Chapter One
Theory of Political Power

Political power is the totality of means, influences, and pressures—including authority, rewards, and sanctions—available to achieve the objectives of the power-holder, especially those of government, the state, and those groups in opposition.

—Dr. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*

The quest for power appears to be a natural appendage of all mankind and its institutions. It occurs between nations, within governments, between and within corporations, and even between friends.[2] Perhaps the most familiar to average citizens are power struggles that occur over the allocation of tax revenues. Legions of lawyers, lobbyists, and public relations specialists ply the interests of their clients to achieve preferential tax treatment or to receive lucrative government contracts. Sometimes, the benefits of such allocations to the people who pay the taxes are questionable. Often, the influence on decisions for such allocations is obscured from public view. For example, a cursory review of the US Defense budget process is replete with cases of legislators forcing airplanes, ships, and weapons upon the US Defense Department even though the military services do not want them, particularly if they are outdated, poorly designed or unnecessary surplus equipment. What governments choose to fund can be inexplicable, at least to the average citizen who knows little about special interests and their lobbyists. Even how tax money is ultimately used can be paradoxical. Environmentalists express amazement when government departments find new ways to undermine the very laws they are responsible for implementing. The use of collected revenues has always been a political issue in democracies and reflects a facet of the continuing efforts to control and influence power.

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[2] Dr. Sharp makes a distinction between social and political power. "Social power may be briefly defined as the capacity to control the behavior of others, directly or indirectly, through action by groups of people, which action impinges on other groups of people. Political power is that kind of social power which is for political objectives." *The Politics of Nonviolent Action,* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973) I: 7.

More far-reaching in consequence than the competition over the distribution of tax revenues, however, are the struggles for power through control of government and the resultant relationships between the rulers and the ruled. When the needle on a continuum between "freedom and tyranny" (admittedly subjective terms) points strongly toward tyranny, there will be a desire for change by those who are oppressed. What changes and how change will be attempted depend upon the oppressed people's understanding of the nature and sources of power. Dr. Sharp describes two models to describe the basis for power in society—one monolithic, the other pluralistic.

The Monolithic Theory of Power

One model to explain political power, described by Dr. Gene Sharp, is referred to as the "monolithic" theory.[3] It portrays power as being centered at the top of a solid, unchanging power structure [See Figure 1]. Occupiers of power portrayed by this monolithic model may change for any number of reasons, but the structure of power itself, that is, its pyramidal shell, is fixed as if in granite, irrespective of the power mix within or the will to change from without. This theory assumes that the people are dependent upon the good will, support and decisions of the power holder and that the ruler determines how this power is to be exercised. Preferably, the ownership of this power structure changes through the process of orderly and legitimate elections. However, under a tyrannical regime, a decision to hold elections is often made by the ruler, with their outcomes generally pre-determined. General Ne Win in Burma and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe are examples of despotic rulers who viewed election rigging as an integral part of the election process. Occasionally dictators miscalculate and fail to take the necessary steps to ensure the desired result of an election. For example, the military regime in Burma was shocked when it authorized an election in 1990 and lost.

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[3] A complete discussion of Sharp's conception of the nature of political power can be found in Volume I of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action,* pp. 7-10. In the introductory chapter of this definitive work, Sharp delineates a common misconception about the structure of political power.

Its response to this unexpected setback was to refuse to accept the will of the electorate and to arrest opposition political leaders.

Authoritarian regimes are comfortable when their public accepts (or acquiesces under pressure to) this monolithic conceptualization of power. The mere fact that they hold power gives them the authority to rule and dictates the obligation of the people to submit, the desires of the ruled notwithstanding. The coercive power of the state under this model is viewed as a primary and legitimate means of enforcing compliance. The twentieth century offers a multitude of examples. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union leader Josef Stalin caused the murder of almost 20 million people who were deemed to be real or potential threats to his hold on power—about the same number of Soviet citizens who died during the war against Germany in World War II.

To undermine and remove tyranny through nonviolent conflict, one must move beyond the conceptual bounds of the monolithic power structure to identify and assess the actual distribution of power in all of its forms. While the monolithic model of power is a useful analytical tool to the study of how despots obtain, hold and pass the reins of power, using this model as a guide to thinking about political change places a severe limitation on the options that can be considered. While it is important for "dreamers of change" to be aware of the monolithic model of power, in order to convert dreams into action they will find more success by substituting a model that views power, its attainment, and its loss in a completely different light—as one with "pluralism" as its guiding feature.

The Pluralistic Model of Power

Another helpful model to understand the nature of power is referred to by Dr. Sharp as the pluralistic model [See Figure 2]. Unlike the monolithic model, a solid, unchanging structure with power concentrated at the top, this theory portrays political power as being pluralistic and fragile. Sources of power are identified as residing among the people throughout society, with the power holder able to exercise only that power that the people permit. **In other words,**

the ruler can only rule with the consent and cooperation of the people. That consent and cooperation may be willingly given or it may be coerced. Consent may be a result of indifference on the part of some in society, or even cultural influence upon obedience patterns. In any event, the important point of the pluralistic model of power is that, since the people provide the ruler with the sources of his power, then the people can also withdraw their consent to be ruled by withholding the sources of power they collectively provide to the regime.

According to Dr. Sharp there are six sources of power that are the key to understanding its pluralistic nature. As will be discussed below, it is these enumerated sources of power over which control, substantial influence, or neutralization is sought. These sources of power find expression in organizations and institutions, called "pillars of support", discussed in Chapter 2.

1. Authority

Authority is the basis for claiming the right to rule and for demanding obedience from the ruled. Election results are often cited as the validation of authority to govern. This is why so many authoritarian regimes insist on holding elections and then stuff the ballot boxes, intimidate the electorate, limit the campaign activities of opponents, and refuse to acknowledge or accept unfavorable outcomes. Legitimacy is critically important to any government, and to be perceived as exceeding constitutional authority or being an outlaw regime has potentially serious consequences both internally and within the international community.

Internally, the loss of apparent legitimacy may become a major factor for the legitimization of political opposition. Using the concept of the "social contract," political opposition may proclaim that if the government has committed a material breach of the constitution of a nation, the contract between the people and the government has been violated, providing the basis for renouncing the obligations to obey, support and cooperate with the regime.

Externally, the loss of legitimacy by a regime may make the

international community receptive to calls for economic and political sanctions against it. Political and economic boycotts can weaken such regimes, as happened to the apartheid regime in South Africa and the dictatorship in Burma. Suspension of Zimbabwe from the British Commonwealth in 2002 was a profound statement that the Mugabe regime was not welcome to sit among democratic governments that had transitioned from colonialism to independent democracies. Moreover, democratic opposition groups are more likely to obtain outside financial and moral support once an authoritarian regime's authority to rule has been seriously eroded. By themselves, however, these international gestures of support are never sufficient to remove a ruler from power. Moreover, such sanctions can also be counter-productive if their effects do more harm to the public than to the regime.

2. Human Resources

The numbers of people who support, cooperate with, and yield to the ruler are an important determinant of a regime's power. This is not meant to suggest that if a majority of people do not like the incumbent leaders then a regime change is inevitable. It only means that the potential for change is present. History is replete with examples of oppression of the majority by a minority. On the other hand, strategic nonviolent struggle cannot succeed without the active support and cooperation of the majority. In a struggle for democracy, numbers are important!

3. Skills and Knowledge

Governing is much more complicated than ever. At the beginning of the 21st century, the President of the United States of America is widely accepted as being the most powerful person in the world. Yet, this most powerful ruler knows little or nothing about the complicated tasks of maintaining airplanes and flight schedules, administering maritime law, conducting criminal investigations, collecting taxes, developing war plans, distributing food, developing and

servicing communications networks, and a host of other proficiencies. The point is that skills and knowledge provided by the people permit governments, at all levels, to function. Without such contributions, a government collapses.

4. Intangible Factors

While it is difficult to measure their importance, intangible factors such as religion, attitudes toward obedience and submission, a sense of mission, or cultural norms can affect a ruler's relationship with the public. For example, there was a period in which there was an acceptance by many in some societies of the "divine right of kings," the belief that rulers were agents of God on earth. To disobey the ruler was thought to be disobedient to God. In other societies, such as Japan, the Emperor was considered to be a God-king. Democracy would have been impossible under those circumstances. At the turn of the 21st century, there were instances of the merging of the Islamic religion and traditional political power in some governments. While it is entirely appropriate to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," the debate must first be held over *what exactly* belongs to him. After all, democracy is predicated upon the belief that any power the ruler has is "on loan" from the people.

5. Material Resources

"He who pays the piper calls the tune" most certainly applies to politics. Control over the economy, property, natural resources, communications and transportation is an important aspect of the limits of power over the public. For example, where the state owns all farmland, it effectively controls a significant part of the lives of all farm families. In a similar fashion, where censorship prevails, the lives of all those involved in all aspects of journalism are controlled or influenced by the government. In countries where the oil industry has been nationalized, there is less dependence upon the public for tax revenues. This lack of dependence on tax revenues from the people has the effect of centralizing the power of the purse for governments.

6. Sanctions

The ability to coerce compliance and support for government laws, including rules and regulations, is limited by the support, cooperation and acquiescence of the public. Sanctions are used both to punish and to deter unacceptable behavior. Sanctions need not be unduly harsh or extreme, such as executions or imprisonment, to be effective. Denial or termination of employment, loss of retirement benefits, limitation on educational opportunities and promotions, travel restrictions (denial of passport), imposition of "eminent domain" of property, denial of access to water, and other sanctions can all be effectively employed to promote submission. In some authoritarian regimes, the media practices self-censorship because the government has the capacity to close down publishers and news organizations through the control of the distribution of newsprint or the revocation of radio and television licenses. Such sanctions are commonplace.

Sanctions are tools of every government. Most often they are used to curb anti-social behavior. At other times, they have been used as weapons to terrorize and to punish populations for political ends. For example, Nazi Germany used collective punishment to deter future actions of underground movements resisting German Army occupation. At the turn of this century, the Israeli government justified collective punishment as a means to deter acts of terrorism. Aside from the fact that punishing a group for the acts of individuals may be a violation of basic human rights, its use as an effective deterrent is questionable. Indeed, collective punishment and assassinations may have an effect opposite of that expected and desired. Collective punishment may result in a determination to retaliate rather than as a deterrent to future acts of violence.

Summary

Chapter 1 examines two models of power. The monolithic model portrays power as being exercised in an unchanging structure in which the people are dependent upon the ruler. The pluralistic model

sees power being exercised quite differently, with the ruler's being dependent upon the people. The sources of power that the people provide to a ruler are also identified, and should these sources of power be withheld from a ruler, his ability to govern would be impossible.

Descriptively, the various structures that permit and sustain the day-to-day operations of government are referred to as its "pillars of support". Thus, the sources of power find expression in organizations and institutions within and outside of government [See Figure 3, Pillars of Support]. Opponents of an authoritarian regime also require pillars of support. When important pillars of support are sufficiently undermined, the government, or the opposition, collapses just as a building will collapse upon itself when its support structure is weakened and gives way.

Chapter Two
Pillars of Support

And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

—Judges, 16:6

Organizations and institutions are comprised of a mixture of sources of power identified in the previous chapter. The sources of power made available through these groups provide the government with its ability to rule. Any regime will rely on some pillars of support more than on others. At the same time, authoritarian regimes attempt to limit the expansion and strength of the opposition's pillars of support. It should not be surprising that in a strategic nonviolent conflict, the operational focus for planners is primarily about the alignment and capabilities of pillars of support.

Identification of Pillars of Support

The identification and analysis of pillars of support are fundamental when opponents of a regime begin to think about any nonviolent strategy. Until the primary pillars of the regime are undermined, neutralized or destroyed, there is little prospect of political reform or regime change. Those waging a nonviolent struggle against an authoritarian regime, therefore, must give keen attention to key institutions and organizations.

Police

The motto "To protect and serve" is descriptive of the image most police departments worldwide seek to project to the public. However, the identity of who is being protected and served is not always the public. Instead, this most visible and omnipresent "face" of government sometimes gives priority to the task of protecting and serving a corrupt and repressive regime.

It is a common sense assumption that where corruption is systemic, reform is most difficult, if not impossible, without a regime change. Even in democratic societies, once corruption has been imbedded within the police structure, reform can occur only by replacing the individuals to whom the police report. The positive aspect of having local police under the supervision of locally elected officials is that the people can hold someone directly responsible for the actions of the police department personnel. Where there is a national police force, exerting influence over police behavior at the local level becomes more difficult.

Citizens do not need to wait for a regime change to begin changing the attitudes and behavior of police personnel. There are a few factors to keep in mind concerning the police. First, police normally live in the communities that they serve. Therefore, their families, relatives, acquaintances and friends have developed a network of relationships (e.g., schools, businesses, religious organizations, and social groups). If the government, then, characterizes those people in the community who oppose the regime as criminals, spies, or terrorists, the police have another reference point by which to evaluate government propaganda. Dr. Gene Sharp, who lived in Norway while doing research on the Norwegian resistance to German occupation during WW II, delights in recounting stories of the local police "faithfully" carrying out the orders of the German authorities. In one instance, the local police contacted the family of person to be arrested with the request that the suspect be informed of his impending arrest, complete with the day, hour and minute that the citizen could expect to see the arresting officers at his home.

Secondly, police forces carrying out the orders of a dictator should not, in general, be viewed as the enemy of the people. They are servants of a system that has failed. It is the system that needs to be replaced, not the thousands of honest and honorable people whose training and skills are necessary to serve and protect a democratic society. Of course, there may be some who need to be singled out for criminal prosecution on charges of murder, torture, or looting, but the focus should be on those individuals, not all who serve in the police forces.

Military

The use of military force to stay in power is viewed as the "trump card" by authoritarian regimes. Unlike police personnel who live and work in the local community, military units are often separated from civilian society, with their own housing, shopping areas, hospitals and schools. This separation from the public tends to hinder the development of personal relationships between military and civilian families. When a government decides to intervene with army forces in open political conflict, there is less incentive on the part of military units to exercise restraint in the use of violence. During the uprising in Burma in 1988, and a year later, in China, the governments dispatched Army units from outside the immediate areas of intervention. In these circumstances, soldiers were considered by authorities to be more reliable than the local police and militia, and thus more responsive to orders. In some countries, where large demonstrations are anticipated, specially trained and equipped riot control units are established to raise the threshold for requiring military intervention.

The time to develop plans to undermine the willingness of the Army to intervene against civilian protesters is well before a government's decision to employ them is made. Key to any plans for undermining the willingness of the Army to commit forces against protesters is to convince them that their own lives and the lives of their families are not threatened and that professional soldiers will have a secure future under democratic rule.

The actions of military units in response to orders are influenced by the attitudes, values and professionalism of its leadership. Officers generally view themselves as patriotic, loyal, and politically conservative. Their "professionalism" sometimes leads them to blindly support political leadership. The German General Staff under Adolf Hitler reportedly disagreed with his political aims, but, nevertheless, they developed the military plans to carry out the will of the Fuehrer. The key point here is that Hitler, as leader of the largest party in the German Reichstag, and having been appointed Chancellor in accordance with the constitution, was considered to

be the legitimate ruler.

The assimilation of democratic values into military culture is a major factor in limiting the use of the military's destructive power against the citizenry. Another factor is the perception of military leaders that there will be an important role for them under a democratic government. Both of these factors require time and careful thought in how to promote these ideas. One significant reason why the Serbian nonviolent movement had so few casualties when the Parliament was seized by thousands of protesters in October 2000 (one person died of a heart attack; another died in a traffic accident) was the Army's decision not to intervene in a "political" matter. No doubt, this decision was influenced by the fact that the democratic movement was clearly winning and members of the military had an interest in positioning themselves for a role in the post-Milosevic government.

Civil Servants

Civil servants are often maligned, criticized, ridiculed, and undervalued. Sometimes, these government bureaucrats are thought of as a colony of ants—thousands of nameless, faceless, mindless workers doing their own little tasks, going to and fro from their little cubby holes. Yet, political leaders, like the dependent "queen" of the ant colony, cannot survive without the obedient, skilled civil servants carrying out these seemingly innocuous activities. These are the people that translate orders into actions: they issue regulations, assess and collect taxes, prepare budgets, run schools, input information into thousands of databases, make purchases for the government, control the airways and harbors, staff embassies, maintain communications systems, and, in fact, perform all of the tasks that keep regimes functional. No government can operate without them.

Opposition groups who adopt strategic nonviolent conflict to seek regime change and democratic reform must understand the importance of winning the support of government employees. But it must also be understood that the very livelihoods of government employees depend upon their obedience to their government em-

ployer, and, as such, few employees can openly oppose the government until there is clear evidence that other pillars of support for the ruler have been seriously weakened. Nevertheless, commitment to an opposition movement by government employees, even if not openly expressed, can contribute to the advancement of the movement's cause in ways limited only by the imagination.

Media

If a popular movement for democratic change is to be successful, it must have the means to communicate its messages to its target audiences. Authoritarian regimes know this and attempt to deny or limit such access, leading to the creation of cyber warfare centers and draconian laws restricting the possession or use of computers and fax machines. Burma, for example, has imposed long prison terms for "unlicensed" machines. Ownership and use of satellite telephones are sometimes restricted, and governments sometimes jam opposition groups' television and offshore radio broadcasts in attempts to close off information to the public.

Control of the press and other internal forms of mass communication by an oppressive government can be easily accomplished. The establishment of publication review boards that require the submission of all books, magazines and newspapers prior to distribution has sometimes been very effective. There is a strong incentive for self-censorship when the review does not occur until after all publication expenses have been incurred. Newspapers, other publications, television and radio stations can have their licenses revoked, their equipment confiscated, and their owners and editors physically intimidated. To overcome these internal constraints, offshore productions are now rather common, whether it is a Burmese radio station broadcasting from Norway or an Iranian television station in California beaming interviews with opposition leaders to audiences in Tehran. The possibility of mass communication originating outside a country's border is exemplified also by the Serbian pro-democracy movement. Over 60 tons of leaflets were shipped into the country and distributed within a few days prior to the election in 2000.

Business Community

Even under the most centralized, socialistic authoritarian regimes, business communities play important roles in the economy. They provide to the people goods and services that the government does not supply. Often, governments give tacit approval to illegal black market activities to reduce incidents of politicized public frustration over shortages of consumer goods.

There is a downside to working with business communities, especially foreign and transnational. It is a perception that international firms prefer to work with authoritarian regimes rather than with more open and democratic governments. There are fewer coordination points once the ruler has been convinced of the rewards for making a deal. Working conditions, wages, and unions are often matters that the ruler can handle quietly and efficiently. The point is that international firms may have no particular interest in whether or not a government is democratic or tyrannical. What matters to them is profit. The challenge for a democratic movement is to convince these companies that change is coming and that it may, in the future, be important for them to be perceived as having been at least neutral in the actions that they have taken.

On a positive note, members of local and foreign business communities often have existing networks of contacts with local, regional and foreign businesses. When it is in their interest to do so, they can provide important resources including money, couriers, and advisors for a democratic struggle.

Youth

A primary concern of authoritarian regimes is to prevent young people from becoming politicized unless that politicization is in support of and controlled by the government. As long as students and other youth are not permitted to become an organized challenge to the stability of the government, opposition groups are deprived of the traditional vanguard for accelerated political change. Some ways governments keep students from becoming active in political oppo-

sition movements are well known. For example, those who openly oppose the regime are denied educational opportunities. In addition, schools may be closed or multiple campuses created to prevent large groups from forming. Long prison terms can be imposed for the violation of various laws that restrict freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Government-run youth programs may be established, where money, food, clothing, and weapons are provided in return for students' intimidating opposition political parties.

Some people have tried to explain why young people are often willing to accept the risks of being in the front lines of revolutionary movements by suggesting that young people have "nothing to lose". Generally, it is true that young people are less likely to have a significant attachment to any employment, and they are less likely to have major family responsibilities. They also demonstrate a youthful zest for life and a belief in their own immortality. These reasons are only a small part of the explanation for their participation, for young people have even more important things to lose—their lives and their futures. Most importantly, however, it is not what might be lost, but rather what might be gained by living in a free and just society that provides impetus for youth involvement. Young people do not generally rationalize their bondage under tyranny. Nor do they generally accept, as given, the impossibility of change. Young people have an instinct, yet undiminished by experience, to know truth from falsehood and right from wrong without numerous gradations of a continuum. It is this intellectual clarity that motivates them.

A word of caution is necessary whenever consideration is given to enlisting students and other young people into a democratic movement. As a group, they are risk-takers in all facets of life. Without clear guidance and discipline, their actions may become excessive, and they may, if provoked, exhibit the same thuggish characteristics of those individuals utilized by an authoritarian regime. A "code of conduct" is important for everyone participating in a movement, but it is especially important for youth organizations, and imperative that the code of conduct be accompanied by training and strong leadership to reduce instances of damaging conduct.

Workers

Without question, the forces of globalization have made life more difficult for workers everywhere. Unions have been weakened in developed countries where companies threaten to move jobs where labor costs are cheaper. In developing countries, governments can be more interested in the economic benefits of having production transferred to them than in basic work-place safety, decent wages, or worker rights. Democracy, rule of law, and freedom of association are steps in rectifying the power imbalance that gives rise to the abuse of workers.

It can be difficult to organize workers, but, once organization is underway, unity can spread quickly. Recall that the democracy movement in Poland was catapulted to victory after the electricians began a strike in the shipyard at Gdansk.

One sector of the workforce of particular interest to planners of strategic nonviolent struggle is transportation and related industries. Any disruption of the movement of goods, people, and services can have immediate economic and political costs to the regime. At the same time, strategic planners need to consider possible unintended consequences if food and other essential commodities are denied to the public.

Religious Organizations

Historically, organized religion has played important roles in political struggles against tyranny—mostly on the side seeking change, but sometimes not. Often religious organizations have networks, both spiritual and financial, throughout the societies in which they operate, from the wealthy elites down to the grassroots of society. Too, because religious leaders are usually well educated in the ways of society as well as in religion, they are generally respected by both their followers and others who know of their works, and they can often influence the attitudes and behavior of others far beyond moral and religious teachings. They can also bring a spiritual aspect to an opposition movement and even become the most articulate speak-

ers for the opposition itself. On the other hand, they can become just as influential and just as articulate for the much narrower special interests of a tyrannical regime. Accordingly, movement leaders must be attuned to the task of encouraging the support of religious leaders or undermining the pernicious influence that they might have.

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

Any group or organization that can function outside direct control and supervision of the government is a potential asset to a democracy movement. International NGOs can raise funds, communicate directly with many publics, obtain needed expertise from abroad, and provide insights obtained from experiences of other democratic movements. In-country NGOs are sometimes quite limited in the scope of activities they are permitted and in their sources for funding. Whether domestic or imported, NGOs sometimes are embedded with government informants, but in most cases that is unlikely to prove a serious challenge to overcome. An important value of NGOs in a nonviolent conflict is that they provide services to the public and thus demonstrate that people need not be totally dependent upon government. NGO activities can weaken the coercive, but subtle, bond that authoritarian regimes require for public obedience.

A dramatic example of the effectiveness of a NGO in undermining the dependence of the people on an authoritarian government occurred in Burma shortly after General Ne Win seized power in 1962. The western part of the country in the Arakan State suffered a devastating flood. According to reports, a Catholic missionary immediately radioed missionaries in other parts of the country and in India of the need for assistance. The response was quick and effective, with food, clothing and building materials arriving within days. When the regime finally sent in teams to assess the damage, they learned that no government assistance was needed and that the people had solved the crisis on their own. Ne Win was reportedly so furious over this incident that it was the cause for the expul-

sion of Christian missionaries from Burma.

Democratic movements need to be reminded, however, that NGOs may have their own agendas. It is important to understand what those agendas might be and to insure that compatibility exists with the goals and objectives of the democratic movement.

Other sources of support are professional organizations, political parties, foreign businesses, and foreign governments, individually and through international organizations. Not to be overlooked are small groups within a community, established for specific interests such as sewing circles, hunting and fishing clubs, book clubs, language study groups, motorcycle clubs, hiking and walking clubs, bird watching clubs, coin collecting clubs, garden clubs, and sports clubs. Strategic nonviolent struggle requires both control over sources of power and the active participation of the population. Organizations contain the sources of power and provide the structures for collective actions.

CHAPTER THREE
OBEDIENCE

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in irons.

—Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book 1, Chap 1.

In an attempt to respond to observations such as the one above, Dr. Gene Sharp raised the following questions:

> How is it that a ruler is able to obtain and maintain political domination over the multitude of his subjects? Why do they in such large numbers submit to him and obey him, even when it is clearly not in their interest to do so?[4]

The questions Gene Sharp raised in the quote above were the basis for his insightful analysis of why people obey. This chapter, in great measure, provides that analysis. The pluralistic model of power (Chapter 1), the configuration of sources of power into pillars of support (Chapter 2), and obedience are the triad for understanding the theory and applications of strategic nonviolent struggle. It is essential, therefore, that there be a thorough understanding of why people obey, sometimes to the extent of giving up their own lives for causes they strongly oppose. Obedience is at "the heart of political power." A ruler cannot rule if the people do not obey. It is this insight upon which strategies for nonviolent struggle are based. If our purpose is to motivate the public to withdraw its consent to be ruled by dictators or other authoritarian regimes, we should first understand why people are obedient in the first place.

Habit

The reason most people obey is the habit of obedience. We are accustomed to obeying those in authority. Since infancy, we have been subjected to authority. For most of us authority begins with our parents, older siblings, grandparents, and other relatives and transfers to schoolteachers, policemen, and even symbols of authority.

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[4] *Ibid*., 18.

For example, we obey traffic signals out of habit—even at deserted road intersections.

A primary objective of recruit training in military forces is to create new habits of obedience. The recruit quickly learns to respond immediately and without question to the commands of his drill sergeant. Hours of repetitive close order drill and constant intimidating supervision has little to do with modern war fighting skills, but they have everything to do with developing a habit of following orders. In addition, the basic soldiering skills, such as the use of weapons, are so deeply embedded through repetitive training, that their use is by habit, and requires no deliberative thought.

Those of us who are addicted to tobacco know what a habit is like. We don't know how many cigarettes we smoke, can't recall when we smoked them, and don't quit smoking when the price has risen to absurd levels. To break this or any other habit, including obedience to authority, we must make a deliberate decision to quit, constantly remind ourselves of that decision, and reiterate why it is important to break the habit.

Fear of Sanctions

Fear of punishment for disobedience is another reason why people obey. When we violate the law, the power of the state can be brought against us. We may be fined a lot of money. The state may seize our property. The state may put us in jail. The state may even execute us for disobeying its laws. The purpose of sanctions is to punish the offender and / or to deter others from disobeying the same or a similar law. A tyrant depends more upon the fear of sanctions to insure obedience than do rulers who have the willing support of the public.

Self-Interest

There are many people who may say they intensely dislike their government, yet they actively support it. Examining the role of self-interest and personal rewards that are available to those who support the government adequately explains this paradox. For example,

what personal rewards are given to members of the armed forces for complying with unpopular or even brutal policies? Promotions, decorations, prestige, special privileges, or retirement income may be factors. In a state-controlled economy where most people are employed by the government, it is in a person's self-interest not to lose his job, since there may not be any alternative employment. Others may gain significant financial rewards for supporting a regime. We should not condemn everyone who supports an unpopular government out of self-interest. Each person has his own reasons for doing so. Many believe there is no other alternative. Our challenge is demonstrate that it may be in their self-interest to disobey.

Moral Obligation

A sense of moral obligation to obey is common in every society. This obligation to obey derives from:

The Common Good of Society. It can be argued that laws protect all citizens. Some laws protect us from the anti-social behavior of others (robbery, murder, rape). Other laws insure the general good of society (rationing of goods and services, conscription of young men into the Army, taxes). Sometimes we may even feel that the common good is best served by obeying a hated ruler because we don't believe an alternative would make life any better. Josef Stalin was clearly a tyrant. Yet, millions of people obeyed him because obedience was considered to be in the common interest of society. Even after learning that Stalin was responsible for the murder of more than 20 million people, some Russians still yearn for the "good old days." We may see peer pressure as a reflection of this moral obligation to obey. **Keep this in mind—peer pressure works both ways and can be a useful tool in changing patterns of behavior.**

Superhuman Factors

Sometimes rulers are given a superman image or a god-like character. When a ruler is perceived as being all-powerful or is perceived

as being the personification of a religion, it is almost inconceivable to think about disobeying that ruler. Who would have dared disobey Adolf Hitler at the height of his rule? This deification of leaders has had a long history. For centuries, people accepted the concept of "god-kings" and the "divine right of kings." Another variant of this divine rule approach is the 20th century fusion of religion and the state in Iran. To counter this factor of obedience, we need only to speak the truth—man is not all-powerful nor is the ruler an agent of God.

Psychological Identification with the Rulers

Some people view their rulers as an extension of their own family. In somewhat the same way supporters of a soccer team experience joy when their team wins or sorrow when the team loses, a ruler becomes an extension of the individual. This is especially true if the people and the ruler have come through a difficult experience together, such as a struggle for independence. (Some infamous fighters for independence include Ho Chi Minh, General Ne Win, and Robert Mugabe). If this familial extension is a factor in a person's obedience, a convincing case must be made that such an identification with the ruler is no longer justified.

Zone of Indifference

Some people may profess an indifference to most, if not all, laws that can even remotely be expected to impinge upon their daily lives. They obey simply because not to do so seems more trouble than it is worth. For most, that may be a reasonable assumption regarding most laws. Problems can arise, however, when laws restricting basic rights and freedom intrude into this comfort zone of indifference. It is the task of the democratic opposition to alert the public that indifference to this intrusion is no longer appropriate since it contributes to the enslavement of society as individual freedoms are eroded by increasingly subtle restrictions that are imposed upon the public.

Absence of Self-Confidence

For a variety of reasons, some people lack confidence in themselves, their judgment or even their ability to make themselves capable of resistance or disobedience. Where there have been decades of authoritarian rule, there may be little experience in society in making decisions or few opportunities for developing leadership. Perhaps some people think that their rulers are more qualified than they are to make decisions. Importantly for a resistance movement, they may feel they cannot successfully defy the government or participate in their own liberation. Restoring the public's confidence in its ability to pass judgment on the actions of the rulers and then to act on those judgments is critical to the success of nonviolent struggle. Sometimes, **what we may think of as "indifference" may well be an absence of self-confidence.**

Summary

We have just examined several reasons why people obey their rulers.[5] They provide a rebuttal to the argument that it is "natural" to be obedient. Human beings are not genetically pre-disposed to be submissive. Obedience is primarily a combination of habits, fear and interests—and habits and interests can be changed and fear can be overcome.

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[5] *Ibid.*, 19-25.

Chapter Four
Mechanisms and Methods of Nonviolent Struggle

. . . all that I claim is that every experiment of mine has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.

—M. K. Gandhi

Moving a society from a dictatorship to a democracy is difficult no matter what path is preferred. If strategic nonviolent strategy is the path of choice by the opposition movement, consideration should be given to the different ways, or mechanisms, in which nonviolent struggle produces the desired changes in the power relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Dr. Sharp identifies four "mechanisms for changing power relationships." These are conversion, accommodation, coercion and disintegration. They provide a cognitive framework for viewing information regarding the dynamics of change in power relationships. These classes of nonviolent action are useful also as methods to activate change or to assess the effects of prior nonviolent actions or campaigns.

Included also in this chapter is an introduction to the broad categories of nonviolent actions: Protest and Persuasion, Noncooperation, and Intervention. See Appendix 2 for a listing of 198 different methods identified by Gene Sharp.

Mechanisms

The ideas of strategic nonviolent struggle must move from theory to practice in order to bring political and social change. Important in the transition from ideas to action is the selection by the opposition of the preferred mechanism, or process, for influencing attitudes and behaviors of the rulers. This decision will, in turn, then influence the selection of methods for achieving the desired changes in the relationship between the people and their government.[6]

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[6] For a more detailed discussion of mechanisms and methods, see Gene Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action,* Vols. II and III.

Conversion

The mechanisms, or processes, used against an opponent to induce change describe the intent or effect of nonviolent actions in differing levels of intensity. There may be situations where the regime can be convinced that its interests can be served by adopting a recommendation or demand by the struggle group. *Conversion* has many advantages for the struggle group. The regime's concession of the validity of the purpose for change could enhance the credibility and legitimacy of opposition leaders, reduce potential risks associated with direct confrontation with the state, and, very importantly, conserve resources for employment at later stages of the conflict. However, this mechanism, which usually involves actions of low-level pressures, is often insufficient when it is used against extreme, authoritarian regimes. Nonetheless, the selection of the issue and how it is promoted have occasionally been successful against even very brutal regimes.

One example of conversion used against a military dictatorship occurred in Burma and involved the teaching of English in the public primary schools. After the military takeover in 1962, General Ne Win decided that the English language was a reminder of Burma's colonial past and declared that English would not be taught at the primary level. At that time, English was commonly spoken by most Burmese as a comfortable second language. Observers also suggested a sinister reason for the change. In order to isolate the people from foreign ideas and influences, the denial of the opportunity to learn English was merely an extension of the draconian censorship laws being instituted. Restrictions on English in university lectures were also imposed. After more than two decades, it became apparent to the regime that there were major economic consequences for this form of censorship. Foreign investors were reluctant to develop factories where the workforce and mid-level managers were incapable of communicating in the international language of business and commerce. University students could no longer be accepted in large numbers to graduate schools in the West. Graduates of Rangoon School of Medicine were no longer accepted into practice

in foreign countries or even admitted in specialty fields for study abroad. After years of the business community and pro-democracy activists advocating wider availability of English language training, the regime relented because it was convinced that the concession would serve its own interests.

Recalling that strategic nonviolent struggle attacks the sources of power, conversion efforts against a regime's pillars of support can be productive. The first step in this process is to insure that members of the organizations and targeted institutions understand that they are not, as individuals, an "enemy of the people" and, in fact, would be welcomed, appreciated, and respected as productive members within a democratic society. As soon as this goal is accomplished, members of targeted institutions will be more receptive to information about the desirability for political change and later calls for specific actions.

Conversion is the primary mechanism for expanding and strengthening the pro-democracy forces. The skillful use of propaganda to contrast life under democratic and authoritarian regimes and news about current nonviolent actions occurring throughout the world are helpful in conversion efforts. News of demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other forms of protests are examples that affect public attitudes. Most importantly, a "vision of tomorrow" with a concept of how that vision could be achieved should be presented to the public.

Perhaps the strongest force for conversion efforts is the demonstration of courage of those who oppose an authoritarian regime. Public acts of courage against oppression dispel the stereotype that sees nonviolent protestors as cowards. Courage is universally respected whether that courage is displayed by soldiers on a battlefield or by nonviolent warriors confronting an oppressive regime. In some cases, the suffering endured by members of an opposition group can greatly influence the attitudes of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Courage is not always measured in the blood shed by individuals on behalf of a cause. The willingness to brave the consequences of an act is a true measure of courage. For example, those who signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776

were displaying great courage in defying the King of England as were the 1950's and 60's civil rights activists who participated in the "sit-ins" to end segregation. Both of these acts of defiance caused the public to examine the fairness of the objectives of a struggle for which its proponents would accept grave risks.

Accommodation

Sometimes, a regime will accommodate a request or demand of pro-democracy forces, not out of respect or courtesy, but because the regime may want to defuse social tension, influence attitudes of foreign governments, impress citizens of its concern for the welfare of the people, or bring an issue to closure before opponents can exploit it for their own purposes. The regime has not been coerced but rather determines that its interests are not being directly threatened nor would it be weakened by conceding to the opposition on a particular issue. The reality is that the regime's absolute hold on power has already been weakened and has become sensitive to issues that could arouse public hostility toward the government. The news regularly reports such token accommodations made by totalitarian governments. The military regime in Rangoon and the leaders in Communist China often release a few prisoners when foreign VIP's from Western countries visit in order to accommodate, in part, the demands for political reforms. The Israeli government routinely makes symbolic gestures to accommodate the US government's requests for the humane treatment of Palestinians. These issues that governments select for accommodation are mostly considered to be irritants and, if agreed to, will not be threatening to their hold on power. In other words, it is a decision they can make with minimal perceived risks.

Recent examples of governments offering accommodation to opposition groups range from symbolic gestures to the appearance of free elections. For example, in response to increasing public protest against the Communist regime in Lithuania in 1988, its Supreme Council hoped to defuse the tensions by accommodating the democracy movement's demand to amend the constitution to grant

official status to the Lithuanian language and to permit the raising of the national flag over a historic site. By that point, the democracy movement, led by a "co-committee," "Sajudis" and other support groups, had become so widespread and successful, that mere symbolic accommodations by the regime were no longer satisfactory.[7] The result was that the opposition increased its credibility as a force for democratic change.

Saddam Hussein's 2002 decision to allow a religious observance is another modern day example of accommodation. Although Saddam Hussein was in absolute control of Iraqi society, he still acceded to the demands of Shiite followers to hold a march of thousands to a religious shrine on the outskirts of Baghdad. Hussein could have denied the demand, and he certainly had the military and police forces to enforce such a ban, yet he relented, possibly hoping to avoid igniting, again, open and violent opposition to his rule.[8]

Acquiescence to the call for free elections is one of the most extreme accommodations that a regime can offer, although the integrity of such elections is almost always compromised. In the last two decades of the 20th century, there have been numerous examples of authoritarian regimes allowing "free" elections within their borders.

The 1990 national election in Burma demonstrates how regimes plot the outcome of the people's choice. One of the last official acts of Burma's General Ne Win before stepping down from power was his call for multi-party elections. For months prior to his July 1988 retirement, there had been demonstrations for political change, including multi-party elections. Ne Win considered that multi-party elections would reduce, if not eliminate, overt opposition to the dictatorship. Given his regime's proven capacity to rig elections, he

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[7] Grazina Miniotaite, *Nonviolent Resistance in Lithuania: A Story of Peaceful Liberation*, (Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2002), 30.

[8] According to reports, Saddam agreed to the march on the condition that no banners or symbols be displayed. The marchers complied, but, according to one witness, they "stomped their feet so loudly they could be heard a block away."

felt that, in an election where the opposition would be hopelessly divided, a ballot box victory was assured.[9]

It is important that when groups select issues for possible accommodation that the accommodation should be expressed in terms that would make the rulers "look good" to the public if it were granted. At the same time, the public should understand that the accommodation by the regime reflects the growing power of the nonviolent movement and that changes to improve society need not require bloodshed. The cumulative effect of conversion and accommodation strengthens society and prepares it for even stronger action.

Elections are commonly used by authoritarian regimes to accommodate opposition demands for political change. Unfortunately, for the public, opposition leaders often naively assume that the elections will be free and fair, that the public can withstand government intimidation, or that international monitors can insure the integrity of the ballot counting process. The elections in Serbia in 2000 and in Zimbabwe in 2002 are examples of different election outcomes of rigged elections.

In Serbia, the political opposition established an election monitoring system from the ballot boxes to Belgrade election central office. They had a well-trained and organized Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaign staff and a plan of action if the government should attempt to steal the election. The opposition groups' early reporting of election results from the counting stations reflected a democratic victory, and the outcome was announced before the official results were tallied. When the government revealed that, according to its count, the opposition had not won, the people went to the streets and proclaimed their victory with mass demonstrations occurring throughout Serbia. The demonstrations culminated in a march on Parliament. Preparations were so complete that the po-

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[9] After first rejecting the idea of multi-party elections, the Rangoon regime agreed to hold them in May 1990. Much to the surprise of the government, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won with over 80 percent of the votes. The regime then rejected the outcome of the election and cracked down again on political opposition.

lice and military did not intervene when the new government was declared and installed.

Zimbabwe's election in March 2002 had a much different result. In Zimbabwe, the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) designed its strategy around a Get Out The Vote campaign and international pressure for a free and fair election. Little attention was given to a "Plan B" that would go into effect should the elections be stolen by the incumbent, Robert Mugabe. Yet, there were early signs that Mugabe had no intention of relinquishing power. With promises of food and pay, youth militias, armed with clubs and knives, were formed and instructed to attack the opposition party workers. Supporters of the MDC and those suspected of thinking about voting against Mugabe were beaten and intimidated. The MDC presidential candidate was arrested for treason. Police and intelligence agents became involved in intimidating the public. Even on election day there were reports of citizens waiting in line to vote being beaten within sight of international monitors. Monitors from some European countries were deported. Voting stations were moved on election day, a government strategy that left voters at a loss over where to cast their ballots. Thousands of votes were unaccounted for when results were tabulated. Mugabe declared a victory. With no detailed plan or any capacity to enforce the mandate of the people's vote, the MDC had no alternative but to limit its response to declaring the election neither fair nor free and to call for another election. There was no assurance whatsoever that a new election would result in any different outcome.

The lesson here is that elections are too important to the regime to lose since that defeat would mean the loss of legitimacy both at home and in the international community. For the same reasons, elections are also too important for the democratic opposition to lose. Preparations should be made to insure that the public is prepared to validate their votes at the ballot box with carefully planned measures to thwart the regime's efforts to rig the results.

Coercion

Conversion and accommodation permit the oppressor the option to accept or reject the requests or demands of the nonviolent opponents with little or no immediate consequences. Coercion, however, can compel submission to demands placed before the regime. At the point where coercion can be effective, a regime's real power has already been significantly undermined. Opposition groups need to understand that attempts to coerce prematurely may undermine their own credibility with the public. Coercive demands that challenge the very existence of an oppressive government should be made only after careful planning and an objective analysis of the chance for success has occurred. If forced compliance with the demands cannot be assured, consideration must be given to a postponement or a reconfiguration of demands.

Political parties and student groups sometimes make "demands" that cannot be enforced. It would be more appropriate to inform the regime of organizational objectives, and only after mobilizing the public, to develop the group's strategic planning capacities and undermine the regime's sources of power should these objectives become specific demands. If, for example, there is a "demand" for a "free and fair election," what sanctions will be imposed upon the regime for rejecting that demand?

Coercion is successful when the demands of the opposition are achieved against the will of the regime. In the example of the October 2000 Serbian elections, opposition groups declared victory even as the Milosevic regime announced that runoff elections would be required. Anticipating election fraud by the regime, extensive planning to seize power through strategic nonviolent struggle was completed prior to the election. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs marched to the Parliament building and occupied it, decisively removing the dictator from power. Milosevic was not in a position to oppose his ouster. His primary pillars of support had evaporated. The police refused to maintain roadblocks established to keep civilian protesters from entering Belgrade, and the armed forces refused to intervene on behalf of Milosevic, citing that the election was a political

matter and not something that required military intervention. The withdrawal of these two pillars of support was a result of intensive efforts over a period of several months to convince members of the military, police and government that democratic change would not lessen their importance or result in a purge of leadership. Milosevic quickly realized that he had become powerless.

While there have been instances where threats of nonviolent coercion have resulted in victory for opposition groups, threats without a credible capacity to act do damage to any movement, as happened in Zimbabwe in 2002 when two calls for a general strike failed to materialize. It took many months of planning and coordination before another successful strike could be carried out. Attempts to coerce without the capacity to impose the threatened sanctions can result in the loss of the momentum of the democratic struggle; active public support can dwindle; and international supporters may question the viability of the movement. It is imperative that capabilities assessments be reviewed during the planning and execution of major nonviolent campaigns to avoid such adverse consequences to a movement.

Disintegration

As mentioned earlier, the ability by opposition groups to coerce the ruler is a reflection that a substantial redistribution of power has already taken place. Once the opposition recognizes that the balance of power has shifted in its favor, the regime should be attacked on a broad front by using the stronger methods of noncooperation and intervention. *If these attacks are sustained, the regime will* ***disintegrate,*** as the sources of power needed for maintaining its rule will no longer be available.

If disintegration of a regime is considered necessary by the opposition, then there must be no reduction in the intensity and scope of nonviolent actions until the collapse of the regime is accomplished. A loss of momentum by the opposition, for whatever reason, can provide the regime with an opportunity to re-assert its power. As in the "exploitation and pursuit" phase of a military campaign, which

occurs when the continuity of defensive positions has been breached, and the enemy attempts to withdraw, the attack must be pursued with the greatest intensity and a willingness to accept higher risks to bring the campaign to early closure. Without a strategic plan, a military force may not be able to respond rapidly and reinforce a breach. So it also is with nonviolent struggle.

Methods of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent actions support and reflect the mechanisms of nonviolent change. The methods of nonviolent action that are available for use by the opposition against an opponent are both extensive and varied. In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Sharp identifies almost two hundred (Appendix 2), and advises that this list is not exhaustive. In fact, creative thinking is encouraged to tailor methods for specific situations.

Nonviolent actions against an oppressive regime will frequently be met with violent retaliation. Beatings, torture, imprisonment, and other sanctions (violent, economic, and social) must be expected. When the government reacts in such a manner, however, wide publicity given to such acts can often be used by the opposition to strengthen public support for the democracy movement and to weaken the regime by exposing its brutality and by raising questions about its legitimacy. In movements over the past century, arrest and imprisonment were marks of honor.

The selection of the proper methods of nonviolent action depends upon the objectives sought by their use. Sometimes a movement, or organizations, might select a method based upon a preference or known capability, then may, or may not, select an objective for the nonviolent action. Such an approach "puts the cart before the horse." Ideally, one should first examine the objectives and then review the menu of methods to select those that provide the most appropriate means to further the strategic and tactical objectives. For ease of consideration, methods can be divided into three broad categories. These are protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention.

Protest and Persuasion

Acts of protest and attempted persuasion provide a signal to the regime that the pro-democratic forces have serious disagreements and objections to certain actions and policies of the government. These protests are primarily symbolic in intent. Moreover, these acts also serve to put the public on notice that the nonviolent opposition movement is challenging the government for specified abuses. While acts of nonviolent protests and attempts at persuasion can be used to advantage at any stage of a strategic nonviolent movement, they are generally introduced early in a struggle, even at its public initiation.

Whatever forms of protest and persuasion are selected, the acts should receive wide-spread media coverage. Demonstrations or protest letters have little or no effect if no one knows about them. One startling example of protest and persuasion that attracted the attention of the world in the 1960s in Vietnam was the self-immolation of several monks who protested against the American-backed government in Saigon. These acts of suicide certainly caused many to ponder why someone would suffer such a painful death as a means of political protest. The purpose of the sacrifice was accomplished, due in large part, because the organizers invited international news agencies to cover and to photograph the event.

These methods do not constitute direct attacks on the opponent's sources of power, discussed in Chapter 1, but rather they are indirect attacks intended to expose the actions of the regime to public scrutiny, express objections to them and attempt to persuade the regime and others that change is needed. Nonviolent struggle is more, much more, than demonstrations of discontent.

Noncooperation

Noncooperation is the most powerful category of nonviolent methods available to opposition movements. Wise selection and planning for this group of actions within a strategy enhances the likelihood of removing sources of power from the regime. The regime's

sources of power, (i.e, authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, material resources, intangible factors, and sanctions) can be attacked by the entire population, not just by males of military age. No government can survive without the cooperation of the people. The message that noncooperation seeks to convey is that "we, the people, will no longer help the government oppress its citizens." The objective is to make it difficult for the government to function. The greatest impact of noncooperation is achieved when the actions that have been selected support the nonviolent strategy and are orchestrated rather than haphazard.

Coupled with the internal noncooperation campaigns against the regime's pillars of support should be a concerted effort to develop international support for the imposition of sanctions that focus on a withdrawal of cooperation. Noncooperation on the international level as well as within the country's borders can help the supporters of political change. The means to remove international support include campaigns such as discouraging or banning investments or imports, objecting to a regime's policies in international forums, placing restrictions on visa requests by officials, placing restrictions on its own citizens on travel to the oppressive regime and limiting foreign assistance to projects administered by nongovernmental organizations that directly support humanitarian needs.

Social Noncooperation

Every person in the country can practice social noncooperation. Avoiding social interactions with targeted members of the regime can be devastating to officials and members of their families. Social elites can stop inviting regime officials to social functions and refuse to attend government sponsored and private social affairs where officials are expected to be in attendance. Children and other relatives of regime officials can be removed from invitation lists to social functions hosted by neighbors and non-governmental organizations. Parents can prevent their children from seeing or dating children of government officials. Shunning sends a message that the people cannot tolerate those who support the regime. It should,

however, be used with care and precision. If it is used incorrectly, it could interfere with ongoing efforts to move regime supporters into the ranks of the opposition. Social and sports events that give prestige to the regime can be boycotted. Even wearing clothing frowned upon by the regime is an act of noncooperation. Those who have become selected targets quickly realize the message that such noncooperation imparts.

During the American colonial period, the governor-general of Massachusetts once complained that he was no more than a prisoner in spite of the fact that he represented the English crown. No one obeyed him, the local militia ignored him, orders and directives were disregarded, and members of the church congregation shunned him.

Economic Noncooperation

Based upon the obvious fact that all governments require revenues to provide the public services expected of them, economic noncooperation as a method of strategic nonviolent action is intended to attack government support by destroying or decreasing the economic incentives available to its supporters. By denying or diminishing the means available to purchase the goods and services to carry out policies, economic noncooperation impairs the ability of the government to retain the loyalty of its supporters.

Nonpayment or underpayment of taxes ("tax avoidance") is an example of economic noncooperation, but so too are consumer boycotts of products or services that provide revenue to the government, strikes that help create economic instability, or the withdrawal of bank deposits that can create a fiscal crisis that international investors cannot ignore. In addition, international corporations, trade associations and international non-governmental organizations can sometimes be persuaded to withhold economic cooperation with targeted governments, further weakening their economic well-being. Economic instability leads not only to the weakening of the pillars of support for a government, it detracts from and limits the regime's efforts to counter an opposition's political noncooperation efforts—not an insignificant contribution to the overall strategic

objectives of a nonviolent struggle.

In a strategic nonviolent struggle, it is important to trace the flow of hard currency coming in to a government and going out. The purpose is to identify points along the way that are vulnerable to attack by methods of economic noncooperation. In some cases, hard currency originates from the sale of natural resources, and goods and services sold as a result of low labor costs. For exports, the most effective targets for the employment of economic noncooperation methods are at the points of sale, while the points of origin for imports to a regime are most vulnerable for attack.

Political Noncooperation

While any and all acts of noncooperation against a regime, as part of a strategic nonviolent movement, are "political" in nature, Gene Sharp identified thirty-eight specific political acts of noncooperation among his "198 Methods of Nonviolent Action" (see Appendix 2). These actions are aimed primarily at the rejection of authority, a key source of power for a government or an occupying power. A collateral benefit of political noncooperation is that it also tends to strengthen civil society. Organizations gain experience and confidence in their capacity to act against the regime, alone, or in concert with other like-minded groups.

Political noncoooperation is a direct assault upon the government. Declarations, manifestos, and other documents rejecting the presumed authority and therefore the legitimacy of a regime can be used to convince the public that the regime has no right to exercise authority. These acts of protests are then followed by boycotts of government institutions, work slowdowns by civil servants, and innumerable opportunities for civil disobedience by the general public, which, if widely and consistently carried out, can neutralize or even disintegrate the power of an authoritarian regime.

Intervention

Nonviolent actions whose intent or effect disrupts established behavior patterns, policies, relationships or institutions are acts of intervention. They may also have the effect of creating new patterns of behavior, relationships or even creating new institutions. Since these methods are more direct in challenging the status quo, they provide more immediate visibility to the issue at hand, a more direct challenge to authority, and the possibility of a more rapid resolution. On the other hand, acts of intervention may result in more immediate and severe repression than acts that are intended as protest and noncooperation.

Recent US history provides examples of how effective third party intervention can be in changing established behavior patterns and social relationships. Lunch counter sit-ins during the US civil rights movement were highly visible and effective actions that directly attacked and quickly ended racial segregation at restaurants. Moreover, these campaigns also brought the necessary visibility and sense of urgency needed to enact legislation addressing the broader issue of racial segregation. As the decades have passed since these actions took place, the violence that occurred during many of the sit-ins is sometimes overlooked. Sit-ins provoked countless beatings, the unleashing of police dogs, and other acts of violence. This violence, often inflicted by authorities, initiated political *jiu-jitsu*, in that the power to inflict violence against peaceful protestors spurred the even more powerful forces of justice to act against segregation.[10] In a strategic nonviolent struggle against an authoritarian regime, that force for justice on behalf of the people may not be the national government, but may require reinforcement from the international community.

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[10] Political *jiu-jitsu* is briefly defined as "A special process that may operate during a nonviolent struggle to change power relationships. In political *jiu-jitsu* negative reactions to the opponents' violent repression against nonviolent resisters is turned to operate politically against the opponents, weakening their power position and strengthening that of the nonviolent resisters." For a fuller definition, see Appendix 1, "Glossary of Important Terms in Nonviolent Struggle."

An example of international intervention was the deployment of International Peace Brigade personnel to Aceh, Indonesia in December 2002. They were to accompany persons representing human rights observers and humanitarian assistance workers who were at risk of violent attack by those opposed to the movement for a change in the political status of Aceh. At the same time, the presence of these international observers served as a deterrent to violence against Indonesian government authorities by members of those groups advocating autonomy or independence. Another example of international intervention has been the use of foreigners as nonviolent bodyguards to protect Palestinian farmers and other civilians from attacks by Israeli settlers and Israeli Defense Forces.

Acts of intervention can weaken and possibly accelerate the collapse of the regime's pillars of support. With a well thought-out strategy, supporting plans can be quickly adjusted to exploit present opportunities. Without a strategy and plans that anticipate needs for adjustment, there may be a loss of momentum. Such a loss of momentum provides the opponent time to react and regroup. Conversely, should institutions of government perceive that interventionist acts are a direct threat to survival, their members may, indeed, rally around the leader and prepare for a "fight to the finish." To reduce the risk or impact of this possibility of a siege mentality affecting regime supporters, a propaganda effort targeted towards these sources of power should be considered and implemented early.

Chapter Five
Problem Solving

The solution to a problem cannot hide when the staff study format is used.

—Saw Yo Shu, Karen National Union, when asked why he supported teaching its use for his Political Defiance Committee Staff

There must be clear objectives, a strategy, and supporting plans in order to wage any conflict successfully. The objectives and guidance for a grand strategy for nonviolent struggle will be the result of policy decisions by the opposition movement leadership. When it comes to translating these policy decisions into executable supporting plans, or when the task is to develop strategic objectives and supporting plans, a large number of problems to solve arise.

Experience has shown that problem-solving skills are often a scarce resource in pro-democracy movements in countries where authoritarian regimes have exercised tight control over society, and decision-making on major issues has been restricted to a small number of regime supporters. For example, in extreme cases, decisions about an individual's choices about where to live, what to study in college, what job to take, and what foods are available to eat are decisions that may be made by the government. In some cases, either due to fear or cultural norms, subordinates are reluctant to make recommendations, but merely carry out decisions made by others. To be adept at recognizing problems, assessing their causes, and making viable recommendations, people must have been allowed the opportunity to hone their skills on problems large and small.

The reality is that people make thousands of decisions in their lifetimes to solve problems. Most of these problems are rather minor (what to wear, what to buy, or who to invite to a birthday party for a small child). Some are more important, such as what career to pursue. Many of these decisions are of so little significance that the final choice doesn't matter because we can live with the consequences of selecting less than the optimum solution. That indifference is not the case, however, with other choices. The decision about whom to

marry is one that may affect us every day for the rest of our lives!

Like individuals, organizations must also solve problems. Because organizational decisions may affect many people both inside and outside the organization, and have resource consequences, it is important that the decision-maker has presented to him or her recommendations that are objective and based upon the best information available. Since there are many similarities in the decision-making environments of military and nonviolent struggles, the problem solving methodology of the military staff can be a useful example for those who make decisions and for those whose responsibility it is to make recommendations to the decision maker.

This problem solving methodology can be used for a wide variety of administrative and managerial topics, can be concise or detailed, and can be used at every level within a movement. It is important that the format be followed in the sequence outlined below.

Format for Staff Study
1. Statement of the Problem
2. Assumptions
3. Facts Bearing on the Problem
4. Discussion of the Facts
5. Conclusions
6. Recommendations

Paragraph 1. Statement of the Problem

As the problem is the center of attention, it is stated in the first paragraph. Finding the words to put in this paragraph may not be as easy a task as it may at first glance appear to be. There is the possibility that paragraph one could mistakenly address a symptom, rather than the problem itself. The common, everyday experience of a man who takes two aspirins with his recurring headache can illustrate an example of this mistake in logic. He has alleviated the symptoms of the headache, but the underlying problem—why he has the headache in the first place—lies undiscovered and unaddressed.

Paragraph 2. Assumptions

In a staff study, assumptions are reasonable suppositions that serve as substitutes for facts. Usually they will address the future events, conditions, and availability of resources. In effect, assumptions are artificial devices to fill gaps in actual knowledge. Ideally, we would prefer not to have to make any assumptions, and they are only included when they are necessary to address the problem to be solved. This is why assumptions should be carefully scrutinized for their validity. There is also the danger of unstated, but implied, assumptions such as about certain capabilities of groups being considered for important tasks.

Paragraph 3. Facts Bearing on the Problem

One of the important steps in successfully solving problems is collecting factual information relating to the problem. In the original example, the man with the recurring headache, all of the facts concerning his lifestyle—facts about his diet, eyesight, work habits, exercise, stress levels, and a host of others—should be outlined.

Paragraph 4. Discussion of Facts

In this paragraph, assumptions and factual information are discussed and analyzed as they relate to the problem. Through this process, options are developed and considered. The headache sufferer can serve as an example to illustrate the importance of this procedure. A doctor, seeking a solution to recurring headaches, might well examine the sufferer's exposure to all the known causes of headaches. That person may not have a problem sleeping, may handle stress well, does not live in a malaria-infested area, and does not have the flu, but he does do a lot of reading, is 40 years old, and has not had his eyes examined in over 10 years.

Paragraph 5. Conclusions

After a discussion and analysis of assumptions and available information directly relating to the problem, the best solution is selected and stated in this paragraph. For example, eyestrain might well be the conclusion that a doctor draws concerning the patient with the headache.

Paragraph 6. Recommendations

In this paragraph, the conclusions are translated into specific recommendations for the decision maker that will result in actions to solve the problem. In our example, an eye examination would be in order to solve the headaches.

A simple "test" of the recommendations is conducted using three criteria:

1. Suitability. Will the recommendations really solve the stated problem?
2. Feasibility. Can the recommendations be implemented?
3. Acceptability. Is the decision maker willing to accept the costs (in political, financial, and human resource terms)? The decision will require a diversion of existing resources or the acquisition of new resources.

An added value to using this problem-solving method is that the decision makers can review how the recommendations were developed. In addition, the decision makers may have additional information that was not considered in arriving at the recommendations. In light of this new information, a review of the staff study might be warranted. In mid-1992, a coalition of Burmese opposition groups established its Political Defiance Committee (PDC). One of its first tasks was to prepare a study on how best to wage the struggle for democracy in Burma in light of changing circumstances. It prepared a staff study, the contents of which were used in high level discussions within the National Council of the Union of Burma

to decide whether priority should continue to be given to armed struggle or if the nonviolent struggle should be pursued. Obviously, the PDC, formed to guide a strategic nonviolent struggle to parallel the nonviolent efforts of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, favored the nonviolent option, but they were careful to be objective. The staff study format was used. The PDC's staff study is an example of how this problem solving method can be used to address strategic policy questions. The study is provided at Appendix 3.

Summary

With experience, the staff study format for solving problems will become second nature to the user. Like the combination of numbers for opening a safe, the sequence of the paragraphs in the staff study format will permit opening the solution to a problem.