove him. They told the Algerians the same thing: "What do you have to fight with?" Today they have to bow down to Ben Bella.<sup>103</sup>

There probably has not been a successful mass revolt in this century where the ruling regime did not try to appear militarily invincible. The Vietnamese showed the "invincibility" of the U.S. military by defeating it. Of course, the conditions and circumstances of Vietnam are not the same as for U.S. activists living in a highly urbanized, industrial society and seeking to transform the American system itself. These different conditions make unavailable to Americans some of the strategic courses taken by the Vietnamese, such as jungle warfare, but provide new types of weapons not possible in Vietnam, such as ability to wreak havoc on a complex economy through mass strikes and industrial sabotage.

Determining at this time what exact methods will be appropriate in an American revolution is, of course, impossible; we don't even know that such a revolution will ever take place, much less what the circumstances will be. But it is possible to speculate. On the question of violence or nonviolence, it is useful to note that most revolutions have involved an organic mix of both. In fact, while pacifists and non-pacifists have traditionally argued over violence versus nonviolence, the debate might be better couched as one of flexibility versus nonflexibility.

Dramatic changes in the country and the world will likely have occurred before a revolutionary situation arises in the U.S. The context would probably be a general worldwide movement toward revolution. Indeed, given the relatively low political consciousness of Americans, one could speculate that the U.S. would be one of the last capitalist holdouts. Hence, contrary to what Gowan et al. suggest, there would likely be strong outside support and suppliers of arms (as well as potential inside sources such as theft and raids of government armories).

Within the U.S., a revolutionary movement could only be conceived where the government has become extremely unpopular, and where there is overwhelming support for the resistance. Any armed effort would likely occur amidst a broad array of campaigns and struggles--of workers, national minorities, women, gays, students, farmers, professional groups, anti-nuclear groups, church groups--relying on primarily nonviolent actions. The extent to which armed struggle would be required depends heavily on the reaction of government forces to the movement. If rebellion spreads to the military ranks and an overwhelming majority of troops turn against the government, then the social transition will be largely peaceful. However, if significant sections of the army remain loyal to the government and carry out a repressive campaign, then the movement will need to organize a popular defense. In past revolutions, violent and nonviolent tactics often complemented each other. For example, when the Sandinistas in Nicaragua launched their final insurrection in June 1979, they called a general strike which was 90 percent effective. Somoza was forced to deploy troops to protect strikebreakers, which further undermined the mobility of his army.<sup>104</sup>

The ability of a U.S. revolution to defeat the government's military force will depend more on the *mass* character of the movement--mass demonstrations, mass strikes, mass resistance--than its ability to match the government gun for gun. Other crucial factors would include an ability to keep united a very diverse coalition of groups; the strength, efficiency, and strategic wisdom of the movement's organization; whether the movement can defend itself against the likely onslaught of government repression; and, essential for the last, the movement's ability to undermine morale of government troops and their willingness to fight. In South Africa, the African National Congress--still underground since its banning in 1960 and maintaining a guerrilla force outside the country--has recognized the need for such a mass emphasis, as noted in the *New York Times*, 16 August 1981:

The indications have been that the African National Congress is hoping to serve as a catalyst for a mass rising, rather than to launch a conventional guerrilla war against Africa's strongest power. For this reason, the battleground is often said to be the factory floor, where black trade unions have been allowed a tenuous legal existence in recent years.<sup>105</sup>

Nonviolent advocates, in counting out use of arms in the U.S., often do not consider how armed approaches might be applied flexibly and within a broader mass framework. Martin Oppenheimer, in his often cited *Urban Guerrilla*, attempts to show the futility of violent revolution in the American context. He creates two scenarios of urban insurrection by black guerrilla groups. Neither involves the support of the general working population or the use of mass strikes, but are confined to a limited core of ghetto blacks, white leftists, and students. The possibility of subversion in the military, of demoralization and mutiny among government troops, is not considered, although these have been crucial factors in many revolutions. Naturally, the insurrections do not fare well: the first is a total failure; the outcome of the second is "open" but looks desperate.<sup>106</sup>

Those proposing nonviolent revolution envision a mass-based struggle similar in ways to that suggested here--popular, built from the grassroots, with mass strikes and demonstrations. But their approach to the question of violence or nonviolence is absolutist and either/or: either it's a movement of noncooperators abiding by nonviolent discipline (along with goodwill toward opponents, non-retaliatory suffering, rejection of secrecy), or it's a strict guerrilla war. They do not allow that mass marches, strikes, and seizure of factories, universities, and other institutions might need to be defended against government attack; nor that the movement might require secrecy and armed protection in order to hold planning meetings, conferences, to maintain offices, communication centers, a radio, a newspaper. Rather, protesters must simply "refuse to cooperate," suggests the nonviolent revolutionary, and must suffer government brutality with patient courage. Barbara Deming's scenario is representative:

We act out respect for ourselves by refusing to cooperate with those who oppress or exploit us. And as their power never resides in their single selves, always depends upon the cooperation of others--by refusing that cooperation (if there are enough of us), refusing our labor, our wits, our money, our blood upon their battlefields, our deference, we take their power from them. The strike, in a great variety of forms--this is all that is needed to depose them (if, again, there are enough of us, enough of us who recognize that this is so). The strike, and what Danilo Dolci has named the reverse strike: carrying out by ourselves the services we think should exist, doing this in our own way, and doing it of course whether or not we are given "permission." These acts and sometimes the related acts of nonviolent disruption and sabotage (nonviolent because care is taken never to injure any person, or to injure the kind of property that has deep life-meaning for people)--this is all that is needed.

This and the fortitude to endure...the retaliation sure to come down upon us for a time. I said earlier that a world of brotherhood could be brought into being only if we built it out of our very muscle and bone. I should have added: and our blood.<sup>107</sup>

Deming is saying, in other words, that protesters will withdraw support for the government, quit working for their employers, and start running things themselves. When the armed force of the state is sent to maintain law and order, and bludgeons people with tear gas, batons, bullets, and possibly torture, resisters will allow their blood to run with quiet forbearance until their suffering wins the sympathy of the soldiers and the rulers' power is undermined.

This nonviolent scenario overlooks the practical needs of a revolutionary movement. It must sustain a solid organization, coordinate and strategize on a national level, win the broadest possible support and maintain the morale and spirit of those in struggle. If the movement insists on remaining nonviolent in face of severe repression--as, say, the Indian national campaigns under Gandhi--the vicious beatings, outlawing of the organization, and jailing of its members make achieving these ends impossible.

In probability, an American revolution will be met with considerable repression and require armed resistance. However, the level of repression such revolution will face, the sympathy and support it will gain among government troops and the general populace, and the strategy and tactics that will be called for cannot be accurately predicted. What is certain is that a successful movement will need to act flexibly and adapt to whatever circumstances emerge. Rigid application of any methods, violent or nonviolent, would be counterproductive.

A final point to consider is how a revolution will be defended once it wins. It is virtually certain that the previous rulers will organize to reinstitute their power, and will use arms, terror, and whatever means are available. A defense strategy that relies on nonviolent noncooperation does not seem adequate. Should Nicaraguan villagers presently under

attack by Somoza's former troops be asked to face their attackers without armed defense? Considering that the Somocista methods during the revolution included cutting open the stomachs of pregnant women and pushing bayonets through the unborn babies, refusing arms to Nicaraguan villagers would seem cruel. Whether the initial U.S. revolution could be accomplished violently or nonviolently, it is hard to imagine how the new society could function and flourish without the organization of popular militias to ensure the safety of communities.

## 6. Violence Could Lead to Nuclear War

In the era of nuclear technology....any force of "violence" that has social dimensions and implications takes on new evil meaning because it may "escalate" into war, get out of hand and bring on the danger of extinguishing civilization, if not the race itself.

A.J. Muste<sup>108</sup>

A frequent pacifist argument against political violence is that it could conceivably lead to nuclear war. It is true that U.S. military intervention, especially in areas like the Middle East, brings danger of direct conflict--and potential nuclear war--with the Soviet Union. But this is not the same as a revolutionary situation within the U.S. It is hard to conceive of U.S. rulers using nuclear weapons against an internal rebellion, weapons that would obliterate and irradiate their own cities. Even using tactical neutron bombs, which are supposed to kill people but leave buildings intact, could create radiation problems for years. A government whose intent is to crush a rebellion and return to a peaceful, productive status quo will probably not use nuclear weapons domestically.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that governments and ruling elites often do not act rationally. There is no guarantee that they will refrain from using nukes, even if this course is self-destructive, to quell a violent uprising--or, for that matter, to quell a *nonviolent* uprising. But those seeking fundamental change need to assess their options and possibilities, and choose strategies that are most likely bring change and ensure human survival. If the present social structure is allowed to remain intact, there is a real possibility that nuclear war could break out in the years ahead. If a popular movement emerges to challenge the ruling powers, but is wedded to nonviolence on principle, the movement may be unable to withstand a repressive campaign; hence, the present social order and its nuclear developments will continue. The best strategy to avert nuclear war is to radically transform the existing economic/social system which thrives on aggressive militarism; a movement adopting such a strategy must be prepared to defend itself if and when this becomes necessary.

Revolutionary movements in third world countries have perhaps greater potential for superpower confrontation and nuclear war than would similar movements in the U.S. and

other industrialized countries. For example, the U.S. contemplated using nuclear weapons in the Vietnam War.<sup>109</sup> Some pacifists have cited this danger as a reason for opposing armed strategies of third world liberation movements. Sharp, in proposing nonviolence for blacks in South Africa, argues that guerrilla and other violent strategies in South Africa are "highly dangerous, especially where the East-West power struggle could become involved and where the conflict could degenerate into nuclear war."<sup>110</sup>

Where liberation movements face continued repression and see no alternative to arms, they should not be expected to reject arms in the name of avoiding superpower conflict. To prevent nuclear war, American activists need to organize a powerful movement that can keep our government from intervening abroad in the short term, and can win disarmament and radical change in the long term.

## **7. Nonviolence Reaffirms Our Human Unity**

The key attitudes [of nonviolence] stem from a feeling for the solidarity of all human beings, even those who find themselves in deep conflict. George Meredith once said that a truly cultivated man is one who realizes that the things which seem to separate him from his fellows are as nothing compared with those which unite him with all humanity.

Dave Dellinger<sup>111</sup>

The proposal that all people are as one, and accompanying emphasis on love, openness, and respect toward friend and foe alike, is probably the major appeal of nonviolence for those who have embraced it. Nonviolence in this sense coincides with the vision, shared by many social activists, of a world where people are cooperating instead of competing, solving their conflicts in a communicative, humane fashion, and where war, exploitation, and the like have been eradicated. My own motivation for being involved in politics lies in such a vision.

But the manner of "acting out our visions" proposed by the nonviolent community has certain limitations. If loving and trusting relations between people are to prevail, then people must have a basis for loving and trusting each other. In a society where the vast majority are cheated and abused for the benefit of a few, and material comfort stands beside poverty, oppressed groups often do not hold feelings of love or human solidarity for people who exploit them, and they are generally wise not to trust such people. When exploitative social relations have been replaced by equality and popular power, then there can be a wider basis for trust and oneness with humanity. Achieving that end will require throwing out a very powerful and stubborn ruling elite, and nonviolent means may not be adequate.

Philosophies advocating human unity and universal love are class-influenced. Members of the middle class, from whom such theories generally originate, strive to cover up class

exploitation and disparities by promoting illusions of social harmony. This is most pronounced at the workplace, where an atmosphere of "cooperation" and "harmony" helps keep workers from raising commotion about low wages and job speedup. The big companies in particular like their workers to feel part of the "company family," identifying with the "fatherly" management. Company bowling leagues, softball leagues, and Christmas parties help promote the image. When a strike is called, or there's a union drive, many workers end up remaining loyal to the "company team."

In society at large, religion has traditionally been the major means of promoting "human unity" and staving off class consciousness among the oppressed. The Quakers, according to Howard H. Brinton, regard God as "the source of unity among conflicting forces."<sup>112</sup> "In withdrawing into the presence of God," say the Quakers, "man seeks to perceive the whole as it is seen by God. Adherence to the part--to a particular individual, nation, race or class--may be overcome by communion with the Father of *all* being."<sup>113</sup> Hinduism holds a comparable view in which the separate souls of individuals seek to reunite, ultimately by returning to God, who is the universal whole. Gandhi's theory of trusteeship--in which the rich administer their wealth and property for the benefit of all--showed plainly what the religious notions of oneness and harmony implied for the sphere of class relations. While aware of the brutal treatment rendered by capitalists and landlords upon workers and tenant farmers, Gandhi opposed forcibly dispossessing the propertied classes: "What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer."<sup>114</sup> In Gandhi's envisioned nonviolent society, "everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love.... We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist."<sup>115</sup>

Human unity cannot exist without equality (and Gandhi's idea of equality between the rich and poor amounts to an apology for the rich). In the context of a class society, generalized calls for harmony and "love for all" tend to support the status quo by discouraging class awareness and keeping exploited groups from recognizing their exploitation. The path to a truly loving society lies not through harmony between antagonistic classes. It lies through the people below taking power and building a world where classes do not exist.



## Chapter 7

# A Class Perspective

Behind every condemnation of revolutionary violence hides a social prejudice, a class prejudice.

Juan Carlos Zaffaroni<sup>116</sup>

The meaning of nonviolent philosophy becomes clearest when considered from a class perspective. As noted in chapter 5, the key distinction between the nonviolent model and other progressive models is that the former remains committed to nonviolence in all circumstances including that of harsh repression. This inflexible posture builds a class bias into the nonviolent model, since a movement that cannot defend against repression is restricted in its capacity to challenge ruling-class power. While nonviolent philosophy endorses action for social change, it also wants to limit that action, and in this sense plays a controlling and containing role. The controlling role of nonviolent philosophy notably applies where violent action has become a reasonable (or at least arguable) movement option. A movement facing violent opposition requires an utmost sense of practicality and flexibility in order to choose the proper response. Pacifist principle, or rigid generalizations of the kind discussed in chapters 3 and 6, compromise the movement's practical decision making and strategy making. Or it can have more serious implications. In Gandhi's campaigns toward India's independence, protesters often would not keep nonviolent discipline in the face of repression. In some instances, these led Gandhi to cancel campaigns or withdraw his support.

The controlling intent of nonviolence is strongly suggested by the "Standards for Civil Disobedience in a Democracy" recommended by Gene Sharp in *Social Power and Political Freedom*:

*For the nonviolent actionist:*

The action must be absolutely nonviolent in all circumstances, in face of all provocation, retaliation, and repressive measures. The actionists ought even to seek to avoid engendering permanent animosity and hostility and to maintain friendly relations with all involved....

The group responsible for laying the plans for the action must operate openly and above board. All plans for action must be revealed publicly in advance of the action, including to the police and other relevant agencies....

The actionists must be willing to accept the penalties provided in the law for disobedience, such as fines or imprisonments....

The nonviolent actionists must behave in a disciplined, dignified manner in all circumstances.

Stressing the need for "fair play," Sharp offers standards of behavior also "*for the government*":

Where a law is not being violated, the nonviolent action must be allowed to proceed peacefully without interference....

The penalties imposed on the disobedient demonstrators must be limited to the maximum--and this must be reasonable--contained in the law chosen for disobedience....

Extralegal measures, such as beatings, shootings, brutalities, and the like, either before or after arrest must in no circumstances be permitted....

While conforming to the above standards, a government is justified in arresting and sentencing demonstrators practicing civil disobedience under the normal provisions of the law chosen for disobedience.<sup>117</sup>

One wonders, in the above, what the nonviolent actionists should do if the government decides not to play by the rules, i.e., if they resort to "extralegal measures, such as beatings" or begin arresting people who aren't violating the law. While the question is not directly posed by Sharp, it is clear what he expects of the nonviolent protesters. They must remain "absolutely nonviolent in all circumstances, in face of all provocation, retaliation, and repressive measures," he writes above. Elsewhere, Sharp argues for continued openness and against secrecy, even where the movement is being repressed.<sup>118</sup>

Despite claimed fairness, Sharp's standards for civil disobedience are actually stacked against the protesters. They are expected to abide by the rules regardless of whether the government conforms to them also. Practically speaking, the government is not likely to adhere to Sharp's standards anyway; its concern is in countering the movement by whatever means seem expedient. On the other hand, those involved in social change may be won over to nonviolent principles or codes of discipline if put forth by an articulate source (for example, Sharp's theories have considerable influence among U.S. anti-nuclear and peace groups<sup>119</sup>).

### **Nonviolent Double Standard**

Injunctions against violence have long been used to ensure that the lower classes remain peaceful, while the ruling classes use any method they please to stay in power. This inconsistency was observed by the Colombian priest Camilo Torres in 1965:

The oligarchy operates on a moral double standard: on one hand, it condemns revolutionary violence; on the other hand, it assassinates and jails the defenders and representatives of the popular class. The same double standard operates in the U.S.; while they talk of peace, they bomb Vietnam and invade the Dominican Republic.<sup>120</sup>

Nonviolent leaders often take a similar stance. Gandhi firmly opposed violent struggles by labor or peasant movements. Yet, he supported use of arms by the ruling class on several occasions (see part II). Martin Luther King held that "if every Negro in the United States turns to violence, I will choose to be that one lone voice preaching that this is the wrong way."<sup>121</sup> But, as the following cases show, King frequently appealed for police and government troops to protect his campaigns.

In March 1964, King asked President Johnson to send marshals to the South to ensure that blacks could register to vote without intimidation.<sup>122</sup> The same month he led a Selma-Montgomery march protected by 4,000 federal troops.<sup>123</sup> On the third night of the 1966 Chicago riots, King drew criticism from militants when he allowed himself to be driven around by police, imploring people to surrender their weapons and return home.<sup>124</sup> In July-August 1966, King launched a series of demonstrations in Chicago's white neighborhoods; most of the public actions were protected by police or National Guardsmen. During one such protest, according to biographer David Levering Lewis, "more than a dozen cars were overturned and set afire (most of them belonging to the demonstrators) by the white mobs, and police made liberal use of their clubs to disperse them."<sup>125</sup> King and co-worker Al Raby issued a statement at the time declaring: "We shall continue to demonstrate in every all-white community in Chicago in our nonviolent effort to open housing for all men.... In the process, we demand the full and active protection of the local police."<sup>126</sup>

Whether King's use of police and troops was justified in these instances is not the point. What's important is that, like his predecessor Gandhi, King *trusted* the government--the arm of the capitalist class--to wield the force of arms in the name of the people, and he regarded this as morally acceptable. However, he refused to place similar trust in working-class blacks, and he considered morally repugnant their efforts to defend themselves when under attack. Nonviolence means a "willingness to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back," King said.<sup>127</sup> As was true for the Mahatma, King's nonviolent morality applied strictly to the lower classes, but the rulers were given moral exemptions.

Many nonviolent advocates would not endorse state violence as did Gandhi and King, but their nonviolent principles are one-sided nonetheless. The ruling powers, who are well-armed, will use violence as they deem necessary; they are not inclined toward nonviolent principles or voluntary suffering techniques. But popular movements are often amenable to such principles; nonviolent advocates can assume leadership roles, helping shape movement philosophy, policies, and strategies. So, regardless of intentions, the injunction

against violence involves a practical double standard: it prohibits those struggling for change from using violence, while those in power are free to use any and all methods.

Malcolm X recognized the unfairness of this approach within the black movement:

I myself would go for nonviolence if it was consistent, if everybody was going to be nonviolent.... If they make the Ku Klux Klan nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. If they make the White Citizens Council nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. But as long as you've got somebody else not being nonviolent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any nonviolent talk....

If the leaders of the nonviolent movement can go into the white community and teach nonviolence, good. I'd go along with that. But as long as I see them teaching nonviolence only in the black community, we can't go along with that. We believe in equality, and equality means you have to put the same thing over here that you put over there. And if black people alone are going to be the ones who are nonviolent, then it's not fair.<sup>128</sup>

People struggling for social change should be free to choose any tactics and strategies, violent or nonviolent, that suit their needs given specific circumstances. Nonviolent principles, and such standards as proposed by Sharp, must be recognized for their class partiality. These principles are intended not for the ruling class but for people who are rising up against the status quo, and are a means of controlling and regulating working-class dissent.

### **Class Issues for Radical Pacifists**

Radical pacifists whom I know and work with in the anti-nuclear movement are wholly committed to anti-capitalist, egalitarian goals, and to building a democratic, popular movement for achieving these goals. I have also found in nonviolent communities a street action orientation, an anti-authoritarian edge, and an exceptional kind of personal warmth. I hope any revolution or social break in which I may take part will be liberally infused with such spirit.

If nonviolent activists are to be ultimately effective in undoing the violence of exploitation and inequality endemic to class society, they will need to develop political theories and strategies employing a class perspective. The thrust of pacifism, distinguishing it from Marxism, is the rejection not only of political violence but of class analysis. The tendency is to place undue faith in the ruling class, in their ability to be converted, accompanied by distrust or insensitivity toward working-class people and their concerns. Nonviolent principles end up placing tactical restraints on the classes below while those in power are unrestrained. There is a real conflict between the radical pacifist desire for a classless society, and that part of pacifist theory which frowns on class analysis as being "too divisive."

In recent years, individuals and small groups, mostly working-class activists, have been pushing for a stronger class orientation in the more radical nonviolent groups such as MNS and WRL. Working-class support and study groups have been started. Position papers and articles have been circulated calling for more involvement in labor and minority issues, more sensitivity to working-class culture and concerns, challenging middle-class assumptions and biases within the nonviolent community and in society.<sup>129</sup> While still a minority position, a genuine commitment to addressing class issues is a growing and promising tendency in the nonviolent community and in the larger anti-nuclear/peace movement where nonviolence holds major influence. On the other hand, though raising important issues, the pacifist writings on class have yet to inquire as to the class influences and biases involved in nonviolent theory itself--be it injunctions against using violence or secrecy, reliance on voluntary suffering, the nonviolent theory of power, or the emphasis on human unity. These hard questions need to be tackled if the nonviolent community is to grow into a more class-conscious and potent force for radical change.

## **Redefining Love**

The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him. At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>130</sup>

Nonviolence represents for many activists an effort to infuse struggles for social change with loving values and a sense of sister/brotherhood. If revolution takes place, nonviolent advocates believe their approach increases the likelihood that loving relations will prevail in the new society.

Loving principles can and should be integrated into the daily work of social change. But if love consists of a deep and caring respect for people, then the movement must define love in a way that affirms the drive toward liberation of oppressed groups. Nonviolence does affirm this. As the Mobilization for Survival points out, "Nonviolent action is an active way to confront and challenge injustice through organizing people's power."<sup>131</sup> Nonviolent activists have demonstrated this commitment in many practical and significant ways.

At the same time, the nonviolent follower draws a line beyond which s/he will go no further. It is when nonviolent means are no longer applicable or are no longer sufficient for liberation that the pacifist commitment to the oppressed, and the nonviolent interpretation of love, become less meaningful. Insisting on nonviolence can mean supporting the systemic violence of the status quo. Robert McAfee Brown makes this point from a Christian perspective in *Religion and Violence: A Primer for White Americans*:

I have discovered that many of my fellow Christians in Asia, Africa, and Latin America exist in such appalling political and economic oppression that for them the possibility of significant change by nonviolent means is scarcely entertainable.

To shrink from the use of violence on the relatively small scale of the quick overthrow of a despotic government is to give tacit approval to the continuing use of structural violence on a massive scale by that same government.<sup>132</sup>

The liberation theologians in Latin America have been redefining the concept of love in Christianity in a new and revolutionary way (or perhaps in the way it was originally intended). One of the early practitioners of the new theology was Father Camilo Torres of Colombia, who left the church to join the guerrilla movement. When he was killed in battle in 1966, his martyrdom affected clergymen across South America. Father Carlos Perez Herrera was among those affected:

Christ is love and I wanted to be a man of love; yet love cannot exist in a master-slave relationship. What Camilo's death meant to me was that I had to dedicate myself to smash the master-slave relationship in Argentina. I had to fight *with* the slaves, the people, as *they* fought, not as an elitist teacher who tells them what is good and what is evil and then goes back to his study to read Saint Augustine but as a genuine participant, *with* them not *for* them, in their misery, their failings, their violence. If I could not do this, I was not a man of the people, that is, a man of God, that is, a believer in brotherhood, which is the meaning of love.<sup>133</sup>

The Catholic church today plays a powerful role in the growing social awareness of Latin America's poor. Thousands of priests have headed for the countryside and urban slums to help create *comunidades de base* (Christian grassroots communities); people are learning the tools of cooperative problem-solving, mutual aid, and, sometimes, the power of collective resistance. Not all the progressive clergy endorse violent struggle. Archbishop Dom Helder Câmara of Brazil is most prominent of the nonviolent advocates. But the trend is moving toward open support of armed insurrection. In a statement released in January 1981, a coalition of religious groups in El Salvador tell why they decided to support the armed opposition:

The Salvadoran people have not chosen armed conflict. Rather, conflict has been imposed on them. Over the years they have sought peaceful solutions in elections and used social and political pressure to achieve their aspirations. Everything has proven futile. Elections have been systematically fraudulent, and political organizations and parties have been systematically harassed and threatened with annihilation....

If the common good does not exist in El Salvador, if peaceful avenues have been continually closed, then we are in that situation in which the church admits the right of legitimate insurrection....<sup>134</sup>

For growing numbers in the Latin American church, realizing love means fighting for equality since, as Herrera said, "Love cannot exist in a master-slave relationship." It means standing on the side of the poor and oppressed. This is not a conditional love. It does not say, "I will support the people's fight for justice, but only if it is by nonviolent means." It is the uncompromising love which I believe lay in the heart of Malcolm X when he said, "I'm interested in one thing alone, and that's freedom--by any means necessary."<sup>135</sup>

## Chapter 8

# Father of Nonviolence

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months.

Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>136</sup>

Gandhi is to nonviolence, one might say, as Marx is to Marxism.<sup>137</sup> The example and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi have influenced social movements around the world. His influence in the United States is probably greater than anywhere outside India. Gandhi's nonviolent strategy was the model for many civil rights struggles of the 1960s; Martin Luther King put Gandhi's principles into practice in the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and in many of the dramatic struggles which followed. Gandhi's theory and methods also influenced the ban-the-bomb and anti-war movements of the 1960s, and they are very popular in today's anti-nuclear movement. Among anti-nuclear activists, Gandhi's influence is most evident in the direct action groups. The philosophies of human nature, social power, and mass civil disobedience espoused in the direct action movement reflect Gandhi's teaching, with important influences from Christian and Quaker pacifism. Training sessions for civil disobedience participants evoke the spirit of Gandhi's ashrams, where *satyagrahis* (passive resisters) were infused with the proper attitudes of self-sacrifice and nonviolence.

In a world teeming with violence and stepping toward the nuclear brink, Gandhi offers an appealing moral model. He believed in the innate goodness of all people, and he was convinced that those who practiced nonviolence could "melt their opponent's heart." He held that lasting peace could be achieved only through peaceful means, and that love and truth can conquer all.

It is widely believed that Gandhi was politically effective, and that his nonviolent campaign liberated India from the colonial grip of the British. But a close look at Gandhi's political career suggests a wide gap between the legend and reality, and reveals much about the class origins and functions of the nonviolent philosophy. Gandhi has been portrayed as a militant seeker of justice; yet, he used nonviolent doctrine to contain militant movements. Gandhi is believed to have stood for the poor, fought for the Untouchables, and befriended the Muslims, but he betrayed each of these groups. Even the independence of India, which accomplished little for India's poor majority, was not primarily the result of Gandhi's nonviolent movement. Rather, it resulted from the



devastating impact of World War II on Britain, combined with the disruptive effects of mass protests and strikes in post-war India--from which Gandhi held aloof--and the spread of communal riots.

Careful analysis suggests that while Gandhi was indeed a social visionary beloved by millions, he was forever trapped by conflicting class loyalties. Gandhian nonviolence was developed for specific political reasons, class reasons: the philosophy as a whole can be understood only within its historic and class context.

### **Gandhi's Middle Class Origins**

Mohandas K. Gandhi, born in 1869 in Porbandar, a prosperous port town in Western India, was raised in a prestigious family. His father and grandfather both served as prime ministers in the Porbandar principedom. His mother, Putlibai, was deeply religious--she fasted often and took strict vows. Gandhi inherited his intense religious outlook from his mother Putlibai, and often joined her on her daily visits to the Vaishnava temple.

By modern American standards, the Gandhis were not wealthy. Mohandas grew up in crowded quarters in a large, three-story house which his father shared with five brothers and their families.<sup>138</sup> Still, by Indian standards the Gandhis belonged to the upper strata of society. In 1930, 70 to 80 percent of the population of India lived at the margin of subsistence, and urban working class families shared one-room tenements with as many as five or six other families.<sup>139</sup> Only young men from well-situated families could study law in England, as Gandhi did. A meager 0.8 percent of the population of British India\* in 1934-35 received even a limited four-year primary education. The number attending universities was certainly much smaller, and the number traveling abroad for study was smaller still.<sup>140</sup>

Throughout his political life, Gandhi's attitudes, actions, and theories of nonviolence reflected the biases of his upper-middle class upbringing. Even as he developed a genuine concern for India's suffering masses and exchanged his suit and tie for the garb of the Indian poor, his identification and political allegiance remained with the upper classes. Gandhi's theory and rhetoric, though unconventional in some respects, suited the traditional managerial role of the middle class. Members of the middle class (e.g., small and medium business owners, managers, and professionals) are traditionally conditioned by their social milieu to "manage" conflicts, especially class conflicts. They contain or divert the anger of exploited groups while promoting illusions of social peace. For example, employers often speak of "the company family" and the value of "cooperation" in their efforts to prevent labor organizing. The union is pictured as an outside force bringing "division" to the workplace. Likewise, Gandhi emphasized the "harmonious co-

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\* "British India" refers to the eleven provinces directly governed by Britain, which made up 55 percent of the area of the country. The remaining land area was composed of several hundred feudalistic states ruled by princes.

operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant."<sup>141</sup> His commitment to "class harmony" meant in practice, however, keeping in check lower-class militancy .

Gandhi was haunted by contradictions. He merged himself with the common people and was dubbed "Mahatma" (great souled one) by those in whom he had inspired new life and the will to fight. But he limited the scope of the struggles he inspired and denied the right of those fighting for change to defend themselves against government violence. He worked ceaselessly, suffered great hardships, and led many campaigns to improve the condition of oppressed groups. But he rejected the notion of peasants and workers forcibly taking the land and factories, insisting they should instead appeal to the rich through the methods of nonviolent suffering. Despite his lower-class sympathies, Gandhi consistently kept his campaigns within moderate bounds that would not threaten the interests of wealthy Indians.

## Chapter 9

# Satyagraha in South Africa

No matter how often a Satyagrahi is betrayed, he will repose his trust in the adversary so long as there are not cogent grounds for distrust....Distrust is a sign of weakness and Satyagraha implies the banishment of all weakness and therefore of distrust, which is clearly out of place when the adversary is not to be destroyed but to be won over.

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>142</sup>

Trust is implicit in the nonviolent approach. If one hopes to change an opponent's heart, it is necessary to trust the opponent's humanity, capacity to reason, and ability to consider different viewpoints. But as Gandhi practiced it, trust is tinged with class bias.\*

Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893 to begin his law career. From his first satyagraha in South Africa, he demonstrated an unshakable trust toward members of ruling circles, and a basic distrust of the lower classes which kept him from supporting fully their struggles for social power. His manner of conducting the movement spurred by the Black Act, which the Transvaal government\*\* passed in 1906, demonstrated Gandhi's trust of people in power and distrust of the masses.

The Black Act was the stiffest in a long series of discriminatory measures aimed at perpetuating the second-class status of the 150,000 Indians living in South Africa. Most of the Indians were free or indentured laborers, but some were traders who were sufficiently successful to pose a competitive threat to white business interests. The Black Act sought to remove this threat; it struck at the freedom of the Indian population and smoothed the path toward more severe immigration restrictions, increased segregation, and easier deportations.

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\* My general history, where not otherwise noted, is based on D.G. Tendulkar's *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*. This thorough eight-volume work, read and approved by Gandhi, was published in a revised edition by the government of India in 1960-63. My critical view of Gandhi's political career is guided by the works of leftist Indian writers, notably Hirendranath Mukerjee, *Gandhiji: A Study* (1960) and *India's Struggle for Freedom* (1962); E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and The Ism* (1958); M.B. Rao, ed., *The Mahatma: A Marxist Symposium* (1969); and Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (1983).

\*\* South Africa consisted at this time of four British colonies: Transvaal, Natal, Orange River Colony (later, Orange Free State), and Cape of Good Hope. In 1910, these colonies became provinces under the Union of South Africa, a member of the British Commonwealth.

To oppose the Black Act, Gandhi and his colleagues formed the Passive Resistance Association (later called the Satyagraha Association). The association attracted a large membership, primarily among Indian merchants and professionals. It sponsored huge outdoor meetings where members swore oaths of resistance, and organized picketing at permit offices to encourage Indians to refuse to register for the residency permits required by the Black Act. These efforts were successful; few Indians registered, and the government was forced to push back its deadline for registration several times. By 30 November 1907, only 511 of 13,000 eligible Indians had registered. At the end of December, the government decided to crack down on non-registrants. Gandhi was arrested and ordered to leave the Transvaal within two days. He refused and on 8 January was given two months' imprisonment--his first jail sentence. By 29 January, 155 passive resisters were in jail.

Gandhi then received a settlement offer from General Smuts who, with General Botha, led the government. Smuts proposed that the Indians register voluntarily, and he promised that the government would repeal the Black Act if a majority did so. Gandhi met with Smuts, agreed to accept the offer, and was set free. The night of his release, he addressed a gathering of 1,000 Indians. "The responsibility of the community is largely enhanced by this settlement," he said. "We must register voluntarily in order to show that we do not intend to bring a single Indian into the Transvaal surreptitiously or by fraud."<sup>143</sup> The other Indian prisoners were released the next day.

Not all Indians were pleased with the settlement. Some of the Pathans\* who had given strong support to resisting the Black Act were angry and felt Gandhi had betrayed them. "It was you who told us that [the fingerprints] were required only from criminals," one pointed out. "How does all that fit in with your attitude today?"<sup>144</sup> On 10 February, Gandhi was badly beaten by a group of Pathans while on his way to a permit office to register. Determined to keep his end of the bargain, Gandhi had an official come to his sickbed to take his fingerprints and fill out the papers. He felt no anger toward his attackers and repeated his message to the community: "Assault or no assault, my advice remains the same. The large majority of Asiatics ought to give finger-prints....The promise of repeal of the Act against voluntary registration having been given, it is the sacred duty of every good Indian to help the Government and the Colony to the uttermost."<sup>145</sup>

### **Broken Promise**

Upon recovering, Gandhi threw himself into public work, attempting to persuade the Indians to register voluntarily. He won a majority to his viewpoint. By 9 May, the last day for voluntary registration, about 8,000 applications were received, and 6,000 of them were approved and passed. *Pretoria News* praised the Indians for their readiness to carry

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\* Pathans are a Muslim people from Afghanistan.

out the pledge. Gandhi now called upon the government to carry out its promise to repeal the Black Act. General Smuts, however, had no such intent. He not only failed to repeal the act, but introduced new measures to strengthen it. "I made no promise to Mr. Gandhi, either on the 30th January or on the 3rd February 1908, that Act No. 2 of 1907 would be repealed," he declared.<sup>146</sup>

Double-crossed, the leaders of the Indian community vainly applied for a return of their applications for voluntary registration. Some of Gandhi's co-workers who had warned about trusting Smuts now taunted Gandhi: "There you are. We have often been telling you that you are very credulous, and believe in anything that any one says. It would not matter much if you were so simple in your private affairs, but the community has to suffer for your credulity in public matters." Gandhi retorted, "It is not credulity but trust, and it is the duty of every one of us, yours as well as mine, to trust our fellowmen."<sup>147</sup>

Passive resistance was resumed. About 100 Indians were arrested and fined for trading without licenses; when they refused to pay their fines, they were imprisoned. Thousands of Indians, led by Gandhi, publicly burned their registration certificates. Dozens of Indians from the Natal Province defied the Immigration Act (which had been enacted by the Transvaal government in December 1907). They illegally entered the Transvaal and accepted jail sentences. On 15 October 1908, Gandhi was sentenced to two months' hard labor for failure to produce a registration certificate. At that time, about 250 passive resisters were in Transvaal jails, and their numbers increased during the following months as the satyagraha continued.

The struggle brought considerable hardship to the participants; financial losses were heavy and a number of families were broken up by deportations. The movement dragged on for years. Gandhi joined a deputation to London in 1909 to appeal to the British government, but without success. Finally, in May 1911, Smuts and Gandhi reached a provisional agreement. The original Black Act was repealed, but a number of restrictions on immigration remained in force. Afterwards, the government reneged on many of its promises, including a pledge made to abolish a yearly three-pound tax levied on Indians in the Natal Province.\*

The situation steadily worsened. In April 1913, the South African government passed an Immigration Bill which was more restrictive than its predecessor. At about the same time, the Supreme Court ruled that Hindu and Muslim marriages did not satisfy the requirements of the immigration laws, meaning that Indian wives were in South Africa illegally and subject to deportation. Gandhi again called for a satyagraha and voluntary suffering:

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\* Indentured Indian workers, upon completing their service, were forced to pay the tax for themselves and family members. The tax for a typical family would amount to twelve pounds, a major portion of a worker's annual earnings. The aim was to encourage ex-indentured workers to return to India.

Unless the Government yield and amend the bill materially, passive resistance must revive, and with it all the old miseries, sorrows, and sufferings. Homes re-established must be broken up. We must learn the lesson again of finding pleasure in pain."<sup>148</sup>

Women and workers played key roles in the 1913-14 satyagraha. A group of Indian women in the Transvaal, furious about the ruling invalidating their marriages, entered the Natal province in October 1913 without permits. There they proceeded to Newcastle where they encouraged 3,000 indentured Indian coal miners to go on strike. The government responded by imprisoning the women under wretched conditions. Their maltreatment won them broad sympathy from the miners, and the number of strikers increased. Gandhi, ever sensitive to the problems of the upper classes, assured the mine owners that the strike was not directed toward them, but toward the government, and that the strikers would return to work as soon as the government carried out its promise to repeal the three-pound tax.<sup>149</sup> Gandhi then organized a great march into the Transvaal to raise the strikers' morale.

Gandhi conducted the march in the authoritarian style that he would bring to all the campaigns in his political career. His relationship to those who joined the march was like that of a general to an army. He, and he alone, determined the strategy, tactics, and ground rules. The participants had no voice in crucial decisions; there were no votes and no lines of accountability between leaders and rank-and-filers. Gandhi's recollection of his instructions to the thousands of people joining the march demonstrates his approach:

None of the "invaders" was to keep with him any more clothes than necessary. None was to touch any one's property on the way. They were to bear it patiently if any official or non-official European met them and abused or even flogged them. They were to allow themselves to be arrested if the police offered to arrest them. The march must continue even if I was arrested. All these points were explained to the men and I also announced the names of those who should successively lead the "army" in my place.

The men understood the instructions issued to them, and our caravan safely reached Charlestown....<sup>150</sup>

More than 2,000 began the long march into the Transvaal on 6 November 1913. Conditions were rigorous. Food was meager. Several women carried babes in arms, two of whom died. As the marchers came near Johannesburg on the 9th, Gandhi was arrested for the third time during the march. The next day the government brought trains for the 2,000 protesters and took them back to Natal where all were jailed.

Gandhi refused to pay a fine and received a nine-month sentence. News of the strike and the arrests spread rapidly. Twenty thousand workers in Natal spontaneously joined the strike against the three-pound tax. The government clamped down hard. Mounted military police attacked strikers and fired at them. Miners were sent back to the mines as

prisoners and forced to work under armed white foremen. The Indians' bravery against repression won sympathy from whites, and raised a storm of protest from around the world. The Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, severely criticized the South African government. The British press was favorable toward the Indians. Under pressure, the government appointed a commission to inquire into the causes of the Natal Indian strike. The commission recommended Gandhi's release; he was freed on 18 December. Nevertheless, the exclusion of any pro-Indian representatives on the commission left the Indian community dissatisfied.

### "Courtesy and Chivalry"

In response, Gandhi resolved to organize a fresh march. But he then canceled it to avoid inconveniencing the government. The government had declared martial law because of a major strike of European employees of the South African railways. Here was a possibility for a great Indian movement to coincide and perhaps merge with a general rail strike; a common struggle between whites and Indians may have been achieved for the first time. "Overtures were made to me to make common cause with the European strikers," Gandhi wrote. But "as a satyagrahi, I did not require a moment's consideration to decline to do so."<sup>151</sup> Gandhi canceled the intended march and offered no assistance to the railway strikers. "I will be no party to embarrassing the Government at a time like this," he told *Pretoria News*.<sup>152</sup> The government was delighted by his decision. Smuts' office praised Gandhi for his "self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry."<sup>153</sup>

The episode reveals sharply in which groups Gandhi placed his political trust. He aimed not to develop the strength and solidarity of labor, but to reach the heart of government officials. "In every step that he takes, the Satyagrahi is bound to consider the position of his adversary," Gandhi believed. He was perfectly willing to hold back mass movements, and reject opportunities for building vitally needed working class alliances to avoid "harassing" the ruling powers and to win their sympathies. Nor was the Indian community consulted as to whether or not a march should be held; the decision was solely Gandhi's.

Gandhi is praised by his biographers for his "noble gesture." Erik H. Erikson (*Gandhi's Truth*) describes the event as follows:

The railway employees of the whole South African Union for reasons entirely their own went on a strike of such serious proportions and implications that the government had to declare martial law. If the railroad workers, in seizing this moment, were deliberately exploiting the government's predicament, the Satyagrahis would not do likewise. Gandhi informed Smuts that he was going to interrupt his campaign until the government had settled its affairs on that other front--a decision both magnanimous and wise, if for no other reason than that Satyagraha needs the center of the stage.<sup>154</sup>

Krishnalal Shridharani (*The Mahatma and the World*) calls Gandhi's suspension of the movement "one of the master strokes of Satyagrahic strategy."

Instead of taking advantage of this two-fold crisis of the Union Government, Gandhi chivalrously suspended the Indian struggle until the administration had settled with the European railwaymen. The government fully appreciated Gandhi's help and many Europeans, who had hitherto been hostile, expressed admiration for the fair play Gandhi had shown.<sup>155</sup>

These biographers point to reforms later granted by the government. But they do not point out that the Indians' overall discriminated status changed little. The plight of the railway workers is not considered. Nor is there mention of the fine chance to develop a strong working class movement and break the race barrier, which Gandhi bypassed to "melt his opponent's heart."

Gandhi and Smuts reached a provisional agreement on 21 January 1914. Smuts said the government would repeal the three-pound tax, recognize Indian marriages, and make other smaller concessions. He added, however, that the reforms must wait for recommendations from an inquiry commission and suggested that satyagraha be suspended in the interval. In light of the previous breaches of trust by Smuts, Gandhi had a hard time convincing the Indians to endorse the provisional agreement. The satyagrahi will not be "misled by the mere fear of suffering into groundless distrust, Gandhi said. "He will not mind being betrayed by the adversary, will continue to trust in spite of frequent betrayals, and will believe that he thereby strengthens the forces of truth and brings victory nearer."<sup>156</sup> After many meetings and discussions the Indians approved the agreement, and the South African satyagraha was ended. This time, the commission did recommend the reforms, and they were enacted in the Indians' Relief Bill of June 1914. Feeling his mission done, Gandhi bid farewell to South Africa and with his wife Kasturbai set sail for India via England.

The Indian community in South Africa unquestionably benefited from Gandhi's leadership. Significant reforms were won, and the Indians became aware of their potential for courageous struggle. On the other hand, persecution of the Indians had not been ended. Discrimination against South African Indians continues to this day. Gandhi was aware of the continuing problems, as in 1924 he reflected:

When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the Satyagraha struggle and the present condition of the Indians in South Africa, one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing, or is inclined to question the efficacy of Satyagraha as a solvent of the problems of mankind.<sup>157</sup>

Gandhi concluded, however, that if the Indians' position had deteriorated, it was "not because of any flaw in the weapon of Satyagraha," but because there were not enough satyagrahis in South Africa.<sup>158</sup> Despite the continuing problems, Gandhi's activity had



won him worldwide respect, and when he arrived in India his people hailed him the "Mahatma."

## Chapter 10

# Textile Strike

The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India, a class war is not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep.

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>159</sup>

Gandhi was committed to helping poor people improve their status, but he was equally committed to avoiding "class war." As a result, he would lead poor people's campaigns but seek to restrain their militancy at the same time. In 1917-18, he led three local campaigns involving tenant farmers in Champaran, peasants in Kheda, and textile workers in Ahmedabad. The Ahmedabad strike, which fits well the Gandhian model of protest, demonstrated Gandhi's ability to inspire people to stand together and, at the same time, to keep campaigns under his full control and limit their objectives.

Ahmedabad, an important textile center in Western India, suffered from a plague in the latter half of 1917. The Indian owners of the textile mills offered bonus pay to weavers as an inducement for them to stay and work in Ahmedabad. When the plague ended, the employers sought to withdraw the bonus even though the price of their goods had increased considerably. The workers, who lived in harsh poverty because their pay was meager even with the bonus, were demanding a 50 percent increase over their original wage. In February 1918, Gandhi was invited to help resolve the dispute. His discussions with the workers and millowners led to an agreement to arbitrate their differences. Before arbitration could begin, however, the workers in a few mills walked out on strike. The millowners retaliated by declaring a lockout, and announced they would dismiss all workers who would not accept a wage increase of only 20 percent.

Gandhi, after an investigation, decided that a 35 percent increase would be fair. He proposed this to the millowners and the workers, and when some workers complained that 35 percent was inadequate, Gandhi called for "justice":

Some workers say that we can demand more than 35 percent. I say you can demand even a 100 percent increase. But if you make such a demand, it would be unjust. Be content with what you have demanded in the present circumstances. If you ask for more, it will pain me. We cannot make an unreasonable demand from anybody. I believe that the demand for 35 percent is just.<sup>160</sup>

The workers agreed to adjust their demand, and at the suggestion of Gandhi they pledged not to resume work until the 35 percent increase was granted and to conduct themselves peacefully during the lockout.

On 12 May, the employers reopened the mills, offering a 20 percent increase to anyone who returned to work. The workers responded by calling a strike. Gandhi addressed outdoor meetings of several thousand workers each morning, and the workers paraded through the streets singing improvised songs.

To win a strike, workers must be able to prevent employers from maintaining adequate production to earn profits. This may require that strikebreakers be prevented from doing the work of those on strike; for example, strikers might block the way of strikebreakers or intimidate them as they cross picket lines. Strikers must also keep themselves and their families fed and in good spirits for the duration of the strike. Gandhi, however, would not allow any harassment of strikebreakers. He asked strikers to stay away from the mills, and he offered to personally guide any scared strikebreaker through threatening picket lines.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, he did not want workers to collect any public donations, even though, as the strike continued, many were becoming hungry. Gandhi refused contributions offered by wealthy sympathizers, telling them:

What is the meaning of Satyagraha if workers join the struggle thinking that you will give them money for it or support them with your money? The real secret of Satyagraha lies in bearing cheerfully the difficulties that it may entail. The more a Satyagraha suffers, the more he is tested.<sup>162</sup>

Gandhi believed the strike should rely solely on voluntary suffering and appeals to the employers' goodwill. He made it clear that he would discontinue his leadership of the strike if his guidelines were not followed: "We shall have to abandon the workers and cease helping them if they do wrong or make exaggerated demands, or commit violence."<sup>163</sup>

The millowners were unyielding and the strikers were growing demoralized. Rumors circulated that workers willing to resume work were being threatened with physical assault. Strikers pointed out that while they had little or no food, Gandhi and his colleagues ate regular meals. In response, Gandhi announced that he would fast to encourage workers to keep their strike pledge. The workers were moved by Gandhi's fast, as were millowners with whom he had friendly ties. For example, Ambalal Sarabhai, who led the millowners, was a sincere admirer of Gandhi and had donated generously to his ashram.<sup>164</sup>

The millowners agreed to accept arbitration after Gandhi had fasted for three days. The arbitrators proposed a 20 percent increase immediately and, following a three-month study, they awarded the workers a 35 percent increase. Some of the workers felt they should also receive back wages for the days they were locked out, but Gandhi opposed

this, explaining that it would amount to "fighting the struggle with employers' money....A warrior must fight on his own strength."<sup>165</sup>

Ahmedabad was a limited victory, but a victory nonetheless. The strike has often been cited as evidence of Gandhi's sympathies toward labor. But it is important to remember Gandhi's authoritarian approach to the workers. He dictated the ground rules for the strike without regard for the wishes or opinions of the impoverished strikers, and he strictly limited the demands they made of their employers.

### **Recruiting Sergeant**

While Gandhi was repelled by class war and would not support violent tactics on the part of workers, he had a different view toward capitalist wars. His support of Britain's war effort in 1918 illustrates that Gandhi's opposition to violence allowed exceptions: state violence was acceptable.

In April 1918, one month after the Ahmedabad strike, Gandhi was invited by Lord Chelmsford, British Viceroy of India, to attend a war conference at Delhi. During the conference, the Viceroy asked Gandhi to support a resolution on recruiting. Gandhi assented and adopted the role of "recruiting sergeant" in support of the British fighting in Europe. He encouraged other Indian leaders to follow his lead, in the belief that their actions would appeal to the hearts of the British rulers and encourage them to grant self-rule to India after the war. In a 30 April letter to the Viceroy, Gandhi wrote:

I recognize in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the dominions overseas. . . . We can but accelerate our journey towards the goal by silently and simply devoting ourselves heart and soul to the work of delivering the empire from the threatening danger. It will be a national suicide not to recognize this elementary truth. We must perceive that if we serve to save the Empire, we have in that very act secured Home Rule.<sup>166</sup>

Gandhi began his recruiting work in the Kheda district, where not long before he had led peasants in a campaign against unfair revenues, "If every village gave at least twenty men," he pleaded, "Kheda district would be able to raise an army of 12,000 men."<sup>167</sup> He held meetings wherever he went, but people were reluctant to step forward. "You are a votary of ahimsa [nonviolence], how can you ask us to take up arms?" they asked.<sup>168</sup> Eventually, Gandhi's steady work did bring results, but the strenuous effort took its toll on his health, and he had a serious case of dysentery. In November 1918, while convalescing, he received the welcome news that Germany had been defeated, and recruiting was no longer necessary. Gradually, his health improved.

Later, Gandhi's friends and admirers questioned and criticized him for his wartime recruiting activities. He explained:

My opposition to and disbelief in war was as strong then as it is today. But we have to recognize that there are many things in the world which we do although we may be against doing them. Possession of a body like every other possession necessitates some violence, be it ever so little. The fact is that the path of duty is not always easy to discern amidst claims seeming to conflict one with the other.<sup>169</sup>

Gandhi's recognition that flexibility was needed and that nonviolent purity was not always possible would be admirable except for one fact: he displayed far more flexibility on behalf of the oppressor classes than on behalf of the oppressed.

## Chapter 11

# Noncooperation Movement 1919-22

"What proportion of the Congress budget" I pressed, "is covered by rich Indians?"

"Practically all of it" he admitted....

"Doesn't the fact that Congress get its money from the moneyed interests affect Congress politics?" I asked. "Doesn't it create a moral obligation?"

"It creates a silent debt," he stated. "But actually we are very little influenced by the thinking of the rich....It does not pervert our policy."

Louis Fischer, in a 1942 interview with Gandhi<sup>170</sup>

Gandhi devoted the bulk of his last thirty years to India's movement for national independence under auspices of the Indian National Congress. The Congress played a dual and contradictory role in India, a role which provided the context for Gandhi's rise to leadership within the Congress.

The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, consisted mostly of urban professionals--lawyers, journalists, teachers--many who held ties with wealthier Indians such as big merchants, industrialists, and landlords. Its early members worked for a larger Indian role in government and an expansion of employment opportunities within a framework of loyalty to British rule. But after two decades and little progress, a younger generation of leaders called for a more aggressive nationalist posture, and after World War I their viewpoint came to prevail within the Congress.

The Congress looked to wealthy Indians to fund its activities, but support came slowly. Indian landlords and businessmen often collaborated with British officials or worked in partnership with British businesses. Many preferred accepting the colonial status quo rather than risk a mass agitational campaign that could potentially incite peasant and labor revolt. Nonetheless, the Congress eventually won wide backing among upper class Indians, notably from merchants and industrialists, who had good reason to resent the British.<sup>171</sup>

British territorial rule, which dated from the mid-1700s, had made India the world's largest colony with the longest history of exploitation. Economic relations between Britain and India followed the typical colonial pattern: Britain bought cheaply India's cotton, jute, food grains, and other raw materials, while India became a prime market for British manufacture such as textile goods, iron and steel, and machinery. With terms of

trade favoring Britain, combined with profits from private investment, interest from loans, and taxation, Britain reaped an annual "tribute" from India totaling 150 million pounds.<sup>172</sup> The effects of British policy in India included deterioration of agriculture, lack of industrial growth, and reduction of India to one of the poorest countries in the world. The British earned hostility not only among India's poor millions but among elite Indian groups also. Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru observed the frustration of Indian businessmen as their efforts to develop indigenous industries--in steel and iron, shipping, chemicals, medicines, electric power, locomotives, auto, and aircraft--were blocked or hindered financially by government policies.<sup>173</sup>

The Congress became the representative of vested interests in India seeking freedom from the economic and political restrictions of British rule. Natural mainstays of the Congress program became boycotts of foreign goods, and *swadeshi* (the promotion of indigenous industries). These were combined with nationwide demonstrations and noncooperation against the government. However, the demonstrations and the scope of movement demands were carefully shaped so the privileges of middle and upper class Indians would not be threatened. Thus, the Congress assumed a dual role. It mobilized public opposition to British colonialism while, at the same time, it worked to restrain peasant and worker militancy and prevent the develop of a revolutionary movement.

Gandhi was perfectly suited for both roles of the Congress. His bold stance against British authority, combined with his immense spiritual appeal and charisma, drew the masses into the anti-colonial struggle. At the same time, Gandhi's nonviolent policy helped keep this activity controlled. His practice of restricting or flatly opposing worker and peasant protests thwarted potentially revolutionary movements. Over the years of the national movement, Gandhi not only led but dominated the Congress.

### **Rowlatt Bills**

Gandhi's determination to oppose British authority while also opposing any militant uprising of lower class Indians was illustrated in his response to the Rowlatt Bills. The bills, which were introduced by the British-run government in 1919, made it a punishable offense to have in one's possession any seditious or anti-government document with mere intention to publish or circulate it. They came at a time when the people of India were in a militant mood, as were people in many other countries after the First World War, including Russia, China, Egypt, Ireland. The year 1919 was most fateful for India. Peasants suffered from price increases. Industrial workers labored under poor working conditions, and they went on strike in unprecedented numbers. Muslims were angry with the treatment given by Britain to the defeated Khalifa, Sultan of Turkey regarded as spiritual leader of the Muslim world. Britain had not kept its promises of self-determination and reforms for its colonies, and members of the Indian National Congress were resentful about the broken promises.

The Rowlatt Bills reflected the British decision to clamp down on the growing dissent. Gandhi set out to organize resistance to the laws. He selected a group to sign a satyagraha pledge to actively oppose the laws and to urge others to sign. Within two weeks, 1,200 people had signed the pledge. Then in a dream the idea for a dramatic action occurred to Gandhi: a general *hartal*, or one-day suspension of all business, combined with self-purification by fasting and prayer.

The hartal, which touched off a movement far larger and more extensive than Gandhi or anyone else had contemplated, was set for 6 April. Gandhi's followers in Delhi, however, mistook the date and observed hartal on 30 March. The dramatic events there included a mammoth procession, which the police and military tried to disperse by shooting at it. Several people were killed. Swami Shraddhanand, the respected leader of Arya Samaj, a Hindu sect, faced bayonets with bared chest, thrilling all of India. The people responded widely to the 6 April hartal. Marches, processions, and protests took place on that day and continued throughout the week.

The government lost its head and replied with terrible repression. On 12 April, a crowd of several thousand gathered for a meeting in the Jallianwala Bagh square of Amritsar. Amritsar had been the scene of a violent skirmish between protesters and authorities, and it was occupied by troops under General Dyer. Dyer took fifty of his troops to the Jallianwala Bagh square, which was bounded on three sides by high walls. Without warning, he ordered them to fire. The troops shot into the crowd for ten full minutes, killing 379 and wounding 1,200. Dyer later said the action was taken to "make an impression." The Amritsar massacre threw the country into a fury; it signaled a critical turning point in Indo-British relations. The Punjab province was placed under martial law, and the British carried out a campaign of repression, humiliation, and terror. Massive indiscriminate arrests occurred, hostages were taken, property was confiscated, and there were public floggings and detention in open cages.

Indian leaders in Delhi and the Punjab, who were increasingly anxious about the people's militancy, invited Gandhi to visit their areas. En route, Gandhi was arrested by the police and escorted back to Bombay. Reports of his arrest inflamed the people and led to violent protests in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Disgusted by the escalated protests, Gandhi urged that the people abandon their weapons and that striking workers return to work. D.G. Tendulkar, Gandhi's official biographer, records that Gandhi was shocked more by the people's violent spirit than by the government's atrocities.<sup>174</sup> Gandhi admonished a large audience at Chowpati:

If we cannot conduct this movement without the slightest violence from our side, the movement might have to be abandoned or it may be necessary to give it a different and still more restricted shape. It may be necessary to go even further. The time may come for me to offer satyagraha against ourselves.<sup>175</sup>



In Ahmedabad, Gandhi offered a three-day fast and urged the people to "repent and do penance for our sins....The first step is that those of us who have captured weapons should surrender them."<sup>176</sup> He also advised spinners from the textile mills to cease their strike: "I advise them to resume work immediately and to ask for increase, if they want any, only after resuming work, and in a reasonable manner. To resort to the use of force to get any increase is suicidal . I would specially advise all mill-hands to altogether eschew violence."<sup>177</sup>

Learning of further clashes in small towns such as Nadiad, Gandhi determined that the entire satyagraha campaign had been a mistake "of a Himalayan magnitude." On 18 April, he called off the movement against the Rowlatt bills. "I am sorry," said the leader who had aroused the fighting spirit of the people as never before:

I underrated the forces of evil...I would be untrue to satyagraha if I allowed it by any action of mine to be used as an occasion for feeding violence, for embittering relations between the English and the Indians. Our satyagraha must, therefore, now consist in ceaselessly helping the authorities in all the ways available to us as satyagrahis to restore order and to curb lawlessness.<sup>178</sup>

Ironically, at the same time that Gandhi called upon his people to help restore order, Lord Chelmsford published a resolution declaring his intent to suppress the national movement with all available force.

### **Developments Within the Congress**

Opposition to the Rowlatt Bills brought new fire to the Indian National Congress which, until that time, had only very limited political impact. Its resolutions and appeals to the British for reforms and self-governing powers had been largely ignored. But in 1919 and 1920, it began to shed its old-time respectability and to more aggressively agitate for change. Local cells were established which reached into every locality. Gandhi, who made his real entry into the Congress in its December 1919 session, quickly dominated it. Subhas Chandras Bose, a longtime Congress activist and its one-time president, writes of Congress members' blind loyalty to Gandhi:

A large number of Congressmen who had accepted the Mahatma not merely as a political leader but also as a religious preceptor...began to preach the cult of the new Messiah. As a consequence, many people gave up eating fish and meat, took the same dress as the Mahatma, adopted his daily habits like morning and evening prayer and began to talk more of spiritual freedom than of political swaraj [self-government]...Worst of all was the tendency on the part of the orthodox followers of the Mahatma to regard everything that he said as gospel truth without reasoning or arguing and to accept his paper *Young India* as their Bible.<sup>179</sup>

Those who dare to think freely and speak out openly are regarded by the Mahatma and his disciples as heretics and treated as such.<sup>180</sup>

The December session of the Congress passed a resolution condemning the Amritsar massacre and demanding that the Viceroy and others responsible for the atrocity be relieved of their posts. Typically, Gandhi secured passage of a resolution which allotted blame as well to the people of the Punjab and Gujarat. He proclaimed that "real manliness consists in not retaliating even when under a shower of bullets, to suffer evil patiently and with the opposition of good. That is the spirit of real heroes."<sup>181</sup>

During the December session, Gandhi indicated his continuing trust in British intentions, despite the repression and human slaughter. The Congress considered a series of legislative concessions offered by the British, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, which would allow Indians to elect the majority of seats in the provincial and central legislatures, with the remaining seats appointed by the British. The central legislature would wield no real power in the government, however. While provincial legislatures were given discretion over such areas as health, education, and agriculture, little funds were available to make real improvements in these areas. Also, the British-appointed provincial governors held veto power over the legislators and could pass any laws over their heads. Finally, the right to vote was extended only to 1 to 3 percent of the adult population. Gandhi urged that the reforms be accepted, although he acknowledged they were inadequate, and the Congress followed his advice. He said, "Indian culture demands that we shall trust one who extends a hand of fellowship."<sup>182</sup>

The general unrest of the post-war period deepened in 1920-21, accentuated by a growing economic crisis. India experienced approximately 200 strikes involving 1.5 million workers in the first six months of 1920. At the same time, peasants demanded lower rents and taxes and a redistribution of lands.

Gandhi did not seek to strengthen and unite these struggles, but rather to limit and confine them. He held aloof from the emerging Indian workers' movement and opposed the spreading strikes, "Strikes are the order of the day. They are a symptom of the existing unrest," he wrote on 16 February 1921, in *Young India*.

[Labour leaders] consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes. In my opinion it will be a most serious mistake to make use of labour strikes for such a purpose. I don't deny that such strikes can serve political ends. But they do not fall within the plan of non-violent non-co-operation.<sup>183</sup>

Gandhi did not oppose political strikes per se. For example, in South Africa he led coal miners in a strike with the political goal of eradicating the three-pound tax. The difference is that, in South Africa, Gandhi was in charge, and he formulated strike policy. In India in 1921, however, the workers were acting under their own leadership and

choosing their own methods. Gandhi could not support this independent activity, as it threatened the propertied class of Indians with whom he identified.

Gandhi similarly opposed tenant farmers who had launched rent strikes and other types of resistance against landlords in the United Provinces. He explained:

The Kisan [tenant] movement has received impetus from Non-co-Operation but it is anterior to and independent of it. Whilst we will not hesitate to advise the Kisans when the moment comes, to suspend payment of taxes to the government, it is not contemplated that at any stage of Non-co-operation we would seek to deprive the Zamindars [landlords] of their rent ...The Kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the Zamindars, whether such is written or inferred from custom.<sup>184</sup>

### **Noncooperation**

Gandhi and other national leaders lacked enthusiasm for the peasant and worker protests, but British disregard for Indian opinion in 1920 would move them to adopt their own program of protest. First, Muslim leaders were angry over the harsh terms of the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey, announced on 14 May. Turkey having been a losing party in World War I, Britain took part of its territories and reduced the civil powers of the Khalifa, the Turkish Muslim leader. This was regarded by Muslims as an intolerable attack on their religion, and they sought restoration of the Khalifa's powers. Second, the government published on 28 May its Hunter Committee Report on the Punjab disturbances. The report, described by Gandhi as "page after page of thinly disguised official whitewash,"<sup>185</sup> excused the government's role in the Punjab and disgusted Indian leaders who had sought redress for government brutalities.

The growing Khilafat agitation had become a rallying point for the more general discontent of the Muslim masses. Recognizing an opportunity to gain Muslim support for the Hindu-led nationalist movement, Gandhi offered his leadership to the Khilafat struggle. A Khilafat committee in August appointed Gandhi to head a program of noncooperation against the British, and the demand for swaraj was later adopted by the Khilafatists. At Gandhi's urging, the Congress followed suit in September. Reversing its earlier decision to cooperate with the government's reforms, the Congress boycotted the assembly elections and launched a campaign of noncooperation. Its three main demands were redress of the Punjab atrocities, the attainment of swaraj, and redress of the Khilafat issue.

A joint Hindu-Muslim movement was thus achieved. India had long been torn by communal hatred and fighting between its Hindu majority and Muslim minority, which the British rulers had encouraged and benefited from. The temporary union achieved between the two communities in the satyagraha of the early 1920s was stronger than at any other time during the independence struggle.

Noncooperation activities were aimed primarily to attract the support of middle class Indians. They were limited to protests against the government; protesters refused to participate in governmental agencies and institutions, surrendered titles and posts, withdrew their children from schools and colleges, and boycotted foreign goods. Congress members and Khilafatists campaigned for noncooperation across the country. Gandhi traveled extensively, and spoke to huge, enthusiastic crowds.

Despite the campaign's limited scope, a large part of the populace was caught up in the spirit of resistance. Strikes and peasant uprisings flared spontaneously, and some violently. As a result, Gandhi hesitated to call for mass civil disobedience. "Hasten slowly," he told an impatient All-India Congress Committee at their July 1921 meeting. "Mass civil disobedience stands on a different footing. It can only be tried in a calm atmosphere."<sup>186</sup> Gandhi emphasized instead what he called "constructive satyagraha," which stressed personal improvement and village self-reliance. He promoted an anti-drinking campaign, launched a boycott of foreign cloth, and reintroduced homespinning. Encouraged by their beloved leader, people everywhere threw their foreign-made clothing into great bonfires. Gandhi's vision of liberation came to be symbolized by the spinning wheel. In his view, industrialization was the true culprit to blame for social and economic problems.

There were those who criticized this aspect of Gandhi's campaign. The poet Rabindranath Tagore blasted the people for their "unquestioning obedience" to Gandhi's preachings and his program of self-negation:

Consider the burning of cloth, heaped up before the very eyes of our motherland shivering and ashamed in her nakedness.... Is it not another instance of the magical formula?... Economics is bundled out and a fictitious moral dictum dragged into its place.... We must refuse to accept as our ally the illusion-haunted magic-ridden slave mentality that is at the root of all the poverty and insult under which this country groans.<sup>187</sup>

Gandhi replied:

Let him go deeper and see for himself whether the charkha [spinning wheel] has been accepted from blind faith or from reasoned necessity...Swaraj has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness....It was our love of foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from its position of dignity....I venture to suggest to the Poet that the clothes I ask him to burn must be and are his.<sup>188</sup>

The movement gathered momentum in the fall of 1921. The Congress supported a manifesto declaring it "the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood." The manifesto was repeated from countless platforms, stunning the government. On 17

November, the Prince of Wales arrived for a tour of the country. Wherever he went, he was greeted by a hartal and boycott of his visit. The massive hartal in Bombay included outbreaks of rioting and vandalism. The sight of this violence depressed Gandhi, who suspended a planned civil disobedience campaign in Bardoli and substituted a personal fast. In late November, the government determined to crush the movement. All volunteer organizations under the Congress and the Khilafat were declared illegal and political meetings were suppressed. Volunteers openly defied the government, which responded with mass arrests, beatings, and destruction of homes and the offices of the volunteer organizations. By the end of the year, some 30,000 protesters were imprisoned, including most of the movement's prominent leaders. For fear of public uproar, Gandhi had been left untouched. In spite of the arrests, thousands more came forth to register as volunteers, and the agitation continued undaunted.

A militant feeling pervaded the Congress's December 1921 session at Ahmedabad, even though its top-ranking leaders (other than Gandhi) were in jail. The Congress resolved to "continue the programme of non-violent non-co-operation with greater vigour" until "the control of the Government passes into the hands of the people...." It pledged "civil disobedience, whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character," and it appointed Gandhi virtual dictator as the "sole executive authority of the Congress."<sup>189</sup> Gandhi was in a cautious mood, however. He helped defeat a resolution defining swaraj as "complete independence, free from all foreign control."\* He claimed this should not be demanded so long as "absolute, indissoluble unity" between Hindus and Muslims remained to be achieved.<sup>190</sup>

People around the country waited anxiously for Gandhi's summons to civil disobedience, which was expected to come in the form of a no-tax campaign. But the calls to action were nonspecific and hedged with provisos. Gandhi advised the people to be patient. "The iron was indeed hot, but the leader did not think it worth while to strike it," observes Hiren Mukerjee in *India's Struggle for Freedom*:

A month went by, a month of gnawing expectation, but no directives came. Many districts approached Gandhiji, pleading to begin a No Tax campaign. One district in Andhra--Guntur--even launched it without permission. Its contumacy was frowned upon, and Gandhiji sent an immediate note to the Congress officials directing that all taxes be scrupulously paid up by the due date.<sup>191</sup>

Finally, on 1 February 1922, Gandhi agreed to begin "mass civil disobedience" in Bardoli, a small district of 87,000. He felt that the people of Bardoli sufficiently met the

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\* The term *swaraj* referred to Indian self-government, but the Congress continually debated what this self-government meant. Did it mean giving Indians a larger voice in government while the country remained a dominion of the British empire? Or did it mean full independence and severance of British control? The former definition, preferred by Gandhi and the Congress moderates, generally prevailed.

requirements of nonviolent discipline to act under his guidance. At the same time, all other parts of India were asked to refrain from any civil disobedience of aggressive character, except upon the express consent of Gandhi.

### **Gandhi's Retreat**

Even this limited struggle was not to be, however. On 5 February, a procession in Chauri Chaura, a little village near the Himalayas, had been fired upon by police until their ammunition had been exhausted. The angry crowd responded by burning the police station, killing twenty-two policemen. When Gandhi learned of the event, he canceled the entire program of civil disobedience and substituted a constructive program of spinning, temperance, and educational activities. "God has been abundantly kind to me," Gandhi wrote.

He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that truthful and non-violent atmosphere which alone can justify mass disobedience.... The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound....<sup>192</sup>

Gandhi's fellow Congress members were shocked and angered by his decision, which he had made without consulting representatives in the various provinces. The country was totally demoralized. "To sound the order of retreat," observes Bose, "just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling-point was nothing short of a national calamity."<sup>193</sup>

Gandhi's suspension of the 1922 movement has been regarded uncritically by many historians, who praise the leader for his moral conviction and commitment to nonviolence. Horace Alexander in *Gandhi through Western Eyes* maintains that moral principles were more important to Gandhi than political goals. Referring to the frustration Gandhi's decision caused Congress leaders, Alexander writes:

From the purely political angle, no doubt the indignation of the politicians was justified. It is conceivable that if Gandhi had gone ahead, even though he himself and the other leaders would certainly have been arrested almost at once, the British Government might have been brought down. Undoubtedly, widespread enthusiasm had been aroused. But this would certainly have been accomplished by much bloodshed and hatred and bitterness. It would not have been a non-violent revolution. To most of Gandhi's colleagues, this did not matter much. To Gandhi it mattered supremely. He was not at bottom a politician but a moralist. To him it was better that the British system, much as he now hated it, should continue for years rather than it should be overthrown by violence.<sup>194</sup>

The view of Judith Brown in *Gandhi's Rise to Power* is the same: "In the end, violence and the threat of more violence was the death of non-cooperation.... It made the Mahatma call off civil disobedience...." Brown writes that after Chauri Chaura, Gandhi felt "he could no longer lead such a movement and retain his integrity."<sup>195</sup>

But Gandhi's abrupt cancellation of the movement was not based on moral abhorrence toward violence *per se*. "Nonviolent principles" did not prevent Gandhi from recruiting soldiers for the British during World War I, nor from making a similar offer in the Second World War. Rather, it was the increasingly popular militancy, represented by the violence at Chauri Chaura and elsewhere, which Gandhi found repugnant. It is significant that Gandhi's resolution calling off the movement, adopted by the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli on 12 February 1922, contained three clauses forbidding peasant protests and offering assurances to landlords.<sup>196</sup>

Gandhi halted the resistance because he feared that the militancy of peasants and workers could not be controlled, and that the movement would go much further than he and other national leaders had in mind. Gandhi's colleagues, on the other hand, believed that scattered acts of violence were fairly inevitable and did not necessarily mean the campaign would get out of the hands of the Congress. Gandhi himself eventually discovered that sporadic violence did not automatically undermine the Congress's leadership, and his posture toward sporadic violence became more flexible during the campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s. In short, the debate over Chauri Chaura was not at bottom a debate about violence or nonviolence, but was more a difference of opinion between Gandhi and other Congress leaders about the best way to serve upper class Indian interests. Because Gandhi had become India's national hero and symbol of resistance, his decision to call off the 1922 movement was ultimately, albeit reluctantly, ratified by the Congress.

As the mass protest cooled off, the government gained confidence; Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922. A week later, he was sentenced to six years of imprisonment. He gained early release in 1924 after undergoing an operation for appendicitis. In the meantime, the movement had fully dissipated.

## Chapter 12

# Religious Conflicts

A man was needed to stand up to the Congress and tell its leaders that their organization, however powerful numerically and financially, does not represent the whole of India.

I admire Mr. Jinnah and feel grateful to him because, in advocating the cause of the Muslims, he is championing the claims of all classes who stand in danger of being crushed under the steam roller of a [caste] Hindu majority, acting under the inspiration and orders of Mr. Gandhi.

Rao Bahadar M.C. Rajah, an untouchable leader<sup>197</sup>

Gandhi's role as a dedicated proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity and a staunch foe of caste prejudice has been widely misinterpreted. It is true that he wrote, spoke, fasted, and struggled in many ways to end Hindu-Muslim strife, and that he worked for certain caste reforms. He did not, however, favor doing away with the caste system per se, and he opposed efforts by Muslims and untouchables to gain an independent political voice. Gandhi ultimately contributed to the religious strife which marked the Indian national movement, even though he sincerely abhorred it. His ambivalence--a desire for peace between Hindus and Muslims and dignity for untouchables on the one hand, and his intense Hinduism and commitment to upper class Hindu political efforts on the other--often created a dichotomy between his words and his actions.

### Hindu-Muslim Divisions

"Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being," observed Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's close friend and political protégé.<sup>198</sup> Gandhi's religious-oriented leadership dovetailed with an ongoing movement in India for the revival of ancient Hindu culture, which grew from the nineteenth century in opposition to the Western culture imposed by the British.<sup>199</sup> While the religious-cultural renewal helped many Indians gain a new sense of pride and dignity, it tended to increase religious tensions in the country. For example, a movement for the protection of cows, regarded by Hindus as sacred animals, was opposed by Muslims, who ate beef, and serious communal riots resulted in 1893. Most early Congress members, anxious to attract more Muslims to the predominantly Hindu Congress, sought to keep the organization at a distance from the religious activities. However, a significant section of the Congress, including influential leaders such as B.G. Tilak, were enthusiasts of the Hindu revival. The Congress and the national movement came to be identified with specifically Hindu ideas and symbols, alienating from the movement a large part of the country's Muslims (roughly one in four



Indians were Muslim). This Hindu religious trend in the national movement strengthened under Gandhi's lead, as R. Palme Dutt comments:

In all Gandhi's propaganda, the preaching of Hinduism and his religious conceptions and the preaching of the general political aims are inextricably mixed.... Is it any wonder that...the National Congress should be widely stigmatized, not only by enemy critics, but even by a considerable body of general opinion, as "a Hindu movement"? It speaks much for their national devotion that a select body of Moslem leaders have faithfully stood in with the Congress under these conditions. But these methods will never win a mass Moslem following.<sup>200</sup>

Beside a reliance on Hindu symbolism, Gandhi and his Congress colleagues followed a political path that further impeded their professed goal of Hindu-Muslim unity. Considerations of Hindu-Muslim or "communal" unity should distinguish between unity "at the top" and unity "from below." A strategy to achieve unity from below would look to the potential of the mass of Hindus and Muslims to join together in alliance against common exploiters--British and Indian elites both--and to remove the conditions of poverty which feed communal bitterness. Unity at the top, on the other hand, relies on negotiations between middle or upper class leaders of the religious communities, who seek greater power vis-à-vis Britain but wish to avoid radical revolt. This upper class approach may involve certain levels of mass mobilization in order to pressure the British for constitutional reform. But the protest movements are restricted in scope; and there are no channels through which lower class Hindus and Muslims joining the protests can exercise voice or influence over the direction or goals of the movement.

Gandhi's was a strategy through unity at the top and, consequently, he could never realize the communal unity in India for which he so often appealed. What is more, the elite Hindu perspective of Gandhi and Congress leaders prevented them from coming to terms with the elite Muslim leadership. They could not achieve even the limited goal of Hindu-Muslim unity at the top. Although the ensuing conflict between Hindu and Muslim leaders was essentially a power struggle between competing branches of the Indian elite, it often affected communal feelings in the country generally, and it eventually brought calamitous results in terms of the partition of India.

The signing of the Lucknow Pact in 1916 indicated that Muslim leaders were willing to work with the Congress when the Congress was willing to support their political causes. At Lucknow, the Congress and the Muslim League (which was formed in 1906, consisting mainly of Muslim landlords and professionals) agreed to work together for constitutional reform. Muslim leader M.A. Jinnah was a main architect of the pact. He persuaded leaders of the Congress to accept principles the Congress had previously opposed. One such principle was separate electorates, which reserved a certain number of legislative seats for Muslims or other minorities, with minorities voting on separate ballots to fill the seats. A second was the principle of weightage, which provided that the number of legislative seats reserved for minorities would be greater than their proportion

of the population. For example, where Muslims were 25 percent of the population, they might be guaranteed 33 percent of the legislative seats. It is notable that Jinnah, who later led the movement for a separate Muslim state, at this time held dual membership in the Congress and the Muslim League, and enjoyed a reputation as "the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity."<sup>201</sup>

Gandhi's actions during the 1919-22 noncooperation movement had both a positive and negative effect on prospects for political unity. As a result of his joining the Khilafat issue with the demand for swaraj, joint Hindu-Muslim protests were common, and a growing number of Muslims were drawn to the Congress. However, Gandhi's sudden suspension of noncooperation caused many Khilafatists to feel betrayed.<sup>202</sup> It also removed a catalyst for joint Hindu-Muslim struggle against a common enemy, i.e., the government. A series of communal riots broke out from 1923 onward. Their roots lay in a complex of factors: religious and cultural differences were exacerbated by the conditions of mass poverty; the British government employed various political maneuvers to keep Indian leadership divided. National leaders, constrained by a middle class orientation and religious loyalties, were unable to develop constructive solutions. A connection between Gandhi's decision to cancel noncooperation (influenced by his elitist fears of lower class revolt) and the communal outbreaks is suggested by Nehru:

It is possible...that this sudden bottling up of a great movement contributed to a tragic development in this country....The suppressed violence had to find a way out, and in the following years this perhaps aggravated the communal trouble.<sup>203</sup>

In September 1924, Gandhi embarked on a twenty-one day fast in response to general religious fighting. A unity conference met at his bedside, and resolutions were adopted. But agreements "at the top" were inadequate, and the fighting continued. Hindu-Muslim alliances were needed that involved peasants and workers and that addressed the many forms of exploitation and oppression which caused poor people to be angry, frustrated, and ready to do violence to one another. No one--not Gandhi, the Muslim leaders, or the Hindu leaders--was prepared to lead the kind of movement that was needed.

### **Turning Point in Hindu-Muslim Politics**

Subsequent events would divide the Hindu and Muslim elite.<sup>204</sup> An All-Parties Conference convened in 1928 to design a constitution which would serve as a united Indian demand. Muslim leaders proposed a series of points regarding regional autonomy and Muslim representation in legislative bodies; the points had been endorsed by both the Congress and Muslim League. However, the All-Parties Conference bogged down when members of the Hindu Mahasabha, an influential revivalist Hindu group, objected to the Muslim proposals. A small committee headed by Congress leader Motilal Nehru (Jawaharlal Nehru's father) was appointed to prepare a compromise draft. The committee's recommendations, known as the Nehru Report, rejected several key Muslim

proposals.<sup>205</sup> Muslim leaders were divided in their response to the report, some accepting it and others protesting. Jinnah, who opposed the report, moved six amendments on behalf of the Muslim League at an All-Parties Convention in December 1928. Jinnah pled for a just Hindu-Muslim settlement and warned that "revolution and civil war" might result if the future constitution left minorities feeling insecure.<sup>206</sup> Only two of the six amendments were adopted, however, and many Muslims were strongly dissatisfied. Gandhi, who played a mediating role during the All-Parties sessions, ultimately lent his weight to accepting the Nehru Report. He observed in August that the report satisfied "all reasonable aspirations,"<sup>207</sup> and secured its adoption by the Congress at its December 1928 session.<sup>208</sup>

Following the treatment of Muslim demands at the All-Parties Convention, Muslim leaders became more unified in opposing the Nehru Report and more alienated from the Congress. In 1929, Jinnah delineated the Muslim demands in his "fourteen points." A crucial point provided that residuary powers (i.e., those powers not expressly assigned to a particular branch of government) be vested in the provinces rather than being retained by the central government as proposed by the Nehru Report. The provincial emphasis would favor the Muslims, who held majorities in certain provinces, while a strong central government would increase the power of the Hindus, being the national majority. A related point reserved for Muslims a majority of legislative seats in the Punjab and Bengal, both Muslim-majority provinces. Other demands included a minimum one-third Muslim representation in legislatures and cabinets, safeguards for Muslim religion and culture, and separate electorates until certain points had been secured.<sup>209</sup>

Jinnah's fourteen points expressed the basic political goals of the Muslim elite to enhance its power in Muslim-majority regions through provincial autonomy, and to ensure and increase Muslim representation in government generally. The demands were limited from a class standpoint and offered little that would directly benefit Muslim peasants and workers. On the other hand, demands of religious or ethnic minorities for regional autonomy are often legitimate, and even today are crucial questions in India and Pakistan. Full evaluation of the Muslim demands requires lengthy debate beyond the scope of this work. But since Gandhi and the Congress had rejected a strategy of building communal unity from below, they were confronted with the demands and concerns of the Muslim elite. If they failed to gain the trust of Muslim leaders through a process of compromise, there would be no Hindu-Muslim unity at the top *or* the bottom. It is true that the elite Muslim leaders were themselves divided, and a number of them remained firm supporters of the Congress. But, as will later be seen, a Hindu-Muslim split would by the 1940s become the overwhelming trend in Indian politics.

## Untouchables

The social code of Hinduism rests on the caste system. For this reason, the Hindu revivalist bent of the national movement alienated untouchables as well as Muslims.\* The most pressing burden for the untouchables, who were about 10 percent of all Indians, was the caste divisions which relegated them to the bottom of the social-economic order.

Gandhi has been widely hailed as champion of the untouchables, whom he named *harijans*, or children of God. He regarded untouchability as an evil superstition and demonstrated his opposition to it in many concrete actions. For example, he appealed to caste Hindus to allow untouchables to enter public temples, and he supported a well-known satyagraha at Vykom in 1925, which successfully removed a prohibition against untouchables.<sup>210</sup> In 1932, Gandhi established the Harijan Sevak Sangh, an association funded by caste Hindus which provided assistance such as educational scholarships, job training, help to dig wells, and medical aid to untouchables.<sup>211</sup>

Nevertheless, the scope of Gandhi's work against untouchability was limited. He sought a facelifting of the caste system, not an abolition, and many untouchables resented his proclaimed leadership of their cause.<sup>212</sup> Gandhi's views on caste shed light not only on their resentment, but also on Gandhi's view of the world.

Gandhi saw castes as a law of nature, and although he proclaimed a vision of equality and unity through the caste system, his vision in fact was a theory of benevolent dictatorship. He believed that the problem was not in the system itself, but in the introduction of innumerable castes and subcastes, in the belief that some castes were superior to others, and in untouchability. These facets of the caste system, he believed, had corrupted Hinduism. He called for a return to the four original caste divisions, called *varnas*.<sup>213</sup> These four divisions, he felt, were a law of nature which applied not only to Hindus but to all humanity.

The law of *Varna* prescribes that a person should, for his living, follow the occupation of his forefathers. I hold this to be a universal law governing the human family.... Hinduism rendered a great service to mankind by the discovery of, and conscious obedience to, this law.<sup>214</sup>

If all accepted and performed their hereditary occupation, with no sense of superiority or inferiority, then social peace could be had, said Gandhi, including peace between classes.

The four *Varnas* have been compared in the Vedas to the four members of the body, and no simile could be happier. If they are members of one body, how

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\* The untouchables are non-caste, or "outcaste," Hindus whose touch was believed to pollute caste Hindus. The untouchability rules applied to all non-Hindus as well, and included restrictions against interdining and intermarriage. Untouchability is officially condemned in India today, but caste prejudice and discrimination remain widespread.

can one be superior or inferior to one another?...It is this canker [of superiority and inferiority] that is at the root of the various ills of our time, especially class wars and civil strife.... These wars and strife could not be ended except by the observance of the law of Varna. For it ordains that every one shall fulfill the law of one's being by doing in a spirit of duty and service that to which one is born.<sup>215</sup>

Some Indians argued that social inequities and prejudices such as untouchability were inherent in the caste system and that the solution was to eliminate caste. Gandhi replied that one cannot discard a law of nature.<sup>216</sup> The caste system, he said, must be cleansed by ridding it of untouchability and concepts of high and low.

The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true Varnashrama, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other....<sup>217</sup>

Gandhi's vision of equality and unity allowed one group to exercise power and authority while another served and obeyed. Drawing from his Hindu caste philosophy, Gandhi applied this model of false equality to all areas of social relationships. His theory of trusteeship, for example, applied the standard to classes. Trusteeship provided that the property of the rich not be taken from them forcibly, but rather that the rich administer their wealth for the benefit of all. "We may not forcibly dispossess the Zamindars," Gandhi wrote,

They need only a change of heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants' woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them a major part of the produce, keeping only sufficient for themselves.<sup>218</sup>

Our Socialism or Communism should...be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant.<sup>219</sup>

This was Gandhi's theory of trusteeship, a benevolent dictatorship which left power and wealth in the hands of capitalists and landlords.

Gandhi's view of the relations between the sexes imposed a similar standard:

I do not envisage the wife, as a rule, following an avocation independently of her husband. The care of the children and the upkeep of the household are quite enough to fully engage all her energy.... The man should look to the maintenance of the family, the woman to household management; the two thus supplementing and complementing each other's labours.<sup>220</sup>

The authority which tended to accrue to the husband within this division of labor did not, in the view of Gandhi, imply any inequality.

Nor do I see in this any invasion of woman's rights or suppression of her freedom.... The woman who knows and fulfills her duty realizes her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which she presides.<sup>221</sup>

Since Gandhi's social vision did not extend to genuine equality for untouchables and other oppressed groups, he did not favor their development of independent political leadership in pursuit of power. This was evident in Gandhi's opposition to minority demands for separate electorates at the 1931 Round Table Conference, where India's future constitution was being negotiated with British officials. Later, he launched a dramatic fast against separate electorates for untouchables, as discussed in the following chapter.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gandhi's most important contribution to the untouchables, was primarily a charity organization and did not aim to organize untouchables politically. Its program emphasized constructive work and welfare activities, which did benefit a small number of untouchables. But, as a 1932 press statement proclaimed, "Social reforms like the abolition of the caste system and inter-dining are kept outside the scope of the League."<sup>222</sup> Untouchable leader B.R. Ambedkar resigned from the Central Board of the Sangh after his proposals for a more comprehensive program were disregarded.<sup>223</sup>

The Sangh eventually established a policy of excluding untouchables from leadership positions in the organization, which aroused hostility toward the Sangh among untouchables. A deputation of untouchables met with Gandhi in 1944, requesting untouchable representation on the Sangh's governing board; Gandhi refused.<sup>224</sup> He later explained:

The welfare work for the Untouchables is a penance which the Hindus have to do for the sin of Untouchability. The money that has been collected has been contributed by the Hindus. From both points of view, the Hindus alone must run the Sangh. Neither ethics nor right would justify Untouchables in claiming a seat on the Board of the Sangh.<sup>225</sup>

According to Ambedkar, the Bombay branch of the Sangh blacklisted and refused scholarships to untouchables holding anti-Congress attitudes.<sup>226</sup>

The limited support that Gandhi and his colleagues in the Congress gave to the untouchable cause or to Muslim demands seemed to be aimed at drawing these minorities closer to the Congress. Gandhi either opposed outright or failed to support measures that would bolster the independent political status of minority communities. As a result, he could not build a genuine unity but actually contributed to the religious antagonisms that divided India.

## Chapter 13

# Salt Satyagraha

My intention is to start the movement only through the inmates of the Ashrama and those who have submitted to its discipline and assimilated the spirit of its methods.

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>227</sup>

During the mid-1920s, the Indian National Congress turned from mass noncooperation to pursue a twin strategy of entry into the legislatures under the Swaraj Party, and village constructive work under Gandhi's All-India Spinners' Association. By the end of the decade, events prompted a return to mass protest. With Britain preparing to restructure India's constitution, the Congress raised the demand of dominion status for India and entered negotiations. Britain refused to yield. In December 1929, the Congress responded by declaring complete independence as its goal and authorizing a program of mass civil disobedience. A second great wave of anti-British agitation under Gandhi was in the making.

The timing of the 1930 salt satyagraha is worth noting. India's trade union movement grew phenomenally in the latter 1920s. A great strike wave in 1928 was highlighted by a successful six-month strike of 150,000 Bombay textile workers. The same year saw mass protests against the arrival of Britain's Simon Commission, which had come to design a new constitution for India while excluding Indians from the commission. Movements of workers and youth were emerging, influenced by socialist and anti-imperialist ideas. The Congress, as an organization, balked at the rising labor movement, despite appeals from a left-wing minority within the Congress. In a dramatic demonstration at the Congress's 1928 Calcutta session, 20,000 workers appealed to the Congress to launch a movement for an independent socialist India, but to no avail.<sup>228</sup> It was only after the government had effectively suppressed the workers' movement, and the country's major labor and socialist leaders were imprisoned under conspiracy charges, that the Congress felt it could initiate its own campaign of civil disobedience without a revolutionary movement developing.

The Congress proclaimed 26 January 1930 as Independence Day and drew an impressive response. Towns and villages everywhere celebrated the historic day; huge crowds gathered to take the independence pledge. Congress members resigned from the legislatures. Gandhi, who was vested with full authority over the campaign, prepared civil disobedience plans. He chose breaking of the government's salt laws as the focal point. The laws prohibited Indians from an ancient practice of making their own salt; Indians were forced to buy imported salt and to pay a government salt tax. While some colleagues were at first skeptical, Gandhi correctly judged that resistance to the salt laws would evoke strong emotional appeal, especially among the poor. He suggested it be

accompanied by picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, non-payment of taxes, boycott of courts, and resignation of government servants. Nehru and other Congress members worried about a repeat of Chauri Chaura: would Gandhi call off the movement if sporadic violence erupted as he had in 1922?<sup>229</sup> Gandhi assured them he would not:

Whilst...every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long as there is a single resister left free or alive.<sup>230</sup>

Breach of the salt laws commenced at the salt-rich beach of Dandi on 6 April. It was the climax of a dramatic 240-mile march taken by Gandhi and seventy-eight selected followers from his Sabarmati ashram (religious retreat and study center). "It is now open to any one who would take the risk of prosecution under the salt law to manufacture salt, wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient," Gandhi announced. The people stepped forward to the call and India was swept by resistance. There was widespread illegal manufacturing of salt and nonviolent "raids" of government salt works. As in the 1919-22 struggle, many went beyond the limits set by Gandhi, including his nonviolent limits. There were scores of peasant risings and withholdings of rent. Workers struck and in some cases took over towns. Repression by the British was fierce and fueled the people's fury. The following description by Tendulkar suggests the popular mood:

There was firing in Calcutta, Madras and Karachi, and lathi\* charges all over India. Processions and meetings were banned. The people retaliated by intensive picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor booths....

On April 18 police armouries at Chittagong were raided. The revolutionary upsurge reached its highest point in Peshawar where huge mass demonstrations were held on April 23. The next day, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the newly formed Khudai Khidmatagar--servants of God--or the Red Shirts, was arrested. Thousands of people surrounded the place of his detention, and there was a mammoth demonstration in Peshawar. The armoured cars were sent to cow down angry demonstrators; one armoured car was burnt, its occupants escaping; thereupon wholesale firing on the crowds was followed by hundreds of deaths and casualties. Two platoons of the Second Battalion of the 18th Royal Garwhali Rifles, Hindu troops in the midst of a Muslim crowd, refused to fire and broke ranks, and a number of them handed over their arms. Immediately after this, the military and the police were completely withdrawn from Peshawar; from April 25 to May 4, the city was in the hands of the people, until powerful British forces, with air squadrons, were concentrated to "recapture" Peshawar city; there was no resistance.<sup>231</sup>

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\* A heavy police stick, covered with iron or leather, which easily cracked skulls.



After Gandhi's arrest on 5 May, popular response was even stronger:

Gandhi's arrest and internment led to hartals and strikes all over India. Some fifty thousand textile workers downed tools in Bombay. The railway workers joined the demonstration. There was a big procession, impressive enough to induce the police to retire from the scene. The cloth merchants decided on a six-day hartal. In Poona, where Gandhi was interned, resignations from the honorary offices and from services were announced at frequent intervals....

The revolutionary zeal was at its zenith. In Sholapur the people held possession of the town for one week, replacing the police and establishing their own rule until the martial law was proclaimed. There was trouble in Mymensingh, Calcutta, Karachi, Lucknow, Multan, Delhi, Rawalpindi, Mardan and Peshawar. Troops, aeroplanes, tanks, guns, and ammunition were brought on the scene and were freely used in the North-West Frontier Province. In June, 500 tons of bombs were dropped over the Pathans but their spirit remained uncrushed. The number of Red Shirts increased from a couple of hundreds to 80,000. Repression in the Punjab gave birth to the Ahrar Party, a spirited Muslim organization.<sup>232</sup>

The resistance lacked certain strengths of the noncooperation ten years earlier.<sup>233</sup> Several years of communal strife and dissatisfaction with the Nehru Report prevented renewal of the type of Hindu-Muslim unity enjoyed in the previous movement. Muslim leaders urged Muslims to not participate in Congress demonstrations, and communal fighting broke out in some areas. Labor militancy, though strong in some cities, did not match the mass upsurge of the early 1920s, nor was support as strong among students and urban professionals. On the other hand, peasants and rural villagers played a much larger role than before, and the greater participation of women was also a step forward in the 1930 civil disobedience. In terms of overall numbers, the 1930s movement was larger--over 90,000 people were arrested, according to a 1931 Congress estimate, or three times the 1921-22 figure--demonstrating the immense influence the Congress organization now had.

### **Congress Moderates Control the Movement**

At the same time, Gandhi and Congress leaders worked to divert this popular response into "safe" channels that would protect India's wealthy interests and avoid lower class revolt. This was accomplished in several ways. First, although the movement was launched under the banner of "complete independence," Gandhi and other Congress moderates did not really intend to force that demand upon the British. The Gandhi-led moderates had defeated a resolution moved by Bose, on behalf of the Congress left wing, to the effect that "the Congress should aim at setting up a parallel Government in the country and to that end, should take in hand the task of organizing the workers, peasants and youths."<sup>234</sup> Instead, four days after the Independence Day demonstrations, on 30 January 1930, Gandhi set forth his "eleven points." These included removal of the salt

tax, improvement of the currency exchange rate, a protective tariff on foreign cloth, protection of Indian coastal shipping, and reduction of land tax and military expenditure. He pleaded: "Let the Viceroy satisfy these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of civil disobedience...."<sup>235</sup> This was a far cry from the militant tones of the independence pledge in which it was held to be "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to British rule.<sup>236</sup>

Second, the campaign's issues and protest activities were shaped in a way that discouraged more militant activity. For example, focusing on the salt laws tended to exclude participation of industrial workers, one of the most militant sections of the population. Moreover, while it involved the peasantry to a significant degree, it tended to divert peasants from anti-landlord activities. Nehru's radical suggestion to launch no-rent campaigns against the zamindars (landlords) was rejected by Gandhi: "In my opinion the zamindar community is superfluous."<sup>237</sup> Gandhi's "mass civil disobedience" sought as much as possible to limit confrontational activities to specially trained satyagrahis who would remain loyal to Gandhi's nonviolent discipline. As he explained to a student group:

We rely not on numerical strength, but on the strength of character, and the civil disobedience resolution was moved more because I had faith in a few men sacrificing themselves for the cause than in the number of men coming forward in response to the call.<sup>238</sup>

Third, the Congress had little to say regarding the various worker and peasant struggles that arose in spite of the Congress. The questions that most concerned peasants and workers--rent reduction, moratorium on debts, stoppage of evictions, adequate industrial wages and working conditions--received little or no support from the national leaders. Of Gandhi's eleven points, only a proposed 50 percent reduction in the land tax and removal of the salt tax were of direct interest to the peasants. The major demands sought to appeal to the Indian business community, as suggested by Judith Brown:

Among Bombay and Ahmedabad businessmen who were in touch with Gandhi there were mixed feelings of apprehension at threats of boycott and disorder, and hope that here was a political leader who could obtain for Indians real power over economic policies. Gandhi's points on currency ratios, tariffs and public expenditure soothed their fears and confirmed their belief that only by supporting Congress would they exert leverage over the raj [British government in India].<sup>239</sup>

It is true that in March 1931 the Congress at Karachi passed a resolution on "fundamental rights" which did address the vital concerns of poor and working people. A progressive document, it guaranteed broad democratic rights, a living wage, healthy conditions of work, nationalization of key industries, and so on. However, the resolution was "meant to placate the Socialist elements in the Congress," according to Bose.<sup>240</sup> Instructions for the Congress delegation to the coming Round Table Conference in London did not include

any of these fundamental concerns. The resolution sought only to "make it clear to the world and to our own people what we propose to do as soon as we come into power."<sup>241</sup>

### **Gandhi-Irwin Agreement**

Gandhi negotiated a provisional settlement with Viceroy Lord Irwin in March 1931 which, in view of the massive mobilization that had been achieved, was a sorry capitulation. The Gandhi-Irwin Agreement conceded not one major demand of the struggle nor of the eleven points. The salt laws were modified but not repealed. Confiscated properties would be returned. Amnesty was granted to political prisoners who had not committed violent offenses. Congress representatives would discuss constitutional reforms at the next session of the Round Table Conference (the Congress had boycotted the first Round Table session in 1930). For these meager concessions, civil disobedience and all aggressive forms of protest were discontinued.

"There seems to be a gulf of difference between the position at Lahore affirming Complete Independence and the present parleys leading on to a settlement," remarked one correspondent at a 6 March press conference in Delhi. "Even when I moved the Lahore resolution," replied Gandhi, "I made it quite clear that independence need not mean a complete dissociation from British connection. If we had been fighting a violent war, then there might have been ruin for one or the other party. But ours has been a non-violent war presupposing compromise."<sup>242</sup> Calling off the struggle before its goals were attained may have been justified had the spirit of the movement been flagging. But Gandhi later told the French *Monde* that "the suggestion of the impending collapse of our movement" at the time the agreement was signed "was entirely false; the movement was showing no signs of slackening."<sup>243</sup> On 5 March, the London *Times* rejoiced, "Such a victory has seldom been vouchsafed to any Viceroy."<sup>244</sup>

One noteworthy provision of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement listed "soldiers and police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders" among the political prisoners refused amnesty.<sup>245</sup> This included the Garwhali soldiers who had refused to fire upon protesters at Peshawar. Gandhi's reasons for disapproving of the Garwhali soldiers, whose disobedience was certainly nonviolent, may surprise pacifist admirers of Gandhi:

A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks the oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience. I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power, I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power.<sup>246</sup>

This was a low moment for the apostle of nonviolence. First, in asserting that the soldiers should have followed orders to shoot protesters, Gandhi shows his low regard both for the lives of protesters and for the soldiers whose imprisonment he endorses. Second, Gandhi again reveals his moral double standard. While he rejects on principle the use of

political violence by the lower classes, he condones state violence--"for when I am in power, I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers." Third, Gandhi's stance toward the Garwhali soldiers highlights his trust of those in power. The goal of his protests lay less in winning the sympathy of police or soldiers--the goal for many modern nonviolent theorists--but in changing the minds of the order-givers at the top.

Gandhi's counter-progressive manner of leading the 1930 salt satyagraha--stifling the movement's scope, keeping peasant and worker movements to the margins, avoiding any revolutionary departures--has been widely ignored in the literature on Gandhi. The leader merely did his best for the people, in the view of many historians, and he gained what concessions could be had under the circumstances. Joan Bondurant's treatment in *Conquest of Violence* is representative. The author praises Gandhi for his readiness to negotiate:

Direct action was not undertaken until every effort had been made for an honorable settlement through negotiation and appeal to the Viceroy. The demand of the satyagrahis that Indians should be free to manufacture salt at will, was at no time relaxed. However, Gandhi remained ever ready to negotiate with the government for a settlement.<sup>247</sup>

Then Bondurant sums up what had been accomplished:

The immediate objective--redress of grievances arising from the Salt Acts--was to a substantial degree realized even though the Acts themselves were not abolished. The long-term objective of Swaraj was, of course, not at once achieved. However, the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement provided that the Congress should participate in the second Round Table Conference to consider constitutional questions involved in the advancement of India along the road towards full independence.<sup>248</sup>

Bondurant analyzes the civil disobedience campaign only in terms of whether it achieved the goals set forth by Gandhi, apart from any larger context. The Congress's internal debate over campaign goals, the wave of strikes and peasant risings inspired by the salt satyagraha, the growing potentials for socialism that existed in India--are all ignored in Bondurant's treatment. Yet, Gandhi's campaign can only be properly understood by setting it within these wider political contexts.

### **Round Table Conference**

The leading parties of India came to the second London Round Table Conference in September 1931 to discuss constitutional reforms with British leaders. Britain had long recognized the value of integrating Indians into its governmental machinery as a means of diverting more militant activity. Its latest proposals would expand this integration by

establishing a federal structure which allowed Indians greater power than before at the provincial level. At the same time, a strong central government would remain under British control, and the British could overrule provincial governments at will.

Gandhi, whom the Congress had sent to London as its sole delegate, demanded Indian responsibility at the center, including control over the army, foreign affairs, and fiscal and economic policies. Gandhi's statements regarding the army leave little room for misinterpretation.

If you will transfer power now to us, then regard this as a vital condition, that the Army should pass under our control in its entirety.<sup>249</sup>

Gandhi discussed the function of this Indian-controlled army. British troops would be told,

Now is the time for you not to remain here to protect British interests and British lives, but you are here to protect India against foreign aggression, even against internal insurrection, as if you were defending and serving your own countrymen.<sup>250</sup>

"That is my dream," said Gandhi. Although he adamantly opposed violence for revolutionary causes, Gandhi's proposals indicate clearly his support of violence in defending the state, whether against external threats or internal revolt.

The British, however, were not prepared to hand over control of the army or any other crucial powers. Gandhi's suspension of the civil disobedience movement had left him with little bargaining leverage. Discussions of federal structure eventually stalled on the question of minority rights. Hindus and Muslims continued to struggle over such questions as separate electorates, weightage, and reservation of Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal legislatures. Other minorities--Sikhs, untouchables, Indian Christians, Europeans--also demanded guarantees. Negotiations were not helped by Gandhi's insistence that he, and not the other delegates, truly represented the minority communities.

All the other parties at this meeting represent sectional interests. Congress alone claims to represent the whole of India, all interests. It is no communal organisation; it is a determined enemy of communalism in any shape or form.... The Congress, I say, claims to represent all these minorities.<sup>251</sup>

Gandhi finally agreed to separate electorates for Muslims and Sikhs "as a necessary evil,"<sup>252</sup> although other points remained in dispute. But Gandhi firmly opposed separate electorates for other minorities and for untouchables in particular. "I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables," Gandhi informed the minorities committee, challenging the untouchable leader B.R. Ambedkar.

Those who speak of political rights of Untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is constructed today. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing [separate electorates] I will resist it with my life.<sup>253</sup>

Gandhi held that the untouchables' cause was being adequately taken up by the Congress. Granting them separate electorates would "create a division in Hinduism." The untouchables' demand was supported by other minority representatives, however, and no agreement could be reached. The delegates agreed to allow British Prime Minister MacDonald to arbitrate this and other disputed communal issues. The conference held its closing plenary and adjourned.

### **Second Wave and the "Epic Fast"**

Gandhi returned to India in late December to find the situation had deteriorated. The government had long forgotten its truce agreements. Drastic ordinances were passed and movement leaders were arrested; Gandhi was jailed on 4 January 1932. Magistrates and police were granted far-reaching powers; civil liberties ceased to exist. The Congress and all sympathetic organizations were declared illegal. Government repression fueled a fresh wave of resistance including boycott of all British institutions, non-compliance with ordinances, and scattered strikes and risings. In four months, there were 80,000 arrests. But the resistance lacked a functional leadership. Despite its now illegal status, the Congress issued orders against secrecy as a perversion of Congress principles. This rigid "nonviolent openness" proved self-defeating. When the Congress announced an open session in Delhi on 23 April, attracting some 500 delegates, the police arrested 180 and attacked the others with lathis.<sup>254</sup>

The prime minister announced in August his Communal Award, which granted separate electorates and other concessions to the various minorities. Britain's "concern" for minorities was part of its divide-and-rule policy: it aimed to encourage loyalist feeling among the minority groups and to discourage their uniting with the nationalist movement. Congress leaders often fed this strategy by their stern view of minority demands and opposition to minorities organizing independently of the Congress. This was exemplified in September when the imprisoned Gandhi opted a "fast unto death" to protest the Communal Award's provision for separate electorates to untouchables. The country's eyes turned toward its leader and there began a rush of negotiations to save his life. Gandhi was willing, with reluctance, to accept reservation of legislative seats for untouchables, but he insisted the seats be filled through joint rather than separate electorates. Separate electorates would "interrupt the process of heart-cleansing and self-purification" taking place among caste Hindus, Gandhi argued, whereas joint electorates would allow caste Hindus to vote for untouchable candidates and thereby demonstrate their freedom from prejudice.<sup>255</sup> Ambedkar and other untouchables demanded separate electorates, however, pointing out that general voters would be unlikely to elect untouchable candidates who were genuinely committed to the rights of untouchables or

the abolition of caste. In short, Gandhi wanted untouchables to rely on appeals to caste Hindus; Ambedkar wanted untouchables to become an independent political force.

Gandhi broke his week-long fast on 26 September, after the British assented to a compromise agreement known as the Poona Pact. The agreement deprived untouchables of separate electorates and the "double vote"; the latter would have allowed untouchables in certain areas to vote on both a separate ballot and a general ballot. In return, the number of seats reserved for untouchables was increased, and untouchables would vote in a separate primary election to select candidates to be placed on the general ballot. Biographers such as Louis Fischer characterize Gandhi's fast as a heroic contribution to the untouchables' cause,<sup>256</sup> but Ambedkar describes it as a coercive act which simply made easier the election of pro-Congress untouchables.<sup>257</sup>

Gandhi's fast did help inspire a wave of anti-untouchability work led by caste Hindus. Wells and temples were opened to untouchables, and charity organizations such as the Harijan Sevak Sangh were established. As discussed in chapter 12, this movement did not organize untouchables politically, nor did it actually oppose the caste system. But it did encourage a wider recognition of the evils of caste bigotry and led later to India's official condemnation of untouchability.

The controversy over separate electorates signaled Gandhi's turn away from the politically "hot" anti-colonial struggle to the relatively safe social issues of anti-untouchability and promotion of the constructive program, which did not threaten the British. Nehru wrote of his shock and dismay upon learning of Gandhi's fast:

I thought with anguish that I might not see him again.... And then I felt annoyed with him for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice--just a position of electorate. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time at least?<sup>258</sup>

Gandhi obtained release from jail in May 1933. Under his advice, an informal Congress meeting in July withdrew mass civil disobedience, permitting only individual civil disobedience as a token of resistance. The following April, Gandhi suggested that the masses had failed to learn his nonviolent message:

I feel that the masses have not received the full message of satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media.<sup>259</sup>

He therefore determined that only one person should be allowed to offer resistance:

After much searching of the heart I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one, and that myself and no other, should for the

time being bear the responsibility of civil resistance if it is to succeed as a means of achieving purna swaraj [complete independence].<sup>260</sup>

A month later, the All India Congress Committee was allowed to meet and decided to call off civil disobedience of every sort, with a proviso that Gandhi alone, if and when he thought it necessary, could offer civil resistance.

Gandhi and the Congress leadership applied mass protest like a water faucet. When Britain refused to negotiate, then on went the water; when concessions were in sight, then the masses were to be quieted. In reference to Nehru and the rebellious young of India, Gandhi said:

Steam becomes a mighty power only when it allows itself to be imprisoned in a strong little reservoir, and produces tremendous motion and carries huge weights by permitting itself a tiny and measured outlet. Even so have the youth of the country of their own free will to allow their inexhaustible energy to be imprisoned, controlled and set free in strictly measured and required quantities.<sup>261</sup>

Aided by a heartfelt knowledge of the popular mind, Gandhi was able to control and utilize the power of mass discontent for the benefit of the Indian elite. The 1930 salt satyagraha had demonstrated revolutionary potentials; yet, in the midst of its strength, Gandhi had called it to a halt. The settlement with the British achieved little for the common people. On the other hand, while most of the Congress demands were denied, the very fact that the mighty British government negotiated and came to written agreement with Congress representatives--and that some demands were partially conceded, such as permission to manufacture salt in certain areas and the release of the majority of political prisoners--considerably strengthened the political and organizational position of the Congress in India.<sup>262</sup> With this prestige and reputation thus gained, the Congress, as political voice of India's bourgeoisie, was ensured a dominant role in Indian politics as the country pushed its way toward national independence.



## Chapter 14

# Congress Ministries

The Congress, in the mid-thirties, again turned away from mass protest to adopt the dual strategy of electoral politics on the one hand and constructive work on the other. Meanwhile, significant numbers in the country, especially among the youth and workers, were drawing closer to anti-imperialist and socialist ideas. The trade union movement was growing, under Communist inspiration; there was a huge wave of strikes in 1937. This leftward trend was also felt in the Congress, where the Congress Socialist Party, established in 1937, agitated for more radical directions. A left-right polarization would rage in the Congress for the remainder of the thirties.

Gandhi, who allied with the Congress right wing, maneuvered brilliantly to keep these radical elements, both within the Congress and in the country at large, within bounds and under his influence. In 1934, against the wishes of Congress colleagues, he announced his retirement from the Congress to devote himself to village improvement work and fighting untouchability. The retirement, however, was only officially so. While Gandhi made a point of not speaking to current political issues either in public or in his newly begun *Harijan* magazine, Congress leaders actually went to him for advice on all important political questions. At the same time, he urged Congress socialists to consider Jawaharlal Nehru their leader and to act under Nehru's guidance. It was an effective ploy. Nehru, a left-leaning socialist but also strongly loyal to Gandhi, was thrust into the Congress presidency in 1936 and again in 1937. The left forces in the Congress consolidated themselves under Nehru's leadership. This enabled Gandhi to remain in the background, appearing neutral between Congress left and right wings, yet exerting influence over both.

Nehru had become a popular figure among India's radical youth and working class. Through him the Congress sought to instill confidence among these groups that a genuine policy of radical opposition to imperialism was being pursued. Nehru toured the country espousing his radical ideals and attracting tens of thousands of left-minded youth as volunteers for the Congress. That Nehru was being used by Gandhi and the Congress right wing to contain the country's leftward movement is hinted at by Sardar Patel who, in 1936, declined his nomination as Congress president in favor of Nehru. "My withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlal stands for," said Patel. But "I ask the delegates to plump for Jawaharlal as being the best person to represent and guide in right channel the different forces that are at work in country."<sup>263</sup>

The task of the national leadership was to keep the radical elements at bay while at the same time appearing as their vanguard. Gandhi was most adept at this. Rather than directly attack the socialists as did other Congress moderates, Gandhi insisted he was a better socialist than they. In place of the anti-capitalist, anti-landlord approach of the

leftists, Gandhi offered his doctrine of trusteeship; instead of class struggle, he urged class harmony:

I do not believe that the capitalists and the landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity, or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses....What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer.<sup>264</sup>

### **Britain Offers Joint Rule with "Safeguards"**

The British were of course no less interested than the Congress in heading off the radical trends in the country, and in placating the more moderate forces for independence as well. They by no means wished to see a revival of the type of upheaval witnessed in 1930-32. The Government of India Act of 1935 offered a plan of constitutional reform based on the principle of "provincial autonomy." Legislative bodies and ministries would be established in all the provinces. These would be granted some measure of self-governance, except the British governors were given "safeguards" which allowed them to intervene almost at will on crucial policy decisions. An all-India federation was proposed, with power to amend the constitution vested in British Parliament. The Act laid forth a joint rule policy known as "dyarchy," in which the British clearly retained the upper hand. It was a far step from independence and was bitterly opposed by even the most moderate forces in India.

Still, as the Congress was not prepared to offer any active resistance, they had little to lose by participating in the legislatures. The Congress campaigned vigorously in the 1937 elections. With its national prestige, thousands of young volunteers, and strong support from the villages accruing from Gandhi's constructive program, the Congress came out with large majorities in six of eleven provincial legislatures. After the elections, the Congress left and right wings battled over the question of accepting ministerial offices. There was strong feeling that, with the British governors' special powers to overrule ministry decisions, acceptance of office would amount to implicit support of British rule. Others, however, saw the ministries as a means of furthering the struggle for independence.

Gandhi, still formally "retired" from the Congress, produced a compromise by which the Congress ministries would be formed but on condition that the governors promise not to interfere with the ministries' constitutionally legal activities. But the governors were not ready to have their powers delimited. A battle of wits ensued between the Congress, with Gandhi as its spokesman, and the government. There was finally reached a "gentlemen's agreement" under which Congress ministries gave assurances of their "constitutional activities," and the Viceroy instructed the provincial governors "not merely not to

provoke conflicts with their ministers but to leave nothing undone to avoid or resolve such conflicts."

Congress ministries were formed in the six provinces where the Congress had won a majority of the legislative seats and in a seventh where it achieved a majority through coalition with non-Congress members. The four remaining provinces were heavily Muslim. The Congress had not contested the elections in most of the Muslim districts, having assumed the Muslims would not support Congress candidates. This turned out to be a grievous mistake. The Congress had long claimed to represent all of India in the movement for national independence. Many Muslim leaders, however, particularly in the Muslim League, had held that the Congress spoke only for Hindus and that the Muslims reserved the right to negotiate separately with the British. The failure of the Congress to make a strong presence in Muslim districts gave strength to the assertions of the Muslim League. For this and other reasons, the wedge between the two communities would sink deeper and deeper in the years to come.

### **Congress Provinces: Reform and Repression**

The Congress provinces instituted a number of reforms, notably in the area of civil liberties. Political prisoners were released, emergency powers repealed, bans on illegal associations and newspapers lifted. However, these liberties were not extended to the point of permitting militant protests and "unauthorized" strikes. It should be noted that the Congress had never sought to ally with the labor movement and had at best given only mild support to various peasant movements. In 1936, a proposal by Nehru for collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations had been defeated by the Subjects Committee of the Congress.

Now in 1937-38, the Congress ministries, faced with a growing tide of strikes and kisan (peasant) demonstrations, struck back with repression. There were wide-scale arrests and prosecutions; police attacked picket lines and protests with lathis and even shootings. Sections of the penal code which had been notoriously used by the British against the Congress, were now being used by the Congress against the mass movements.

Gandhi's idea of "class harmony" apparently included repression of the workers' movements. In *Harijan*, which the newspapers had begun calling Gandhi's "instrument of instructions," the nonviolent leader defended the methods resorted to by the Congress ministries. "Civil liberty is not criminal liberty," he wrote in the 23 October 1937 issue. "In seven provinces, the Congress rules. It seems to be assumed by some persons that in these provinces at least, individuals can say and do what they like. But so far as I know the Congress mind, it will not tolerate any such licence."<sup>265</sup> The following year, in *Harijan's* 13 August 1938 issue, Gandhi warned striking workers and some Congress supporters against the use of militant methods:

One complaint is that, in the name of peaceful picketing, pickets are resorting to methods bordering on violence, such as making a living wall beyond which no one can pass without being hurt or hurting those who make the wall. As the author of the peaceful picketing, I cannot recall a single instance in which I had encouraged such picketing....To prevent the workers from going to their work by standing in front of them is pure violence and must be given up. The owners of mills or of other factories would be justified in invoking the assistance of the police, and a Congress Government would be bound to provide it if the Congressmen concerned would not desist.<sup>266</sup>

Critics accused Gandhi of contradicting his nonviolent principles. "Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds," was Gandhi's reply borrowed from Emerson. "I have deplored the necessity for it," he said. "But till the Congress has developed a peaceful method of dealing with violent crimes, its ministers must use police and, I fear, even the military, if they are to undertake the administration of the affairs of the country in the present stage of its career."<sup>267</sup>

## Chapter 15

# The War Years

On 3 September 1939, England declared war on Germany after the latter had invaded Poland. On the same day, the Viceroy, without consulting Indian leaders or the legislatures, announced that India was at war. This was followed by a number of repressive ordinances to ensure "the security of India." The government's manner of imposing the war on India enraged the people. Ninety thousand Bombay workers carried out, on 2 October, a one-day political strike against the war. The Congress made protests and resigned office in the provinces.

### Waiting for an Inner Urge

The moment was ripe for calling a national struggle against British colonial rule. But such was not to be. The Working Committee warned Congress rank and filers against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strikes, and the like. Control and management of civil disobedience was placed fully in Gandhi's hands, who held the reins tightly. "Everybody is asking me not whether but when I am to call the country to civil disobedience," he wrote in *Harijan*, 5 March 1940. "I cannot and will not start mass civil disobedience so long as I am not convinced that there is enough discipline and enough non-violence in the Congress ranks." The country must wait, said Gandhi, until he was struck by an inner urge:

It is inherent in the technique that I never know the time-table in advance. The call may come at any time. It need not be described as from God. The inner urge is a current phrase easily understood. Everybody sometimes acts upon the inner urge. Such action need not always be right. But there is no other explanation possible for certain actions.<sup>268</sup>

Gandhi cited various reasons for not launching a mass struggle: indiscipline in the Congress, insufficient Hindu-Muslim unity and danger of communal riots, not wishing to embarrass Britain in its moment of need. But the real reason had more to do with the current position enjoyed by the Indian bourgeoisie in relation to Britain. During the First World War, as discussed in chapter 10, Gandhi and the Congress had offered unconditional support to Britain, including recruiting services. They had hoped in vain that such aid would capture the hearts of the British and that self-rule would be forthcoming. Between the two wars, Indian capital, and the Congress in particular, had gathered considerable strength. Provincial autonomy had been secured and a political organization built with cells reaching down to every locality. In this context, the Congress felt that, should Britain's status in the war grow critical, they might be willing to grant India's independence in exchange for the country's cooperation in the war.

Independence could thus be achieved without the necessity of leading a popular movement, which conceivably could turn anti-capitalist as well as anti-imperialist. It was in fact this increased strength of the Congress, and not Gandhi's "greater horror" toward war, as claimed by Gandhi and many of his biographers, that prevented the leader from becoming the "self-appointed recruiting sergeant" that he had become during the previous war.

### **Congress and Gandhi's Political Dance**

At the beginning of World War II, an immediate conflict arose between Gandhi and the Congress regarding the stance to be taken toward the war. Gandhi held that Congress support for the British should be unconditional but only of a moral and nonviolent character. The Congress Working Committee, however, was prepared to give support only on condition that Britain promise post-war independence for India; and they were ready to give active military support, such as recruiting soldiers. This difference of opinion was presented as a collision between moral views, that for Gandhi nonviolence was an unbreakable creed while for the Congress it was merely a policy to be adopted or discarded as needed. Yet, the peculiar arrangement subsequently worked out between Gandhi and the Working Committee, and the series of mutual maneuvers employed by them over the course of the war, suggest that the rift between the two was not really so wide. Their strategy of alternating from negotiations with the British to restricted forms of civil disobedience then back again, keenly outlined in E.M.S. Namboodiripad's *The Mahatma and the Ism*,<sup>269</sup> can only be described as a game of "musical nonviolence."

The first move by the Working Committee was to announce that the Congress could not cooperate with the war effort until the British made clear their intentions with regard to self-determination for India. On 17 October 1939, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow handed the Congress a firm negative on independence. Dominion status was the goal of British policy in India, he declared. He also implicitly accepted the Muslim League's claim to speak for the Muslims of India, saying that the wishes of the Congress could not be met until the rights of the country's minorities had been safeguarded. The British leaders, of course, had no interest in the welfare of Muslims or other minorities but were skillfully exploiting the divisions that existed.

The Working Committee thus determined that greater pressure must be applied to the British. Congress ministers in the provinces were called upon to resign their posts and Congress members were asked to be prepared for "all eventualities." Gandhi reiterated to the press the Congress demand for complete independence. The minorities question, he said, must be resolved internally and not by Britain's intrusion. In these circumstances, Gandhi's nonviolent stand, including his appeal to the Allies to resist the Nazis with nonviolent means, came in handy for the Working Committee. It could be used to whip up the anti-war sentiment of the people, which was already rising fast. Gandhi was thrust into active leadership of the Congress. At the March 1940 session at Ramgarh, he addressed Congress delegates for the first time since his 1934 retirement. Gandhi spoke

on how the struggle against the war was to be organized. After the session, on 25 March, he gave detailed instructions in *Harijan* as to how the Congress committees and individuals should function as satyagrahis, proclaiming "Every Congress Committee a Satyagraha Committee."<sup>270</sup>

Soon, however, the international situation changed. In May, Britain received a setback in Norway. Germany launched an invasion of Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Churchill replaced Chamberlain as Britain's prime minister. Congress leaders considered that these developments might evoke a change in British policy toward India. Gandhi said, "While the hourly butchery is going on in the West and the peaceful homes are being destroyed...I will leave no stone unturned to bring about a peaceful and honourable settlement of the present deadlock."<sup>271</sup> In other words, the path of negotiations, rather than satyagraha, would be sought. Inevitably, the conflict between the Working Committee and Gandhi on the nonviolence question reemerged. If the Congress was to strike a bargain with the British, it would hardly be convenient to be saddled with a leader who held that any support given Britain should be on a purely nonviolent basis. So, after prolonged discussions, it was declared that Gandhi would be absolved of Congress leadership:

Mahatma Gandhi desires the Congress to be true to the creed of nonviolence and to declare its unwillingness that India should maintain armed forces to defend her freedom against external aggression or internal disorder. [The committee] are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji; but they recognize that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and, therefore, absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue."<sup>272</sup>

In July, the Congress made to the government the "Poona Offer." It restated that the Congress was ready "to throw its full weight into the efforts for the effective organization of the defence of the country," provided that Britain grant India's freedom after the war. The Viceroy replied on 8 August with the "August Offer," which said that the new constitution should be "primarily the responsibility of the Indians themselves" but under two conditions: the obligations to Britain regarding the war effort must be fulfilled and, secondly, the minority opinions must not be overridden. Implicit in the second condition was the issue of the partition of India, which the Muslim League had been increasingly raising. Britain was seeking to make partition a condition of independence, as a divided India would be weak and continue to be exploitable by the British. The divide-and-rule ploy came as a disappointment to the Congress.

Britain's rejection of the Congress offer led again to resolution of the "conflict" between Gandhi and the Working Committee. At an emergency meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on 15 September, Congress President Maulana Azad said: "These events made us decide to again request Mahatma Gandhi to assume the active leadership of the Congress. I am glad to inform you that he has agreed to do this, as now there is no difference whatsoever between the Working Committee and him."<sup>273</sup>

On 17 October 1940 began an "individual anti-war satyagraha" under Gandhi's direction. Vinoba Bhave, a long-time Gandhi follower, was chosen to make anti-war speeches in defiance of the Defence of India Rules. He was arrested and jailed. Nehru followed on 31 October. One by one, the top Congress leaders, selected by Gandhi, shouted anti-war slogans in the streets and were arrested. Over 600 were in jail at the close of the year. In January, larger lists of satyagrahis were enrolled, and, in April, the entire rank-and-file membership of the Congress was invited to take part. There were 20,000 convictions by midsummer 1941. The protest, however, was only symbolic; Gandhi had no intention of launching a mass movement. Tendulkar records:

The number of satyagrahis would have been many times larger but for the limits which Gandhi imposed on the campaign. When, in April, *Hindu* complained that the campaign had produced no appreciable impression on the war effort, Gandhi retorted that it was not intended to hamper that effort. It was a moral protest.<sup>274</sup>

Britain was unmoved by the satyagraha. Meanwhile, the people grew discontent and communal riots flared.

In the latter half of 1941, the Allies suffered heavy reverses in the war. Germany had invaded Russia and was steadily advancing. A German drive through the Middle East was expected. Japan had plunged into the war full-scale and consolidated its position in Indochina. The Working Committee met at Bardoli on 23 December 1941 to review the new developments. India had become a keystone of allied defense in Southern Asia, as well as an important source of manpower and war materials. Britain, under war pressure and seeking support, had released most satyagraha prisoners on 4 December. The time had come again for negotiations. Gandhi conveniently asked to be relieved of Congress leadership, saying that he stood for complete nonparticipation in war under all circumstances. The Working Committee obliged him. A resolution was passed re-declaring the readiness of the Congress to support the war effort in exchange for independence.

The situation of the Allies grew worse. On 7 March 1942, the Burmese port of Rangoon fell to the Japanese, and India appeared to be next in line. Churchill announced on 11 March that the War Cabinet had agreed on a plan for India and that Sir Stafford Cripps would be sent to negotiate with Indian leaders. Cripps had essentially nothing new to offer. Dominion status, with the right to secede from the Commonwealth, was being proposed; but the bulk of the draft dealt with the uncertain future and gave little for the concrete present. The British plan also included the possibility of partition, and, in the divide-and-rule tradition, Cripps talked separately with representatives of different religious communities.

It is worth noting that, while negotiations between Cripps and the Congress were officially conducted by President Azad and the Working Committee, Gandhi's advice was



continually sought throughout the talks. The crucial exchange took place informally between Cripps and Gandhi himself. "Why did you come if this is what you have to offer?" Gandhi said. "I would advise you to take the first plane home."<sup>275</sup>

Each time the Congress wished to negotiate with Britain, Gandhi fittingly "retired" from the Congress leadership. This allowed the Congress to offer its full cooperation in the war as a bargain for independence, without Gandhi having to sacrifice his nonviolent image. It was important that image be kept intact for, if popular protest again became necessary, Gandhi's moral appeal would be needed to keep the movement within restricted and nonviolent bounds. Yet, in truth, Gandhi's leadership of the Congress was never absent. This was particularly evident during the Cripps talks. It was further confirmed when Gandhi, following the failure of those talks, assumed active leadership of the Congress for the third time during the war, launching the August 1942 "Quit India" movement.

### **Nonviolent Defense?**

The wartime call for independence raised the question of how, in the absence of British troops, India would defend itself against Japanese or German invasion. Gandhi's answer came in the form of a resolution adopted by the Allahabad session of the All-India Congress Committee in April 1942. The resolution demanded that Britain abandon its hold on India. In case an invasion takes place, "the committee would...expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them."<sup>276</sup> Here Gandhi was attempting to reconcile his demand for British withdrawal, and the obvious need for India's defense, with his own need to appear as a consistent espouser of nonviolence. It later became evident, though, that Gandhi was not serious about this nonviolent defense idea. Asked for specifics at an 18 May press conference, he said, "I have no plan" except "there should be unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation, and if the whole of India responded and unanimously offered it, I should show that, without shedding a single drop of blood, the Japanese arms--or any combination of arms--can be sterilized."<sup>277</sup> Gandhi finally backed off from the nonviolent defense stance in a June interview with Louis Fischer:

"It seems to me," observed Fischer, "that the British can't possibly withdraw altogether. That would mean making a present of India to Japan....You do not mean, do you, that they must withdraw their armies?"

For at least two minutes, Gandhi said nothing. "You are right," he said at last. "No, Britain and America, and other countries too, can keep their armies here and use Indian territory as a base for military operations. I do not wish Japan to win the war."

"Why have you not communicated your plan to the Viceroy?" Fischer later asked. "He should be told that you have no objection now to the use of India as a base for allied military operations."

"No one has asked me," was the reply.<sup>278</sup>

Gandhi elaborated on his new position in *Harijan*, 5 July: "Friends are confounded now to discover that my proposal admits of the presence of British and even American troops under any circumstance at all. In vain, do I argue that the allied troops, if they remain, will do so not to exercise authority over the people, or at India's expense, but they will remain under treaty with the Government of free India at the United Nations' expense for the sole purpose of repelling Japanese attack and helping China."<sup>279</sup>

While accepting the presence of British troops, Gandhi's demand for ending British rule remained firm, and renewal of civil disobedience was still foreseen. During his June talks with Fischer, the impending struggle was described in a militant language untypical of the Mahatma.

"In the villages," Gandhi explained, "the peasants will stop paying the taxes. They will make salt despite official prohibition." This will "give the peasants the courage to think that they are capable of independent action. Their next step will be to seize the land."

"With violence?" Fischer asked.

"There may be violence," Gandhi said. "But then again the landlords may co-operate."

"You are an optimist," Fischer remarked.

"They might co-operate by fleeing," Gandhi joked.

"Or," Fischer said, "they might organize violent resistance."

"There may be fifteen days of chaos," Gandhi said, "but, I think, we could soon bring that under control."<sup>280</sup>

Was the apostle of nonviolence preparing for a militant mass movement? possibly including violence? and a challenge to the power of the landlords as well? Not exactly. But Gandhi was a sharp politician and his fiery words were no accident. Gandhi was hoping to create a few days of chaotic protest which, on the one hand, would suffice to frighten the government into conceding the national demand while, on the other, would neither hamper the allied war effort nor lead to an upheaval with revolutionary implications. "My intention," he explained to the press on 14 July, "is to make the thing as short and swift as possible."<sup>281</sup>

## "Quit India" Movement

Thus, on 8 August 1942, the day a "Quit India" resolution was adopted by the All-India Congress Committee in Bombay, Gandhi made numerous hints to the press that a large-scale upheaval was in the making. Asked if the resolution meant peace or war, Gandhi did not rule out violence: "Emphasis in any non-violent struggle, projected or in operation, is always on peace; war, when it becomes an absolute necessity." One journalist suggested that a complete general strike would be required to win the quick victory that was being sought. "You are right," said Gandhi, "when you say that for a swift ending a general strike is necessary. It is not outside my contemplation, but I shall move with utmost caution. And if a general strike becomes a dire necessity, I shall not flinch."<sup>282</sup>

However, in his actual program of action, Gandhi took careful measures to ensure a militant mass struggle would not result. In his lengthy speech at the All-India Congress Committee session, special appeals were made, in turn, to journalists, princes of the Indian states, government servants, soldiers, and to students. The workers and peasants, who constituted the huge majority of the Indian population, received no mention, as they apparently had no special role in the envisioned campaign. Nor had the existing peasant and worker organizations been contacted or attempts made to include them as participants

in the resistance. Gandhi's draft of instructions to the Working Committee included plans for a 24-hour hartal. It stressed that "on the day of the hartal, no processions should be taken out, nor meetings held in the cities. All people should observe a twenty-four hours fast and offer prayers." Meetings and processions were, however, permitted in villages "where there is no fear of violence or disturbance." Militant demonstrations were thus sought to be prevented. In contrast to Gandhi's talk with Louis Fischer about peasants "seizing the land," his current instructions asked peasants to restrict themselves to struggle against the government alone. Taxes to the government should be withheld, he said. But where the landlord sides against the government, then "his portion of the revenue, which may be settled by mutual agreement, should be given to him" by his tenants.<sup>283</sup>

The Working Committee planned to send the viceroy their demands and to allow a week or two for response before initiating the movement. But the government took no chances. Gandhi, the whole of the Working Committee, and other Congressmen were taken into custody on 9 August, only a day after the Quit India resolution was passed. News of the arrests brought serious outbreaks all over India. The government passed ordinances banning the Congress and outlawing protests.

During the weeks that followed, India became a virtual battlefield between the people and the government. Huge crowds gathered in cities and rural areas and came into conflict with the police and military. Various symbols of British rule--police stations, post offices, railway stations, telegraph wires--were damaged or destroyed. Government repression was unrestrained. Unarmed mobs were fired upon and even machine-gunned from low-flying aircraft. Many arrestees received whipping sentences. According to official figures, over 30 police officers and over 900 civilians were killed from August to

November 1942. By the end of the year more than 60,000 persons had been arrested, of whom 26,000 were convicted.

The bulk of the resistance, both nonviolent and violent, had been effectively crushed by the end of September. Gandhi's hope that a quick storm of protest would force Britain to the negotiating table was not fulfilled. The rising which came to be called the "August Revolution" had bitterly failed, primarily because of the narrow aims of its designers. A massive and sustained struggle had not been prepared for. Also hurtful was Gandhi's order against secrecy. "This is an open rebellion," he had told the All-India Congress Committee. "In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man would not engage in a secret movement....In the present struggle, we have to work openly and to receive the bullets on our chest, without taking to heels."<sup>284</sup> Because of this "open bravery," the whole of the movement's leadership could not escape being immediately jailed. The massive spontaneous demonstrations which followed were without direction, coordination, or strategy. A number of Congress workers did have sense to go underground; an unlawful Congress radio was operated from "somewhere in India," announcing news of events which the government concealed from the public. But, in general, the movement was without an organizational apparatus and could not sustain itself.

While in prison, Gandhi kept correspondence with the authorities. It is to Gandhi's credit that, unlike in previous movements, he firmly refused in these letters to blame the people of India for the violence that emerged. He insisted instead that "the Government goaded the people to the point of madness" and had "started leonine violence" by its wholesale arrests of Congress leaders.<sup>285</sup> There was considerable agitation for the release of Gandhi and others, including a dramatic 21-day fast by Gandhi in February 1943. But the government was not amenable. Finally, with his health deteriorating, Gandhi was released in May 1944, along with some of his colleagues. Thousands remained behind bars, however, until the end of the war in 1945.

### **Gandhi's Offer to the Viceroy**

In June 1944, Viceroy Lord Wavell, referring to the Quit India resolution, refused Gandhi permission to talk with Working Committee members still imprisoned; he also declined to meet personally with Gandhi. On 4 July, Gandhi gave an interview to Stewart Gelder, which was intended as a message to the viceroy. "I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today," he assured. "I cannot take the country back to 1942, history can never be repeated." Backing off somewhat from the Quit India demand of 1942, Gandhi asked that a national government be formed at present, with complete independence to be established at the end of the war. "So far as military operations are concerned," he said, "the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief will have complete control. But it must be possible for the national government to offer advice and criticisms even in military matters." Asked what would be his position should the Congress become a participant in the war effort, Gandhi said, "After independence was assured, I would probably cease to

function as adviser to the Congress and as an all-war resister I would have to stand aside but I shall not offer resistance against the national government or the Congress."<sup>286</sup>

On 27 July, Gandhi made a more direct offer in a letter to Lord Wavell: "I am prepared to advise the Working Committee to declare that, in view of the changed conditions, mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942, cannot be offered and that full co-operation in war effort should be given by the Congress if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made and a national government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed subject to the proviso that during the pendency of the war, the military operations should continue as at present, but without involving any financial burden on India."<sup>287</sup>

The Viceroy replied that Gandhi's proposals were "quite unacceptable" as a basis for discussion. The British counter-offer was along the lines of the Cripps proposal of April 1942, again holding that Indian self-government could not be granted until the minorities issues had been properly resolved. The crux of the matter was that if India was to gain independence under conditions favorable to the Indian people, then it must be taken forcibly, from a position of strength. If, on the other hand, such independence was achieved from a position of weakness, then the conditions were bound to be favorable to the British rulers; this would include, among other things, a divided India. Repelled as they were by the prospects of a militant mass movement, the course taken by Gandhi and the national leaders was ultimately the latter one.

I have discussed in some detail these wartime affairs for several reasons. First, I wished to show again the class inconsistency of Gandhi's nonviolent creed. On the one hand, he remained ever ready to endorse violence for defending the interests of Indian capitalists--be it by backing the crushing of strikes to protect factory owners in 1937-38 or offering his cooperation in both world wars in exchange for independence. On the other hand, he was adamantly opposed to violent actions by the working class or peasantry for the purpose of defending or improving their own lives.

Second, I wanted to illustrate the lengths to which Gandhi and the Congress leaders were willing to go to protect Gandhi's nonviolent appearance and hide its class contradiction from the populace. In 1944 the deception was finally dropped, and Gandhi directly offered cooperation in the war--perhaps because the Working Committee was mostly still in jail and unable to make its own proposal to Britain. But also, since Gandhi had no plans of renewing civil disobedience, it became less vital that his nonviolent stance be maintained.

Third, I wanted to provide an alternative to the standard accounts of this period by pro-Gandhian writers. Gandhi wished people to believe that his nonviolent convictions had grown stronger in the later part of his life, and many authors have supported his claim. Gene Sharp in *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* writes that "Gandhi's thinking was constantly developing. Early in his career he did give certain qualified support to war. By the end of his life he no longer did so....While believing the Allies to be the better side in

the Second World War, he did not support the war."<sup>288</sup> According to Sharp, Gandhi "rejected any military alliance with the Allies even as part of a bargain in exchange for India's independence." Sharp supports his assertion with various quotes from these years in which Gandhi reaffirms his devotion to nonviolence and abhorrence toward war. Statements which contradict the leader's adherence to nonviolence are not mentioned. Nor does Sharp examine what Gandhi was actually doing during the years that India's leadership was offering military cooperation as a bargain for independence. He ignores:

- The political dance in which the Working Committee "retired" Gandhi whenever it wished to negotiate with the British, and then "unretired" Gandhi when it wanted civil disobedience;
- Gandhi's advisory role in the Cripps negotiations, where Congress had offered military cooperation in exchange for independence;
- Gandhi's allowance--in his June 1942 interview with Fischer and then his 5 July article in *Harijan*--for Allied armies to remain in India for its defense;
- Gandhi's indirect offer to the viceroy through the 4 July 1944 interview with Gelder, and finally his direct offer on 27 July of the Congress's "full co-operation in war effort...if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made."

An interesting effort to defend Gandhi's nonviolent posture can be found in Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*. In his introduction to volume I, Pyarelal writes:

The difference of Mahatma Gandhi with his colleagues was fundamental. Gandhiji was not prepared to make any compromise on the issue of non-violence. He refused to be a party to any form of effort in support of a violent war even if what looked like Swaraj could be obtained in return.<sup>289</sup>

Yet, in chapter II, Gandhi's talk with Gelder and proposal to the viceroy to help the Allies are discussed at length. Pyarelal does not recognize his own contradiction nor that of the Mahatma but seeks to defend the latter: "Furtherance of the war effort in terms of his offer, Gandhiji showed, was not only not inconsistent with his 'basic creed of non-violence' but a natural corollary to it in terms of the total abolition of war."<sup>290</sup> In other words, according to Pyarelal, Gandhi was supporting war in order to achieve peace--surely a defensible position, but hardly consistent with that of a man who forever stressed that "violence must beget violence."

## Chapter 16

# Independence and Bloodshed

On 15 August 1947, official transfer of power took place and Indian self-rule was established. In his "message to the nation," Congress President Acharya Kripalani proclaimed:

Never before was so great an event transforming the destiny of millions of men and women consummated with such little bloodshed and violence. That this has been possible is due to the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who, if any man may be so-called, is the Father of our Nation. He has led us in the non-violent battle for freedom and he has shown us the way to make this freedom fruitful in the service of our people.<sup>291</sup>

Kripalani's claim, that India achieved freedom from British rule as a result of an essentially nonviolent struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, has become the standard interpretation of Indian history and has certainly been echoed by proponents of nonviolence. A typical statement is that of Richard Gregg in *The Power of Nonviolence*:

In 1947, after twenty-six years of nonviolent struggle under Gandhi's leadership, India won her political freedom from Britain.... This was the first time in the history of the world that a great empire had been persuaded by nonviolent resistance to grant freedom to one of its subject countries.<sup>292</sup>

The notion that "nonviolence worked in India" has become a central tenet in nonviolent lore. Yet, when we take into account the events which prompted Britain's move, and when we further consider what was actually accomplished from the standpoint of the Indian masses, the extent to which "nonviolence succeeded" in India gets tossed into question.

At the time of the Allied victory in August 1945, Gandhi had led India's battle against British rule for more than twenty-five years. Still, the empire was not ready to abandon its colonial hold. At the Simla conference in June-July 1945, Britain skillfully played the Congress and Muslim League against each other; the inability of the two organizations to come to agreement provided Britain an excuse for withholding independence.

### **Congress Negotiates, Indians Mobilize On Their Own**

What moved Britain from their uncooperative stance in 1945 to a position of granting independence in 1947? It certainly was not the pressure of nonviolent civil disobedience.

The protests led by Gandhi and the Congress during the war had been symbolic and ineffectual; after the war, they organized no protest at all.

But, even while national leaders lost interest in mass mobilizing, India in the post-war period was a hotbed of activity, with anti-imperialist sentiments at fever pitch. The focal point in late 1945 became the popular demand for release of Indian National Army prisoners. The INA had been organized outside the country under former Congress activist Subhas Chandra Bose. It had planned to enter India and inspire a nationwide violent revolt against Britain. The mission failed, but the INA nonetheless became a national symbol of resistance. Their trial and imprisonment stirred mass demonstrations. Shooting of protesters in Calcutta and elsewhere inflamed the people. Under pressure, the government released three principal INA officers.

The movement took an exciting turn in February 1946 when the Royal Indian Navy went on strike in Bombay. The strike spread to other cities, joined by the Air Force and local police forces. The Bombay sailors held their own in a seven-hour armed battle against government forces on 19 February. They finally surrendered on the 23rd. But the strike was very significant as it indicated to the British they could no longer rely on Indian recruits to suppress popular movements. Of equal import was that the Navy mutiny had joined Hindus and Muslims in a mutual struggle; this unity was also visible in the massive support demonstrations, including a one-day general strike and hartal in Bombay. A deep disappointment was the general aloofness, and even mild opposition, of the national leadership to these events; this was true for the Muslim League as well as the Congress. On 22 February, Gandhi issued a statement denouncing the strikes and violent protests:

"This mutiny in the navy and what is following is not, in any sense of the term, non-violent action....A combination between the Hindus and the Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy and it will lead to and is probably a preparation for mutual violence--bad for India and the world."<sup>293</sup>

Without support from the national organizations, the upsurge around the INA prisoners and the Navy mutiny eventually died down. A fine opportunity for uniting Hindus and Muslims in a common fight against imperialism had been passed.

This was also a period of intense working class struggles. From November 1945 onwards, there came a wave of strikes in almost every important industry. Particularly militant were an all-India postal strike in July 1946 and a one-month general strike on the South India Railway in August-September 1946. These were met with ruthless repression and, again, with non-support and restraints from national leaders. The Congress had successfully prevented an all-India general strike of railwaymen in June by convincing strikers that their grievances would be "sympathetically considered" by the Railway Board. The board later went back on its "assurances" and sought to punish the strikers.



In the latter part of 1946 came a series of revolts by peasants and agricultural workers in the Indian states. The states consisted of several hundred mostly tiny territories that checkerboarded the country. They were ruled by princes under backward and semi-feudal conditions. The ferment spread to wide areas, involving armed resistance in several locations. But, once more, the country's leaders worked to discourage these movements. In some instances, the Congress ministries themselves ordered the crushing of protests.

### **Division at the Top Spreads Below**

While the people of India demonstrated spontaneously and were clearly ready for united action, the top leaders, particularly of the Congress and the Muslim League, were sorrowfully divided and confused. Scrambling for a negotiated settlement with the British, rather than turning to the strength of the masses, the Indian leaders were manipulated like playthings. The British Cabinet Mission sent to negotiate with India in 1946 was having a field day as the country's two foremost organizations fired their anger not toward the British rulers but toward each other.

Inevitably, the political divisions at the top filtered down and shaped the mass discontent: the people's anger became diverted from militant anti-imperialism and anti-landlordism into a bitter communal battle. Fighting was touched off in Calcutta on 16 August 1946. The Muslim League, feeling the talks with the Cabinet Mission were swaying in favor of the Congress, had declared Direct Action Day hoping to place pressure on Britain. Muslim demonstrators attempted to force store owners to close their shops. There were assaults and looting. The city's Hindu community followed with reprisals against the Muslims, and then the Muslims with counter-reprisals. Calcutta was engulfed in bloody riots for three days. Similar events broke out in Bombay, in the United Provinces, and elsewhere. Communal warfare became a recurrent theme in the months ahead, as an air of fear and tension pervaded the country.

India was in a state of extreme turmoil, torn by worker and peasant revolts on the one hand and communal strife on the other, when British Prime Minister Clement Attlee made a surprise declaration on 20 February 1947. Britain would no longer demand that "all parties" in India reach agreement but would instead take steps "to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948." The deadline was later moved forward to 15 August 1947. Britain's haste is explained by Alan Campbell-Johnson, press attaché for Viceroy Mountbatten, who negotiated the transfer of power:

[Chief of staff] Lord Ismay likened the position to 'taking charge of a ship in mid-ocean with a fire on the deck and ammunition in the hold.' By then it was a question of putting the fire out before it actually reached the ammunition. There was in fact no option before us but to do what we did.<sup>294</sup>

The London *Daily Mail* admitted editorially that if Britain had wanted to stay on in India "it would have needed an occupation force of 500,000 men," which was unavailable because of other commitments.<sup>295</sup> Britain, still trying to recover from a costly and brutal war, was in no position to grapple with a huge country torn by riots and protest. Hiren Mukerjee in *India's Struggle For Freedom* points to an additional factor. Britain had negotiated in December 1945 an American loan of nearly a billion pounds, which included a clause that, as from 15 July 1947, Britain's creditor countries should be free to convert on demand their British sterling into U.S. dollars and buy goods directly and more voluminously from America. This meant that, if Britain's economic hold over India was not to be fully lost to its U.S. competitor, its relations with India must be made friendly. Thus, for the British rulers, Indian independence became an economic as well as political necessity.<sup>296</sup>

Still, if self-rule was to be granted, it would be on Britain's terms. According to the agreement with Congress leaders, British capitalists would be left untouched and could continue on equal terms with Indian capitalists. A second condition provided various safeguards to former personnel of the British services in India. These factors, in addition to India's decision to remain as part of the British-led Commonwealth, promised that Britain would continue to play a powerful role in the political economy of India , although that role would no longer be a controlling one.

### **India's Partition and Communal Warfare**

Most crucial of the British terms, however, and most devastating for India, was the provision for partition of the country and creation of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state. Some 40 million Muslims made their homes in predominantly Hindu parts of India, while 20 million Hindus lived in the Muslim-majority areas to be established as Pakistan. The partition thus promised to exacerbate the already serious communal problem. It meant that Britain and other imperialist nations could continue indefinitely the game of dividing and ruling the Indian people. In recognition of this fact, the Congress had for years fought vehemently against any independence plan which included the splitting of India. (The Pakistan demand had been raised by the Muslim League in March 1940 at the instance of its president, M.A. Jinnah. The League, however, did not speak for the whole of the Muslim community. In April 1940, representatives from several Muslim parties gathered in Delhi to protest the Pakistan idea. Later, as the rift between Hindus and Muslims grew sharper, the League won a larger following and greater Muslim support for the partition plan.)

The stance of the Congress had long been that if the Muslim community desired to create a separate state, that it should be created; but this decision should be made freely by the Indian people and not as a forced condition of independence. Yet, when the carrot of full independence was finally placed before Congress leaders in the form of the Attlee Declaration, they made barely a murmur about the provision for a divided India. Even Gandhi, who had said, "If the Congress wishes to accept partition it will be over my dead

body," urged the All-India Congress Committee session in June 1947 to accept the British plan. Acknowledging the decision was unpalatable, Gandhi argued its acceptance was the best of the Congress's alternatives. To Congress socialists who protested and talked in terms of a revolution or upheaval, Gandhi replied, "I have not that strength today or else I would declare rebellion today."<sup>297</sup>

The splitting of India gave impetus to communal rage. The months preceding and following the August transfer of power witnessed mutual violence between religious communities the likes of which India had never seen. Particularly in the provinces to be divided--the Punjab and Bengal--battles between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs reached near civil war proportions. For fear of their lives, millions of Muslim refugees poured into the newly formed Pakistan, and as many Hindus and Sikhs fled from Pakistan to India. An estimated 500,000 people were killed within a year; untold millions of refugees were rendered hungry and homeless.

The choice facing Congress leaders in the post-war period had been either to launch a mass struggle to take the country on Indian terms, or to accept transfer of power on Britain's terms. The people of India were clearly ready to be mobilized after the war, launching wide protests independently of the Congress. But they needed a national leadership to provide direction and unity of purpose. The Congress declined to provide such leadership. Perhaps, given the worker and peasant militancy at the time, a countrywide protest against Britain seemed an unsafe option from the standpoint of India's elite leaders. The masses may have stepped beyond the bounds of the independence demand and raised also class-based issues of poverty and exploitation. Hence, the Congress opted for negotiations instead of struggle, agreeing finally to Britain's terms of a divided India. The Congress, as the political voice of India's business class, wished to avoid a class war, so instead opened the door to interreligious war. Mahatma Gandhi, through nearly thirty years of Congress leadership, played a key role in shaping its class politics. While he may not have recognized the linkage between the Congress's political path and the outbreak of communal fighting--and he was deeply pained by the violence and hatred--Gandhi continued to support the Congress's strategy up to the point of endorsing the partition agreement in 1947.

### **Gandhi Campaigns for Communal Harmony**

In his last two years, Mahatma Gandhi's utter sincerity and true caring for the common people contrasted with the power-grabbing activities of the bulk of Congress leaders. On 15 August 1947, the country celebrated its newly won independence, and Congress leaders held ceremonies and made pronouncements about the future. But Gandhi did not share their joy. Tendulkar writes:

There were festivities all over the country. But the man who more than anyone else had been responsible for freeing India from the alien rule did not share in these rejoicings. When an official of the Information and

Broadcasting Department of the Government of India came for a message, Gandhi stated that "he had run dry." When told again that if he did not give any message, it would not be good he replied: "There is no message at all. If it is bad, let it be so."<sup>298</sup>

Gandhi was more aware of the country's failures than its successes. Since the outbreak of communal strife in August 1946--when Direct Action Day in Calcutta had turned into a gruesome riot--Gandhi had taken up the call for communal harmony. He traveled from village to village, often on foot, holding huge prayer meetings and pleading for compassion and fellowship, for defending the victims of riots, for assistance to refugees. On several occasions, the very presence of Gandhi, or his undertaking of a fast, was effective in preventing riots and bringing the communities together. But even the whole of the Mahatma's energies could not suffice to stem the tide of blood and bitterness. It was the sad flaw of Gandhi, his unconscious bond with the upper class, that allowed him to promote communal unity on the basis of moral appeals, but which led him to oppose the uniting of Hindus and Muslims on the basis of a mutual mass struggle (an example being his stern view of the Royal Indian Navy strike in February 1946).

After independence, a growing rift developed between Gandhi, who spent his time trying to hold the people together and tend to the social wounds of communalism, and his Congress colleagues, who seemed to have lost interest in the masses and begun to thirst for political power. Gandhi blasted the Congress ministries for their increasing corruptness. He even asked that the Congress disband as a political grouping and devote itself to constructive work. But this was to no avail. The Indian bourgeoisie had gotten what it wanted--freedom from British capital (or relative freedom, at least)--and it no longer had use for the Mahatma's charisma or his moral appeal among the masses or his constructive program. In June 1948, Gandhi had been working to quell communal tensions in Delhi. He was fatally shot by a Hindu fanatic at a prayer meeting on 30 June.

### **Gandhi's Contradictory Legacy**

What had been the achievement of Gandhi and his nonviolent technique? In this regard, Nehru aptly writes:

It is not because of [Gandhi's] non-violence or economic theories that he has become the foremost and most outstanding of India's leaders. To the vast majority of India's people he is the symbol of India determined to be free, of militant nationalism, of a refusal to submit to arrogant might, of never agreeing to anything involving national dishonor.<sup>299</sup>

Gandhi's gift to the masses of India was in helping them shake off passivity and become actors in the social change arena. His nonviolent principles and methods, on the other hand, acted to limit popular movements at the same time as it inspired them. It would not even be correct to say that India's independence, as narrow as that independence was, had

been won primarily through Gandhi's nonviolent resistance. It was in fact when people moved beyond the bounds of Gandhi's satyagraha--including his nonviolent bounds--that the British rulers were the most threatened and anxious to negotiate. It was the mass post-war upheaval--agitation for release of Indian National Army prisoners; peasant and worker revolts; military mutiny; communal strife--combined with Britain's weakened capacity as an international power after the war, which actually pushed Britain against the wall and convinced them to surrender power. The post-war protests were carried on independently and often in spite of either Gandhi or the Congress; and this activity included violence and arms.

The nonviolence of Gandhi wound up serving perfectly the needs and interests of Indian bourgeois nationalism. It inspired a popular movement for national independence, and then controlled and contained it. Throughout the 1940s, Gandhi had refused to launch a mass movement (beyond the symbolic civil disobedience of the Quit India movement in 1942). This had left the national leaders powerless to fight the partition of India, while it also left lower-class Hindus and Muslims with no constructive way to vent their anger. The massive butchery that followed, the millions of dislocated people, the severe economic havoc caused by partition, the subsequent Pakistan-India wars over Kashmir and other issues (relations between the two countries remain tense today)--must all be taken into account in evaluating Gandhi's nonviolent politics. Beyond this, the overwhelming majority of Indians gained little from independence. If anything, their overall condition has worsened since 1947.<sup>300</sup> The current prime minister Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru (no relation to Mohandas Gandhi), competes with the old British viceroys in her readiness to pass repressive ordinances and crush popular movements (a recent ordinance outlawed most strikes in India). The primary beneficiaries of independence were the Indian upper class, whose power and autonomy has since vastly increased.

The course taken by the Indian national movement, and the cost of its failures, raise important questions about nonviolent theory. Pacifists hold that violence begets violence, while nonviolence leads to peace. But the Indian movement does not necessarily support this lesson. Gandhi and his colleagues sought change nonviolently. But their elitist manner of leadership--refusing to link the nationalist struggle with labor and peasant struggles, refusing to unite Hindus and Muslims in militant joint movements when opportunities clearly presented themselves--left them victim to a divide-and-conquer game with the British. Their strategy ended up contributing to one of the ugliest and most violent episodes in history. And because theirs was an elite movement, the Congress's new India maintained the social violence of a class society.

Radical pacifists might ask what would have happened had Gandhi and the Congress been non-elite and radical in their orientation. Suppose they had launched a militant but nonviolent movement, uniting class demands with anti-imperialist ones and avoiding the communal divisions. Might their nonviolence have begotten nonviolence in an independent and socialist India? My speculative answer is that a movement of this breadth and character could not have kept nonviolent discipline. The masses of Indians

would not have tolerated government repression without resorting to arms and violent methods. This was evidenced time and again during Gandhi's campaigns: as the resistance took on a mass character, Gandhi could not keep the people to nonviolent standards.

### **Nonviolent Theorists as Historians**

Nonviolent theory does not, of course, begin or end with Gandhi. But he is the tradition's most influential pioneer, practitioner, and theorist. If nonviolent advocates misapprehend the history of nonviolence--of which Gandhi's political career is an essential part--they cannot really understand their own theory and its meaning.

Nonviolent writers have been poor historians of Gandhi. They have not placed his words or campaigns in any critical context; have not addressed the elitism of Gandhi and the Indian national movement, or Gandhi's opposition to labor and peasant movements; have ignored or sidestepped Gandhi's double standard regarding violence.

Gene Sharp, for example, presents Gandhi as a militant radical and consistent espouser of nonviolence. Sharp offers ample quotes from Gandhi affirming that he stood for "abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour"; that he was "an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes"; that while he formerly pursued "the politics of petitions, deputations and friendly negotiations," Gandhi later believed "the English nation responds only to force."<sup>301</sup>

Yet, Gandhi's political activity often contradicted these statements. He consistently opposed India's labor and socialist movements which sought to challenge capitalist relations. He endorsed violence on many occasions, and the causes (such as suppression of strikes) were not always noble. To the very end, he preferred friendly negotiations with Britain over the use of force through mass mobilizing--and the Indian people paid dearly for Gandhi's reluctance to mobilize.

Nonviolent writers have also not carefully addressed the Hindu-Muslim conflict, nor considered any possible connection between Gandhi's national movement and India's violent partitioning. The independence movement, argues Richard Gregg, demonstrated that "nonviolent resistance is more efficient than war because it costs far less in money as well as lives and suffering." He roughly estimates that 8,000 were killed as a result of the independence movement. "Considering the importance and size of the conflict," Gregg writes, "and the many years it lasted, these numbers are much smaller than they would have been if the Indians had used violence toward the British."<sup>302</sup> In Gregg's view, the communal violence which killed a half million people and left millions more homeless had no connection to the independence movement or the divisive course that was taken.

In a similar vein, George Lakey in *Strategy For A Living Revolution* writes: "The Hindu-Moslem violence of 1948 is a complex matter, related to the partition of India, among

other things. But rioting in India predated the nonviolent campaigns and is still going on decades after independence, so it can hardly be laid to Gandhi's campaigns."<sup>303</sup> While Lakey acknowledges the relation between communal strife and partition, he does not consider the connection between partition and the political actions of Gandhi and his colleagues. Lakey is certainly right that communal tensions and riots preceded Gandhi and continue to this day. But this does not necessarily absolve Gandhi and his colleagues of responsibility. Communal violence grows from the wretched conditions of Indian society and the failure of a sufficiently broad movement to provide an alternative, i.e., by unifying the Indian masses behind a program of fundamental change. Such broad possibilities had been open to Gandhi in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, but he did not pursue them.

Finally, nonviolent historians have failed to apply a class perspective to Gandhi and his movements. The independence movement, we are told, achieved "freedom for the people of India" through nonviolence. India, from this standpoint, consists of one great common mass who were subjugated under British rule and then set free. Yet, the primary beneficiaries of independence were India's wealthy minority. Class relations went unchallenged by the national movement, so that British rule was replaced by the rule of India's elite classes. Nonviolence was a method for carefully mobilizing pressure against the British to achieve these elite aims. Such certainly does not forestall the use of nonviolence for other purposes. But let our study of nonviolence be informed by an accurate assessment of its role in past movements.

## Chapter 17

# Nonviolent Direct Action

For some, a commitment to nonviolence grows out of a religious conviction. For others, it comes from a careful consideration of a vision for the future and a path to reach it from where we are today. The choice of a nonviolent way of life is a personal one. But a large part of the anti-nuclear movement has decided to incorporate nonviolence into the heart of our strategy, and therefore it is important that what we mean by nonviolence is fully understood by all and is consistently carried out.

*International Day of Nuclear Disarmament Handbook*<sup>304</sup>

Today, nonviolent philosophy has its largest presence in the international anti-nuclear movement. This presence is most strongly felt in that part of the movement committed to "nonviolent direct action." Therefore, part III focuses on the direct action section of the movement; and I will mainly consider the movement in the U.S., where I have been active for the past several years.

*Nonviolent direct action*, a term coined by Martin Luther King, is widely heard in the anti-nuke movement. The term carries with it a sense of urgency, righteousness, and spiritual uplift. But activists do not agree on its meaning. The handbook for the 19 October 1979 protest on Wall Street says:

Direct action, often mistakenly equated with civil disobedience, means seeking to limit or stop an injustice at the source, without appealing to an intermediary. Such action could be legal or illegal.<sup>305</sup>

Anna Gyorgy, in her widely read *No Nukes: Everyone's Guide to Nuclear Power*, defines direct action more broadly to include almost any grassroots activity:

Direct actions range from educational canvasses to rallies, marches, and demonstrations, and sometimes include actions aimed at specific targets--such as the occupation of a nuclear site or facility.<sup>306</sup>

In the handbook for the May 1980 occupation/blockade at the nuclear plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire, direct action becomes a rather amorphous political philosophy:

The political and social reality of direct action extends far beyond specifically-defined events--it encompasses everything we do, every day of our lives. It demands the liberation of all women and all men through



processes which encourage personal autonomy and freedom within the context of collective living and working.<sup>307</sup>

In practice, *nonviolent direct action* is mostly used interchangeably with civil disobedience, and that is how I will use the term here. But the various meanings attached to the term, and the sense of reverence sometimes associated with it, says something about the power and attraction of nonviolent philosophy in the anti-nuclear movement.

The direct action anti-nuclear movement relies heavily on Gandhian theories and methods, but its application of nonviolence differs in important ways from that of its predecessor. Most obvious are the differing contexts. The Indian national movement under Gandhi approached revolutionary proportions, and it might conceivably have taken arms. The movement's nonviolent policies were closely tied to the non-revolutionary goals of its upper class leaders. Today's direct action groups, on the other hand, do not operate within the context of widespread revolt. Their nonviolent policies are not aimed at holding back militant workers' movements; rather, nonviolent strategies are the proper choice at this time.

The two movements are also marked by different organizational styles and values. Gandhi's nonviolence was strictly authoritarian; he fancied himself the general of a nonviolent army. The Indian National Congress functioned by parliamentary procedure and was highly centralized, with local branches acting under discipline of the central body. The direct action movement, however, is anti-authoritarian and widely anti-leadership. Decisions are made by consensus, organizations have decentralized structures, and the autonomy of local groups is emphasized. The bulk of Congress leaders were politically moderate or liberal. Though a minority of its members were socialist, and socialist ideas were popular in India, the Congress was essentially pro-capitalist. But the direct action movement is radical in thrust. Movement literature points to the connections between militarism, patriarchal values, and the capitalist profit system. Many anti-nuclear activists are committed to fundamental social change.

Yet, the direct action movement shares many traits with Gandhi's nonviolent movement. Civil disobedience, with its "nonviolent attitudes" and strategy of gaining public sympathy through dramatic acts of protest and voluntary suffering, is emphasized by the current movement, and civil disobedience was essential to Gandhi's campaigns. The values of human unity and love permeate the present nonviolent movement, just as they did Gandhi's. Other features of nonviolent theory--such as its concept of means and ends, its view of social power, its call for transforming rather than defeating the opposition--are common to both movements.

Nonviolent tactics are certainly called for in the current anti-nuclear movement. It does not have the forces to use violence effectively and, as long as people are free to demonstrate peacefully, it would be hard to justify violence in the public eye. Still, there are good reasons to question the movement's adherence to nonviolence as a philosophy. First, conditions change and there may be future situations in which violence or mixed

strategies would be necessary. Many activists believe that radical structural change in society is ultimately needed to undo the nuclear threat. Should a broadly supported revolutionary movement develop in the U.S., the intensity of government repression may require an armed defense. In such circumstances, nonviolent principles could come into conflict with the requirements of social change.

A second and more immediate consideration is the influence of nonviolent philosophy on the daily practice of the anti-nuclear movement. If nonviolent forms of protest are a given in this period, which nonviolent tactics and strategies are to be adopted? What does nonviolence imply for the movement's internal life and organizational processes? While the long-term revolutionary questions should be raised, part III will focus on the more immediate implications of nonviolence in movement practice. Of course, there are differences among nonviolent advocates, and some disagree with what is done in the name of nonviolence in the anti-nuclear movement. Not all pacifists favor decision making by consensus, heavy reliance on civil disobedience, or the promotion of a "friendly, nonviolent attitude" toward police and opponents. But these practices are deeply rooted in nonviolent traditions and they are prevalent in anti-nuclear groups.

## Chapter 18

# Consensus Decision Making

[Consensus is] a direct outgrowth of nonviolence, which affirms respect for the individual within a group and creates a spirit of trust and cooperation.

*Direct Action Handbook: Diablo Canyon*<sup>308</sup>

Consensus...means accepting the lowest common denominator of agreement. This is not necessarily--or usually--the correct or best position, and it is often not fully satisfactory to anyone. It is more democratic to have a majority strongly support one proposal than to have all merely feel they can "live with another proposal.

Doreen Zelman, "In Favor of Voting"<sup>309</sup>

Consensus is a group decision-making method which is widely used in anti-nuclear, feminist, and environmental movements and in alternative businesses and communities. It has been particularly popular in direct action anti-nuclear organizations. While the consensus model is not a necessary component of nonviolence, many believe it to be so. And those who have brought nonviolent theory to the anti-nuclear movement--notably, the nonviolent trainers from Movement for a New Society, American Friends Service Committee, and War Resisters League--have been strong believers in consensus. The method has become an integral part of the nonviolent theory, culture, and politics defining the anti-nuclear movement. Consensus applies the nonviolent notion of human unity to group decision making; as we will argue, it carries that notion to an illogical extreme. In fact, no practice greater hinders the movement on a day-to-day level than does the consensus process.

### Practical Problems

A group using consensus does not vote; rather, it discusses and amends proposals until everyone present agrees to them. Practically speaking, consensus is unanimous voting. This poses few difficulties for small groups when minor issues are under consideration, but it can create almost insurmountable difficulties in large groups, particularly when controversial issues are at stake. Every member of the group has the power to block a decision. When this occurs, the group has two choices: it can persuade the blocker to cease blocking, or it can search for alternatives which the blocker can accept. Although objectors are often encouraged to "stand aside"--to abstain rather than block--the potential power of blocking, even when it is not exercised, heavily influences the consensus process.

Groups making decisions by consensus tend to regard the process with a sort of spiritual reverence--I mean it is *worshipped*. The suggestion that even a straw vote be tried often brings reactions of hostility and moral indignation. The aura of morality discourages any objective analysis of the effects of consensus.

In practice, consensus can and often does frustrate the very purposes it is said to advance. The blocking mechanism undermines democratic decision making, while the requirement for unanimity can sometimes discourage the free expression of opinion. Consensus is a cumbersome process which drains the energy of a group and makes participation impossible for those unable to devote the many hours often required to come to a decision. The method can immobilize an organization, enhance the power of a tiny minority, and, in some cases, lead to the break-up of groups.

But there are important reasons why people are drawn to the process, as I was drawn to it when I entered the movement. I was introduced to consensus in 1977, in the Venice chapter of the Southern California Alliance for Survival (AFS). Consensus worked very well in our group; in fact, I had never felt more respected and cared for, nor had any group ever listened to me more attentively. The consensus method added to our sense of cooperation and participation. This, joined with the excitement and dedication that came with being part of a new, mushrooming anti-nuclear movement, helped us to build a thriving chapter.

The experience of our group was not unique; many anti-nuke activists have reported similar benefits from consensus. In a society where many people, particularly working class people, have virtually no voice in the activities and institutions around them--where we are shaped into cogs of a great bureaucratic wheel--it is a precious feeling to be part of a community group where each person's opinion really matters. The right under consensus to block decisions seems to give an assurance that each person's opinion will always carry weight, that the group cannot erode the power of any individual. This is the special appeal of consensus.

The method nevertheless poses problems, and did so in AFS. Each month, our local chapter would send a "spoke" (spokesperson) to a regional AFS meeting. Consensus was the decision-making method in the regional meeting, where a participant could block only if the group s/he represented had "consented" to block on a particular point. As a result, blocks in the regional meeting posed almost insurmountable obstacles. Even if a compromise could be found that was agreeable to the blocking spoke, s/he would have to go back to his/her local group for approval. Then, the question would be reconsidered at the next monthly meeting. Proposals might bounce back and forth in this manner for months. Various remedies were attempted, such as arranging special meetings between the disputing parties, but nothing worked well. Regional decision making became increasingly frustrating. Occasionally, rather than allow the inaction to continue, the staff of the regional office would implement proposals even when they had been blocked. In these cases, the process which was designed to enhance the power of group members led to unilateral action by the staff. Although there was some grumbling about violating the

process, most did not complain, as they preferred the violation to doing nothing at all. The frustrations of consensus finally led AFS to abandon it and adopt a voting model in late 1979.

Other anti-nuclear groups have been similarly frustrated by the consensus process, especially at the community or regional level of decision making. Mark Evanoff, tracing the history of Northern California's Abalone Alliance, notes that the organization has time and again been unable to achieve consensus on important statewide issues: "Organizers are [getting] burned out by statewide travel to meetings that produce no immediately tangible results."<sup>310</sup> Others have observed that the difficulty of reaching consensus contributed to a lack of political clarity in Washington's Crabshell Alliance: "In Fall 1977, Crabshell tried at several statewide meetings to clearly define its attitude toward nonviolence, one of Crabshell's basic principles. When no consensus could be reached, Crabshell gave up the effort."<sup>311</sup> The Northern California Livermore Action Group had the same experience in 1982. (We will tell that story shortly.)

Advocates of consensus sometimes admit the method can be cumbersome. "Consensus takes time and patience," advises a recent consensus manual.<sup>312</sup> But the real consequences of this within political movements are seldom explored. It is not always possible to resolve differences among group members, particularly during a single meeting, even with sincere efforts to be patient, cooperative, and creative. It is sometimes impossible, therefore, to make vital decisions, and this weakens the solidarity of an organization. Even people who feel deep concern about the nuclear threat will leave the movement if it is unable to come to decisions and carry out activities.

Not only is consensus cumbersome, but it breeds conservatism and lowers the quality of decisions. It is a standard rule in the anti-nuclear movement that when a group cannot reach consensus, the last decision made on a subject remains in force. Thus, the difficulty of reaching unanimous agreement encourages political rigidity and lends inordinate power to those who oppose change. Moreover, in the effort to find a decision everyone will accept, good proposals tend to be watered down. Judith Van Allen recalls the efforts of the Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union in 1971 to reach consensus on their principles of unity:

It just went on and on. There were so many different political viewpoints represented in the group that nobody was happy with the principles until they were such a mush that didn't mean anything. I mean, it took the analysis out of it so that it was just vague and general. You know, we're against everything bad and for everything good.<sup>313</sup>

Consensus means long, monotonous meetings. Meetings of four to six hours are quite regular occurrences in the Livermore Action Group (LAG). This not only burns people out, but also limits participation to those who can spare the time. Most Americans work at least forty hours a week, and many have families. They cannot devote the time that consensus demands. As a result, the power of movement activists who are single and

have part-time or flexible jobs is enhanced, since they have time for the extended meetings. Consensus can foster a power elite within an organization.

### **Voting as an Alternative to Consensus**

Proponents of consensus (some of whom concede that it causes some problems) argue that it is far more humane and democratic than alternatives such as majority vote, and that it is more consistent with visions of a cooperative society. Voting is widely portrayed as competitive and coercive. The *Diablo Canyon Blockade Handbook* states:

Voting is a win or lose model, in which people are more often concerned with the numbers it takes to "win" than with the issue itself. Voting does not take into account individual feelings or needs.<sup>314</sup>

A similar view is expressed in *Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making*:

Timid individuals or people who find it difficult to put ideas into words can be ignored.... The minority can easily be dispensed with by outvoting them. Although in theory everyone may participate in majority rule, in reality this method ensures less democracy than it seems to promise.<sup>315</sup>

People who have participated in groups that do vote suggest that this picture does not reflect the practices of community groups with a commitment to cooperation, although it does apply to many bureaucratic institutions and hierarchies (e.g., the U.S. Congress). Many voting groups try to avoid decisions by a slim majority, especially on major issues, and aim at as much unanimity as possible. For example, Matthew Hermann, who is active in a teachers' union and a member of Solidarity, a socialist-feminist group, reports:

I don't think I've ever experienced a vote in any organizations I've worked with using a strict voting method when there have been fifty-one/forty-nine votes and the organization hasn't seriously reconsidered what it was doing. Whereas the organization doesn't adopt consensus as a rule, people pretty much understand that a fifty-one/forty-nine vote means that there's a serious problem. Things have to be worked out.

We had our national convention for Solidarity this summer. And we had two very volatile issues. One was regroupment [joining with other national organizations] which involved a lot of concerns such as whether feminism was going to be taken seriously by these other groups. There were a lot of amendments made and when we finally took a vote it wasn't close; it was a large majority. The other major issue that was very difficult was the Central American question, specifically about Nicaragua. This was an issue that could have really split the organization badly. Instead of voting, which we didn't see

as particularly appropriate at that time since there was so much disagreement, we mandated that there would be a study of this issue for the next six months. We would try to come to further agreement at that time. Some people were prepared to walk out of the organization if the vote was taken in a certain direction.

Some issues are important enough to split on. When Solidarity pulled out of NAM [New American Movement], it was clear we had very little in common with that other organization.\* We did not want to go knocking on doors for Teddy Kennedy....But on a relatively minor issue, it doesn't make sense to split an organization over a vote. You can always pull away from votes.<sup>316</sup>

Jane Hunter, who is active with the Peace and Freedom Party and a member of the advisory board for KPFA (a progressive Berkeley radio station), explained that the John Brown Club, a chapter of the Peace and Freedom party, makes special efforts to satisfy the concerns of minorities:

You see two or three people who are plugged in, who have been involved in the work over a period of time, who aren't happy, they're in a minority. What we do is take the time to stop and say, "What is it that's bothering you with this?" You vote and have a mandate to go forward but you also make sure you're not going to lose people as you go forward. We vote and then afterwards talk about why they're unhappy. We don't spend hours on it. We're talking about five minutes. And we'll make various changes as they're needed.

If five or six people in a minority raise their hand, then it's very Neanderthal to say, "OK, we have a majority. We're all going to do it. If you don't like it, tough shit." People who are reasonably progressive ought to have some kind of social foundation for their progressiveness. I mean, it doesn't all come out of your head, right? It does reflect in your life and how you are....You have the vote. If everyone's not satisfied, you work with it for a while. You make synthesis.<sup>317</sup>

David De Leeuw, a member of Workers' Power (a socialist group) and a long-time activist with Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU, a rank-and-file caucus in the Teamsters' Union) discussed his experience in voting groups and their approach to minorities:

The issue to me is, do you have some real political discussion of your decisions? Do you listen to what people have to say? The thing about consensus is it forces a certain amount of political discussion. It does it sort of artificially in some ways, but it means you have to listen to minority points of

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\* A reference to the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, with whom NAM combined to form the present Democratic Socialists of America.

view in a serious way. And that's a good thing, it seems to me. But consensus can also get in the way of a movement acting effectively. I think you have to reach a stage where minorities do get listened to even if they get outvoted on something. You have to build up that sort of discussion and trust.

In the organizations I have been in, I have really, really rarely seen a substantial and upset minority just get voted down. Inevitably, people make concessions to them, think about what they're saying. If it's really too divisive, people will back off and not press the issue for awhile....

Ninety percent of what happens at Workers' Power or TDU in fact operates on consensus. Nine of ten decisions are made by votes that are unanimous. We're talking about groups of ten to thirty people. I actually think that most groups operate on consensus most of the time, even if they officially take a vote on things.<sup>318</sup>

Voting can be a more flexible way to make decisions than consensus. If the decision is important, and if the group feels a need for unanimity or a substantial majority, the time can be taken to discuss the issues and find a synthesis. But for smaller questions where unanimity is not essential, a vote can be quickly taken. On the other hand, if an important issue is at stake and time is limited--or if the group has grappled with a question for many hours and there is clearly an impasse--the group can decide whether it is more important to have further discussion or to vote and move on. With consensus, the standard rule is that no decision can be made until everyone is in agreement. Although people often stand aside when unanimity is impossible, the consensus process can and does immobilize groups.

### **The Myth of Non-Coercion**

Consensus is widely claimed to be a non-coercive, democratic decision-making method. D. Elton Trueblood explains that the Quaker method of decision making (the major source of the consensus process) involved "the use of love and persuasion as against force and violence. The overpowering of a minority by calling for a vote is a kind of force" which breeds resentment.<sup>319</sup> Similarly, the *Wall Street Action Training Handbook* states:

Consensus allows us to recognize our areas of agreement and to act together without coercing one another. *Under consensus, the group takes no action that is not consented to by all group members.*<sup>320</sup> (emphasis in original)

These claims are overstated. In truth, voting and consensus can both involve forms of coercion, i.e., forcing one party to accept the decision of another. The difference is that the will of the majority holds sway in voting, while an individual or minority wields power in consensus. Proponents of consensus often fail to recognize that preventing



people from doing as they wish can be no less coercive than forcing them to do as they do not wish.

Often, when an individual or minority blocks a decision, the alternatives available to the group are limited. As a result, concessions are often given and agreements made with which few are comfortable because the alternative is immobilization. It is important to note that a block need not actually take place for this coercion to occur. Once an individual has voiced opposition to a proposal, particularly a strong opposition, a *potential* block exists and the group is well aware of this. The group is often forced to make concessions to the individual to avoid a block which *may* occur. Hence, the individual wields immense power over the group whether or not a block is exercised.

An incident in LAG before the June 1982 blockade at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory (where nuclear weapons are designed) illustrates many of the failings of consensus. LAG had adopted verbatim the Abalone Alliance nonviolence code. Many LAG members were uncomfortable with the guideline which read, "Our attitude will be one of openness, friendliness, and respect toward all people we encounter." They objected on the grounds that oppressed people often do not feel open, friendly, and respectful toward authorities such as the police, and that such feelings should not be a requirement for joining the blockade. A month-long series of talks on the issue was capped by two full days of informal, open discussion. Finally, a recommendation was made to strike the words "friendliness and respect" and say simply that our attitude would be "open and nonviolent."<sup>321</sup> Matthew Hermann tells of the consensus process which this entailed:

It was clear that people were not happy with the code. It had that clause that said we will be open, friendly, and respectful--like the boy scouts. So we get to this meeting and we start talking about it and talking about it and talking about it as happens in every LAG meeting, with no sense of direction or how it's going to be resolved. Finally, Eric, who's another member of Solidarity, asked that a straw poll be taken to see what the general impression in the room was. Well, this was a very radical proposal within LAG. We debated for two hours whether we would take a poll or not.

I asked Hermann if he was exaggerating. He said he was not.

And finally we took a poll. The vote was seventy-four to two in favor of changing the nonviolence code. One of the two people blocked it. He was asked repeatedly to stand aside, to leave, to die. People were just so upset. He wouldn't budge and it was blocked. His reasons for blocking were just the traditional radical pacifist positions. He could not work in an organization that did not have these principles.<sup>322</sup>

I have endured similar "consensus nightmares," although they are not typically as extreme as the case just described. It is especially grueling when a group is unable to

reach consensus on questions of procedure (such as the debate on the straw vote described above). Few experiences are more personally demeaning or collectively debilitating. The kind of power wielded by the blocker in the LAG meeting had nothing to do with democracy\* or fairness. It is argued that consensus ensures that decisions will not violate anyone's moral values or ignore individual needs. It is true that the morals and needs of the LAG blocker were not violated. But what about the needs of the seventy-four people who favored changing the code?

Some proponents of consensus might discount tales of horrible blocked meetings as being the rare exception. *In fact, every block involves abuse, unfairness, and coercion of the larger group.* And even when the right to block is not exercised, its threat is present. The possibility of a block affects a group's decision-making process, and that, too, is abusive.

Consensus is often defended as a process which works if people act "responsibly." "The power to object and block consensus should be used responsibly and sparingly," the *Wall Street Handbook* advises. "Block consensus only for serious, principled objections...."<sup>323</sup> But is it ever responsible to exercise that sort of power over a group? The problem is not so much that individuals act irresponsibly or somehow abuse the consensus process. The problem lies in giving individuals that kind of power in the first place. Consensus turns majority rule into minority rule. That's not democracy.

## Discussion and Participation

Advocates have held that consensus allows every individual a voice in the decision-making process. "Since the goal is group unity, rather than beating the opposition," says *Building United Judgment*, "every member is considered important and the group tries to listen to and respond to each person. Everyone's support is needed, so the softer voices that might be drowned out in a competitive situation are encouraged and attended to."<sup>324</sup> I have found that consensus frequently has the reverse effect. By establishing the goal of total unity and seeking to satisfy all objections before taking action, consensus works to discourage disagreement and presentation of controversial issues. When the agenda is busy or when it's been a long night, it often seems prudent to keep quiet and let things pass rather than to raise an objection which might take another hour to resolve. The knowledge that the entire group must be won to a position, and, in some cases, that certain individuals are certain to block it, often makes one suspect it is not worthwhile to put forward a minority view. Blocking, on the other hand, is a very risky act, especially at larger organizational meetings and conferences. The spotlight is suddenly on the blocker, who had better be prepared for heavy grilling. Consensus etiquette forbids pressuring blockers, but it happens regularly. When one person keeps the whole group from moving forward, it is understandable that some people will grow impatient.

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\* Democracy, as it is used here, means "rule by the people." It is derived from the Greek words *demos* (the people) and *kratein* (to rule).

Tension underlies many consensus meetings. People are afraid someone will block or object, and it will then be necessary to spend more time struggling with a question. Voting, because it does not require complete unity, makes it easier for people to disagree. Moreover, a person who objects to a proposal in a consensus meeting is expected to speak up and explain why. Many people find this intimidating, especially at large political meetings. In voting, it is necessary only to raise one's hand for or against. This means that those who are shy or new to a group can participate without having to explain or defend their position before the group. Especially in the large meeting, consensus allows the braver or more experienced activists to be heard, but the position of the quieter people is often never known (there is not always time to go one by one around the circle). Using straw votes to find out where everyone stands would, of course, alleviate this problem; straw voting could be used within a consensus framework.

The general advantage of voting is that it recognizes that conflicts and differences cannot always be resolved, especially within a single meeting. It allows decisions to be made and the work of a group to go forward while internal conflicts continue. Voting ultimately allows more issues and concerns to be aired, while consensus unintentionally suppresses conflict and discourages open debate.

### **The Small Group Solution?**

The problems of consensus are most clearly seen at large meetings. Even when blocking is modified to require the support of  $x$  number of persons, it still involves an unfair coercion of the majority by a minority. The problem is lessened in small groups of less than ten or so who work together regularly and are reasonably like-minded. In fact, small task-oriented groups often require no formal process at all, consensus *or* voting. For example, I worked with a newsletter group ranging from four to eight people as part of the East Bay Anti-Nuclear Group in Berkeley. In over a year of working together, I don't believe we had any disagreements that required more than five minutes to resolve. Some might propose that consensus would work if the movement simply had lots of autonomous small groups doing independent projects. This is, in fact, what anti-nuclear groups often do, since running a larger organization seems so hopeless under current practices.

But this is not a solution. Without a broader organization to unify local groups, map out common strategy, coalesce with other groups and movements, bring in volunteers, provide resources, share skills, and bring together the strength of many people, the movement cannot seriously challenge its powerful and well-organized opposition. Moreover, a well-functioning large organization can provide a sense of wider community and shared purpose and direction for small local groups. These elements are essential. Where they are lacking, small groups become isolated and dispirited. They often fail to generate activity, and then they break apart.

It is true, however, that consensus usually works within small local groups, apart from the larger organization. Even if the group officially voted, consensus would probably emerge most of the time. But consensus can cause real problems even in small groups whose members have significant philosophical differences. For a movement that hopes to grow, that expects diversity, and that wants to develop clarity on questions of strategy and politics, consensus is not useful.

### **Sources of the Consensus Method**

The anti-nuclear movement owes its consensus process primarily to the tradition of the Quakers, or Society of Friends, and to the feminist movement. These respected predecessors seem at first glance to provide evidence that the process is proven and worthwhile. But a closer look shows that the Quakers' group process does not readily apply to anti-nuclear groups, since the two groupings differ radically in character and in their decision-making requirements. We also find that feminist groups relying on consensus have been often troubled by the process, and that many feminists prefer voting.

Two organizations--Movement for a New Society and American Friends Service Committee--have been especially influential in introducing consensus to the anti-nuclear movement. Both grow from the Quaker tradition: MNS's organizational predecessor was A Quaker Action Group; AFSC is the social service arm of the Quakers. The Quaker method of consensus, which dates from their founding in 1652, is based on the Quaker religious conception. Quaker prayer involves "waiting upon the Lord" until "the Light" reveals itself within us. "In the Light wait where the Unity is, where the peace is, where the Oneness with the Father and Son is, where there is no Rent nor Division," wrote Friends' founder George Fox.<sup>325</sup> In group decision making, while there is of course practical discussion, Quakers ultimately rely on "the Light Within producing unity," explains Howard H. Brinton.<sup>326</sup> "There is but one Light and one Truth....The nearer the members of a group come to this one Light, the nearer they will be to one another...."<sup>327</sup> Hence, the Quakers reject voting because it involves division, thereby keeping them from reaching a spiritualistic unity.

From examination of the Quakers, one can see that the consensus process grows from a religious vision of a divine realm of unity and truth: to approach this realm is to approach the Lord. Some activists practicing consensus today share this belief in a divine realm of unity, and many do not. But all who practice consensus should understand that the method was developed for religious reasons.

In this respect, consensus and nonviolence share important historic-religious influences. Although Gandhi and King did not, to my knowledge, use the Quaker method for making decisions, their nonviolent philosophy employed a similar divine conception of unity and truth.

It should be stressed that there are important differences between the practice of consensus in Quaker groups and its use in the anti-nuclear movement. Quaker business meetings have a religious character. "There is much greater effort to find what is best for the group as a whole in terms of our identity with God. People are less likely to press for their own needs as individuals as often happens in groups like LAG," observes Margaret Mossman, Northern California Friends clerk. She says that people's comments are often followed by silences, sometimes as long as three to five minutes. In twelve years of involvement with the Friends, Mossman recalls only four times when an individual blocked, or "stood in the way" of a decision.<sup>328</sup> Quaker groups have a high level intimacy and shared values. Newcomers must attend meetings for a year or two before they are fully accepted in the Society. Also, it is easier to postpone difficult questions in a Friends' meeting than in political groups which are generally preparing for an upcoming demonstration or responding to an immediate crisis. By all accounts, consensus has served the Quakers well in over three centuries of practice. But the decision-making requirements in an action-oriented mass political movement where people come and go, and where daily struggles over political differences and conflicts are the rule, are radically different from that of an enclosed, cohesive religious community.

The second major source of the anti-nuke movement's consensus process is the feminist movement. Consensus became part of the model of "participatory democracy" adopted by young feminists in the late 1960s. In fact, many activists equate consensus with "feminist process."<sup>329</sup> Citing feminist theorist Joan Rothschild, MNS writers Bruce Kokopeli and George Lakey argue that consensus is "the mode of decision-making most consistent with the feminist concept of freedom: interdependence, including self-realization and support for others."<sup>330</sup> It is incorrect, however, to identify consensus with feminism. The many feminist groups who use voting rather than consensus are hardly being "less feminist" because of it. On the contrary, because it enables a minority to exert power over a majority, consensus is inconsistent with such feminist goals as equality and eliminating the abuse of power.

The model of participatory democracy, moreover, is neither new nor necessarily feminist. Jo Freeman, writing in the feminist journal *Chrysalis*, points out that feminists borrowed the group style of participatory democracy primarily from the sixties' New Left, which was not known for its feminism, and that it has been a recurring theme in American social movements.<sup>331</sup> Participatory democracy attempted to eliminate the distinction between leaders and followers, to emphasize personal involvement and informality over bureaucratic structures. The leaderless, structureless approach was well suited to women's consciousness-raising and rap groups. But it led to problems for women's political groups similar to those experienced in the anti-nuclear movement. The feminist attempt to counter, through the use of consensus, the coerciveness and personal disregard many women had experienced in the New Left only created new forms of coercion which enabled individual women to disregard the needs of groups of women. Moreover, as Joreen (aka Jo Freeman) points out in her influential essay, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," the abdication of formal leadership merely gave more room for

informal cliques and hidden leaders who were more difficult to monitor and to hold responsible to the group because they could not be appointed or removed.<sup>332</sup>

The experience of A Woman's Place Bookstore, a collectively-run feminist bookstore in Oakland, California, illustrates the problems feminists have faced with consensus even in very small groups. In the early 1980s, the six-woman collective became split into factions of two and four, debating such questions as the store's political focus. The four members who wanted the store to serve as a catalyst for coalition-building were opposed by the other two members who preferred a separatist posture. Compromises could not be found, and the faction of two frequently blocked decisions. The collective's disputes finally led to a court battle, and the minority of two was forced to resign from the store. Afterwards, the store established a "fail-safe" policy in its decision-making process: if consensus were blocked, the group could choose to override the block or could question the blocker's suitability as a member of the collective.<sup>333</sup>

Anti-nuclear groups often emulate what is done in the feminist movement on the assumption they are practicing "feminist process." But many types of group and organizational styles come under the umbrella of the feminist movement, and within the movement there is an ongoing debate on issues of leadership, power, and the meaning of feminist process.<sup>334</sup> If the anti-nuclear movement borrows uncritically from the feminist movement, it will forego the benefit of learning from feminists' past mistakes.

### **Middle Class Bias and the Need for Trust**

Consensus reflects a middle class bias in a number of ways. It is in accord with the fears of conflict and desires for social harmony (even false harmony) which are hallmarks of middle class social education. It is suited to privileged groups of people who can spend many long hours just "being with the process" and who have may have little personal investment in actually making decisions which will lead to social change. It reflects middle class individualistic values which lead to putting one's personal interest and needs above those of the group. In other words, it may be difficult for middle class people to place their trust in a group. This lack of group trust is a major obstacle to the use of a voting model in organizations which presently use consensus.

There are other obstacles to the use of a voting model in direct action anti-nuclear organizations. These include moralistic beliefs about the inherent goodness of consensus and the evil of voting, as well as the near impossibility of reaching consensus on doing away with consensus (a built-in catch-22 feature of consensus). Also, many activists lack experience with the use of majority vote in a cooperative context. But the need for greater trust is the most essential. Consensus advocates often speak of the importance of group trust but, ironically, mistrust is actually at the foundation of the consensus method. Consensus is based on the assumption that unless people are given the power to block, the group as a whole will not listen to them and their needs will be ignored. There is much in our society and in our experiences to validate such fears. But I believe there is

enough humanity and caring within the ranks of the anti-nuclear movement to warrant some trust.

Conflict between individual and group needs is inevitable. A democratic process should give the group, not the individual, final say about the way the conflict will be handled, the compromises to be made, and where the balance will be struck. Movement activists need to begin to trust their groups, which means trusting themselves, to make decisions in a sensitive and cooperative way. While voting is no panacea and can be abused, as can any group process, it is at least one essential element in a democratic process and in an effective organization.

## Chapter 19

# Open, Friendly, and Respectful

[Nonviolence is] a friendly, open, caring attitude [that is] part of the tone of all our activities, meetings, and relationships.

*Survival Guide: Survival Summer 1980*<sup>335</sup>

It is a characteristic middle class role to promote illusions of social harmony that help maintain the status quo. In progressive movements, this same false harmony works to quiet internal dissent. Those putting forward unpopular positions within organizations are accused of being uncooperative and divisive, while the group as a whole is unable to address political disagreement in a direct way. Artificial harmony and friendliness are prevalent in the anti-nuclear movement; consensus decision making is one expression of this attitude, while nonviolence provides its supporting theory.

Without question, a friendly environment is preferable to an unfriendly one. But when friendliness is urged upon people, or when it is enforced through nonviolence codes, there is cause for suspicion. People who like one another will naturally be friendly; advocating friendliness insults people's intelligence and humanity. Children can be admirably honest with their feelings: if they like you, you'll know about it; if they don't, you'll know about that too. Parents often urge their children to hide their dislike of people: "Now be nice to Uncle Henry." This insults children; it denies their feelings. Similarly, when pacifists or others tell us to be loving and friendly, they are treating us like children and denying what we feel. Besides encouraging a phony atmosphere where debate is stifled, the injunction to be friendly can alienate people who have suffered injustice, are angry about it, and don't feel like covering it up. In 1964, black pacifist Bayard Rustin criticized King's emphasis on love in the civil rights movement:

I happen to believe...that the Negro community is no longer taking Martin Luther King's brand of nonviolence.... Love conquers all, if it can be conquered. But no Negro leader if he wants to be listened to is going to tell any Negroes that they should love white people. Furthermore I won't do it because I won't encourage that kind of psychological dishonesty. They don't love them, they have no need to love them, no basis on which they can love them. Who can love people who do these things to people?<sup>336</sup>

## Compulsory Touchy-Feely

Newcomers to the anti-nuke movement first experience the "nonviolent attitude" of friendliness and openness at meetings and events which do not involve facing the



movement's opposition. Where counterculture values are strong (e.g., in the Abalone Alliance), there is a prevailing notion that everyone should love everyone else. Many groups promote this through group hugs and "touchy-feely" games. For example, we played "pretzel" at one meeting: everyone held hands in a circle, twisted all around each other without dropping hands, and then tried to undo the knot we made. I was once quite fond of these group hugs, group massages, and silly games, especially when I became active in anti-sexist men's groups. I liked breaking the social taboo against men touching men, and it was fun being playful in groups. The vision of a loving, caring culture which these activities represented held--and continues to hold--attraction for me. Only when I began thinking critically about the future of the anti-nuke movement did the touchy-feely games begin to lose their appeal, at least in the context of a political movement. I began to think about the way working people I know--my family and my fellow workers on the job--would feel about the games. Many of these people are truly scared by the nuclear threat, and perhaps one day their concern will lead to political action. I know the vast majority would not feel comfortable at a political meeting where they were expected to hold hands, play hokey-pokey, hug people they hardly know, or give a report on their personal lives during "check-in." Meetings can be humane and personalized without making a ritual of it. Group activities appropriate for picnics, parties, personal growth and consciousness-raising sessions, or enclosed communities, are not always appropriate at political meetings in a movement that hopes to build a broad base of participation.

I have found the injunction to be friendly particularly annoying when I personally dislike someone or have a strong disagreement with them and have been expected to join them in a group hug at the end of a meeting. There is no pleasure in having to touch or be friendly with a person one feels unfriendly toward, and it trivializes one's anger or political differences. It is true that one is "allowed" to sit out of the group hugs and games, but the social pressure and teasing one receives, and the feeling of isolation from the rest of the group, make this an uncomfortable option. It is very important that people in the movement treat one another with respect, but it should not be mandatory that they be loving and friendly toward everyone. The movement should make room for the whole range of human emotions, including animosity and anger.

### **Love Your Oppressors**

Nonviolent love raises broader issues when it is applied to relationships with opponents, e.g., the police, nuclear industry officials, pro-nuke politicians. The police are particularly significant, since they are the opponents with whom protest movements have the most direct contact. In deciding the posture to take toward police, the movement must consider both the social role of the police and the life experiences and feelings of the groups the movement hopes to involve in its protests. The role of the police is complex, involving a wide range of public safety and other human services, says the Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis in *Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Analysis of the U.S. Police*. Nevertheless, the police serve ultimately as a mechanism of repression. Their central function is to control the working class:

Historically, the main function of the police has been to protect the property and well-being of those who benefit most from an economy based on the extraction of private profit. The police were created primarily in response to rioting and disorder directed against oppressive working and living conditions in the emerging industrial cities. They were used consistently to put down striking workers in the industrial conflicts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The police did not shoot or beat the corporate executives of Carnegie Steel, the Pullman Company, or the Pennsylvania Railroad who subjected their workers to long hours, physical danger, and low pay; instead, they shot and beat the workers who protested against that exploitation. In the 1960's, the police did not arrest the men who planned and directed the U.S. aggression in Southeast Asia; they arrested the people who protested against that aggression. And in the ghetto revolts of Harlem, Watts, and Newark, the police did not use tear gas and shotguns on slumlords or on merchants who sold shoddy and overpriced goods; they used them on the Black people who rebelled against that victimization.<sup>337</sup>

Corporate crimes of the wealthy and powerful--embezzlement, fraud, price gouging, chemical dumping--are ignored or mildly penalized, observe the *Iron Fist* authors, while street crimes are punished selectively along lines of class, race, and sex:

Studies of police street practices consistently show that the police use their discretion to arrest more often against working-class people than others. For example, middle-class youth are much more likely to be let off with a reprimand for many kinds of crimes, while working-class youth are far more likely to be arrested and charged, for the same kinds of offenses. More dramatically, it has been shown that the police systematically use their ultimate weapon, deadly force, much more against Third World people than against Whites. A recent study found that between 1960 and 1968, 51 percent of the people killed by police were Black--in a country where Blacks make up something over 10 percent of the population. The police response to the crime of rape is another example of this pattern, for although rape--unlike most expressions of sexism--is considered in law a serious crime, it is typically dealt with in ways that serve to degrade and further victimize women and to enforce oppressive and stereotypical conceptions of women's role.<sup>338</sup>

Nonviolence codes\* of the Abalone, LAG, and similar groups (e.g., "Our attitude will be one of openness, friendliness, and respect toward all people we encounter") refer to encounters of protesters with nuclear workers, media people, and the general public, but especially refer to encounters with the police--the group with whom participants in civil disobedience are most frequently in conflict. In LAG, it has been the lesbian-feminist and working class activists who are most perturbed over the "friendly and respectful"

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\* Codes of conduct used primarily for civil disobedience actions.

requirement in the code. This should be expected, since these groups have usually experienced more harassment and abuse from police than have heterosexual and middle class activists. Because of their anger, these groups do not always conform to code behavior, in the eyes of their fellow demonstrators. For example, during the 1982 Livermore blockade, members of the Feminist Cluster of LAG came under fire for their "angry chanting" and "confrontational style."

The experience of the 1982 blockade illustrates a number of ways in which the requirement to be open, friendly, and respectful reflects middle class efforts to impose its values on others, and thereby to maintain social peace and order. The "less respectful" among us were paternalistically reprimanded to avoid being "hostile" to the police. Monitors wearing headbands imprinted with the slogan "Practice Nonviolence" repeatedly told milling, cheering supporters of the blockaders to be friendlier to the police and to "cooperate" by getting out of the way so the police would not be hindered in their attempts to arrest blockaders who sat down in the road. Concern about upsetting the authorities translated into suppression of the anger of feminists and others, as well as the sexuality of lesbians. Lesbian protesters who showed physical affection to one another in jail were criticized by some who believed that this alienated prison guards. Dana Bergen wrote in *Plexus*, a San Francisco feminist monthly, that during jail time "a number of LAG members seemed more concerned about communicating with prison guards than with the Feminist Cluster."<sup>339</sup>

In general the requirement for a "nonviolent attitude" muffled self-expression at the 1982 Livermore blockade. I do not wish to deny the experiences or feelings of activists of any class or group who may feel genuine love or respect toward the police and want to communicate with them. But the feelings of those who do not respect the police, or who may even hate them, should not be denied. Based on their experience, oppressed people often feel hostility to the police and are not interested in appealing to them; they perhaps believe that to do so is a waste of time. Middle class people more often do respect the authorities, and this is based on their experiences. Full discussion of the differing attitudes among movement activists toward police is clearly called for. However, friendliness and respect toward authorities should be a matter of personal choice, not something the movement encodes and imposes on people.

This does not mean that groups should allow rock throwing or other foolish types of provocation at demonstrations. There is no need to provoke unnecessary violence. But there is a difference between forbidding rock throwing and requiring people to be open and friendly toward police. This difference is described clearly by Judith Van Allen, who in 1965 worked in Georgia with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC; King's organization). I asked Van Allen whether the SCLC encouraged a friendly, respectful attitude toward authorities. She replied:

Hell no. It was respectful but not friendly. Nobody ever thought you could be friendly to Georgia state troopers when they were confronting you on the street. Basically what we were taught was not to talk to them at all.

"Not to try to persuade them?" I asked.

Not to try to persuade them. I think if you had suggested you could persuade them you would have been just laughed out of the room. Ridiculed.

The discipline of militant nonviolence was to not shout insults. It had very much the feeling of moral witness. You were acting in this totally moral way as a tactic that would show police as the awful, racist, redneck bigots they were. So we weren't supposed to provoke them. That was it. You weren't supposed to provoke the cops.<sup>340</sup>

The question of what conduct should and should not be permitted at demonstrations is a delicate one. On the one hand, there is no need to further antagonize the police, who are probably already feeling somewhat hostile. On the other hand, there is a need for movement activists and supporters to say publicly what is in their hearts, and to say it as they feel it--loudly and angrily, if that is the way they feel it. Telling people to "not be hostile" is going to offend and alienate many movement supporters, in addition to sapping spirit from the protest and lending it a phony, artificial feeling. Rock throwing or other defensive measures may even be appropriate where police initiate an attack on protesters. Risk and conflict cannot always be avoided in mass protest movements. The challenge for the movement is to minimize such risks without at the same time defeating the purpose of the action--which is to give participants the opportunity to publicly express their firm opposition to nuclear policies.

### **Differing Visions of Change**

Many movements can and do organize successfully without employing nonviolence codes, advocating friendly attitudes, or encountering the kinds of debate seen in LAG on these issues. What distinguishes LAG and other direct action anti-nuke groups is, first, the central role of nonviolent philosophy. Other current movements--such as that of labor, women's rights, or Central American solidarity--do not embrace nonviolent philosophy as such (though they certainly rely overwhelmingly on nonviolent tactics). In LAG, while nonviolent philosophy is not the official creed, it is to a large degree the *unofficial* creed. And as the organization has grown to include activists from a range of political traditions, it is inevitable that conflicts will emerge over LAG's nonviolence codes, values, and processes.

A second factor distinguishing LAG and the direct action movement is the intense reliance on civil disobedience. Protesters who trespass or block nuclear plant gates place themselves in a vulnerable position, where attacks from police are much more likely than for movements that rely on legal protests. Codes requiring friendly attitudes, whether right or wrong, are bound to be proposed from a safety perspective within groups that rely on civil disobedience.

Perhaps, then, the movement cannot resolve the debates over codes and attitudes without addressing wider strategic questions--e.g., How will the movement ultimately achieve its goals? How will it get from here to there? The debate over LAG's nonviolence code may actually represent deeper, unspoken debates over conflicting visions of social change.

What vision of change is implied by the nonviolent attitudes promoted in the direct action movement? I think there a mix of visions among the movement's nonviolent followers. There are those guided by a traditional peace perspective which identifies hatred and mistrust as being at the root of war, and which proposes love and harmony as the road to peace. Others may gravitate to Gandhi's vision of converting those in power through the voluntary suffering of nonviolent protesters, or in the Gandhian phrase, "melting the opponent's heart." Still others subscribe to a more radical pacifism that looks toward mass strikes and noncooperation within a broad challenge to corporate power, but sees the values and attitudes of nonviolence as a necessary ingredient in building such a resistance.

The movement should begin discussion of its visions. This will enrich the debates over nonviolence codes, and perhaps make them more politically productive. Of course, agreement over vision and strategy will not come easy--and may never come at all if we are strategizing by consensus! Nonetheless, such discussions will benefit the movement. Perhaps we can agree, at minimum, that the movement must develop group processes, public actions, and cultural values that speak to broad constituencies and allow the widest participation.

## Chapter 20

# Civil Disobedience

People see us committed to civil disobedience actions and decide that because they cannot go to jail, the anti-nuclear movement is not for them.

Marty Jezer<sup>341</sup>

Since the mid-1970s, tens of thousands of activists have dramatized their opposition to nuclear power and nuclear weapons through civil disobedience, a protest tactic which involves consciously breaking a law and peacefully accepting arrest or other consequences. Civil disobedience is a dramatic, intense demonstration of protesters' convictions. It is a powerful tool for drawing public attention to nuclear issues; nonviolent civil disobedience and the ensuing mass arrests at nuclear weapons facilities, the Pentagon, and nuclear power plants have been a magnet for media attention. Nevertheless, direct action groups have been mistaken to make civil disobedience the cornerstone of movement activity; this strategy is not adequate to build a mass-based movement which could actually stop the threat of nuclear power and weapons.

Mass civil disobedience at nuclear facilities in the United States was modeled upon a 1975 protest at a Wyhl (pronounced "veal"), West Germany, nuclear power plant site. About 28,000 protesters overran the construction site at Wyhl. They were successful in blocking construction, and the plant was later canceled (plans for the plant were renewed in 1982, however<sup>342</sup>). Wyhl became an international symbol of nuclear resistance and it informed the vision of nuclear opponents across the U.S.<sup>343</sup>

Wyhl was the inspiration for the event that fired the anti-nuclear power movement in this country: the Clamshell Alliance's 1977 occupation of a nuclear plant construction site in Seabrook, New Hampshire. More than two thousand activists, who attended nonviolent training sessions conducted by MNS trainers, descended on the site. The Seabrook protest and others sparked by it attracted wide media coverage, and the nuclear power question, which had been relatively obscure, became a major public issue. For example, the Three Mile Island nuclear plant accident near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1979 received blaring headlines and weeks of TV news coverage, while a similar near-catastrophe that occurred in 1966 at the Enrico Fermi plant near Detroit received almost no media attention. The coverage given Three Mile Island is a direct result of three-four years of civil disobedience and local educational work by the anti-nuclear movement. Civil disobedience has invigorated the movement with a lively, anti-authoritarian spirit, attracting tens of thousands of activists. A well-planned blockade can be a shot in the arm for regional organizations. Affinity groups formed for a particular action often stay together to do organizing work. Donations and inquiries pour into the movement office and local activity remains at a high level for months.

Because the occupations have been a powerful tool for increasing public awareness and protest activity, many anti-nuclear groups have made civil disobedience their entire strategy rather than just a tactic to be used in appropriate situations. Overemphasis on civil disobedience has been the continuing concern of a number of activists. Jane T. Weed of Northern California's Abalone Alliance observed in *It's About Times* (February 1979) that civil disobedience (CD)

no longer seems to be a part of a program to stop the nukes, but has become the entire purpose for the existence of the Abalone. Education, outreach to other sectors (i.e., low-income, labor, minority, 'parents,' etc.) has been consistently lacking....CD has taken on a mystical quality, it has become faddish and glamorous.<sup>344</sup>

Reliance on jail-going tactics limits the movement's constituency. Blockade militancy has become a substitute for the development of broader programs and strategies. Although civil disobedience is often combined with legal demonstrations and campaigns, organizing a mass blockade requires immense organizational resources and energy. Hence, the legal protests and community outreach and education, which could potentially involve wider sections of the population, do not receive the priority they deserve. Long-term questions regarding what organization and broad social changes would be required to actually halt the nuclear threat receive almost no attention.

Despite problems, attempts to build bigger and bigger civil disobedience events continued as the major strategy of anti-nuke alliances formed in the wake of Seabrook. Rather than using media exposure and the excitement aroused by a mass occupation as a springboard toward a more encompassing grassroots movement, the tendency was to immediately start planning for the next occupation. Thus, even as American opinion began turning against nuclear power--especially after Three Mile Island--the movement's active membership tended to be limited to those who could afford to or were willing to be arrested. Moreover, the blockades and occupations, with their extensive preparations beforehand and court and jail hassles afterward, took their emotional and financial toll on participants. By 1980-81, many anti-nuke groups had turned away not only from civil disobedience but from any attempts to build mass protests. Some groups folded. Some, like the Clamshell, began to focus more on legal intervention.\* The Nuclear Freeze campaign in 1981 gave the movement new life. The focus shifted from power to weapons, and many groups began working on state and local freeze initiatives.

At the same time, civil disobedience remains the focal point for many groups. In California, Abalone Alliance and the Livermore Action Group continue organizing mass blockades, while legal protests, community outreach, and other grassroots activity are given lesser priority. In Europe, many groups have looked toward a strategy of

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\* This involves giving evidence, filing briefs and appeals, or in other ways intervening in the extensive licensing process involved with commercial nuclear plants.

nonviolent blockades to protest U.S. deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles. \*\* One of the best known of these groups is the women's peace camp at Greenham Common, England, which is guided by nonviolent direct action principles.<sup>345</sup> Similar peace camps, which establish residency and ongoing vigils at nuclear facilities, has sprung up both in Europe and the U.S.

While the blockades generally do not stop the construction or operation of a nuclear facility for more than a day or two, their political impact has been significant. Nuclear power plants have been more subject to influence by the political climate and pressures from investors than has the nuclear weapons industry. The mass arrests and media exposure at nuclear plant construction sites have strengthened the efforts of legal intervenors. Innumerable delays and some cancellations have been won. Still, seventy-three commercial plants are now operating in this country, eighty-nine more are in planning or construction, and the movement does not have the resources or a sufficiently large membership to battle them all. On the nuclear weapons front, there have been fewer concrete victories. The Carter and Reagan administrations have funded new weapons systems with apparent abandon.

Despite the shortcomings of civil disobedience as the center strategy for protesting nuclear power and armaments, many anti-nuclear activists continue to believe in it, for a number of reasons. First, U.S. organizers originally adopted the approach because they believed nonviolent occupations had been successful in the European anti-nuclear movement. Second, civil disobedience is attractive because it is consistent with the strong moral tone implicit in nonviolence. Third, nonviolent direct action is believed to "empower" protesters. Finally, many activists feel that civil disobedience allows them to make a stronger, more dramatic statement than do the traditional marches and rallies.

### **The European Experience**

American organizers who developed a strategy of mass civil disobedience based on the successful Wyhl occupation in 1975 failed to consider the special circumstances at Wyhl, and, more crucially, failed to put Wyhl in historical perspective. The police were not prepared for the 28,000 protesters who occupied the nuclear construction site, and they did not attack. A smaller number of nuclear opponents held the site for eight months, and a court ruling halted construction of the plant, which has been delayed for many years. A special consideration regarding Wyhl is that almost no construction had been done at the time of the occupation: only a big hole had been dug. An anti-nuclear victory would have been harder to come by had millions of dollars been invested in plant construction.

But the German police learned from their experience at Wyhl, and future attempts to occupy nuclear sites were met with forces adequate to defeat them. For example, in a

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\*\* Mass legal demonstrations, the major ones drawing hundreds of thousand of protesters, are a more regular feature of the movement in Europe than in the U.S., however.



protest at Brokdorf, West Germany, a year after the Wyhl action, 30,000 people were unable to gain access to a nuclear construction site. Moats up to eight yards wide and a six-foot fence topped with rolls of barbed wire had been built to protect it. The police attacked protesters with water cannons, tear gas, and mace, and dropped smoke and tear gas bombs from helicopters. Numerous injuries and arrests resulted.<sup>346</sup>

Battles at nuclear sites in West Germany, France, and Spain intensified in the years following the Wyhl protest. Brokdorf was the scene of a second embattled protest in 1981. The action was described in *Newsfront International* (May 1981):

Between 50,000 and 80,000 demonstrators were met by 30,000 police and border troops. When demonstrators attempted to cut through the barbed wire fence surrounding the plant and fired gasoline bombs and steel balls propelled by sling-shots at hovering police helicopters, police retaliated, charging with water cannons, batons and tear gas. At least 50 people were injured, 4 seriously.<sup>347</sup>

The battle at Brokdorf points up a distinction between the European anti-nuclear power movement and the American one. While blockades and occupations in the U.S. have stressed nonviolence under all circumstances and voluntary arrests, Europeans protesting nuclear power facilities often defend themselves--sometimes with violence--and seek to avoid arrest. The approach in Europe has emphasized practicality over civil disobedience rituals: the goal of protesters is to stop or interfere with plant construction.\*

The huge police attacks faced by the European movement after Wyhl demonstrates the problems of direct action (i.e., physical intervention) as the cornerstone of activity, whether the actions are violent or nonviolent. The brute force of the German state ensured that a protest victory such as at Wyhl could not be repeated. The protesters at Brokdorf numbered two or three times that at Wyhl, but they were not successful in halting construction of the plant. Nor did the protests and their repression by the police spawn sufficient public support. Despite ongoing efforts of the anti-nuclear movement, West Germany's nuclear power program continues to move forward.

Anti-nuclear activists in this country can learn from Europe that police and military forces will be marshaled in sufficient numbers to defeat civil disobedience activities. Turning the nuclear tide will require a broad-based social movement with overwhelming numbers, one that can take on the government and the corporate interests who profit from nuclear development. A multi-layered strategy is required, alliances need to be built, a

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\* This discussion applies to the European anti-nuclear *power* movement; Europe's anti-weapons movement is much more influenced by nonviolent philosophy and civil disobedience methods. Unlike the movement in the U.S., where many groups oppose both nuclear power and nuclear weapons, the movements in Europe function more separately and have different influences.

social and political base developed. Direct action tactics have their role--and, in the long run, a very crucial role--but will only be effective within the context of broader strategies.

### **Civil Disobedience and Moralism**

"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself," Gandhi was fond of saying. The belief that actions deemed morally good must bring good results has an important influence in the direct action anti-nuclear movement. Consider the strongly moral approach to civil disobedience of Ground Zero, a nonviolent religious group conducting an educational and civil disobedience campaign at the Trident submarine base in Bangor, Washington. The campaign is consciously Gandhian, writes Ground Zero co-founder Jim Douglass, and seeks to stop Trident by means of truth, love, and suffering:

Trident can be stopped if we can realize that all of us--base workers, Ground Zero people, Trident crew members, the Russians, all the suffering people in between--are one in Christ, in the Buddha, in God's love, in the humanity we share and are on the verge of annihilating. We can realize our unity in a process of truth and love which Jesus called "the kingdom of God" and Gandhi called "satyagraha" or "truth-force."...

Trident can be stopped because good is more powerful than evil. But we have to believe in the good and live it out.

"Living out the good" means accepting suffering through civil disobedience, as over a thousand have done since the campaign began in 1975.

Repeaters in civil disobedience have served escalating sentences ranging up to six months per conviction. This acceptance of fairly heavy jail sentences has been to take on personal responsibility and suffering for Trident and to appeal to others for a deep change of heart.

The ultimate goal of the Trident campaign is "not a political victory but spiritual change," says Douglass.

In a satyagraha campaign, unlike war, it is the force of truth and love which determines the outcome--not violence and not even political pressures. The purpose of the Trident campaign is to awaken that nonviolent, love-truth force in everyone, on both sides of the fence. We all need conversion to a new spirit of nonviolence. Through such an ongoing conversion Trident can be stopped.<sup>348</sup>

For Douglass, as for Gandhi, the path to social change depends less on effective political strategies than the degree of our internal purification and moral goodness. Nonviolent activists typically have a stronger practical-political emphasis than Douglass, but divine

qualities of love, truth, and moral suffering are common to nonviolence, even among groups with a more pragmatic orientation. Political tactics such as civil disobedience, which are sometimes but not always suitable, come to be seen as a moral duty or a means of evoking some suprahuman force or law. The moralist element in civil disobedience encourages tactical and strategic rigidity.

## **Empowerment**

The nonviolent theory of power as described in movement handbooks has further encouraged a rigid dependence on civil disobedience among direct action groups. The *Diablo Canyon Blockade Handbook* explains:

The theory of active non-violence proposes...that government depends on people and that political power is variable, even fragile, always dependent on the cooperation of a multitude groups and individuals. The withdrawal of that cooperation restricts and can even dissolve power. Put another way, power depends on continuing obedience, so when we refuse to obey our rulers, their power begins to crumble.<sup>349</sup>

This theory of power proposes an important truth: a disobedient populace *can* undermine the power of rulers. But the theory is simplistic. Individuals or groups who disobey authorities without a political strategy and a broad base of support create only a small nuisance for the government. Direct action and obstructionist tactics applied indiscriminately do not empower the movement. A sense of timing and context are important.

The nonviolent conception of power has led many direct action groups to delusions of grandeur: they believe they have more power than they actually have. The Coalition for Direct Action at Seabrook (CDAS), a split-off from the Clamshell Alliance, attempted to occupy Seabrook in October 1979 and May 1980. While previous occupations had been regarded as symbolic protests (i.e., the goal was not to directly halt construction so much as to arouse public concern for the problem), CDAS announced its intent

to close the Seabrook plant by non-violently, physically stopping construction....Our success will not be measured in terms of symbolic value, nor media impact, nor numbers arrested. Our success depends on our effectiveness in directly blocking further construction, and our ability to do so in a collective and non-violent way.<sup>350</sup>

The CDAS events, which involved 3,000 protesters at the first action and 1,500 at the second, were violently crushed. At both demonstrations, the police took off their badges and, instead of arresting people, attacked with batons, tear gas, and mace. Several demonstrators received broken bones and concussions. The CDAS organizing strategy may have actually made it easier for the police to get violent. Because raising public

awareness was not an aim of the protests, the organizers had not publicized well. With small media presence, police had a free rein to carry out repression.<sup>351</sup>

The Abalone Alliance, at its September 1981 Diablo blockade, had also declared the event was "not symbolic." It was "intended to actually obstruct the operation of the plant, and will be sustained for as long as necessary."<sup>352</sup> Here, too, the need for good media relations was deemphasized. The Abalone's unrealistic goals for the action put media spokespersons in a difficult position, as Marcy Darnovsky reports in *It's About Times* (December-January 1982):

Many of the official spokes felt uncomfortable about the existing Abalone consensus that required them to tell reporters what they themselves had a hard time believing--that the blockaders would be able to directly halt operations at the plant. As the absurdity of this claim became clear, they increasingly voiced their objections to holding to it. But the line was insisted upon and enforced by other organizers.<sup>353</sup>

The problem, however, goes much further than poor media relations. The wide belief that a couple of thousand protesters are "regaining their power" and "taking control of their lives" by getting arrested at a nuclear site has broad implications for the movement and its effectiveness. True, going to jail for a day or two with hundreds of friends can be inspiring for participants. But the resulting legal difficulties, fines and sometimes longer jail sentences, and the continued construction of the plant or deployment of weapons are reminders that protesters are far from having real control over their lives.

The illusion that the relatively small anti-nuclear movement has the power to stop the nuclear industry, and can wield that power through acts of civil disobedience, reflects the middle class orientation of many movement theorists and strategists. Because middle class people have had more options in life and better access to power than have working class people, they sometimes come to believe that powerlessness is just a state of mind, not an objective reality. It is relatively easy for them to believe the nonviolent theory which says, "We have only to cast off our fear and stubbornly refuse to obey, and the fragile power of government starts to dissolve." This philosophy cannot explain why, despite years of hard work and nonviolent militance by thousands of activists in the U.S. and Europe, nuclear development continues unabated.

It is important that the movement acknowledge that pro-nuclear interests have much greater power than does the movement at this point in time. From this would follow a more concerted commitment to broaden the ranks of anti-nuclear protesters and expand the movement's base of power. Although protesters have influenced many important decisions, they are far from having the power to shut down and convert the nuclear industry. Nor are they likely to have that kind of power until they can wrest the ability to determine energy, defense, and social policies from the hands of corporate interests. To gain real power, a sweeping social movement is needed.

## Raise the Stakes?

Perhaps the most compelling reason direct action groups rely on civil disobedience is that the legal marches and rallies seem to have no effect, and they lack the militant feeling and drama of a blockade. Many see civil disobedience as "raising the stakes" of the struggle and therefore bringing the movement closer to its goals. *Blockade the Bombmakers: Civil Disobedience Campaign Handbook*, produced for the 14 June 1982 sit-in at the United Nations, expresses the common frustration with traditional approaches: "We have made countless appeals, sent petitions, gone to rallies, walked on marches, spoken at meetings, participated in pickets and boycotts, written letters to newspaper editors--for decades. Yet, not one single bomb has been dismantled." Hence, civil disobedience has become necessary. "The time has come to raise the stakes of our struggle against the arms race....We seek to disrupt 'diplomacy as usual' through mass nonviolent direct action. In this way the governments cannot ignore our presence and our demands."<sup>354</sup>

The failure of years of organizing to bring us closer to disarmament is certainly frustrating. But it is questionable that "raising the stakes" is the appropriate response. Despite many mass civil disobedience actions, the governments continue "diplomacy as usual." Shall the movement respond with further escalated militancy?

Such a course was adopted by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), leading group of the sixties' New Left, whose escalated militancy grew all out of proportion to reality. Following a split in June 1969, the Weathermen faction emerged as a "centralized military organization" of two or three hundred people attempting to lead "the people's war" to revolutionary victory in the U.S. They raided high schools and colleges, bombed ROTC buildings and government targets, and charged through the streets of Chicago during the October 1969 "Days of Rage," breaking windows, beating passersby, and getting viciously crushed by the Chicago police force. A small core went underground, isolated from the flourishing anti-war movement.<sup>355</sup>

There are many situations where militant or obstructionist tactics are appropriate, but as the example of SDS demonstrates, it is important that movements not rely on the militancy of a few as a substitute for genuine mass involvement. When large numbers are prepared to support the cause, but not necessarily to go to jail, the movement should organize activities that allow large numbers to participate. The movement against the Vietnam war showed that mass legal demonstrations (which formed the core of movement protest), as well as civil disobedience protests, grassroots educational campaigns, letters and petitions, can indeed have political impact. In 1971-72, when many anti-war activists were growing desperate because of their apparent ineffectiveness, the movement was actually having immense impact. A 1971 Harris poll showed 60 percent of Americans favoring U.S. withdrawal.<sup>356</sup> Labor unions were turning against the war.<sup>357</sup> American troops had become so demoralized and cynical toward the war that the U.S. was unable to continue its ground war effectively.<sup>358</sup> On several occasions,

government plans to escalate the war were postponed or canceled as a result of massive anti-war mobilizations; according to defense expert Daniel Ellsberg, such mobilizations helped deter President Nixon's contemplated use of nuclear weapons against Hanoi in 1968.<sup>359</sup> The movement's deep influence, even after the movement had dissolved, was reflected in the Carter administration's reluctance to intervene against revolutions in Angola, Iran, and Nicaragua.

Now that the government has renewed its taste for aggressive militarism, the anti-nuclear movement needs to renew its faith in the power of mass participation and in the capacity of Americans to mobilize. Legal demonstrations can certainly become trite and uninspired when planned in a routine, mechanical fashion, as can civil disobedience actions that are planned without imagination. The challenge for the movement is to develop forms of public protest that are both inspired and mass-oriented. This could involve digging into the illustrious histories of past movements--labor, civil rights, anti-war, feminist--and discovering effective tactics that can be adapted to present circumstances. It might also involve creating totally new forms of mass protest and resistance.

## Epilogue

My 1984 work concluded with a chapter offering strategic directions for the anti-nuclear movement. I've decided to drop that chapter here; my proposals were geared to movement trends and political events of the time. Instead, I want to elaborate on the personal events that led to my writing this book, and to urge an alternative to nonviolent philosophy. Nonviolence is one of several ideologies available to those who engage in movements for peace and justice. When I joined the anti-nuclear movement, I had vague socialist convictions but had not defined my political outlook much beyond that. My thinking would be influenced by the ideas in the movement. I was notably drawn to the literature of MNS. Although not a pacifist--for example, I supported the use of arms by third world liberation movements--I was attracted to MNS's style of politics, their attention to group process, and their vision of nonviolent revolution in the U.S. I especially liked the model of community that MNS was developing among their hundred-plus members in a West Philadelphia neighborhood. In 1978, I visited their community and came close to joining them.<sup>360</sup>

Rather than move to Philadelphia, however, I moved from Los Angeles to Berkeley in 1979. There I began studying and writing to work out more clearly my political philosophy, with much guidance from MNS literature and from Gene Sharp's *Politics of Nonviolent Action*. In 1980, a new Berkeley friend, Margo Adair, read my working draft that sought to explain Sharp's theory of power to an anti-nuclear audience. Margo had developed interesting politics: she was a meditation teacher and also a Marxist. She criticized my piece as being "idealist." I had no idea what she meant. She fed readings to me on Marxist philosophy, which thoroughly engaged me. I was struck by Marx's biting logic and the sheer totality of his vision. My favorite was *The German Ideology*, chapter I (entitled "Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlooks"), in which Marx and Engels challenge Feuerbach, Hegel, and all the other major philosophers of their day. Here are some of the passages that I found significant:

Once upon a time a valiant fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the *idea* of gravity.<sup>361</sup>

It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.<sup>362</sup>

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force.<sup>363</sup>

The revolution is necessary...not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.<sup>364</sup>

It took me several weeks, and many discussions with Margo, to get the hang of Marx's materialism. I wrestled with questions like, "Does the ruler have power because we cooperate, or do we cooperate because the ruler has power?" Eventually, though, I got a grasp of Marx, saw the shortcomings of Sharp's theory, and began to look afresh at my own politics, that of MNS, and of the anti-nuclear movement. I won't attempt here an explanation of Marxist philosophy; my understanding is a practical working one, not that of a trained student of philosophy. But my newfound materialist and class perspective guided my critique of nonviolence, and remains today an integral part of my political thinking.

Political activists need a wider philosophy, an integrated framework for understanding how society works and how change can be accomplished. Nonviolence is one such framework, but it is unsound--or so I have attempted to show. If our ideology reflects a poor interpretation of the world, the political strategies that grow from our ideology will be unrealistic. Gandhi's class-blind view of the world, for example, led him to place foolish trust in the rich and powerful and in the British colonial rulers, who kept failing to meet his expectations. His approach to communal harmony (relying on moral appeals) and uplift of the poor (based on the spinning wheel and his theory of trusteeship) were likewise unrealistic. In the anti-nuclear movement, a similar harmony-driven ideology led to an unrealistic and undemocratic method of making decisions. The belief that righteous means would lead to righteous ends, combined with a delusionary view of power, led to an over-reliance on civil disobedience that limited the movement's prospects for wider organizing.

Marxism is the best tool available for examining the world "as it really is," and hence provides the best framework for shaping political strategies. Important qualifications must be added, however. There are umpteen versions of Marxism and some are driven by strange and even anti-progressive political agendas. Stalin and Mao, for example, both developed distorted, mechanistic versions of Marxism that served to perpetuate their own power. And both were internationally influential; Stalinism, in fact, was the world's dominant school of Marxism for decades. Such Marxisms distorted and continue to distort the theory and practice of countless organizations of the left.<sup>365</sup> So I want to recommend selectivity to novice explorers of Marxism. Read Marx himself. And find writers and organizations that represent the best democratic, "change from below" traditions of the Marxist left.<sup>366</sup>

A second qualification: even the finest theory and most appropriate strategy may not lead to success. As Marx emphasized, we operate under circumstances not of our own choosing; those circumstances are not always ideal for the organizer. Nonetheless, whatever the circumstances and however ripe the moment, we need to have the best tools and strategies available, and the Marxist tradition has enormous offerings.

The anti-nuclear movement in the U.S. and internationally has waned since its peak years in the late 1970s and early '80s. Yet, even while the ending of the Cold War has eased



the East-West arms race, the environmental and militarist threats addressed by the anti-nuclear movement remain with us. It is likely that the movement will reemerge in one form or another. Nonviolence, in the meanwhile, continues to have an avid following among activists and scholars globally, as a subject search on the World Wide Web reveals. Many universities have established programs in the emerging field of peace and conflict studies, in which nonviolence is a frequent influence and area of study. I expect that my book, though late in arriving, will have relevance to a range of activists and students of social change.

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**NOTES**

## Chapter 1 - The Nonviolent Philosophy

- <sup>1</sup> From "The Greenpeace Philosophy" in a pamphlet entitled *Confrontation* (Washington, DC: Greenpeace, no date).
- <sup>2</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Marx and Gandhi Were Liberals--Feminism and the 'Radical' Left*, included in "A Study Kit for Nonviolent Action" (San Francisco: War Resisters League/West, no date) p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979) p. 205-6.
- <sup>4</sup> Janey Meyerding, "Feminism and Pacifism: Doing It Our Way," *WIN* (8 Feb 1979) p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> An example are Gordon Faison and Bob Irwin, for whom pacifism suggests quieter, more individualistic forms of war resistance or reform work, while nonviolence is associated with active mass resistance and a radical social vision such as in the Gandhian tradition ("Nonviolence Theory and Strategy for the Anti-Nuclear Movement" in *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, ed. Fred Wilcox (Trumansberg, NY: Crossing Press, 1980] p. 29). Gene Sharp, on the other hand, considers *satyagraha* (Gandhian civil disobedience) and nonviolent revolution as two particular *types* of pacifism oriented to mass action (*Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p. 226). Since my critique is concerned with nonviolence in its active, radical forms, and since the ideas espoused by today's "radical pacifists" are not different from those of "nonviolent radicals," I will not distinguish between the two.
- <sup>6</sup> From a 1979 brochure of War Resisters League/West, San Francisco.
- <sup>7</sup> *Survival Guide: Survival Summer 1980* (New York: Mobilization for Survival, 1980) p. 53.

## Chapter 2 - Moral View: Violence Itself Is Wrong

- <sup>8</sup> A.J. Muste, *The Essays of A.J. Muste*, ed. Nat Hentoff (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) p. 206.
- <sup>9</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength to Love* (Cleveland: Collins Publishers, 1963) p. 98.
- <sup>10</sup> Raghavan N. Iyer, "Means and Ends in Politics," in *Gandhi: His Relevance for Our Times*, eds. G. Ramachandran and T.K. Mahadevan, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967) p. 239.
- <sup>11</sup> Theodore Paullin, *Introduction to Non-violence*, rev. ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972) p. 7. Paullin's work is included in Sibley's *Political Theories of Modern Pacifism* (see note 6).
- <sup>12</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Press, 1962) 1:30.

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- <sup>13</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1941-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press) p. 16-61.
- <sup>14</sup> Ira Sandperl, "Revolutionary Nonviolence," *Resource Center for Nonviolence Newsletter* (fall 1978) p. 7. Resource Center for Nonviolence, Santa Cruz, CA.
- <sup>15</sup> Ed Hedemann, "Nonviolence," in *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, ed. Ed Hedemann (New York: WRL, 1981) p. 14.
- <sup>16</sup> Sibley, *Political Theories of Modern Pacifism*, intro. p. 28.
- <sup>17</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. v-vi.
- <sup>18</sup> Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980) p. 303.
- <sup>19</sup> Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979) p. 252.
- <sup>20</sup> The quoted phrase is from *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, p. 274. Sharp distinguishes between nonviolence "as a principle" and nonviolence "as an expedient" and discusses these at length in part 2 of the book. His discussion does not test the validity of nonviolent principles as such. Rather, Sharp assumes nonviolent moral principles to be valid, and he goes on to point out that people need not accept such principles in order to use nonviolent methods effectively.
- <sup>21</sup> George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973) p. 214.

### Chapter 3 - Practical View: Violence Begets Violence

- <sup>22</sup> Ed Hedemann, "Nonviolence" in *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, ed. Hedemann (New York: War Resisters League) p. 13.
- <sup>23</sup> Quoted in Hamilton Bims, "Deacons for Defense," *Ebony* (Sep 1965) p. 26.
- <sup>24</sup> *Amnesty International Report 1981* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1981) p. 174-75.
- <sup>25</sup> Joseph Collins with Frances Moore Lappé and Nick Allen, *What Difference Could a Revolution Make? Food and Farming in the New Nicaragua* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982) p. 4, 136.
- <sup>26</sup> same, p. 4, 153.
- <sup>27</sup> See Henri Weber, *Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981) p. 100-137.
- <sup>28</sup> "A Secret War for Nicaragua," *Newsweek* (8 Nov 1982) p. 42-53.
- <sup>29</sup> Fred Landis, "CIA Psychological Warfare Operations: Case Studies in Chile, Jamaica, and Nicaragua," *Science for the People* 14 (Feb 1982) pp. 6-11, 29.
- <sup>30</sup> See Katherine Yih, "Inside a Miskito Resettlement Camp," *The Guardian*, New York (2 Mar 1983) p. 16; Michael E. Knell, "Miskito Doctor Recalls Attacks," *In These Times* (16-22 Feb 1983) p. 5. *Akwesasne Notes*, official organ of the Mohawk Nation, has been deeply critical of the Nicaraguan government, claiming Miskito rights are being broadly violated (see most issues in 1981 and 1982). However, Vernon Bellecourt of the International Indian Treaty Council said during a forum on

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- Nicaragua at the San Francisco American Indian Center, 27 Mar 1983, that the *Akwesasne* editors have only heard one side of the story. He and others have been appealing to elders of the tribes close to *Akwesasne Notes* to visit Nicaragua themselves and talk with the Miskitos.
- <sup>31</sup> Weber, *Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution*, p. 104-10, 126-27. See also Jack Epstein and J.H. Evans, "Nicaragua--Anatomy of a Revolution," *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (5 Jan 1983).
- <sup>32</sup> A useful summary of the progress and problems of the Nicaraguan revolution during its first year is Roger Burbach and Tim Draitmin, "Nicaragua's Revolution," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 14 (May-Jun 1980). For a sympathetic pacifist view on Nicaragua, see Matt Meyer, "Journey to Nicaragua: A Precarious Peace," *WIN* 18 (1 Dec 1982) p.4-10.
- <sup>33</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917-1967* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) p. 30.
- <sup>34</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. 801.
- <sup>35</sup> The struggle to build democracy and participation in Mozambique makes for interesting study. See Peter Sketchley and Frances Moore Lappé, *Casting New Molds: First Steps toward Worker Control in a Mozambique Steel Factory* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Policy Development, 1980); Frances Moore Lappé and Adele Beccar-Varela, *Mozambique and Tanzania: Asking the Big Questions* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Policy Development, 1980); Allen Isaacman, *A Luta Continua: Creating a New Society in Mozambique* (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York, 1978).
- <sup>36</sup> Mulford Q. Sibley, *The Political Theories of Modern Pacifism: an Analysis and Criticism*, rev. ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972) intro., p. 21.
- <sup>37</sup> The late *WIN* magazine, longtime voice of the nonviolent left, carried periodic sympathetic articles on post-revolutionary countries. See, for example, the *WIN* special issue on Nicaragua, 1 Dec 1982.
- <sup>38</sup> Gordon Faison and Bob Irwin, "Nonviolence Theory and Strategy for the Anti-Nuclear Movement," in *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, ed. Fred Wilcox (Trumansberg, NY: Crossing Press, 1980) p. 28.
- <sup>39</sup> Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 537.
- <sup>40</sup> Barbara Deming, *Revolution and Equilibrium* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971) p. 210.
- <sup>41</sup> Deming, *Revolution and Equilibrium*, p. 208; Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980) p. 167; Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965) p. 116.

#### Chapter 4 - Nonviolent Theory of Power

- <sup>42</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. 456.
- <sup>43</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Press, 1962) 2: 38.

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- <sup>44</sup> The theory is also proposed by Deming (*We Cannot Live Without Our Lives*, 1974); Faison and Irwin (*Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, 1980); Gregg (*The Power of Nonviolence*, 1959); Hedemann (*War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, 1981); Lakey (*Strategy for a Living Revolution*, 1973); and Judith Steihm (*Nonviolent Power*, 1972).
- <sup>45</sup> Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 28.
- <sup>46</sup> same, p. 44.
- <sup>47</sup> same, p. 476.
- <sup>48</sup> same, p. 32.
- <sup>49</sup> Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, 1: 353.

## Chapter 5 - Social Change Based on Suffering

- <sup>50</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Press, 1962) 1: 4.
- <sup>51</sup> Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd ed. (Nyack, NY: Fellowship Publications, 1959).
- <sup>52</sup> Barbara Deming, "New Men, New Women: Some Notes on Nonviolence," in *We Cannot Live Without Our Lives* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974) p. 12.
- <sup>53</sup> See George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973); and Susanne Gowan, George Lakey, William Moyer, and Richard Taylor, *Moving Toward a New Society* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1976).
- <sup>54</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. 79-80.
- <sup>55</sup> Chris Harman, *The Lost Revolution: Germany 1918 to 1923* (London: Bookmarks, 1982) p. 157-91.
- <sup>56</sup> George Lakey and Patricia Parkman, *They Didn't Call It Nonviolence, But...: Three Cases of Civilian Insurrection in Latin America*, included in "A Study Kit for Nonviolent Action" (San Francisco: War Resisters League, no date) The events are also described in George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973) p. 37-41.
- <sup>57</sup> See William Krehm, *Democracia v Tiránias en el Caribe* (Mexico City: Union Democrática Centroamericana, 1949) p. 67-68, 107-9, 114-15. Krehm describes the transfer of power following the May 1944 strike:

When Martínez abandoned El Salvador, he deposited the presidency in the hands of his Minister of War, General Andrés Ignacio Menéndez. An old carpenter seventy years of age, Menéndez didn't have a lot of ambition and hadn't a strong character. These precious qualities made him a suitable caretaker of the presidency during the momentary vacancy of Martínez. When Martínez prepared for his first reelection in 1934, he had passed the presidency for six months to Menéndez and afterwards taken the presidency for himself. Now the good intentions of Menéndez tricked the democrats who

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weren't very aware, and they accepted this ship as good by the appearance of its paint." (p. 107)

The nonviolent strike posed no real challenge to the ruling powers, says Krehm:

A pacific strike would have held little efficacy against the task of putting down a big martial machine full of modern armament, which made the coffee barons and Spaniard pro-fascist priests feel very safe. (p. 115)

Krehm's book is in Spanish. The above translation is by Patricio Rizzo. For an English account of this period of Salvadoran history, see Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution* (Boston: South End Press, 1982) p.33-38.

- <sup>58</sup> Lynne Shivers, "Inside the Iranian Revolution," in *Tell the American People: Perspectives on the Iranian Revolution*, ed. David H. Albert (Philadelphia: Movement for a New Society, 1980) p. 74-75.
- <sup>59</sup> The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, *At War With Humanity: A Report on the Human Rights Records of Khomeini's Regime*, 3rd ed. (Auvers-Sur-Oise, France: no publisher, 1982) p. 324-25.
- <sup>60</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977) p. 330-41.
- <sup>61</sup> Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980) p. 170.
- <sup>62</sup> See Marvin E. Gettleman et al., eds., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War* (New York: Grove Press, 1982) p. 128-56.
- <sup>63</sup> Manning Marable, *From the Grassroots: Essays Toward Afro-American Liberation* (Boston: South End Press, 1980) p. 56.
- <sup>64</sup> William G. Domhoff's books include *The Bohemian Grove and Other Retreats: A Study in Ruling-Class Cohesiveness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); *The Powers That Be: Processes of Ruling-Class Domination in America* (New York: Random House, 1978); *Who Rules America Now? A View for the '80s* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983).
- <sup>65</sup> Quoted in Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People: United States Involvement in the Rise of Fascism, Torture, and Murder and the Persecution the Catholic Church in Latin America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980) p. 321-22.
- <sup>66</sup> same, p. 332-33.
- <sup>67</sup> same, p. 321.
- <sup>68</sup> same, p. 157.
- <sup>69</sup> Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979) p. 47.
- <sup>70</sup> Michael Clodfelter gives estimates of Vietnamese civilian casualties totaling 1,775,000 from 1963 to 1975. *Warfare and armed conflicts: a statistical reference to casualty and other figures, 1618-1991* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992). See also Citizens Commission of Inquiry, *The Dellums Committee Hearings on War Crimes in Vietnam:*

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*An Inquiry into Command Responsibility in Southeast Asia* (New York: Vintage, 1972).

<sup>71</sup> Chomsky and Herman, *Washington Connection*, frontispiece.

<sup>72</sup> same, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> same, p. 49.

<sup>74</sup> same, p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Judy Costello, "Beyond Gandhi: An American Feminist's Approach to Nonviolence," in *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, ed. Pam McAllister (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982) p. 178.

<sup>76</sup> same, p. 178.

<sup>77</sup> Lynne Shivers, "An Open Letter to Gandhi," in *Reweaving the Web*, p. 188.

<sup>78</sup> Eleanor Patterson, "Suffering," in *Reweaving the Web*, p. 168-69.

## Chapter 6 - Common Nonviolent Arguments

<sup>79</sup> Ed Hedemann, "Nonviolence," in *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, ed. Hedemann (New York: WRL, 1981) p. 12-13.

<sup>80</sup> Judith Steihm's work is *Nonviolent Power: Active and Passive Resistance in America* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972).

<sup>81</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. 753.

<sup>82</sup> David Levering Lewis, *King: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979) p. 193-96.

<sup>83</sup> See Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York: Norton, 1976) p. 261-314.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in same, p. 302.

<sup>85</sup> Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd ed. (Nyack, NY: Fellowship Publications, 1959) p. 47-48.

<sup>86</sup> Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (Boston: South End Press, 1977) p. 150-66.

<sup>87</sup> William Moyer, "A Nonviolent Action Manual," in *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, ed. Fred Wilcox (Trumansberg, NY: Crossing Press, 1980) p. 39.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski's treatment in *The Power of the People: Active Nonviolence in the United States* (Culver City, CA: Peace Press, 1977) p. 69-71.

<sup>89</sup> Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down, the General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969) p. 270

<sup>90</sup> Kim Moody and Jim Woodward, *Battle Line: The Coal Strike of '78* (Detroit: Sun Press, 1978).

<sup>91</sup> George Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1981) p. 110-11, 123, 157.

<sup>92</sup> Wilfred G. Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1966) p. 62-67.

<sup>93</sup> George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973) p. 139-40.

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- <sup>94</sup> Gordon Faison and Bob Irwin, "Nonviolence Theory and Strategy for the Anti-Nuclear Movement," in *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, p. 33.
- <sup>95</sup> Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 486.
- <sup>96</sup> Hedemann, "Nonviolence," p. 14.
- <sup>97</sup> See chapters 13 and 15 in the present work.
- <sup>98</sup> Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965) p. 48; quoted in Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 488.
- <sup>99</sup> Brecher, *Strike!*, p. 200-1.
- <sup>100</sup> Susanne Gowan, George Lakey, William Moyer, and Richard Taylor, *Moving Toward a New Society* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1976) p. 239.
- <sup>101</sup> Dave Dellinger, *More Power Than We Know: The People's Movement Toward Democracy* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975) p. 174.
- <sup>102</sup> Gowan et al., *Moving Toward a New Society*, p. 242.
- <sup>103</sup> Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973) p. 73.
- <sup>104</sup> Black, *Triumph of the People*, p. 157.
- <sup>105</sup> Joseph Lelyveld, "Someday, African National Congress May Hit the Target," *New York Times*, 16 Aug 1981, p. E-3.
- <sup>106</sup> Martin Oppenheimer, *The Urban Guerrilla* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969) p. 111-26.
- <sup>107</sup> Barbara Deming, "New Men, New Women: Some Notes on Nonviolence," in *We Cannot Live Without Our Lives* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974) p. 8-9.
- <sup>108</sup> A.J. Muste, "Nonviolence and Mississippi," in *Gandhi: His Relevance for Our Times*, eds. G. Ramachandran and T.K. Mahadevan, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967) p. 220.
- <sup>109</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, "Call to Mutiny," in *Protest and Survive*, eds. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith, rev. ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981) p. vi.
- <sup>110</sup> Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980) p. 178.
- <sup>111</sup> Dave Dellinger, "The Future of Nonviolence," in *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History*, ed. Staughton Lynd (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966) p. 524.
- <sup>112</sup> Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years: The History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends Since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1976) p. 166.
- <sup>113</sup> same, p. 62.
- <sup>114</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p. 41.
- <sup>115</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Press, 1962) 2: 335.

## Chapter 7 - A Class Perspective

- <sup>116</sup> Juan Carlos Zaffaroni, *Cristianismo y Revolución* 9, Buenos Aires (Sep 1968) p. 31.



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- <sup>117</sup> Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980) p. 137-38.
- <sup>118</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p. 486.
- <sup>119</sup> Discussions of nonviolent theory in movement literature frequently reflect influence from Sharp, and have especially espoused the nonviolent theory of power as Sharp has developed it (see chapters 4 and 20). Examples are *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, p. 12; *Grass Roots: An Anti-Nuke Source Book*, p. 31; *Training Handbook: The Wall Street Action, October 29, 1979*, p. 10-11; *Diablo Canyon Blockade/Encampment Handbook*, p. 11, 45; *Livermore Weapons Lab Blockade/Demonstration Handbook, June 21, 1982*, p. 36.
- <sup>120</sup> Camilo Torres, *The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres*, ed. John Gerassi (New York: Random House, 1971) p. 418.
- <sup>121</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) p. 63.
- <sup>122</sup> David Levering Lewis, *King: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979) p. 239.
- <sup>123</sup> same, p. 286.
- <sup>124</sup> same, p. 336.
- <sup>125</sup> same, p. 338
- <sup>126</sup> Quoted in same, p. 338.
- <sup>127</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958) p. 103.
- <sup>128</sup> Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Ballantine, 1973) p. 151-52.
- <sup>129</sup> See MNS Working Class Support Group, "Classism" issue of *Dandelion*, newsletter of Movement for a New Society, winter 1979; David McReynolds, "Socialism," in *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual*, ed. Ed Hedemann (New York: WRL, 1981) p. 16-22; Donna Warnock, "Confront Classism," in *International Day of Nuclear Disarmament* (Berkeley, CA: Livermore Action Group, 1983) p. 18-19; Peg Averill, "Heads and Tales," *WIN* (16 Jan 1975) p. 16.
- <sup>130</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958) p. 103-4.
- <sup>131</sup> *Survival Guide: Survival Summer 1980* (New York: Mobilization for Survival, 1980) p. 53.
- <sup>132</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence: A Primer for White Americans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973) p. xv, 57.
- <sup>133</sup> Quoted in John Gerassi, ed., *The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres* (New York: Random House, 1971) p. 33-34.
- <sup>134</sup> "The Sign of Resurrection in El Salvador: A Testimony from Christians Who Accompany the People in Their Struggle," in *El Salvador: Central America in the Cold War*, eds. Marvin E. Gettleman et al. (New York: Grove Press, 1982) p. 208-9.
- <sup>135</sup> Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Ballantine, 1973) p. 148.

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 Chapter 8 - Father of Nonviolence

- <sup>136</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958) p. 97.
- <sup>137</sup> Many theorists have interpreted Gandhi's ideas, borrowed from them, altered them, and in various ways tried to orient them toward a secular-leaning audience in the West. Richard B. Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence*, first written in 1931, was a pioneering work in this regard, as was Joan V. Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, published in 1958. Gene Sharp, whose *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) is the most comprehensive nonviolent study to date, is strongly influenced by Gandhi. He indicates his deep regard for Gandhi and Gandhian technique in the preface to his book, *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power: Three Case Histories* (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Publishing House, 1960) p. xii-xv. See also "Gandhi's Political Significance" in Sharp's *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979) p. 1-21.
- <sup>138</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1969) p. 104.
- <sup>139</sup> R. Palme Dutt, *India To-Day* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940) p. 51-55.
- <sup>140</sup> same, p. 78
- <sup>141</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p. 57.

## Chapter 9 - Satyagraha in South Africa

- <sup>142</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Publishing House, 1950) p. 332-33. In some quoted passages, I have edited the punctuation for clearer reading.
- <sup>143</sup> same, p. 161.
- <sup>144</sup> same, p. 162.
- <sup>145</sup> same, p. 170.
- <sup>146</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 1: 94.
- <sup>147</sup> Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 191.
- <sup>148</sup> *Indian Opinion*, 12 Apr 1913; M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 86 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, government of India, 1958-82) 12: 14.
- <sup>149</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 12: 252-53.
- <sup>150</sup> Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 293-94.
- <sup>151</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 15: 244.
- <sup>152</sup> *Pretoria News*, 9 Jan 1914; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 12: 323.
- <sup>153</sup> Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 325.

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- <sup>154</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1969) p. 215-16.
- <sup>155</sup> Krishnalal Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946) p. 70.
- <sup>156</sup> Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, p. 332.
- <sup>157</sup> same, p. 338.
- <sup>158</sup> same, p. 338-39

## Chapter 10 - Textile Strike

- <sup>159</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p.42.
- <sup>160</sup> Quoted in Mahadev Haribhai Desai, *A Righteous Struggle: A Chronicle of the Ahmedabad Textile Labourers' Fight for Justice* (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Publishing House, 1951) p. 11.
- <sup>161</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1969) p. 350.
- <sup>162</sup> Quoted in Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p. 20.
- <sup>163</sup> From a leaflet issued by Gandhi. same, p. 43.
- <sup>164</sup> Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, p. 70-71.
- <sup>165</sup> From a leaflet issued by Gandhi. Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p. 69.
- <sup>166</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 86 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-82) 14: 377-78.
- <sup>167</sup> same, 14: 443.
- <sup>168</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 1:230.
- <sup>169</sup> Quoted in same, 1: 233-34.

## Chapter 11 - Noncooperation Movement 1919-22

- <sup>170</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper, 1950) p. 373.
- <sup>171</sup> Excellent on the role of Indian business interests in the national movement is Bipan Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 5 (1975) p. 309-26. Also helpful are S. Bhattacharya, "Cotton Mills and Spinning Wheels: Swadeshi and the Indian Capitalist Class, 1920-22," *Economic and Political Weekly* 11 (20 Nov 1976) p. 1828-34; G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1953); Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1983).
- <sup>172</sup> R. Palme Dutt, *India To-Day* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940) p. 21.
- <sup>173</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New York: John Day Co., 1946) p. 408-21. A fuller treatment of the discrimination against Indian businesses is Amiya Kumar

- Bagchi, "European and Indian Entrepreneurship in India, 1900-30," in *Elites in South Asia*, ed. Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p. 223-56.
- <sup>174</sup> D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 1: 259.
- <sup>175</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 86 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-82) 15: 211.
- <sup>176</sup> same, 15: 222.
- <sup>177</sup> same, 15: 224.
- <sup>178</sup> same, 15: 243-44.
- <sup>179</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1922-1940* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964) p. 114-15.
- <sup>180</sup> same, p. 70.
- <sup>181</sup> Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 1: 277.
- <sup>182</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 16: 366.
- <sup>183</sup> *Young India*, 16 Feb 1921; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 19: 365-66.
- <sup>184</sup> *Young India*, 18 May 1921; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 20: 106.
- <sup>185</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 17: 482.
- <sup>186</sup> Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 2: 52.
- <sup>187</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "The Call of Truth," *Modern Review*, Oct 1921 (Calcutta). Published in Jag Parvesh Chandler, ed., *Tagore and Gandhi Argue* (Lahore, Pakistan: Indian Printing Works, 1945) p. 55-56.
- <sup>188</sup> *Young India*, 13 Oct 1921; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 21: 288-90.
- <sup>189</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 22: 99-102.
- <sup>190</sup> same, 22: 106-8.
- <sup>191</sup> Hirendranath Mukerjee, *India's Struggle for Freedom*, 3rd rev. ed. (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1962) p. 156-57.
- <sup>192</sup> *Young India*, 16 Feb 1922; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 22: 415-17.
- <sup>193</sup> Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 73.
- <sup>194</sup> Horace Alexander, *Gandhi through Western Eyes* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1969) p. 41-42.
- <sup>195</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972) p. 328.
- <sup>196</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 22: 377-78. The Bardoli resolution included the following:

2. In view of Nature's repeated warnings, every time mass civil disobedience has been imminent some popular violent outburst has taken place indicating that the atmosphere in the country is not non-violent enough for mass disobedience, the latest instance being the tragic and terrible events at Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended and *instructs the local Congress Committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government and whose payment might have been suspended in*

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*anticipation of mass civil disobedience, and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature. [emphasis mine]*

6. Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that ryots [tenant farmers] are not paying rents to the zemindars [landlords], the Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots that such withholding of rents is contrary to the resolutions of the Congress and that it is injurious to the best interests of the country.

7. The Working Committee assures the zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances, the Committee's desire is that redress should be sought by mutual consultations and by the usual recourse to arbitrations.

## Chapter 12 - Religious Conflicts

<sup>197</sup> Quoted in Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan* (London: J. Murray, 1954) p. 134.

<sup>198</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New York: John Day Co., 1946) p. 365.

<sup>199</sup> Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964).

<sup>200</sup> R. Palme Dutt, *India To-Day* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938) p. 416-18.

<sup>201</sup> Waheed-uz-Zaman, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Myth and Reality* (Karachi, Pakistan: National Book Foundation, 1976) p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) p. 20.

<sup>203</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography*, rev. ed. (London: The Bodley Head, 1953) p. 86.

<sup>204</sup> For an account of events sympathetic to the Muslim position, see Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism: The Emergence of the Demand for India's Partition 1928-40* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1977). Less sympathetic to the Muslims but not pro-Congress is Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916-1928* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1979). For a pro-Congress view, see Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, 3rd rev. ed. (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Ltd., 1947), as well as most standard histories of Gandhi and the Indian national movement.

<sup>205</sup> The Muslims had offered to accept joint, rather than separate, electorates in the provincial and central legislatures provided that:

- 1) Sind, a predominantly Muslim area, be separated from Bombay Presidency and constituted as a province.

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2) Reforms be introduced raising Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan, both having Muslim majorities, to a status equal to other provinces.

The Muslims further proposed that:

3) Muslims be guaranteed a majority of legislative seats in the Punjab and Bengal. Although Muslims held population majorities in these provinces, 55 and 54 percent respectively, their lower economic and educational status as compared to Hindus meant a lower Muslim voting strength (the voting franchise extended to only 3 percent of the population, based on property ownership and educational qualifications). Thus, fearing that Muslim majorities would be reduced to legislative minorities in these provinces, they demanded reserved majorities until such time as full adult suffrage would be granted.

4) one third of seats in the central legislature be reserved for Muslims.

The Nehru Report, as amended by the All Parties meeting in August 1928, accepted the first two points, except they would not be effective until a government was established under a Nehru Constitution. The third and fourth points were rejected. The report also proposed that residuary powers be vested in the central government, rather than in the provinces as preferred by the Muslims.

Jinnah's amendments, which were rejected in December, reiterated the third and fourth conditions, proposed that the first two conditions be effective immediately rather than waiting until the Nehru constitutional guidelines were established, and called for vesting residuary powers in the provinces.

Sources: Indian National Congress, *All Parties Conference 1928: Report of the committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India*, a.k.a. the Nehru Report (Allahabad, India: All India Congress Committee, 1928); "M.A. Jinnah's Speech on the Nehru Committee's Recommendations," in *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement*, ed. Jamil-Ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore, Pakistan: Publishers United, 1970) p. 92-96.

<sup>206</sup> "M.A. Jinnah's Speech," in *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement*, p. 92-96.

<sup>207</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 3: 330.

<sup>208</sup> same, p. 335.

<sup>209</sup> "Draft Resolution Prepared by Mr. M.A. Jinnah Representing Consensus of Opinion between Different Schools of Muslim Political Thought (Popularly Known as Fourteen Points)," in *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement*, p. 98-

100. In the fourteen points, the Muslims would forego separate electorates if points 1 and 2 in note 9 above were secured.
- <sup>210</sup> Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, rev. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965) p. 46-52
- <sup>211</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (Lahore, Pakistan: Classic, 1977) p. 126-45.
- <sup>212</sup> A major critique is B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*. Rebuttals to Ambedkar in defense of the Congress and Gandhi are C. Rajagopalachari, *Ambedkar Refuted* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1946) and K. Santhanam, *The Fight Against Untouchability* (New Delhi: Hindustan Times Press, 1949). A helpful overview of the relations and conflicts between the two leaders is Eleanor Zelliot, "Gandhi and Ambedkar--A Study in Leadership," in *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*, ed. J. Michael Mahar (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1972) p. 69-95.
- <sup>213</sup> The Hindu castes are based on occupational groups. A person's life occupation and caste are determined by heredity: one must follow the occupation of one's father and forefathers. While Indians have developed hundreds of castes and subcastes, there were originally four divisions, called varnas. The four varnas were *Brahmans* (religious teachers), *Kshatriyas* (warriors and nobles), *Vaishyas* ("producers of wealth" such as merchants, landowning farmers, craftspersons), and *Shudras* (laborers).
- <sup>214</sup> *Young India*, 17 November 1927; M. K. Gandhi, *My Varnashrama Dharma* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965) p. 47.
- <sup>215</sup> *Harijan*, 28 September 1934; M.K. Gandhi, *Varnashramadharma* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962) p. 8-9.
- <sup>216</sup> *Young India*, 21 January 1926; Gandhi, *My Varnashrama Dharma*, p. 30-31.
- <sup>217</sup> *Harijan*, 11 February 1933; Gandhi, *Varnashramadharma*, p. 40
- <sup>218</sup> *Young India*, 4 February 1926; M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p. 23-24.
- <sup>219</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2 August 1934; Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship*, p. 57.
- <sup>220</sup> Gandhi, *Varnashramadharma*, p. 32.
- <sup>221</sup> same, p. 33.
- <sup>222</sup> From the organization's press statement of 3 November 1932. Quoted in Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done*, p. 141. The Harijan Sevak Sangh was originally called the All-India Anti-Untouchability League.
- <sup>223</sup> Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done*, p. 133-140.
- <sup>224</sup> same, p. 131-32, 142.
- <sup>225</sup> Quoted in same, p. 142.
- <sup>226</sup> same, p. 144.

- <sup>227</sup> *Young India*, 27 Feb 1930; M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 86 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-82) 42: 497.
- <sup>228</sup> R. Palme Dutt, *India To-Day* (London: Victor Gallancz Ltd., 1940) p. 324; Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960) p. 158.
- <sup>229</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography*, rev. ed. (London: The Bodley Head, 1953) p. 209-10.
- <sup>230</sup> *Young India*, 27 Feb 1930. Published in Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 42: 498.
- <sup>231</sup> D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 3: 35.
- <sup>232</sup> same, 3: 39.
- <sup>233</sup> This assessment relies on Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 1983) p. 289-91.
- <sup>234</sup> Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 174.
- <sup>235</sup> *Young India*, 30 Jan 1930; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 42: 434-35.
- <sup>236</sup> The independence pledge is published in Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 42: 427-28.
- <sup>237</sup> Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 285.
- <sup>238</sup> *Young India*, 16 Jan 1930; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 42: 388.
- <sup>239</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928-34* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 93.
- <sup>240</sup> Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 207.
- <sup>241</sup> *Young India*, 9 Apr 1931; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 45: 372.
- <sup>242</sup> *Young India*, 19 March 1931; Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 45: 265.
- <sup>243</sup> Quoted in Hiren Mukerjee, *Gandhiji: A Study*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1960) p. 97.
- <sup>244</sup> Quoted in same, p. 97.
- <sup>245</sup> B. Pattabi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1969) 1: 440. The Gandhi-Irwin Agreement is published here in full.
- <sup>246</sup> From an interview in *Monde*, 20 Feb 1932; quoted in Dutt, *India To-Day*, p. 333.
- <sup>247</sup> Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, rev. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965) p. 101.
- <sup>248</sup> same, p. 101-2.
- <sup>249</sup> *Indian Round Table Conference (second session), 7 September 1931--1 December 1931, Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1932) p. 387.
- <sup>250</sup> same, p. 387.
- <sup>251</sup> *Indian Round Table Conference (second session), 7 September 1931--1 December 1931, Proceedings* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1932. Cmd. 3997) p. 390.
- <sup>252</sup> *Gandhiji in England: and the Proceedings of the Second Round Table Conference* (Madras, India: B.G. Paul and Co., 1932) p. 85.



- <sup>253</sup> *Indian Round Table Conference, Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee*, p. 544.
- <sup>254</sup> Mukerjee, *Gandhiji*, p. 103; Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 3: 157-58.
- <sup>255</sup> Quoted in Pyarelal Nair, *The Epic Fast* (Ahmedabad, India: Mohanlal Maganlal Bhatt, 1932) p. 70.
- <sup>256</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, 2 vols.* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1959) 2: 55-71.
- <sup>257</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (Lahore, Pakistan: Classic, 1977) p. 87-94, 270-71.
- <sup>258</sup> Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, p. 370.
- <sup>259</sup> From press statement of 2 April 1934. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, 57: 349.
- <sup>260</sup> same, 57: 349.
- <sup>261</sup> Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 2: 373.
- <sup>262</sup> S. Gopal writes that, for Gandhi, the most important feature of the settlement with Lord Irwin was "the tacit recognition of the Congress as the intermediary between the people and the Government." Members of the government in London privately expressed disapproval of the acceptance of "the unique and semi-sovereign position of the Congress." S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin 1926-1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) p. 113.

#### Chapter 14 - Congress Ministries

- <sup>263</sup> D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 4: 108.
- <sup>264</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p. 41.
- <sup>265</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 23 Oct 1937; quoted in Tendulkar, 4: 204.
- <sup>266</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 13 Aug 1938.
- <sup>267</sup> Quoted in Tendulkar, 4: 269-70.

#### Chapter 15 - The War Years

- <sup>268</sup> Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 5: 253-54.
- <sup>269</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1958) p. 85-93.
- <sup>270</sup> Quoted in Tendulkar, 5: 265-66.
- <sup>271</sup> same, 5: 282.
- <sup>272</sup> same, 5: 286.
- <sup>273</sup> same, 5: 318.

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- 274 same, 6: 7.  
 275 same, 6: 72.  
 276 same, 6: 79.  
 277 same, 6: 84.  
 278 same, 6: 94-95.  
 279 same, 6: 119.  
 280 same, 6: 98-99.  
 281 same, 6: 123.  
 282 same, 6: 169-71.  
 283 same, 6: 172-74.  
 284 same, 6: 163.  
 285 same, 6: 191.  
 286 same, 6: 255-56.  
 287 same, 6: 263.  
 288 Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979) p. 3-4.  
 289 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Publishing House, 1965) book one, 1: xvi.  
 290 same, 1: 28.

#### Chapter 16 - Independence and Bloodshed

- 291 D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, 1st ed., 8 vols. (Bombay: Vithalbai K. Jhaveri & D.G. Tendulkar, 1951-54) 8: 95. This is my only reference from Tendulkar's first edition; all others are from the revised edition.  
 292 Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd ed. rev. (Nyack, NY: Fellowship Publications, 1959) p. 28.  
 293 D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, rev. ed., 8 vols. (Delhi: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63) 7: 68-69.  
 294 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission With Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1951) p. 354.  
 295 Quoted in Hirendranath Mukerjee, *Gandhiji: A Study*, 2nd ed. rev. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1960) p. 179.  
 296 Hirendranath Mukerjee, *India's Struggle For Freedom*, 3rd ed. rev. (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1962) p. 289.  
 297 Tendulkar, rev. ed., 8: 17.  
 298 same, 8: 80.  
 299 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Nehru on Gandhi* (New York: John Day Company, 1948) p. 108.  
 300 A fine overview is Dilip Hiro, *Inside India Today*, rev. ed. (New York: Monthly Review, 1979).  
 301 Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979) p. 83, 137, 10.

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<sup>302</sup> Gregg, *Power of Nonviolence*, p. 100.

<sup>303</sup> George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973) p. 204.

#### Chapter 17 - Nonviolent Direct Action

<sup>304</sup> *International Day of Nuclear Disarmament Handbook* (Berkeley, CA: Livermore Action Group, 1983) p. 8.

<sup>305</sup> *Wall Street Action Training Handbook, October 19, 1979* (New York: War Resisters League, 1979) p. 9.

<sup>306</sup> Anna Gyorgy, *No Nukes: Everyone's Guide to Nuclear Power* (Boston: South End Press, 1979) p. 462.

<sup>307</sup> *Seabrook Occupation/Blockade Handbook, May 24, 1980* (Boston: Boston Clamshell, 1980) p. 8.

#### Chapter 18 - Consensus Decision Making

<sup>308</sup> *Direct Action Handbook: Diablo Canyon, Aug. 6, 1978* (San Francisco: Abalone Alliance, 1978) p. 9.

<sup>309</sup> Doreen Zelman, "In Favor of Voting," *The Network: New York's Non-Nuclear Magazine*, no. 6. Published by a group based at State University of New York at Albany.

<sup>310</sup> Mark Evanoff, "Abalone Story," *It's About Times* (Nov/mid-Dec 1980) p. 7. Newspaper of the Abalone Alliance, San Francisco.

<sup>311</sup> Steve Leigh and Glenn Talaska, "Building an Effective Movement," *Nuclear Times* (Mar 1979). Published by Live Without Trident, Seattle, WA.

<sup>312</sup> Michael Avery et al., *Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making* (Madison, WI: Center for Conflict Resolution, 1981) p. 55.

<sup>313</sup> Personal interview, Nov 1982.

<sup>314</sup> *Diablo Canyon Blockade/Encampment Handbook* (Santa Cruz, CA: Northern California Preparers/Trainers Collective, 1980) p. 14.

<sup>315</sup> Avery et al., *Building United Judgment*, p. 5.

<sup>316</sup> Personal interview, Nov 1982.

<sup>317</sup> Personal interview, Nov 1982.

<sup>318</sup> Personal interview, Aug 1982.

<sup>319</sup> D. Elton Trueblood, "The Quaker Method of Reaching Decisions," in *Beyond Dilemmas: Quakers Look at Life*, ed. S.B. Laughlin (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1937) p. 118-19.

<sup>320</sup> *The Wall Street Action Training Handbook, October 29, 1979* (New York: War Resisters League, 1979) p. 27.

<sup>321</sup> See *Livermore Weapons Lab Blockade/Demonstration Handbook, June 21, 1982* (Berkeley, CA: Livermore Action Group, 1982) p. 32.

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- <sup>322</sup> Personal interview, Nov 1982, Berkeley, CA.
- <sup>323</sup> *Wall Street Handbook*, p. 27.
- <sup>324</sup> Avery et al., *Building United Judgment*, p. 6.
- <sup>325</sup> Quoted in Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years: The History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends Since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1976) p. 20.
- <sup>326</sup> same, p. 109, 121-22.
- <sup>327</sup> same, p. 106.
- <sup>328</sup> Personal interview, Mar 1983.
- <sup>329</sup> Examples are *Livermore Blockade Handbook*, p. 39; *Diablo Blockade Handbook*, p. 12; *Blockade the Bombmakers: Civil Disobedience Campaign Handbook, June 14, 1982* (New York: War Resisters League, 1982) p. 11.
- <sup>330</sup> Bruce Kokopeli and George Lakey, "Leadership for Change," *WIN* (2 Nov 1978) p. 13.
- <sup>331</sup> Jo Freeman, "Crises and Conflicts in Social Movement Organizations," *Chrysalis* 5 (spr 1977) p. 45.
- <sup>332</sup> Joreen, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Radical Feminism*, eds. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle, 1973) p. 285-99.
- <sup>333</sup> These events were described to me by two members of the bookstore collective.
- <sup>334</sup> Besides the articles by Jo Freeman/Joreen (notes 24 and 25 above), see the spring and winter 1976 issues of *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*. The spring issue is on "Leadership,"; the winter, on "Organization and Strategies." Especially good, and written for the peace movement, is Norma Becker, "Beyond the Abdication of Power," *WIN* (7 Dec 1978) p. 4-10.

## Chapter 19 - Open, Friendly, and Respectful

- <sup>335</sup> *Survival Guide: Survival Summer 1980* (New York: Mobilization for Survival, 1980) p. 53.
- <sup>336</sup> Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence on Trial," in *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History*, ed. Staughton Lynd (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966) p. 493.
- <sup>337</sup> Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis, *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Analysis of the U.S. Police*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1982) p. 12.
- <sup>338</sup> same, p. 13.
- <sup>339</sup> Dana Bergen, "Within the Peace Movement: Women Branded Troublemakers," *Plexus* (Aug 1982) p. 8.
- <sup>340</sup> Personal interview, July 1982.

## Chapter 20 - Civil Disobedience

<sup>341</sup> Marty Jezer, "Who's On First? What's On Second? A Grassroots Political Perspective On the Anti-Nuclear Movement," *WIN* (12 Oct 1978) p. 13. Jezer had been active in the Clamshell Alliance's Seabrook campaign, where the townspeople passed a referendum against the plant but where relatively few were drawn to the jail-going tactics of the Clamshell. His analysis of the anti-nuclear movement is strongly recommended.

<sup>342</sup> *WISE News Communiqué* no. 135 (15 Apr 1982) reports:

"Wyhl, West Germany, longtime symbol of resistance for the international anti-nuclear movement, is back in the news again. On March 30, a Federal Court in Mannheim, West Germany, ruled to allow the construction of a nuclear plant in Wyhl. This reverses two previous decisions made in 1975 and 1977 to halt construction of the plant." (World Information Service on Energy, Washington DC.)

Legal appeals and active resistance against the Wyhl plant continue. Wyhl, incidentally, is frequently misspelled, but this is how the locals spell it.

<sup>343</sup> Films of the Wyhl demonstration were widely disseminated in the U.S. Anna Gyorgy notes that the Clamshell Alliance drew its strategy from Wyhl: "Inspired by the citizen occupation that had blocked construction in Wyhl, West Germany, the Clams planned a first civil disobedience for 1 August [1976]." Gyorgy, *No Nukes: Everyone's Guide to Nuclear Power* (Boston: South End Press, 1980) p. 396. The Abalone Alliance was similarly influenced: "As in the 26,000 person non-violent occupation which stopped the Wyhl, Germany nuclear facility, we can create such a powerful dilemma for the government and PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric] that they will decide never to operate Diablo as a nuclear reactor." *Diablo Canyon Blockade/Encampment Handbook* (Santa Cruz, CA: Northern California Preparers/Trainers Collective, 1980) p. 18.

<sup>344</sup> Jane T. Weed, "Is CD Appropriate Now?" *It's About Times* (Feb 1979) p. 9. Newspaper of the Abalone Alliance, San Francisco.

<sup>345</sup> See Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk, *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas and Actions from the Women's Peace Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

<sup>346</sup> "Atomkraft--Nein Danke: The Anti-Nuke Movement in Germany and Western Europe," *Science for the People* 10 (Sep/Oct 1978) p. 8.

<sup>347</sup> "West Germany's New Wave," *Newsfront International*, no. 246 (16-31 Mar 1981) p. 13. People's Translation Service, Oakland, CA.

<sup>348</sup> Jim Douglass, "Satyagraha and Trident," *Resource Center for Nonviolence Newsletter* (fall 1982) p. 10-11, 14-15. Resource Center for Nonviolence, Santa Cruz, CA.

<sup>349</sup> *Diablo Canyon Blockade*, p. 45.

<sup>350</sup> *Let's Shut Down Seabrook! Handbook for Oct. 6. 1979 Direct Action Occupation* (Cambridge, MA: Boston Clamshell, 1979) p. 9.

<sup>351</sup> See Steve Stallone, "Seabrook in Perspective," and Marcy Darnovsky, "We're not going to arrest you...", *It's About Times*, (Nov/mid-Dec 1979) p. 6-7; Peter Galbraith, Jane Kesselman, and Don Nicodemus, "Seabrook: Direct Action Confronts the State," *It's About Times* (mid-Jun/Jul 1980) p. 5.

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- <sup>352</sup> *Diablo Canyon Blockade*, p. 2.
- <sup>353</sup> Marcy Darnovsky, "Headlines and Hype," *It's About Times* (Dec/Jan 1982) p. 11.
- <sup>354</sup> *Blockade the Bombmakers: Civil Disobedience Campaign Handbook, June 14, 1982* (New York: War Resisters League, 1982) p. 5.
- <sup>355</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage, 1974) p. 600-657.
- <sup>356</sup> Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978) p. 600.
- <sup>357</sup> same, p. 469, 545-46, 582-83.
- <sup>358</sup> same, p. 628-45.
- <sup>359</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, "Call to Mutiny," in *Protest and Survive*, eds. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith (New York: Monthly Review, 1981) p. xv-xvi.

## Epilogue

- <sup>360</sup> Founded in 1971, MNS reached its peak in the late 1970s with about 300 members in the U.S. and Canada. It declined thereafter and folded in 1988, while the MNS press, New Society Publishers, continues to publish. In his retrospective, George Lakey notes that "MNS had its greatest influence on organization and strategy of the anti-nuclear power movement." "Life and Death of MNS," *Friends Journal* (Sep 1989) p. 22.
- <sup>361</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlooks*, 2nd rev. ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976) p. 19-20.
- <sup>362</sup> same, p. 31.
- <sup>363</sup> same, p. 57.
- <sup>364</sup> same, p. 49-50.
- <sup>365</sup> See John Molyneux, *What Is the Real Marxist Tradition?* (London: Bookmarks, 1985).
- <sup>366</sup> A good starting place are the Marxist journals; among the best are *New Left Review*, *Monthly Review*, *Socialist Register*, *Against the Current*.