Chapter Thirty-six

FIRST STEPS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

An important but difficult task

The development of sound strategies is one of the most important requirements of an effective campaign. When the grand strategy, strategies, tactics, and methods have been selected in advance, these should shape the general direction and conduct of the conflict throughout its course.

A good strategy will aim at achieving the objectives of the overall struggle, as well as of individual campaigns, through effective mobilization of the strengths of the populace against the opponents. In most major conflicts, wise strategies will also need to include ways to undermine the opponents' sources of power.

The overall strategic conception—for both the grand strategy and the strategies for individual campaigns—will make the objective(s) clear, sketch how the struggle will begin, determine what kinds of pressures and methods are to be applied to gain the long-term objectives, and direct the actions aimed to achieve possible intermediate objectives. The strategies for individual campaigns

should also guide how the struggle can expand and advance despite repression, mobilizing and applying the resisters' resources in effective ways.

"To plan a strategy" means to calculate a course of action that is intended to make it more likely to get from the present to a desired future situation. A plan to achieve that objective will usually consist of a phased series of campaigns and other organized activities designed to strengthen the aggrieved population and society and to weaken the opponents.

Strategists should avoid both overly ambitious plans and excessively timid ones. Wise strategic development will help to ensure the effective interaction of tactics and specific methods to implement the strategy and improve the chances of victory. Clear strategic insight is required if changes from one phase of the conflict to another, and one method to another, are to take place with good purpose and effect. The strategies will also project the intended way in which the struggle will become successful and how the struggle will be concluded.

The development of strategic plans for the conduct of a major struggle is a difficult and complex task. This chapter and the two that follow are intended only to introduce a basic understanding of that task, and to provide limited guidance to those who recognize the need for responsible preparations.

We shall now focus on two important early components of strategic planning. The first is the preparation of a strategic estimate to reveal in greater depth what is the situation within which the conflict is to be waged. The second is to examine the levels of strategy as they may be with advantage developed in the conflict.

PREPARING A STRATEGIC ESTIMATE[1]

Strategy can be developed only in the context of a particular conflict and its background and circumstances. Therefore, all strategic planning requires that the strategists have a profound understanding of the entire conflict situation. This requires attention to the broad context of the conflict, including physical, geographic, climatic, historical, governmental, military, cultural,

[1] This section draws very heavily on the thinking and analysis of Robert Helvey.

social, political, psychological, economic, and international factors. The identification and analysis of such factors prior to developing strategy is known as a "strategic estimate."[2]

At its most basic level, a strategic estimate is a calculation and comparison of the strengths and the weaknesses of the nonviolent struggle group and that group's opponents, as seen within the broad social, historical, political, and economic context of the society in which the conflict occurs. The strategic estimate should, at a minimum, include attention to the following subject areas: the general conflict situation, the issues at stake, the objectives of both parties to the conflict, the opponent group, the nonviolent struggle group, third parties to the conflict, and dependency balances between the contending groups.

Examining the issues and objectives

Of primary importance, strategic planners will need to examine the issues at stake from the perspectives of both the potential resisters and the opponents. What are the broad issues as seen by each side, and how important are they to the impending conflict?

Not all issues are equal. Some may be seen by one or both sides to be fundamental. Other issues may be viewed as of lesser importance. It is important to determine whether or not the issues are seen by either side to be ones of "no compromise," that is, issues—rightly or wrongly—believed to be fundamental to a group's adherents. Such issues often include strongly held beliefs about the nature of their society, their religion, their basic political convictions, or what they see as the requirements for their people to survive.

The nature of the issues at stake and their perceived importance to each side will have a fundamental impact on the development of strategies for the impending resistance. Therefore, strategists will need to develop clear and accurate statements of the issues at stake in the conflict from the perspectives of both the opponent group and the prospective nonviolent struggle group.

It is important to recognize the distinction between the broad issues of the conflict and the specific objectives of an individual campaign. Issues are more general. For example, in a labor con-

[2] See Appendix A for a plan for calculating a strategic estimate.

flict the issues might be seen as wages, working conditions, and respect. However, in a particular strike, the objectives would be more specific, such as a demand for a certain wage increase, implementation of certain safety measures, a demand for medical insurance, or proposals for job security.

Both parties to a conflict may have not only immediate objectives, but also long-term ones that may not be avowed at the time. Strategic planners should accurately assess what each side's objectives are, and to what degree the competing objectives may be compatible or incompatible.

The general conflict situation

Every strategic estimate needs to include a detailed survey of the general conflict situation in which the nonviolent struggle will be conducted. All factors that could have a conceivable impact either on the opponent group or on the nonviolent struggle group should be carefully examined. These include terrain and geography; transportation infrastructure; communications networks; climate and weather; the political, judicial, and economic systems in the country or region where the conflict occurs; population demographics; and types and degrees of social and economic stratification. These also, very importantly, include availability and control of economic and life-support resources; and the status of independent civil society.

It is also important to examine the immediate general political situation in which the struggle must operate. Are special controls, such as martial law or other means of serious repression, in effect? What are the current political and economic trends?

Condition and capabilities of the contending parties

Full and detailed knowledge about all parties to the pending conflict is extremely important. Such knowledge should focus on real capabilities, rather than on each group's statements of intent or simple assumptions about their respective conditions. The strategic estimate is an internal planning document, not a propaganda tool. Inaccurate or exaggerated views of the strengths, weaknesses, and capacities of the contending parties will produce unwise strategies and might even result in defeat.

It is very important to study the demographics of each side's adherents and sympathizers. This examination should include age, gender, literacy rates and educational standards, population growth rates, geographic distribution, socioeconomic class, and other such factors. Are there geographic, cultural, ethnic, or economic boundaries separating the two sides?

Similarly, it is important to know something about the political, social, cultural, and economic "systems" in which each side operates. What are the supports of these systems, and to what degree are they independent of, or dependent on, the other side? Are the supports of these systems independent of the State structure? Is the State structure itself controlled or utilized by the opponents, or are both sides independent of the State?

Attention must also be paid to identifying the opponents' sources of power, and the institutions that serve as "pillars of support"[3] for the opponents by providing these sources of power. Pillars of support are the institutions and sectors of society that supply a regime (or any other group that exercises power) with the needed sources of power to maintain and expand its power capacity. Examples include moral and religious leaders supplying authority or legitimacy; labor, business, and investment groups supplying economic and material resources; civil servants, administrators, bureaucrats, and technicians providing human resources and special skills; and police, prisons, and military forces providing the ability to apply sanctions (including repression) against the population.

A similar review is required of the nonviolent struggle group and the broader "grievance group" (defined as the wider population that suffers from policies and actions of the opponent group and on whose behalf the conflict may be waged). What are the sources of power of those groups, and the institutions that serve as their "pillars of support"?

Part of the process of strategic planning will be to determine, on the basis of this information, how best to strengthen (or create) the pillars of support for the nonviolent struggle group while undermining those of the opponents.

It is also necessary to assess the relative "struggle power" of each side, and to compare them. For the opponents, this means it

[3] The term "pillars of support" was introduced by Robert Helvey.

will be important to know the extent and reliability of their administration, military capacity, police and intelligence forces, as well as the degree of support they have from their own population and institutions. Also essential is the identification of weaknesses and vulnerabilities within the opponent group. How unified is the group? Are there power struggles or rivalries among the leadership? Are there any organizations or institutions that normally support the opponent group but might be targeted for transfer of loyalties or for organizational destruction?

For the resisters, it is important to know their capacity to wage nonviolent struggle. This includes their knowledge of this technique, their experience with this type of action, and the adequacy and nature of their preparations. What is the present and the potential degree of support the resisters receive from the general grievance group? What support do the potential resisters receive from other groups, institutions, and contact networks within the population? Which of these can really help? Are there significant internal conflicts, such as rivalries, power struggles, or ideological disputes, within or between sectors of either the general grievance group or the nonviolent struggle group?

Other questions are also important. How much support do the opponents receive from internal and external allies? How well do the prospective opponents understand nonviolent struggle? Is there actual or potential sympathy and support for the opponents within the general resisting population? What are the roles of social, class, racial, and religious factors?

What is the resistance group's access to information? Who are their internal and external allies? To what extent do they enjoy internal social solidarity and support? What are their economic resources? What is the depth of their strategic skill? What is the degree of competency of the group's strategists and leaders? Is strategic competence concentrated in a leadership group, or is such expertise instead diffused among the general population of potential resisters? (The latter would be very rare.) Are there threats to the organizational strength of the resisters?

Third parties

It will also be important to assess what may be the roles of third parties on behalf of each of the sides during a conflict.

These potential roles may include assisting with public relations, providing diplomatic assistance or pressure, providing financial support, applying economic pressures, and providing educational and technical assistance to either side. Third parties may also supply police and military assistance (usually not to the nonviolent struggle group), provide safe areas, and help disseminate knowledge of nonviolent struggle. It will be very useful for the resistance strategists to have accurate information and reasonable projections about who the potential third parties are and what their possible activities might be during the course of the coming conflict.

Dependency balances

A proper strategic estimate should also examine the "dependency balances" that exist between the contending parties. To what degree does or can the opponent group control the economic resources and life-support resources—fuel, water, food, etc.—of the potential resistance group? Similarly, to what degree does or can the nonviolent struggle group control the economic resources and life-support resources of the opponent group? This will reveal the degree of actual or potential dependence of each group on the other group for meeting identified needs. This can be very important in nonviolent struggles, and also can often help determine which methods might be most effective when planning the struggle.

When to launch a struggle

The specific factors presented above are only a sampling of the kinds of factors that will need to be identified in a strategic estimate prior to planning strategy. Once completed, the strategic estimate of the conflict situation and of the capacities of the contending parties serves as the background for the formulation of a grand strategy for the nonviolent struggle group and for the formulation of specific strategies for individual campaigns.

If the strategic estimate reveals that the nonviolent struggle group is weaker than required for a major struggle with the prospective opponents, then the group should not at that time launch a struggle that requires great strength. There is no substitute for,

or shortcut to, strength in a movement of nonviolent struggle. If the group is weaker than desired, either the action should initially take only limited forms that can be effective without great strength (which will be discussed later), or more ambitious action should be postponed until the group is stronger. Clearly, major efforts should be put into the strengthening of the population that is primarily affected by the grievances and into developing its capacity to wage effective struggle.

The strategic estimate is what makes this, as well as other decisions faced during the struggle, more clear. While extremely important, however, the strategic estimate is not the only issue to consider when planning strategy. Thorough and in-depth knowledge of this technique of nonviolent struggle is of prime importance. Other relevant factors also require attention throughout the planning process in order to make the nonviolent struggle as effective as possible. Many of these strategic guidelines will be addressed in Chapter Thirty-seven.

LEVELS OF STRATEGY

With the knowledge gleaned from the strategic estimate and the objectives of the nonviolent struggle group in mind, what is the broad conception of how the struggle is to be waged and how the objectives are to be achieved? Making this determination requires, among other things, identification of the intended mechanism of change in nonviolent struggle that is to be relied upon and determination of whether more than one campaign will be required. This is the domain of strategic thinking.

A strategy is the conception of how best to act in order to achieve objectives in a conflict. Strategy is concerned with whether, when, or how to fight, and how to achieve maximum effectiveness in order to gain certain ends. Strategy is the plan for the practical distribution, adaptation, and application of the available means to attain the desired objectives.

As was previously discussed, there are four levels of strategy: grand strategy, strategy, tactics, and specific methods.[4] The most

[4] These definitions were drafted by Robert Helvey, Bruce Jenkins, and Gene Sharp. Unpublished memorandum, Albert Einstein Institution.

fundamental is grand strategy. Then there is strategy itself for more limited campaigns, followed by tactics and methods that are used to implement the campaign strategies. An understanding of these four elements, and the differences between them, is essential if one is to attempt to develop strategies for a specific conflict.

It should be remembered, of course, that there is no single strategy applicable to the use of nonviolent struggle on all occasions. No single blueprint exists or can be developed to serve all conflicts. Each situation is somewhat different, often radically so. However, general guidelines can be developed for planning strategies, keeping in mind the factors we discussed previously. Planners of a grand strategy for a specific conflict will require a profound understanding, not only of the conflict situation, but also of the technique of nonviolent struggle, and of general strategic principles. Some of these will be discussed in Chapter Thirty-seven.

Grand strategy

Grand strategy is the master concept for the conduct of the conflict. A grand strategy is the conception that serves to coordinate and direct all appropriate and available resources (economic, human, moral, etc.) of the population or group to attain its objectives in a conflict. It is an overall plan for conducting the struggle that makes it possible to anticipate how the struggle as a whole should proceed. How can the struggle be won? How is the desired change to be achieved?

Grand strategy includes consideration of the rightness of the cause of the struggle group, evaluation and utilization of other pressures and influences apart from the technique of struggle, and the decision on the conditions under which resort to open struggle will be had.

Grand strategy very importantly includes the selection of the technique of conflict, or the ultimate sanction, which will be used as reserve leverage in actual or implied threats during negotiations, and later used in an open confrontation of forces if that occurs. In this case, the technique is nonviolent struggle. The selected grand strategy also sets the basic framework for the development of strategies for waging the conflict in more limited campaigns directed toward particular objectives.

Additionally, nonviolent struggle can sometimes be combined in a grand strategy with the use of other means of action that are not violent, and therefore do not threaten the operation of the technique. Fact-finding, publicity, public education, appeals to the opponents, and sometimes negotiations, as well as electoral campaigns in some cases, could in many situations be beneficially used in connection with nonviolent struggle. These means are often used in tandem with economic boycotts and labor strikes, for example. Lawsuits or other legal action have at times also been used to support nonviolent action, as in the case of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott.

Grand strategy also includes consideration of how the struggle itself relates to the achievement of the objectives for which the conflict is waged. The projection of the likely long-term consequences of the conflict also falls within grand strategy.

A grand strategy for a nonviolent struggle should preferably include not only bringing an end to that which is rejected, but also the establishment of something new to replace it. For example, a grand strategy that limits its objective to merely destroying an incumbent dictatorship runs a great risk of producing another dictatorship. A better purpose might be to change the system of domination and to institute a superior political system of greater freedom and democratic controls.

The grand strategy needs to sketch in broad strokes how the nonviolent struggle group should conduct the conflict. This would broadly stretch from the present to a future situation in which its objectives have been achieved. Which general means of pressure and action might be applied in that effort? What is to be the main thrust of the nonviolent struggle against the opponents? Is the pressure to be applied through economic losses? By undermining the opponents' legitimacy? Through political paralysis? What about international pressures? Will other pressures be utilized?

Very importantly, is the nonviolent struggle group able to weaken or remove most or all of the sources of power of the opponent group? These sources include authority (or legitimacy), human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions. Weakening or severing these sources of power by attacking their pillars of support is crucial in strug-

gles against highly repressive regimes, and can cause the power of these regimes to crumble.

If the resisters are strong enough, have sufficient numbers, and focus their noncooperation on these sources, even an extremely ruthless regime can potentially be weakened or disintegrated. The Serbian struggle in October 2000 is an example.

At the beginning of the conflict, however, efforts to fully neutralize or remove the opponents' sources of power are unlikely to be within the capacity of the struggle group. The results of the strategic estimate should help to determine whether the group is capable of applying the required pressures with sufficient force to succeed in a single campaign, or whether it should plan for a series of more limited campaigns. This calculation is a necessary part of the grand strategy, and is discussed more fully in Chapter Thirty-seven.

Strategy

Individual strategies for campaigns with more limited objectives are very important. Strategies for campaigns guide how particular conflicts are to be waged within the scope of the broader struggle and the grand strategy. These limited strategies sketch how specific campaigns shall develop, and how their separate components shall be fitted together so as best to achieve their objectives. Strategy also includes the allocation of tasks to particular groups and the distribution of resources to them for use in the conflict. Sound campaign strategies help guide the struggle by taking the skeletal framework of the chosen grand strategy and filling it out into a comprehensive conception to direct specific aspects of the struggle.

Although related, development of a grand strategy and formulation of campaign strategies are two separate processes. Only after the grand strategy has been determined can the specific campaign strategies be fully developed. Campaign strategies will need to be designed to achieve and reinforce the grand strategic objectives. Factors in the formulation of campaign strategies include the development of an advantageous situation, the decision of when to wage a campaign, and the broad schema for utilizing more limited engagements within the strategy to bring success.

Often, the targets of campaign strategies should reflect the broad issues or grievances outlined in the grand strategy. If the conflict is largely of an economic nature, and a grand strategy has been adopted that prescribes the predominant use of economic pressures, then the strategies for selective campaigns will most likely focus on specific economic targets and will apply pressures such as labor strikes and economic boycotts. If, however, the grand strategy is focused on gaining political freedom, opposing dictatorial rule, or upholding freedom of expression, then the strategies for individual campaigns may focus on specific expressions of those issues, employing relevant methods such as distribution of prohibited literature, exercise of banned free speech, or other methods that may dramatize the extreme nature of the autocratic rule or the violations of human rights and civil liberties.

This is not to say that only economic pressures can be used in struggles over economic issues, or that only political pressures should be applied in predominantly political struggles. Economic noncooperation can be effective in forcing political policy changes—and even regime change—in some cases. Nevertheless, it is often beneficial when planning campaign strategies to select specific issues and targets that are easily recognizable as representative of the broad grievance identified in the grand strategy.

Tactics

The strategy for a campaign for a limited objective will determine what smaller, "tactical," plans and specific methods of action should be used in pursuit of the main goal. A good strategy remains impotent unless it is put into action with sound tactics. However, skillful selection and implementation of tactics will not make up for a bad overall strategy. The choice of tactics to implement a strategy may involve consideration of different fronts, groups, time periods, and methods.

A tactic is a limited plan of action, based on a conception of how best in a restricted phase of a conflict to utilize the available means of fighting to achieve a limited objective as part of the wider campaign strategy. To be most effective, the tactics and methods must be chosen and applied so that they really assist the

application of the strategy and contribute to achieving the requirements for its success.

Tactics prescribe how particular methods of action are applied, or how particular groups of resisters shall act in a specific situation. For example, in a labor struggle in which factory workers are striking for union recognition, increased wages, or improved working conditions, tactics include selection of the timing of the strike, of how workers are persuaded to participate in the strike, of what action is to be taken to discourage strike breakers, of how strikers can be supported economically while not working, of what efforts are to be made to encourage public sympathy and support, and of what contacts are to be made with the factory owners.

Tactics are thus the plans for conducting more limited engagements within the selected strategy—limited in scale, participants, time, or specific issue. They specify how a group will act in a specific encounter with the opponents.

A tactic fits within the campaign strategy, just as campaign strategies fit within the grand strategy. Tactics are always concerned with struggle, although strategy also includes wider considerations, in addition to how to fight. A particular tactic can only be understood in relationship to the methods it employs and as part of the broader strategy of a campaign.

Methods

In order to achieve the best results and the most effective implementation of the developed strategies, the choice of nonviolent "weapons," or specific methods, will need to be made carefully and wisely. Many past conflicts have started with the choice of the specific methods of action to be used, rather than development of long-term plans for conducting the conflict. This is not recommended. Instead, the wiser sequence is the development of the grand strategy first, then development of a strategy for an individual campaign. Only then can the planners select the tactics

and specific methods of action that are most appropriate. Available methods were listed in Chapter Four.[5] There are others.

The characteristics of the three general classes of methods need to be reviewed.

- **Protest and persuasion:** These methods include vigils, parades, petitions, picketing, and walk-outs. They are largely symbolic in their effect and produce an awareness of the existence of dissent.
- **Noncooperation:** These methods include social boycotts, economic boycotts, labor strikes, and many forms of political noncooperation, including boycotts of government positions, civil disobedience, and mutiny. The methods of noncooperation, widely applied, are likely to cause difficulties in maintaining the normal operation and efficiency of the opponents' political or economic system. In extreme situations, these methods may threaten the existence of a regime.
- **Intervention:** These methods include hunger strikes, sit-ins, nonviolent obstruction, creation or strengthening of alternative institutions, and parallel government. They possess some of the qualities of both previous groups, but may additionally constitute a more direct challenge to the opponents' regime. By disruption of various types, they make possible—but do not guarantee—a greater impact with smaller numbers, provided that courage and discipline are maintained despite repression.

In most serious conflicts, the methods of noncooperation are especially important because they may threaten the capacity of the system to operate. They will require skill in their selection and their application. The advantage of these methods of noncooperation is that, adequately applied for sufficient time, they can be coercive and can even disintegrate the opponents' regime.

The methods of noncooperation often require much time and the participation of many people to achieve their impact. Many of the methods of nonviolent intervention, on the other hand, can be applied by small numbers of people. However, these methods usually require considerable discipline or preparation in order to

[5] For full definitions of the methods with historical examples, see Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action,* Part Two, *The Methods of Nonviolent Action.* There are, of course, many additional methods that exist or can be developed.

be successfully applied, and some can be applied only for limited periods of time. Some of these methods of nonviolent intervention may also be met with especially severe repression. Some methods of nonviolent intervention, such as parallel government, require massive support.

Frequently, methods that apply differing pressures and use different mechanisms may be combined effectively within the same campaign. Fast rules are not possible, but effective combinations of methods require wise strategic planning.

In most struggles, more than one method will be used. In such cases, the order in which the methods are applied, the ways in which they are combined, how they influence the application of other methods, and how they contribute to the struggle as a whole all become very important.

Sometimes, the combination of methods is relatively simple, especially in a local or limited type of action. Economic boycotts have been used, for example, in support of sit-ins against racial discrimination, and picketing is commonly used in support of strikes. When a general strike is used to support or oppose the mutiny of government troops, however, the situation becomes more complicated, with larger numbers of methods likely to be used.

Whoever plans the nonviolent struggle should be familiar with the full range of nonviolent methods of action available for possible application. The impact of the various methods differs considerably, even assuming that they are competently applied. For example, a protest fast by a highly respected person will have a very different effect than would bureaucratic obstruction by civil servants. The effect of a fast or bureaucratic obstruction, in turn, would differ significantly from a widespread general strike or refusal by police to locate and arrest political resisters. Different methods need to be chosen for different situations, objectives, and strategies.

Choosing methods

Each individual strategy requires a careful selection of the specific methods of nonviolent struggle to be used, followed by their skilled application. The most important specific methods to be used need to have a clear relationship to the objectives of the

campaign or the struggle as a whole, and should contribute instrumentally to achieving those objectives.

The number of methods applied in any single conflict will vary from only one to dozens. The chosen methods need to be matched to the issues at stake, the intended mechanism of change, the capabilities of the population that is to apply them, and the selected campaign strategy. Other factors that need to be considered in choosing specific methods include the situation, the objectives of both the nonviolent struggle group and the opponents, characteristics of the resistance group and the opponents, the expected repression, and the anticipated development of the struggle.

Here some questions should be asked. Very importantly, do the methods being considered contribute to implementing the selected grand strategy and the individual campaign strategy? Do the methods in question apply the kind of pressures against the opponents that have been identified as necessary if the struggle is to be successful? For example, if the strategy identifies economic pressures as the most important, then economic methods such as labor strikes and economic boycotts will likely be required. If, instead, the strategic objective is to undermine the ability of the opponents to rule, then particular methods of political noncooperation are likely to be needed to weaken or sever the supply of the regime's sources of power by attacking its pillars of support.

If the methods being considered do not directly implement the campaign strategies and do not apply the identified needed pressures directly, do they at least facilitate the application of the methods that will apply those pressures, such as by increasing resistance morale or undermining the opponents' morale? For example, if a labor strike is the primary method being employed under the strategic plan, secondary methods such as picketing or an economic boycott may be used to support the strike.

The methods to be used also need to be chosen with consideration of whether they are likely to help produce the change through the chosen mechanism of nonviolent struggle: conversion, accommodation, nonviolent coercion, or disintegration, as we discussed in Chapters Thirty-two and Thirty-three. For example, an extended fast may affect people's feelings and may gain publicity. However, a general strike, a walk-out by civil servants,

or an army mutiny may paralyze the regime, producing nonviolent coercion. The methods and the mechanisms need to be matched.

Another important factor in the choice of methods is the type of repression and other countermeasures that are expected. How much repression are the general population, the resisters, and the leaders prepared to suffer while continuing their resistance and defiance?

Also, the number of available resisters is very relevant in the choice of methods and mechanisms. It is obviously unwise to call a general strike if one has only 20 persons committed to participate. With a different method, however, such as a hunger strike, 20 people, depending on who they are, can call significant attention to the grievance and exert significant psychological or moral pressure that can lead to stronger action. Such a small action, however, needs to be conducted with extra high standards of behavior for the participants.

The effects particular methods will produce on the development of the movement are also important. Will they contribute to the progressive development of the struggle, to changed attitudes and altered power relationships, to shifts in the support for each side, and to the later application and impacts of stronger nonviolent methods?

In choosing the methods, one should remember that it may be easier to get people to refrain from doing something that has been ordered than to get them to do something that they do not usually do. This is especially true if the action is very risky or is prohibited.

During the struggle

Specific methods will need to be selected for initiating the conflict. These may be symbolic, or they may be more ambitious, such as the launching of a strike. At the very beginning of a campaign, nonviolent struggle strategists may deliberately use relatively weak methods in order to test, by the population's response, whether the population will be willing to attempt stronger methods and able to withstand more severe repression as the price of success.

Once the struggle is underway, it will be necessary to review the strategy previously selected for the conflict to determine if additional or different methods should also be scheduled for application. Is the use of only a small number of methods dangerous to the success of the struggle, or is such a restriction necessary to concentrate the pressures on the opponents? Can the resisters survive the opponents' pressures and repression as they concentrate their action against these selected few points? Is a shift of methods needed to maintain flexibility in the developing struggle?

More questions will also need to be answered. Will the methods help to gain or keep the initiative in the conflict? If the methods are intended to be applied more widely, are they in fact likely to spread? If the methods require special training or preparations—and hence are suited for select small groups—are such preparations available? If the methods are to be applied by masses of people, can their use be replicated widely without special training or preparations?

Moving from one level of action to another—as from symbolic protests to noncooperation, and from noncooperation to intervention—can involve a progressive increase in the degree of repression that is risked. In reverse, the choice of noncooperation instead of intervention may at times help to produce a relatively less explosive and dangerous conflict situation with relatively less severe repression. These relationships between the classes of methods and the severity of repression are not applicable in all situations and against all opponents, however. Quite mild methods may at times be met with brutal repression, especially if the opponents are a regime that cannot tolerate public expressions of dissent and opposition.

In a long struggle, phasing is often very important. The selection of objectives and the choice and sequence of methods may be the most important factors in that phasing. Often, certain milder actions must precede others, so that it may be possible later to use stronger methods. The decision of when to proceed to a new phase of the struggle must be carefully weighed. Such shifts of methods can help to avoid a static condition and to maintain the initiative.

The strategic plan

The strategic plan is the concrete blueprint for the implementation of a strategy. The plan should answer the questions of who, what, when, where, and how for the strategic components of each campaign.

In small or extremely limited struggles, this strategic plan might exist realistically only on the tactical level. For example, in a limited labor struggle where the grand objective and campaign objective are the same (a contract that includes improved benefits and wages), and with only one or two methods and one campaign involved (a conventional strike following the breakdown of contract negotiations), the strategic plan will lay out the details of when the strike is to begin, who is to participate and what their roles will be, where the picket lines will be, and what logistics will be necessary for provision of food, money, and other material necessities to the families of the striking workers. In such a case, the preparation of the strategic plan will not necessarily be a separate step from the planning involved in selecting tactics and methods for the implementation of the campaign strategy.

In a broader and more complex struggle, however, the strategic plan may exist on multiple levels. In rare struggles in which it is possible to plan concretely for multiple campaigns to operate simultaneously or in short sequence, the strategic plan should specify the order of those campaigns and the timing when each is to begin, based on the strategic relationship between them. It will also identify any subdivisions within the campaigns themselves.

For example, in a broad labor struggle directed against a particular company or industry in which the labor group possesses uncommon strength and popular sympathy, the struggle might include, in addition to strike action, a campaign to boycott all products produced by that company or industry. The campaign strategy may then identify a need to promote and enforce the boycott through varied actions ranging from primary and secondary boycotts and picket lines in front of stores to solidarity demonstrations and blockage of foreign exports of the product. The strategic plan with implementing tactics and methods fills in the blanks, identifying which stores to picket, where and when to arrange demonstrations, what types of publicity to seek for pro-

motion of the primary and secondary boycotts, and what groups to target for support in preventing exports of the product.

While method selection is involved here, some of these specific tasks may exist above the level of tactical planning, which—though part of the strategic plan—refers specifically to the concrete logistical and operational planning of each individual action within the campaign.

In short, the strategic plan is the overall operational guide for action. It is the plan for concrete application and implementation of the strategy. On a broad level, strategic plans normally include four phases:

- Preparation for the conflict
- Initiation of action to gain the objective(s)
- Development of the ongoing struggle
- After success, consolidation of the gains

Within each phase, the strategic plan should follow the campaign strategies to identify the specific tasks that need to be carried out on the various strategic levels, as well as the persons or groups who will be responsible for them. As previously mentioned, an important component of the strategic plan is the tactical plan, which should identify in detail the tasks required to implement successfully each individual action within a campaign.

Strategists should keep in mind that in complex struggles, including those against repressive regimes, prior to the initiation of conflict it is usually very difficult, and often impossible, to plan the concrete implementation of the grand strategy from the first campaign to the last. In these cases, the strategic plan should be as concrete and specific as possible for implementation of the strategy for the initial campaign, but will be necessarily vague for future campaigns. This is because the limited objectives of future campaigns, their strategies, timing, and tactical activities will be determined in large part by changes in the conflict situation that will occur during the first stage or stages of the struggle. Strategists will therefore need to keep a close eye on the progress of the struggle, and develop the concrete strategic plans for future campaigns accordingly, while the conflict is ongoing.

Further guidelines for responding and adapting to changes in the course of the conflict will be discussed in Chapter Thirty-seven. In the meantime, it is important to identify insights into strategic planning gained from past experience and analyses that can contribute to greater effectiveness in planning strategy for nonviolent struggle. This is the focus of the next chapter.