

C. The choice of weapons

In order to achieve optimal results, the choice of nonviolent weapons to initiate and conduct the campaign will need to be made carefully and wisely. It will be necessary to determine which of the specific methods of nonviolent action described in Part Two (and possibly other methods) are most appropriate to this particular conflict. This decision will need to be taken in the light of a variety of factors. These include the issues at stake, the nature of the contending groups, the type of culture and society of each, and the social and political context of the conflict. Other factors are the mechanisms of change intended by the nonviolent group (as to convert or to coerce), the experience of the nonviolent group, and their ability in applying nonviolent action. Finally, there are also the type of repression and other countermeasures expected, the ability of the nonviolent group to withstand them, and the intensities of commitment to the struggle within the nonviolent group. There are of course others.

The number of methods used in any single conflict will vary from only one to dozens. The choice of the specific methods to be used in a given campaign will be based on several factors. One of these is a judgment as to whether or not the basic characteristics of the method contain qualities desired for that particular conflict. For example, generally speaking, the methods of the class of nonviolent protest and persuasion (Chapter Three) are largely symbolic in their effect and produce an awareness of the existence of dissent. Their impact is proportionately greater under authoritarian regimes where opposition and nonconformity are discouraged and rare. Depending on the numbers involved, the methods of noncooperation (Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven) are likely to cause difficulties in maintaining the normal operation and efficiency of the system. In extreme situations, these methods may threaten its existence. The methods of nonviolent intervention (Chapter Eight) possess qualities of both groups, but in addition usually constitute a more direct challenge to the regime. This class of methods makes possible a greater impact with smaller numbers, providing that fearlessness and discipline are maintained.

Moving from the class of nonviolent protest and persuasion to that of noncooperation and thence to nonviolent intervention generally involves a progressive increase in the degree of sacrifice required of the nonviolent actionists, in the risk of disturbing the public peace and order, and in effectiveness. The methods of noncooperation can be interpreted as withdrawal of cooperation from an evil system, and hence as having connotations of a defensive moral action. The use of this class of methods, as

compared to nonviolent intervention, may also contribute to producing a *relatively* less explosive and dangerous social situation, in that they simply withdraw existing cooperation or withhold new forms of cooperation with the opponent.¹⁵³ The penalties and sufferings imposed directly or indirectly upon noncooperators, although severe at times, may be relatively less than those involved in nonviolent intervention. Also, the risk of such repression in any particular case may be less. It may also be easier to get people to refrain from doing something which has been ordered, i.e., to noncooperate, than to get them to do something daring which is prohibited.

For effective noncooperation, larger numbers of participants are usually required than for either symbolic protest or intervention, and the action usually continues over longer periods of time. Often a long duration is necessary for the noncooperation to achieve its impact. In 1930 Gandhi said that whereas the cooperation of three hundred million people would be necessary for a foreign-cloth boycott campaign to be successful, for the civil disobedience campaign an army of ten thousand defiant men and women would suffice.¹⁵⁴ Many of the methods of nonviolent intervention can only be practiced for limited periods of time. A continuous effect therefore is achieved only by constant repetition of the action. These methods therefore require more skilled, reliable and determined practitioners than methods of noncooperation. Because of this, the quicker methods of nonviolent intervention usually require considerable preparations in order to be successfully applied. Also, those methods are often best combined with other forms of nonviolent action. The movement using intervention methods, too, must be more highly disciplined and better led. "The quickest remedies are always fraught with the greatest danger and require the utmost skill in handling them."¹⁵⁵

Another important factor in the selection of the specific methods to be used in the campaign is whether the actionists intend to produce change by the mechanism of conversion, accommodation, or nonviolent coercion. Within that context, the specific inducements for change by the opponent which the nonviolent group is attempting to produce may be important; these may include, for example, economic losses, weakening of political position, guilt feelings, new perceptions, and the like. Where conversion of the opponent is sought, such methods as the general strike, mutiny and parallel government are obviously not appropriate. But where nonviolent coercion is intended these may be precisely the methods needed, whereas forms which rely for their impact on psychological and emotional effects on the leaders of the opponent group may be a waste of time and

effort. The problem is complicated, however, and frequently methods which apply differing pressures and use different mechanisms may be combined effectively within the same campaign. Fast rules are not possible.

In most cases more than one method will be used; then the order in which the methods are applied, the ways in which they are combined, and how they influence the application of other methods and contribute to the struggle as a whole become highly important. The methods to be used in a given situation must be considered not only for their specific and immediate impact on the conflict situation and the opponent. Also important is their contribution to the progressive development of the movement, to changes in attitudes and power relationships, to alterations in the support for each side, and to the later application and effects of more radical nonviolent methods.

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

For large-scale planned campaigns against determined opponents the question of how to combine the use of several methods is not easy to answer; it must be considered in the context both of the overall strategy of the struggle and its more localized and restricted phases. In a long struggle phasing is highly important, and the choice and sequence of methods may be the most important single factor in that phasing. Waskow speaks, for example, of the “‘escalation’ of disorder without violence.”¹⁵⁶ The importance of this phased development of a nonviolent campaign has been stressed by specialists in Gandhi’s type of nonviolent action, such as Bose¹⁵⁷ and Bondurant. As one of nine “fundamental rules” of satyagraha Bondurant lists:

Progressive advancement of the movement through steps and stages determined to be appropriate within the given situation. Decision as to when to proceed to a further phase of the satyagraha must be carefully weighed in the light of the ever-changing circumstance, but a static condition must be avoided.¹⁵⁸

It may, therefore, be determined that certain methods must precede others, in order that it may be possible later to use more radical forms.

Gandhi frequently used the response of the volunteers and public to

some specific action as a means of testing whether or not some further, more radical, form of action were possible, in such terms as degree of commitment, willingness to act, ability to withstand the opponent's sanctions, degree of discipline, and ability to remain both fearless and nonviolent. In his testimony before the Hunter Committee in 1920, for example, Gandhi said:

Hartal was designed to strike the imagination of the people and the government . . . I had no means of understanding the mind of India except by some such striking movement. *Hartal* was a proper indication to me how far I would be able to carry civil disobedience.¹⁵⁹

He also used the consumer's boycott to test readiness for civil disobedience. Gandhi wrote in 1921: "It is my firm conviction that if we bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no Government can resist."¹⁶⁰

In May 1920 Gandhi had reported in *Young India* that the organizers of the coming noncooperation movement had decided that it should take place in four stages: 1) relinquishment of honorary posts and titles, 2) progressive voluntary withdrawal from government employment, 3) withdrawal of members of the police and the military from government service ("a distant goal"), and 4) suspension of payment of taxes ("still more remote").¹⁶¹ The first stage involved the minimum danger and sacrifice,¹⁶² while the last two involved the greatest risks.¹⁶³

The 1930-31 movement was planned with a different strategy. It began with methods of nonviolent protest, such as the Salt March itself and mass meetings, and mild forms of political noncooperation, such as limited withdrawals from the provincial legislatures—all involving small numbers of people. The mass movement itself began directly with civil disobedience of a law regarded as immoral, and then developed to include both milder forms of noncooperation and more radical forms of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention.¹⁶⁴