

Chapter Thirty-one

SOLIDARITY AND DISCIPLINE TO FIGHT REPRESSION

The need for solidarity

Faced with repression, the nonviolent resisters will need to stand together, to maintain their nonviolent discipline, internal solidarity, and morale, and to continue the struggle.

During the initial stages of the struggle, the resisters are likely to identify with the whole population affected by the grievance (the “grievance group”). It is rarely possible to achieve unanimous participation in nonviolent struggle from the grievance group. How many of them will directly participate or support the resisters will vary from one conflict to another. However, it is essential that all who participate in the struggle develop and maintain solidarity with each other, and deliberate efforts may help to achieve that. This solidarity will strengthen their morale and ability to act effectively.

Maintaining morale in nonviolent struggles is extremely important. There appear to be four basic ways of doing this:

A. Maintaining rapport and solidarity

The participants need to feel constantly part of a much larger movement that gives them, personally, support and strength to continue their resistance. They need to feel that others continue in solidarity with them. This is helped by regular contacts and demonstrations of “togetherness.” These may include mass meetings, marches, songs, parades, or symbols of unity. A common philosophy, if present, and open lines of communication among activists, leaders and support groups may also help.

B. Generating incentives to carry on the struggle

Efforts may be needed to support the determination to continue the struggle. The participants must believe their action is justified, the gained objectives will be worthwhile, and the means of action have been wisely chosen. Their morale is likely to increase if the resisters understand the technique well and if the goals and means of struggle are, or can be, related to the general population’s accepted values.

C. Reducing grounds for capitulation

Because the participants may become discouraged and fatigued, measures should be developed at the beginning of the conflict to prevent or minimize those feelings. At least the original participants should continue their support for the struggle. Specific supports for their morale may be helpful. Special entertainment may be marginally useful. Where the nonviolent resisters and their families lack food, housing, money, and the like—because of participation in the struggle—a major effort to supply these may be needed.

The sufferings incurred in the course of nonviolent struggle are sometimes interpreted by the leaders in ways that make them seem more bearable: “Our people suffer every day, and it is all wasted,” said a South African resistance leader, who invited people instead to suffer for the cause of justice.¹

¹ Leo Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 112-113.

D. Restraints or sanctions

These pressures to continue support for the nonviolent struggle differ radically from the punishments for indiscipline applied in wars, which usually consist of imprisonment or execution. Sometimes in nonviolent struggles, verbal persuasion is sufficient to bolster participation. When persuasion is not adequate, other methods may be used. These include vigils, public prayers, picketing, fines, publication of names of defectors, suspension of membership, social boycotts, economic boycotts, fasting, and nonviolent interjection. Intimidation and threats of physical harm must not be used.

If the resisters' morale and determination remain high, the opponents' repression will have failed. To achieve this, however, the resisters must maintain their nonviolent discipline.

Inhibiting repression

The opponents' difficulties in controlling the movement arise in part because the means of repression generally applicable against nonviolent struggle tend to be more limited than those against violent resistance. Brutalities and other severe repression are more difficult to justify against nonviolent resisters and may actually weaken the opponents' position, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The degree to which a regime will feel able to defy world—or internal—opinion will, of course, vary, depending on such factors as the kind of regime it is; whether it expects that certain events can be kept secret; the degree to which it is threatened by the events; how dependent it is on the outside world; and whether opinion against the regime will be translated into assistance for the nonviolent struggle group and actions against the opponents.

There is suggestive evidence that nonviolent discipline in the face of repression tends significantly to restrict future repression and to cause especially difficult problems for the opponents.

The opponents prefer violence

The opponents may seek to reduce the special difficulties of repressing a nonviolent resistance movement by falsely attributing violence to the nonviolent resisters or publicizing and exaggerat-

ing any violence that occurs. The opponents may even try to provoke violence and break the resisters' nonviolent discipline. Resistance violence is often seen to "legitimize" violent repression. The opponents may provoke violence by severe repression, or they may employ spies and agents provocateurs. If publicly revealed, the news of such acts could disastrously undermine the opponents' usual support and power position. Disciplined nonviolent resistance will help to expose any such agents.

The need for nonviolent behavior

The requirement that volunteers maintain nonviolent discipline is rooted in the dynamics of the technique of nonviolent action. Nonviolent discipline is not an alien emphasis introduced by moralists or pacifists. Nonviolent behavior is a requirement for the successful operation of this technique.

Nonviolent behavior is likely to contribute to achieving a variety of positive accomplishments, including (1) winning sympathy and support, (2) reducing casualties, (3) inducing disaffection and even mutiny of the opponents' troops, and (4) attracting maximum participation in the nonviolent struggle.

How violence weakens the movement

The introduction of violence by resisters will weaken a nonviolent struggle movement by disrupting nonviolent discipline, contributing to a possible shift to violence by resisters. It may lead to a collapse of the movement. Resistance violence shifts attention to the violence itself, away from the issues, the courage of the resisters and the opponents' usually much greater violence. The use of violence by the resisters or members of the broader grievance group tends to unleash disproportionately severe repression and to reverse any sympathy that may be developing inside the opponent group for the resisters. Success in nonviolent struggle requires that only nonviolent "weapons" be used.

Sabotage and nonviolent action

Sabotage—defined for this discussion as "acts of demolition and destruction of property"—is *not* compatible with nonviolent

struggle. The dynamics and mechanisms of sabotage are different from those of nonviolent struggle. Sabotage

- risks unintentional physical injury or death to persons serving the opponents or to innocent bystanders;
- requires a willingness to use physical violence against persons who discover the plans and are willing and able either to reveal or to block them;
- requires secrecy in planning and conducting missions;
- requires only a few persons to implement plans and hence reduces the number of effective resisters;²
- demonstrates a lack of confidence in the potential of nonviolent struggle, thereby potentially weakening the resisters' tenacity in the use of this technique;
- is a physical-material action, not a human-social action, indicating a basic conceptual shift in how the conflict is best waged;
- attempts to undermine the opponents by destroying their property, not by withdrawal of consent by the population, thereby potentially weakening a fundamental approach of nonviolent struggle;
- creates an environment in which consequent physical injury or death commonly results in a relative loss of sympathy and support for the nonviolent struggle group and the resisters' movement in general; and
- often results in highly disproportionate repression. This repression that has been provoked by sabotage is not likely to weaken the opponents' relative power position, nor to bring support for the resisters.

² Some of the methods of nonviolent intervention also require only a few persons to apply them. However, their use predominantly occurs in the context of a wider struggle in which many other resisters are applying the methods of noncooperation and protest. Acts of sabotage, however, are not generally applied in combination with mass popular resistance, and may contribute to a reduction of such resistance as confidence is placed in the acts of demolition and destruction. This shift in confidence may lead to a deliberate increase in such acts, which can increase the risk of a general shift to violent conflict of some type.

Other ways to slip into violence

One of the ways the nonviolent struggle may slip into violence occurs when resisters prepare to use it in a possible future situation. Such preparations constitute a great temptation for the resisters or members of the grievance group to use violence, especially in a crisis when limited violence against the opponents has already occurred.

The necessity of discipline

Discipline is crucial, especially when there is danger of violent outbreaks and when participants lack experience and deep understanding of the nonviolent technique.

Under this discipline, resisters must adhere to certain minimum standards of behavior, depending on the particular situation. The absence of discipline will impede or block effective use of this technique.

Continued participation in the struggle and refusal to submit to fear are the most critical aims of discipline, followed closely by adherence to nonviolent behavior. Discipline also includes compliance with plans and instructions. Discipline will help people face severe repression and will minimize the impact of the repression. It also fosters respect for the movement by third parties, the population in general, and, at times, even the opponents.

Promoting nonviolent discipline

Nonviolent action almost always occurs in a conflictual and tense situation. Nevertheless, it is possible to prevent violence and maintain discipline. Tension and aggression can be released in disciplined, nonviolent ways.

In some cases, participants in nonviolent action may intuitively, or by common accord, adhere to nonviolent discipline without formal efforts to promote it. Discipline in nonviolent action is primarily self-discipline. However, in dangerous or risky situations, stronger efforts are needed to promote nonviolent discipline. If a violent attack is to be confronted directly, both discipline and nonviolent behavior are required. Various means of encouraging discipline will be effective only to the degree that they strengthen the will or conscience of individual resisters. In-

structions, appeals, and pledges, as well as discipline leaflets, marshals, and other means, may be used to encourage discipline.

In violent situations, resistance leaders have sometimes postponed or called off a nonviolent campaign. At other times, more vigorous nonviolent struggle has been launched to provide nonviolent ways to express hostility and frustration. In the face of a hostile attack, strong discipline may be required to prevent both a violent response and a rout. If leaders wish to avoid a physical encounter, it may be better to move the nonviolent group, to disperse, or to shift to simpler, less provocative methods of action. Sometimes, certain forms of nonviolent action, such as a publicly visible demonstration, may allow for the venting of emotions, while avoiding violence.

High morale is important in achieving and preserving nonviolent discipline. The resisters' morale will often increase if they feel that some significant source of strength not available to their opponents is supporting them. Possible sources might include their chosen technique of action, the justice of their cause, the inevitability of their victory, or the support of powerful friends. But additional means are often still needed to ensure nonviolent discipline. Resisters and the general grievance group need to understand *why* the campaign needs to remain strictly nonviolent.

Wise leadership and carefully selected strategies, tactics, and specific methods, implemented with intelligently formulated plans, will contribute significantly to achieving and maintaining nonviolent discipline. Another contributing element is the training of both the general participants and special personnel. This has at times been done through study groups, workshops, seminars, sociodramas and other means. Speeches, messages, and on-the-spot appeals are also often used to prevent violence and to promote discipline.

Effective organization and communication within the nonviolent group will also contribute to nonviolent discipline. Clear lines of command and communication can produce both general and specific instruction on behavior. "Marshals," for example, can be used to help keep a demonstration nonviolent and disciplined. Pledges of nonviolent discipline have also been used.

Whether or not the arrest of leaders is expected, other persons capable of stepping into leadership positions and able to help maintain discipline should be selected in advance. If known lead-

ers are arrested, this arrangement can lead to the diffusion of leadership. In rare cases of extremely large nonviolent struggle forces that are aiming to gain independence or to destroy a dictatorship, the resistance activities and organizations may grow so strong that they take on characteristics of a parallel government, which in turn helps to maintain nonviolent discipline. If serious violence appears possible, more active nonviolent intervention may be required to prevent the violence.

The inefficacy of repression

If the nonviolent resisters remain fearless, disciplined, and persistent, then the opponents' attempt to force them to submit will likely be thwarted.

Arresting leaders and banning their organizations are insufficient to end the resistance and are likely to stifle the movement only when it is weak and people are fearful. Such repression will likely fail to crush a movement under the following conditions:

- A widespread and intensive education program on nonviolent struggle has been conducted.
- People have considerable experience in using the technique.
- Advance training has taken place and a widely distributed manual is available on how to resist nonviolently.
- Successive layers of leadership have been selected in advance.
- The first leaders set the example of fearless action, risking arrest or other serious repression.

The result of such advanced developments may be the decentralization of leadership, increased self-reliance among the resisters, and adherence to nonviolent discipline.

Repressive measures may even become new points of resistance, without increasing the resistance group's original demands. Various measures of repression may be utilized as new points to practice civil disobedience and political noncooperation to continue the group's struggle to gain its original goals.

In this situation, even an intensification of repression may fail, and may instead aggravate the opponents' problems and further

erode their own power. If the methods of noncooperation used have been appropriate for the conflict, and applied widely, strongly, and persistently, the opponents' control of the situation—and even their ability to maintain their position—may become seriously weakened. Instead of repression helping the opponents to restore control, the repression may even trigger the additional force of political ju-jitsu against the opponents.

