

Nonviolence versus capitalism

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Brian Martin

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The author can be contacted at
brian_martin@uow.edu.au

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Introduction

Nonviolent action is the most promising method for moving beyond capitalism to a more humane social and economic system. Approaches based on using state power—including state socialism and socialist electoralism—have been tried and failed. Dramatic changes are definitely needed because capitalism, despite its undoubted strengths, continues to cause enormous suffering. Nonviolent action as an approach has the capacity to transform capitalism, though there are many obstacles involved.

With the collapse of most state socialist systems, there has been since 1990 much triumphal rhetoric about the superiority and inevitability of capitalism. But it is far from an ideal system—very far. It is producing economic inequality on a massive scale, with the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer. It is destroying traditional cultures, replacing them with a homogeneous consumer culture that lacks authentic community. It is causing enormous environmental damage, undermining biological diversity and depleting resources. It is making the lives of most workers bleak and meaningless, while denying work to those who do not fit the available slots.

But capitalism does produce a massive quantity of goods. It harnesses human acquisitive drives to the task of production unlike any other system. Within market parameters, it provides goods and services in a generally responsive fashion, and has dramatically raised material living standards in many countries. Capitalism does have strengths. Do the weaknesses really matter, if there is no alternative?

Actually, it is absurd to say that capitalism is inevitable. This is really just an excuse for doing nothing to examine and promote improvements and alternatives. The way society is organised is due to the actions of people, and these actions can change. History shows a tremendous range of possibilities for human patterns of interaction. Furthermore, technological development is creating new options for the structuring of work, communication and interaction. Considering

that capitalism is only a few hundred years old and continues to change, and that there is nothing approaching agreement that the current system is ideal, the assumption of inevitability is very weak indeed.

Defenders of capitalism assume that there are only two basic options: either capitalism or some sort of system based on authoritarian government, either state socialism or some other sort of dictatorship. (Capitalism is assumed to go hand in hand with representative government, but this ignores those countries with capitalist economies and authoritarian politics, including fascism and military dictatorship.) But of course there are more than these two options. There are other ways of organising economic and social life. The challenge is to figure out which ones are worthwhile and worth pursuing.

Even setting aside options that are completely different, capitalism is by no means a fixed and final system. It will be transformed and will transform itself in coming decades. It could become better or it could become worse, depending on what people do about it.

The two most prominent strategies against capitalism pursued during the 1900s were state socialism and socialist electoralism. Both were attempts to use the power of the state to transform capitalist relations. State socialism—as in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China—relied on capture of state power by a revolutionary party which, in the name of the working class, eliminated private ownership and replaced it by state ownership. In practice the communist party became a new source of rule, in many cases highly repressive.

Socialist electoralism is an attempt to bring about socialism more gradually, gaining state power through the electoral system, increasing the level of state ownership and putting restraints on capitalists. It has been pursued in countries such as Sweden, France and Italy. In practice this strategy has failed by being watered down. Rather than bringing about a transition to socialism, left-wing parties have instead become managers of capitalism, fostering social democracy, in effect an enlightened reform of capitalism. In many cases they have eventually adopted the same policies as their political rivals.

It may seem that capitalism, state socialism and social democracy are very different, but they all rely on the power of the state and hence, ultimately, on violence for control of society. Capitalism relies

on state power to protect private property, state socialism relies on state power to run both the economic and political system and social democracy relies on state power to manage the economy. So at a deep level—the level of power for social control, and the ultimate reliance on violence—these three approaches have much in common.

Nonviolent action offers another road, with the potential to be a radical challenge to capitalism without relying on state power. There are hundreds of methods of nonviolent action, including leafletting, strikes, boycotts, marches, sit-ins, refusals to obey and setting up alternative institutions. These methods have been used extensively in all sorts of settings. The most well known are the campaigns for Indian independence led by Gandhi. Here is a list of some of the most often cited highlights of nonviolent action from 1900 onwards.

- Resistance to Russian domination in Finland, 1899-1904.
- Collapse of the Kapp Putsch, a military coup in Germany, 1920.
- German resistance to the French-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, 1923.
- Gandhi's campaigns in India, 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.
- Toppling of 10 military dictatorships in South and Central America, 1930s to 1950s.
- Resistance in several European countries to the Nazi occupation, 1940-1945.
- US civil rights movement, 1950s and 1960s.
- Sarvodaya campaigns in India and Sri Lanka, 1950s onwards.
- Collapse of the Algerian Generals' Revolt, 1961.
- Czechoslovak resistance to the Soviet invasion, 1968.
- The Iranian revolution, 1978-1979.
- Direct action against nuclear power in various countries, 1970s onwards.
- Campaigns against logging, large dams, freeways and on other environmental issues, 1970s onwards.
- People power in the Philippines to bring down the Marcos dictatorship, 1986.
- Palestinian intifada, 1987-1993.
- Prodemocracy movement in China, 1989.
- Collapse of East European regimes, 1989.
- Thwarting of a coup in the Soviet Union, 1991.

- Elimination of apartheid in South Africa, early 1990s.
- Forced resignation of Indonesian President Suharto, 1998.
- Removal of Serbian ruler Milosevich, 2000.

These are all examples of major challenges to aggression, repression and oppression carried out largely or entirely without violence (though of course violence is often used *against* nonviolent activists). These events include resistance to military invasion, toppling of repressive regimes and challenges to oppressive social systems or hazardous practices. A number of social movements, notably the feminist and environmental movements, have made nonviolent action an integral part of their campaigning.

But what about nonviolent action against capitalism? A look down this list reveals that not a single one of these highly prominent actions is specifically targeted against capitalism.

Actually, there has been an enormous range of nonviolent action against aspects of capitalism—just not usually at the dramatic level of the above examples.¹ For example:

- workers' direct action against employers, such as strikes, boycotts, work-to-rule and factory occupations, to obtain better pay and conditions or a greater say in decision making;
- workers' control and cooperatives, providing alternatives to capitalist ownership and management;
- environmental movement campaigns against damaging industries, harmful products and new industrial developments;
- local campaigns against commercial developments (often linked to campaigns elsewhere);
- squatting in unoccupied buildings as a means of exposing and challenging private control over housing;
- global campaigns against agencies and arrangements extending the power of capital, such as campaigns against the World Bank and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment;
- direct action against genetically engineered crops.

As well as these initiatives that challenge aspects of capitalism, a close look at just about any aspect of capitalist society will reveal challenges using nonviolent action. Consider advertising, a crucial part of consumerism and the commodity-based culture. Responses have included rejection of advertising messages (as in "no junk mail" signs on mail boxes), campaigns against particular styles of advertising, and the creative defacing of billboards.

Nonviolent resistance to capitalism has occurred from the beginning of the industrial revolution through to the November-December 1999 protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organisation and subsequent protests in Washington DC, Prague, Melbourne and other cities against the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other global economic management forums. While there is ample nonviolent action within and against the capitalist system, this has not so often been conceived in terms of a nonviolence framework. Instead, the rhetoric and imagery of class struggle, including armed struggle, have had greater saliency in anticapitalist movements. Especially among Marxist organisers, there is neglect of or even antagonism to nonviolence.

The problem is compounded by a neglect of capitalism in writing and thinking on nonviolence. Gandhi's constructive programme of village democracy and self-reliance was certainly noncapitalist, although capitalism as a system was not widely seen as one of his main targets in campaigning. However, nonviolence writers since Gandhi have largely neglected capitalism, and indeed this neglect can be traced to the heart of the consent theory of power used by Gene Sharp as the theoretical foundation of nonviolence theory.² Sharp's model assumes a dichotomy between rulers and subjects: if subjects withdraw consent, the power of rulers dissolves. This model works best, as a foundation for practice, when rulers are obvious, as in a military dictatorship.

From the point of the view of the ruler-subject model, capitalism is a complex system. There used to be just a few owners at the top (and there still are a few such as Bill Gates and Rupert Murdoch), but increasingly ownership is dispersed among shareholders and managerial power dispersed within corporate bureaucracies. "Withdrawing consent" sounds easy enough in principle but what does it mean in practice: boycotting all corporations or refusing the boss's orders? Most people participate in the market system in various ways that are not easily captured by the ruler-subject picture.

Capitalism is, in many ways, a more robust type of system than a dictatorial regime. Market relations draw people in, making them a part of the system, whereas a dictatorship has a more difficult time providing jobs and benefits to a large segment of the population. Injustice is experienced under both capitalism and a dictatorship, but with a dictatorship the source of injustice is easier to pinpoint. For

nonviolence theory and practice, dictatorship is an “easy case”: people know what needs to be challenged, and the primary questions are about how to mobilise support and maintain campaigning momentum in the face of repression. Something more sophisticated is needed to transform capitalism.

Many of the most powerful instances of nonviolent action have been largely spontaneous, with little planning or training. This is often the case in resistance to military coups, such as the 1920 Kapp Putsch in Germany, the 1961 Algerian Generals’ Revolt and the 1991 coup in the Soviet Union. In each case the nonviolent resistance was improvised on the spot, partly because there was little or no warning that a coup would occur. Even in some of the longer campaigns, the level of planning and training has been low, such as the intifada in Palestine, which burst on the scene as a surprise to both Israelis and the Palestinian leadership and whose course over the years was more an organic development than a carefully calculated trajectory.

Spontaneous nonviolent action has a better chance of being successful when people have an intuitive grasp of what needs to be changed. In the case of a military coup, the coup must be defeated and the status quo (or better) restored. The intifada was a change of tactics—it was mass unarmed action rather than terrorism, which had been used unsuccessfully by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation—for a widely understood goal, namely ending the Israeli occupation. But if the goal is not so obvious to participants, then spontaneous nonviolent action—or violence, for that matter—is far less likely to be effective.

It was Gandhi who pioneered planning for nonviolent action. He saw overt action as part of a long-term strategy for social change, requiring great care in preparation, planning, discipline and training. His example has been taken to heart by a number of social movements, such as the US civil rights movement and antinuclear campaigners. Realising that an action may lack impact without sufficient preparation, if it is aimed at the wrong target or is ill-timed, campaigners have spent great effort in social analysis, community education and nonviolence training, in order to maximise effectiveness.

With planned nonviolent action, there is a much greater capacity to deal with complex systems of oppression, by working out targets

that deal with the source of problems as well as tapping into popular concerns. A strike for higher pay can be valuable to exploited workers but does not challenge the relationship between employers and workers, whereas a work-in to demand a greater say in what is produced aims at a more fundamental change in the relationship.

It is worth noting that the strategies of Leninism and socialist electoralism are calculated, indirect and not “spontaneous.” Workers are expected to support political parties claiming to operate on their behalf rather than acting directly against those they see as their exploiters, such as their immediate bosses. Many workers have been sufficiently convinced that they channel their efforts away from “obvious” targets such as prominent capitalists, instead aiming at party building or election campaigning. Anticapitalist activists pursuing a strategy based on nonviolence can learn from this experience: workers and others are quite capable of understanding a long-term strategy for change that initially might not seem as intuitive as tackling obvious targets. The challenge is to develop a suitable strategy that engages large numbers of people.

There is another important reason why nonviolence planning is needed to tackle capitalism: the ways that exploitation and damage under capitalism are disguised. This is nothing new or peculiar to capitalism, since every system of exploitation and inequality is justified by some rationale, whether it is the divine right of kings or the naturalness of the caste system. Yet the process of obfuscation is less transparent with capitalism. The exploitation involved in trade—for example, selling bananas in exchange for computers—is not so immediately obvious as is the source of repression when police beat and torture dissidents. The mystifications involved in the commodity form were described insightfully by Marx in the mid 1800s, yet it remains a challenge to expose the exploitation involved.

Information—including records, computer programs, correspondence, and much else—plays an ever larger role in capitalist economies. This causes additional factors to come into play that make exposure of capitalist oppression more difficult. Governments use “disinformation”—intentional telling of lies and half-truths—to advance their interests. Corporations and governments use public relations to give their messages the right “spin,” both to boost favourable images and block damaging stories. Advertising fosters a mind-set in which it is natural to assume that commodities are the

solution to problems, hindering critical thinking about the whole commodity system. Hollywood filmed entertainment creates attractive but deceptive images of what life can be like. The result is an information-rich environment that is immensely enticing. Contrary viewpoints, although sometimes censored, are often tolerated on the margins, giving the impression that there is a genuine marketplace of ideas.

This rich information environment provides new challenges for nonviolent activists. The traditional Gandhian philosophy of satyagraha involves seeking the truth through dialogue, with nonviolent action as a means of encouraging opponents to engage in the dialogue. That approach makes some sense when the facts of repression and oppression are reasonably obvious, where there is an obvious source of oppression and where there are opponents with whom activists can engage in dialogue, directly or via intermediaries. These conditions no longer apply. Much of the oppression in capitalism is built into the system of ownership and exchange: there are few obvious “opponents” who by their actions can change the system. Furthermore, the system for producing “unreality” has become so pervasive that straightforward dialogue seems ever more elusive. This is another reason why, for nonviolent action to be used effectively to transform capitalism, a deeper analysis is required, plus careful planning. A system built on a surfeit of information (with plenty of distortions and imbalances) requires a different sort of strategy than a system built primarily on censorship.

There is another reason why nonviolent action has not been seen as a strategy *against* capitalism: it has been mostly used as a method for promoting reform *within* capitalism. Strikes, boycotts, work-to-rule, rallies and many other methods have been used to improve workers’ pay and conditions, oppose harmful products and block damaging developments. These are all quite valuable, but are seldom seen as challenges to capitalism as a system. As a result, nonviolent action is not recognised as a potentially revolutionary strategy.

“Revolution,” namely a fundamental change in social relations, is of course the rhetoric of Marxism. “Reform” is seen as tepid and inadequate, even though a series of reforms may end up having a more lasting impact than a revolution that is quickly corrupted or reversed. Leninist strategy often relies on nonviolent action for early stages but on violence for “advanced” stages of overthrowing the

ruling class. One result is that those who perceive themselves as revolutionaries seldom think of nonviolence as the primary means.

There are several ways to address this. One is to develop the model of nonviolent revolution, which has been espoused by Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan, Erik Dammann and others.³ Another is to scrap the very image of revolution as too tainted by violent and masculine imagery, and to substitute an alternative, such as to think in terms of goals and methods of equality, justice, truth and participation. One challenge is that the vocabulary of “revolution” has been taken over by advertisers.⁴ Any alternative vocabulary is similarly susceptible.

In any case, if nonviolent action is to become a strategy *against* capitalism, to replace it or transform it into something qualitatively different, then the strategy needs to go beyond reform. The key here is strategy. For nonviolence to be effective against capitalism, improved understanding is needed, both of capitalism and of nonviolence itself.

Social analysis and social problems

To undertake an effective campaign requires some level of investigation. For example, a campaign against genetically engineered crops needs information on environmental risks, likely impacts on farmers and organic alternatives, plus insight into government and corporate strategies and how they can be countered. Knowledge and insight are invaluable, especially in a field where advanced science and technology play such a major role.

The professionalisation of intellectual work, especially in universities and research laboratories, has led to incredible specialisation. This is most true of technical fields such as biochemistry and computer engineering. The only groups that can take advantage of most such research are those with large resources, especially governments and major corporations, which are able to hire researchers and set the agenda for much of the research. In contrast, protest groups have little money or capacity to hire researchers or to fund expensive investigations. With a budget even one tenth of that devoted to military research and development, enormous advances in nonviolent struggle could be made.⁵

Lacking the capacity to hire researchers or fund their own research, social movements rely heavily on investigations carried out

by sympathisers, especially academics. There are many academics who study issues of interest to activists, but unfortunately most of them aim to communicate primarily to other academics. The academic system rewards scholars who publish in refereed journals, namely those relying on critical scrutiny of submissions by peers, which is a recipe for dealing only with what impresses scholars and not with what is beneficial to activists.

This has led to a way of thinking that affects even those scholars who are sympathetic to action. The basic approach is to get the theory right and then draw conclusions. The main orientation is to analysis and critique, with very little on alternatives or strategies. This sort of work can be quite valuable—some of it is truly inspiring—but it is not likely to be the foundation for participatory understanding.

What is needed is not theory from on high, developed by theoreticians and dispensed by movement gurus, but theory that can be used and refined daily by rank-and-file activists.⁶ Within some social movements, this occurs routinely. Many feminist activists have some familiarity with ideas from feminist theories, including some conception of patriarchy, alternatives and strategies; for this sort of “practical feminism,” much academic feminism is irrelevant.

Sometimes low-cost investigations can be carried out by participants. Investigations by activists are increasingly both possible and important. A search for information on the World Wide Web, plus sharing of information with other activists, can quickly lead to valuable material.

Within the nonviolence movement, there is a reasonable level of understanding of nonviolence theory, especially the methods and dynamics of nonviolent action. Nonviolence theory is an outgrowth of the practice of nonviolence and has not “gone academic” the same way as many other areas, perhaps because there are fewer careers to be made in the field. In order to apply nonviolence theory to capitalism, there needs to be a compatible analysis of capitalism, one that can be used by activists.

Analysing capitalism is a major enterprise. There are vast bodies of writing in various traditions, including neoclassical economics, Marxism and non-Marxist political economy. There are insights to be had for nonviolent activists, but to extract them is no easy task. Most of the writing is uncritical of capitalism, while most of the critical

works give little attention to strategy for activists. There is a rich banquet for theorists, with only a few crumbs for activists.

Rather than sifting through analyses of capitalism, an alternative approach is to start with the alternative to capitalism and the method of obtaining it and build up activist-relevant theory from that. In the case of nonviolence, the alternative and the method are jointly specified: a nonviolent society created through nonviolent action.

That is the approach taken here. The starting point is nonviolence, which is both a method and a goal. “Nonviolence” is used in a broad sense, including participation and dialogue as well as lack of physical violence. Capitalism is analysed from the perspective of how it can be challenged and transformed using nonviolent action. Of course, it is useful to draw on some of the many insightful analyses of capitalism. But the key point is this: rather than develop a comprehensive analysis of capitalism first and then draw implications, instead critiques of capitalism are drawn on just to the extent that they are relevant for a nonviolent challenge. That means in addition that the analysis must be reasonably clear to activists. A high-level analysis understandable only to a few scholars is not much value except to the scholars themselves.

Needless to say, what I offer here is just one contribution to the process, which to be successful must involve many people grappling with ideas and using them in conjunction with practice.

Overview

In the spirit of activist-relevant analysis outlined above, chapter 2 deals with nonviolence, outlining methods, giving examples, presenting arguments for and against, and examining theory. For those who have been exposed to nonviolence theory and practice, this will be familiar ground.

Special attention is given to weaknesses of nonviolence, at a theoretical level, for challenging distributed systems of domination such as capitalism. The implication is that nonviolence theory must be supplemented by an appropriate analysis of the system being challenged. That may seem obvious, but in fact nonviolence theory relies on a very general theory of power and works reasonably well in practice only because many activists have a very good practical insight into local systems and dynamics of power. This combination

works moderately well for obvious systems of domination, such as dictatorship, but for more dispersed systems of power such as capitalism, activists need deeper understandings.

With this background on nonviolence, chapter 3 looks at capitalism. Some of the obvious problems with capitalism are outlined, such as exploitation of workers, but only briefly.

The main part of the chapter describes three central aspects of capitalism that are specially relevant for developing a nonviolence strategy. The first is the most obvious: capitalism's link with systems of violence, including government, the military and police. Without the ultimate sanction of violence, capitalism would not survive. But this reliance on violence is hidden through the routine operation of the market and needs to be brought into brighter view. Nonviolent action is ideally designed to challenge and undermine systems based on violence, so the key here is to design nonviolent actions that tackle the violent underpinnings of capitalism.

But although capitalism depends ultimately on violence, for most of the time it is sustained by belief systems and everyday behaviours, including those associated with consumerism, property, entitlement, individualism and selfishness. Challenging such beliefs and behaviours is a difficult task. Nonviolent action offers one approach, but not just any action will serve. Careful examination of options and alternatives is needed. It is in the area of beliefs and behaviours that the most effort is needed, especially because capitalism has an unparalleled capacity to coopt ideological challenges.

A third central aspect of capitalism that is specially relevant for developing a nonviolence strategy is destruction of alternatives. In the rise of capitalism, prior systems and alternative practices, such as community-controlled production, cooperatives and collective provision, were destroyed or marginalised. One reason why capitalism seems like the only option is that alternatives have been eliminated. Nonviolence strategy in this area is reasonably straightforward: it is the building of alternatives, in the tradition of Gandhi's constructive programme. But this is not easy in the face of the power of capital to destroy and supplant alternatives.

Chapter 4 deals briefly with conventional anticapitalist strategies, especially Leninism and socialist electoralism, examining them through the lens of nonviolence theory. None of them has succeeded in permanently replacing capitalism with a better system, though it

can be argued that social democracy has limited many of the worst capitalist excesses. From a nonviolence perspective, a central problem with these strategies is that they rely on the use of violence, namely the power of the state, for bringing about change. The existence of a system of violence means that it can be, and often is, used to support the powerful and repress challengers. Thus, these anticapitalist strategies have given only a limited amount of power to the people, retaining much power in the hands of a ruling group, whether it is communist party elites or politicians and bureaucrats in a social democratic government.

Taking note of these failed and flawed challenges to capitalism is especially relevant because some of the greatest hostility to nonviolent alternatives has come from socialists. It might be concluded that the collapse of communism has opened a tremendous opportunity. A nonviolent challenge to capitalism now has better prospects because the alternative socialist road, based on violence, is largely discredited.

Chapter 5 looks at nonviolent alternatives to capitalism, spelling out some possible principles for organising society without the capacity for organised violence. It turns out that there are not many comprehensive visions of society that are explicitly constructed on a nonviolent foundation. To illustrate possibilities, four models are outlined: sarvodaya, anarchism, voluntaryism and demarchy. By examining these, it becomes apparent how little of the current capitalist system is viable without the ultimate sanction of violence.

One of the features of nonviolence is that it is self-consistent: it incorporates its goals within its means. In other words, nonviolent methods are used to help attain a nonviolent society. Looking at models of a nonviolent society is part of the process of developing and refining this self-consistency.

With a background of method, critique and alternative, it is time to examine strategies. This is the task of chapters 6 to 12. Chapter 6 discusses principles for assessing strategies and proposes a short check list for assessing campaigns, including questions such as “Is the campaign resistant to cooption?” This check list is used in the following chapters to assess a range of actual and possible campaigns.

Chapter 7 examines workers’ struggles, including campaigns for better wages and conditions, for jobs, workers’ control, green bans and whistleblowing. Some campaigns, such as workers’ control, provide a potent challenge to capitalism whereas others do not. It is

noted here and later that even if a campaign does not challenge capitalism as a system, it may still be very worthwhile for other reasons.

Chapter 8 looks at sabotage, an approach on the border of nonviolent action. Chapter 9 probes environmental activism, in particular campaigns against pesticides, nuclear power and local developments. Chapter 10 analyses social defence, which is nonviolent community resistance as an alternative to military defence, as a means to undermine capitalism. Chapter 11 addresses three campaigns challenging corporate globalisation: the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the campaign against genetically modified organisms and the development of free software. Chapter 12 assesses several economic alternatives—community exchange schemes, local money systems and voluntary simplicity—as strategies against capitalism.

Chapters 7 through 12 illustrate how to use a check list, developed through a nonviolence analysis, to assess strategies for their potential to challenge capitalism. The assessments given here are not definitive. What is important is for activists to decide on their own check lists and choose their campaigns and methods according to their own goals. Finally, chapter 13 discusses the relation between campaigning and the more subtle process of cultural change.

Notes

1 Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999), gives an insightful survey of recent popular challenges to corporate power.

2 Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), pp. 7-62. Sharp's ideas are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

3 Erik Dammann, *Revolution in the Affluent Society* (London: Heretic Books, 1984); Dave Dellinger, *Revolutionary Nonviolence: Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971); George Lakey, *Strategy for a Living Revolution* (New York: Grossman, 1973); Brian Martin, *Social Defence, Social Change* (London: Freedom Press, 1993); Martin Oppenheimer, *The Urban Guerilla* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969); Geoffrey Ostergaard, *Nonviolent Revolution in India* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985).

4 The title of a new glossy magazine is *Revolution: Business and Marketing in the Digital Economy*. A billboard—an ad for Adobe—shows

several men in suits with their neckties ablaze, with the web site address www.smashthestatusquo.com. Then there is the Apple Computer ad showing Gandhi and his spinning wheel, with the Apple slogan "Think different," flying in the fact of the fact that Gandhi was a trenchant critic of both capitalism and much modern technology.

5 Brian Martin, *Technology for Nonviolent Struggle* (London: War Resisters' International, 2001).

6 This view is developed in Brian Martin, "On the value of simple ideas," *Information Liberation* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), pp. 143-163.

2

Nonviolence

For many purposes, nonviolence is easier to explain through examples than definitions or theory.¹ And what better example than Gandhi's famous march to Dandi in 1930? India was then under British rule and ruthlessly exploited. The British claimed a monopoly on the manufacture of salt, taxed it and arrested any Indians who made it. Gandhi decided illegal production of salt from sea water would be a good form of civil disobedience. To maximise the impact of this act, he marched with his followers for 24 days on the way to the small coastal village of Dandi, telling about the planned act along the way and picking up hundreds of adherents. By the time the march reached Dandi, it had already served as a powerful organising method. The salt-making and arrests then served to dramatise the injustice of British rule. Similar salt-making civil disobedience actions took place simultaneously across India.²

This sort of organising would not have been possible if the aim was a violent resistance. Openness would not have been possible, either in recruitment, training or action. Participation would have been limited. Finally, violent attacks often have the effect of unifying the opponents and alienating potential supporters. The march to Dandi, in contrast, did far more to undermine support for the British and win sympathy from observers.

The US civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s made excellent use of nonviolent action.³ In the US South, slaves had been freed in the 1860s but blacks⁴ continued to be oppressed by the practice of segregation, with denial of equal opportunity and retribution for those who bucked the system. In 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, civil rights activist Rosa Parks sat in the white section of a bus, in planned defiance of the segregation laws. After she was arrested, blacks in the city boycotted the buses, many of them walking long distances to work.

The civil rights movement picked up momentum, with additional boycotts, “freedom rides” (blacks and whites on buses together traveling through the South), sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters, marches through segregated cities, road blockades and rallies. The civil rights movement made enormous strides especially through the early 1960s.

The peace movement worldwide has made extensive use of nonviolent action. There is a long tradition of war resistance, namely men refusing to go to war or to be in the army. In war after war there have been men who have gone to prison for refusing military service; in some countries they are persecuted or even killed. Others claim exemption from military service as conscientious objectors or emigrate to avoid conscription.

Many creative actions are used by peace activists to protest against wars, arms production and export, weapons systems and military support for repressive regimes. At Greenham Common in the UK, women protested against the US military base in numerous ways. They maintained a presence for years, held rallies, repeatedly entered the camp (acts of civil disobedience) and sought to win over soldiers and observers.

Other types of peace protest have included marches (including some across continents), rallies, vigils, street theatre, human blockades of trains carrying weapons, trade union bans of arms shipments, sailing ships into nuclear test zones and pouring blood on military documents.

In recent decades, the environmental movement has made heavy use of nonviolent action. Forest activists, for example, have put themselves in the way of bulldozers and chain saws, sometimes locking themselves to equipment in order to hinder operations. Others have placed themselves in vulnerable positions in front of ships carrying rainforest products, using kayaks or even by swimming.

These sorts of dramatic actions are only the tip of the iceberg of activity by social movements. Behind effective actions there is usually a vast amount of work in analysing the situation, preparing for action, nonviolent action training, mobilising support and coordinating the action. For every individual on the “front line” in a dangerous or challenging action, there may be dozens behind the scenes arranging meetings, transport, food, child care, posters, public statements, media liaison, legal support, fund raising and much else.

A few highlights of nonviolent action may be thrilling and dramatic, but there is lots of routine work necessary to support these visible actions. This is not so different from military operations: a fighter pilot's sortie is backed by the work of aircraft designers, builders, testers, maintenance workers, planners, accountants, cooks and many others.

Furthermore, the most visible and risky actions do not necessarily have more impact than other sorts of action. Sometimes the most effective methods may be quiet work in talking to neighbours, producing leaflets, holding small meetings and writing letters. Sometimes the most effective actions are personal behaviour in not using certain products, voicing disapproval of a popular policy or being friendly with a stigmatised person. Whether or not these methods are called nonviolent action, they are certainly part of the process of social change from the grassroots.

Nonviolent action has been used to thwart military coups, sometimes with dramatic success. In 1920 there was a military coup in Germany, led by Wolfgang Kapp. The putschists captured the capital, Berlin, and the elected government fled to Stuttgart, where it advocated nonviolent resistance. There was a general strike in Berlin and massive rallies. Noncooperation was an effective tool of resistance. Typists refused to type Kapp's proclamations and bank officials refused to cash his cheques without appropriate signatures, and all authorised signatories refused to sign. The coup collapsed after just four days.⁵

Algeria used to be a colony of France. From 1954 there was an armed struggle for independence, leading to huge loss of life. In August 1961, as the French government made moves towards granting independence, anti-independence French generals in Algeria staged a coup. There was even a possibility of invasion of France. Many French soldiers in Algeria, most of them conscripts, refused to cooperate, simply staying in their quarters. Many pilots took off but flew their planes elsewhere so they could not be used by the generals. As well, there were massive protests in France. The revolt collapsed after just a few days without a single person killed.⁶

There are numerous cases of repressive governments toppled by nonviolent action, especially in Central and South America.⁷ In 1944, the repressive military regime in El Salvador was easily able to put down a military revolt. But soon after there was a nonviolent

insurrection. University students began a strike, which was soon joined by high school students, then over a period of weeks by physicians and business people, until virtually the entire country was at a standstill. Police shot at some boys, killing one. This led to massive protest in the streets. The dictator, Martínez, did not risk using military troops against the crowds. The troops were reliable against the military revolt but were less so in the face of popular opposition. Martínez left the country just six weeks after the beginning of the nonviolent insurrection.⁸

Finally, there are a few cases where nonviolent resistance has had a degree of success against military invasion. In 1968 Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia to put an end to the liberalisation of communist rule there, so-called “socialism with a human face.” There was no military resistance, which the Czechoslovak military judged to be futile. Instead, there was a unified nonviolent resistance, from Czechoslovak political leaders to the citizens. One of the most effective forms of opposition was fraternisation: talking to the invading troops, telling them about what was really going on—they had been told they were there to stop a capitalist restoration—and encouraging them to support the resistance. The initial aim in the invasion was to set up a puppet government; this was not attained for eight months: leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party refused to cooperate with the invaders and no alternative leaders could be found. The invasion backfired badly on the Soviet Union, discrediting its policies worldwide and causing splits or policy switches in many foreign communist parties.⁹

Thus on numerous occasions nonviolent action has demonstrated its effectiveness when used by social movements and against military coups, dictatorships and invasions. But what about social revolution, seen by some as the ultimate goal? Perhaps the best example is the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979, which was largely carried out by nonviolent means.¹⁰ The Shah’s regime was a ruthless one, using imprisonment and torture against dissidents and even at random just to strike terror into opponents. It was highly armed and had diplomatic support from all major powers, including the US, Soviet Union, Israel and most Arab states.

As protest developed in 1978, police fired on a crowd, killing several people. In Islamic tradition, a mourning procession was held 40 days later. The procession turned into a political protest, and

troops were used again. This process of killing, mourning and protest occurred at various locations around the country, causing an escalation in the resistance, with secular opponents joining the processions. Workers joined by going on strike and instituting go-slows in factories, until virtually the entire economy ground to a halt. As rallies became larger, more and more people were shot dead in the streets. But eventually troops refused to fire and the Shah fled the country.

The death toll in Iran was horrific, a total in the tens of thousands. But this was small compared to many armed liberation struggles. For example, many hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the Algerian war for independence, out of a smaller population than Iran's.

It is important to note that not all uses of nonviolent action lead to long-lasting, worthwhile change. Nonviolent action is not guaranteed to succeed either in the short term or long term. The 1989 prodemocracy movement in China, after a short flowering, was crushed in the Beijing massacre. Perhaps more worrying are the dispiriting aftermaths following some short-term successes of nonviolent action. In El Salvador in 1944, the successful nonviolent insurrection against the Martínez dictatorship did not lead to long term improvement for the El Salvadorean people. There was a military coup later in 1944, and continued repression in following decades.

The aftermath of the Iranian revolution was equally disastrous. The new Islamic regime led by Ayatollah Khomeini was just as ruthless as its predecessor in stamping out dissent.

At this point it is valuable to point to the role of planning in nonviolent action. Nonviolent action in social movements, such as the Indian independence movement, the US civil rights movement, the peace movement and the environmental movement, is usually backed up by a fair amount of analysis, preparation, training and mobilisation. Activists think through what they are trying to achieve and pick their methods and opportunities carefully. By doing plenty of preparatory work and by careful planning, the odds are increased that outcomes will be positive and the movement can build strength and attain its goals.

In contrast, many of the dramatic actions against coups, dictatorships and invasions have been largely spontaneous. In the cases of the Kapp Putsch, the Algerian Generals' Revolt, the nonviolent insurrection in El Salvador, the Czechoslovak resistance to the Soviet

invasion and the Iranian Revolution, there was little or no preparation, planning or training. In essence, nonviolent action in these cases was largely spontaneous.

Spontaneity is not a reliable basis for success or long-term change. An army could hardly be expected to be successful without recruitment, weapons, training and leadership. Why should nonviolent action be fundamentally different?

What this suggests is that the power of nonviolent action is yet to be fully realised. Military methods have been used systematically for centuries, with vast resources devoted to train soldiers, build weapons and develop strategies. Revolutionary violence has had far fewer resources, but even these have been substantial. By comparison, nonviolent action has had only minimal support and a low level of development.

Nonviolent action

Gene Sharp gives this description: “Nonviolent action is a generic term covering dozens of specific methods of protest, noncooperation and intervention, in all of which the actionists conduct the conflict by doing—or refusing to do—certain things without using physical violence.”¹¹ In his classic work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* he catalogued 198 different methods, and since then he has discovered hundreds more. Some methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion are public speeches, petitions, banners, picketing, wearing of symbols, fraternisation, skits, religious processions, homage at burial places, teach-ins and renouncing honours. Some methods of noncooperation are social boycott, student strike, providing sanctuary, hijrat (protest emigration), consumers’ boycott, refusal to rent, traders’ boycott, lockout, refusal to pay debts, international trade embargo, lightning strike, prisoners’ strike, sympathy strike, working-to-rule strike, economic shutdown, boycott of elections, refusal to accept appointed officials, civil disobedience, deliberate inefficiency, mutiny, severance of diplomatic recognition and expulsion from international bodies. Methods of nonviolent intervention include fasting, sit-ins, nonviolent obstruction, guerrilla theatre, stay-in strike, seizure of assets, alternative markets, revealing identities of spies and alternative government.

Nonviolent action is just what its name suggests: it is action rather than nonaction, and it avoids physical violence. Nonviolent action

can be coercive and can cause (nonphysical) harm. Strikes, boycotts and sit-ins can all cause economic harm to a business. Noncooperation with political officials and alternative systems for decision making can cause political harm to a government official. Ostracism can cause psychological distress to an individual. Nonviolent action is, after all, a method of waging conflict. If it is going to be effective, it has to make some impact.

Nonviolent action does not involve physical violence. That rules out beatings, imprisonment, torture and killing. Nonviolent action is for waging conflict, so it does not include routine activities such as attending a meeting, voting in an election, buying vegetables or reading a newspaper—unless, due to circumstances, they are integral parts of a conflict. For example, if a government outlaws carrots, then growing, selling and buying carrots could be a form of nonviolent action.

A crucial issue is whether nonviolent action is used for a “good” purpose. Of course, what is considered good depends on who is judging. Cutting off funds, for example, can be used either to support or oppose racial segregation. In 1956, the legislature in the state of Virginia passed a law to cut off state funding for any school that racially integrated.¹² In contrast, the international campaign against apartheid in South Africa included withdrawal of investment. In the Gandhian approach, acting against repression or oppression are an essential part of the idea of nonviolent action, whereas in the pragmatic approach exemplified by Sharp, nonviolent action is simply a method which can be used for good or bad. Here, the term “satyagraha” is used for the Gandhian conception and “nonviolent action” for the pragmatic one. In practice, even those using the pragmatic conception usually refer to examples where nonviolent action is used to challenge oppression.

Just because nonviolent action can be used for good and bad purposes does not mean it is a neutral method. Weapons can be used for good and bad purposes, but they are not neutral because they are easier to use for harm than for social benefit. A guided missile is a tool with a built-in bias: it is easy to use to destroy and kill, though in principle it could be used to foster harmony, for example by being an object of worship! Nonviolent action is also a tool with a built-in bias: it is easier to use against oppression than for it. To understand why, it is useful to list some of the strengths of nonviolent action.

- For those seeking to create a world without violence, nonviolent action is self-consistent: it uses only those methods that are compatible with the goal. This is unlike military defence, which relies on the threat of violence to prevent war.

- Nonviolent action allows maximum participation in social struggle. Nearly anyone can sign a petition or join a boycott or vigil without regard to sex, age or ability. This is unlike military or guerrilla forces, which put a premium on physical fitness and often exclude women, children and the elderly.

- Nonviolent action often works better than violence, since it is more likely to win over opponents and third parties. It often works better than using official channels for change, such as formal complaints to governments, court actions or elections, since nonviolent action can be used by those without administrative impact, legal support or electoral influence.

- Nonviolent action often leads to more lasting change, because it mobilises more of the population in a participatory fashion than either violence or official channels.

- Compared to violent struggle, nonviolent action usually leads to fewer casualties. Although violence can be and is used against nonviolent protesters, this is usually less intense and sustained than against armed opposition, since it is easier to justify violence against a violent opponent. Note, though, that nonviolent action is not guaranteed to cause fewer deaths and injuries.¹³

If these are some of the strengths of nonviolent action, what are the weaknesses? Of course, nonviolent action may not work, but then no method is guaranteed to work in every circumstance. Therefore it is useful to compare nonviolent action to two alternatives: violence (armed struggle) and official channels (such as operating through bureaucracies, courts and governments).

- Nonviolent discipline can be hard to sustain. A small number of participants who become violent or run away can be damaging to an action. Military forces use force to maintain discipline, for example by imposing punishments on those who refuse orders and by court-martalling deserters. Official channels have their own requirements, such as forms to fill out and payments to make: those who do not follow the rules usually make little progress. Nonviolent discipline relies more on moral sanctions than do the military and bureaucracies.

- Mobilising support for nonviolent action can be difficult. Military forces can employ soldiers or use conscription. Government departments hire employees. So far, most nonviolent activists have been volunteers.

- Nonviolent action has an image problem. From the point of view of those who favour or are used to armed struggle, nonviolent action seems weak. A standard assumption is that the side with the greater capacity for inflicting violence will necessarily win in a struggle. From the point of view of those who favour official channels, nonviolent action is inappropriate, illegitimate or illegal.

- As a pragmatic method for reform, nonviolent action may not lead to lasting change. As noted above, there have been some spectacular nonviolent campaigns against dictatorial regimes, but the aftermath has seen a new system of oppression. On a smaller scale, nonviolent protests may lead to a change in government policy that is quietly reversed once the protesters are gone.

- As a systematic alternative, nonviolent action has extremely radical implications. To run a society without systems of violence would mean that governments and corporations could not survive without widespread support. Completely different arrangements might be needed for organising work, community services and defence.

Nonviolent action thus has many strengths but also a number of weaknesses. Several of the strengths are important for challenging capitalism, especially self-consistency, participation and forging lasting change. It is also important for activists to be aware of and try to overcome the weaknesses, especially the reversal of changes made through nonviolent action and the need for a full-scale alternative to capitalism.

It might seem that there is a contradiction in saying that nonviolent action can lead to more lasting change and yet that many of the changes brought about are susceptible to reversal. The resolution is to note that nonviolent action can lead to more lasting change than violence or official channels, especially because it is through a participatory process, but even so reversal of this change is still a great risk. To bring about long-lasting change without using violence is bound to be difficult, and to use violence is to risk causing enormous suffering.

Severe repression¹⁴

A common argument against nonviolent action is that it can't work against severe repression. What about ruthless invaders who just keep killing people at the least hint of resistance? What can be done to stop a programme of total extermination? How can nonviolent action possibly work against repressive regimes such as the dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin?

It is worthwhile exploring various responses to these questions. Nonviolent resistance *can* be successful against very repressive regimes. As described earlier, the Iranian revolution occurred in the face of a ruthless military and torture apparatus. Against the Nazis, there was effective nonviolent resistance in several countries, including Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands.¹⁵ However, nonviolence was not tried, in a big way, against the Nazis. Many Germans were ardent supporters of the Nazis, and many people in other countries were admirers as well. Supporters of military methods tended to be especially favourable to the Nazis.

There was no concerted attempt from outside Germany to undermine the Nazis using nonviolent methods. Stephen King-Hall gives a telling account of how he tried futilely as late as 1939 to drum up British government support for a campaign to undermine the German people's support for Hitler.¹⁶ There has been no further study on this issue, so it must be considered a possibility that concerted nonviolent attack from around the world could have undermined or restrained the Nazi regime.

Throughout the rule of the Nazis, there *was* a German opposition to Hitler. This internal opposition was not fostered by the Allies, nor was it given sufficient credit by postwar writers.¹⁷

To take another example, consider the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqi military under Saddam Hussein. Nonviolent resistance by the Kuwaiti people was probably not a possibility, since Kuwait was a grossly unequal and authoritarian society, so it would have been difficult to build a popular base for nonviolent resistance. The time to stop Saddam Hussein was much earlier, in the 1980s. Nonviolent opposition was required then against the governments of Iraq, Kuwait and others in the Gulf region that were repressive and undemocratic.

A principal reason why Saddam Hussein's Iraq became such a military power and threat was the support given by outside powers.

The Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980 was supported by the governments of the US, Soviet Union and many other countries. Numerous companies sold Saddam Hussein arms and technologies of repression. Governments were silent about his use of chemical weapons against Iranians and against Kurds in Iraq and about his brutal repression of political opponents in Iraq. He was given diplomatic support right up until the invasion of Kuwait.

Since many governments gave Saddam Hussein support during the 1980s, a key role for nonviolent action should have been to expose and oppose the hypocritical foreign policies of Western governments. That is a lesson for the future. There are plenty of repressive regimes in the world today being given full support by Western governments.

Real-life dictatorships are not as all-powerful as might be imagined. Under the brutal military regimes in Argentina and Chile in the 1970s and 1980s, many individuals continued to openly express opposition in the workplace, in public protests and in the media. Student protests shook the harsh regimes in South Korea and Burma. If nonviolent resistance could be prepared for and expanded, then dictatorships would be difficult to sustain.

For example, consider the courageous stand of publisher Jacobo Timerman in Argentina, who maintained his newspaper's open resistance until he was arrested and tortured. An international campaign led to his release and he wrote about his experiences in a powerful book. His efforts were among those that contributed to the collapse of the generals' regime in the country.¹⁸

Ruthlessness—namely, the psychology of the ruler—may not be the key factor. Instead, the real issue is how to make the ruler dependent in some way on the nonviolent resisters. This might be economic dependence or it could be the influence of family members who know people in the resistance. If there is a dependency relationship, then the ruler will encounter great obstacles if severe repression is used, because pressure will increase on the ruler. But if there isn't some direct or indirect connection between the two sides, then even a fairly benevolent ruler may do really nasty things.¹⁹

The issue of severe repression highlights the issue of suffering. In the Gandhian tradition, suffering by nonviolent activists is a primary mechanism for the effectiveness of nonviolent action, since recognition of this suffering is supposed to “melt the hearts” of opponents.

Acceptance of the inevitability of suffering has been criticised, especially by feminists, as perpetuating submissive and dependent orientations that have been imposed on subordinate groups for too long. A more pragmatic response is to note that suffering is seldom effective in converting those dispensing violence. In the case of the 1930 salt satyagraha, the police who brutally attacked protesters were not greatly deterred by the suffering they caused. However, the campaign was influential due to impact on people around the world who read about it through the reports of journalist Webb Miller.²⁰ So the key to winning over others was a chain of observers and communicators who passed on information about the campaign until it reached those who were ultimately responsible, in this case the British government. This process has been called the “great chain of nonviolence.”²¹

Not all methods of nonviolent action open activists to physical attack. Boycotts, for example, are relatively safe compared to sit-ins. If repression is harsh, methods and tactics need to be specially chosen. More use can be made of quiet “mistakes” in carrying out tasks and “misunderstandings” of orders. Preparation in advance is crucial for things such as shutting down factories, protecting dissidents, providing food and shelter for survival, maintaining communications and exposing repression to the world. When support for the resistance becomes widespread, open defiance becomes possible.

In many countries, challenging capitalism is not as likely to lead to brutal physical attacks as would, for example, opposing a harsh dictatorship. In the normal operation of capitalism, suffering is imposed through economic mechanisms, such as job losses, destruction of livelihoods, injuries on the job and harm from dangerous products. As will be seen in later chapters, dealing with capitalist repression is less difficult than dealing with the attractions of the consumer society.

A nonviolent society

Nonviolent action is often thought of as just a set of methods, but it also is the basis for a way of life. There are several ways to approach this. One is the constructive programme, part of Gandhi’s legacy. It involves taking positive measures to overcome poverty, discrimination, exploitation and other social ills by grassroots efforts to build supportive and vibrant communities. Nonviolent action is often a

“negative” process: it is used against systems of domination. The essential complementary process is the building of systems without domination.

The constructive programme can be interpreted as a programme of service, namely support and aid for those in greatest need. Another dimension of creating a nonviolent society is the creation of social, political and economic arrangements that minimise oppression. This might be called the “institution building” side of the constructive programme. It includes, for example, workplaces in which workers and community members make decisions about what to produce and how work is done. There is more on this in chapter 5, which covers nonviolent alternatives to capitalism.

Yet another dimension to a nonviolent society is appropriate technology.²² Technology, which includes everything from hoes, shoes, televisions and needles to jet aircraft and supercomputers, is both a product of society and a reflection of political and economic values. Some technologies are more supportive of a nonviolent society than others. For example, interactive communication media such as the post, telephone and email provide fewer opportunities for domination than do one-directional media such as newspapers and television. One way to help build a nonviolent society is by choosing and developing technologies that support self-reliance.²³

This outline gives only the briefest introduction to possibilities for a nonviolent society. The point is that nonviolent action as a method is only one part of the picture. The method needs to be tied to an alternative.

The consent theory of power

Gandhi approached nonviolent action as a moral issue and, in practical terms, as a means for persuading opponents to change their minds as a result of their witnessing the commitment and willing sacrifice of nonviolent activists. While this approach explains some aspects of the power of nonviolent action, it is inadequate on its own. Moral persuasion sometimes works in face-to-face encounters, but has little chance when cause and effect are separated. Bomber pilots show little remorse for the agony caused by their weapons detonating far below,²⁴ while managers of large international banks have little inkling of the suffering caused by their lending policies in foreign countries.

For insight into both the strengths and weaknesses of nonviolent action, in particular for dealing with capitalism, it is useful to turn to the consent theory of power, proposed by Gene Sharp as the theoretical foundation for his study of the politics of nonviolent action.²⁵ Sharp is the world's foremost nonviolence scholar. Although his work has received little attention from other scholars, it is enormously influential in nonviolence circles. His theory of power is often presented as the theory component in nonviolent action training.

The essence of Sharp's theory of power is quite simple:

- people in society can be divided into rulers and subjects;
- the power of rulers derives from consent by the subjects;
- nonviolent action is a process of withdrawing consent and thus is a way to challenge the key modern problems of dictatorship, genocide, war and systems of oppression.

The two key concepts here are the ruler-subject classification and the idea of consent. The "ruler" includes "not only chief executives but also ruling groups and all bodies in command of the State structure."²⁶ Sharp focuses on the state,²⁷ spelling out the various structures involved, especially the state bureaucracy, police and military. All those besides the rulers are the subjects.

Sharp defines political power, which is one type of social power, as "the totality of means, influences, and pressures—including authority, rewards, and sanctions—available for use to achieve the objectives of the power-holder, especially the institutions of government, the State, and groups opposing either of them."²⁸ Sharp counterposes his analysis to the common idea that power is a monolithic entity residing in the person or position of a ruler or ruling body. He argues instead that power is pluralistic, residing with a variety of groups and in a diversity of locations, which he calls "loci of power." The loci of power provide a countervailing force against the power of the ruler, especially when the loci are numerous and widely distributed throughout society.

Accepting the argument that power is not intrinsic to rulers, then it must come from somewhere else. Sharp gives the following key sources of power: authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources and sanctions. What is the basis for these sources of power? This is where the second key concept of Sharp's enters in. He says that "these sources of the ruler's power depend *intimately* upon the obedience and cooperation of the

subjects.”²⁹ Without the consent of the subjects—either their active support or their passive acquiescence—the ruler would have little power and little basis for rule.

Power for Sharp is always contingent and precarious, requiring cultivation of cooperation and manipulation of potentially antagonistic loci. His consideration of the sources of power thus leads him to obedience as the key: the “most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects. Obedience is at the heart of political power.”³⁰

Sharp’s focus on obedience then leads him to ask why people obey. He suggests that there is no single answer, but that important are habit, fear of sanctions, moral obligation, self-interest, psychological identification with the ruler, zones of indifference and absence of self-confidence among subjects.

Nonviolent action constitutes a refusal by subjects to obey. The power of the ruler will collapse if consent is withdrawn in an active way. The “active” here is vital. The ruler will not be threatened by grumbling, alienation or critical analyses alone. Sharp is interested in activity, challenge and struggle, in particular with nonviolent methods of action.

The consent picture works best, as theory, when there is an obvious oppressor. Sharp refers regularly to Stalinism and Nazism, and his examples of challenges to authority mostly deal with situations widely perceived as oppressive by Western political judgement. Capitalism is not included. While Sharp gives numerous examples of nonviolent action by workers, he offers no examination of capitalism as a system of power.

One reason for this is that the ruler-subject model does not fit capitalism all that well. True, the traditional Marxist classifications of bourgeoisie and proletariat—ruling class and working class—seem to fit a ruler-subject picture. But classes, according to Marx, are defined by their relation to the means of production. Can withdrawal of consent be used to change relationships to means of production? It is not a matter of just withdrawing consent from a particular factory owner, but of withdrawing consent from ownership itself. How to achieve that is not so obvious.

Capitalism is a system of exchange, based on markets for goods, services and labour power. In all of these there is an element of

reciprocity. In a retail shop, the exchange is money for goods. In employment, the exchange is money for labour. Oppression in capitalism is built into the exchange system, for example in the surplus extracted by owners, in the alienation of workers, in the degradation of the environment and in dependency of Third World economies. A boycott is a method for withdrawing consent, but can it be used to withdraw consent from the exchange system itself, or from its oppressive elements? Because exchange involves each party both giving and getting something, the idea of rulers and subjects does not fit all that well.

In some workplaces the owner-boss is like a ruler, directly ordering workers around. But in corporate bureaucracies of any size, domination is more diffuse and complex. Many workers both exercise power over subordinates and are subject to superiors. Furthermore, there may be cross-cutting systems of authority, so that formal power depends on the task.

Likewise, in the marketplace, individuals may be both buyers and sellers, with a different exchange and power relationship from situation to situation. The idea of withdrawing power from a ruler does not make a lot of sense in these circumstances.

Thus, because capitalism is a system of cross-cutting relationships, in which oppression is built into the system of exchange as well as exercised through direct domination, the consent theory is not so obviously applicable. The challenge is to modify or supplement consent theory to make it more relevant to capitalism.

Besides capitalism, other systems of power have similar complexities, including patriarchy,³¹ bureaucracy and racism. Actually, even systems of domination that seem to fit the ruler-subject model are much more complex. Stalinism was not just a matter of Stalin himself wielding power by consent of the people. A fuller understanding of Stalinism would require analysing the mobilisation of support and suppression of dissent through the Communist Party, the process of industrialisation, the reconstitution of the hierarchical army in the 1918-1921 war against the Western attack on the revolution, the social inheritance of Tsarism and the international political environment.

One of the intriguing aspects of consent theory is that although it has considerable theoretical shortcomings, it is remarkably well suited for activists. Unlike Marxism, which is a theory built around collec-

tivities, social relationships and large-scale processes (classes, base-superstructure, hegemony), consent theory is individualistic and voluntaristic. It immediately implies that individuals can make a difference: all they need to do is withdraw consent and the power of rulers is undermined. This can actually be quite effective, because experienced and perceptive activists often have a remarkably good grasp of power structures, especially local ones. Through their own understanding of complexities of power, they essentially provide the structural analysis that is missing from consent theory. In turn, consent theory provides activists with an easy way to grasp that their own actions can have an impact. The theory, of course, does not provide detailed guidance on what actions to take in particular circumstances, nor a guarantee of success. Therefore activists are seldom under illusions about the difficulty of their task: preparation, training and careful decision making are required.

This suggests that to develop a nonviolent challenge to capitalism, a key factor is for activists to have an understanding of how capitalism works, from the point of view of nonviolent intervention. That is the topic of the next chapter.

Notes

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4 Terminology has changed. "Negro" was the accepted term at the beginning of the civil rights movement, "black" became standard in the 1960s and more recently "African-American" has been used.

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9 H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Philip Windson and Adam

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10 David H. Albert (ed.), *Tell the American People: Perspectives on the Iranian Revolution* (Philadelphia: Movement for a New Society, 1980); Fereydoun Hoveyda, *The Fall of the Shah* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).

11 Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), p. 64.

12 Sharp, p. 240.

13 This point is made forcefully by Gene Keyes, "Heavy casualties and nonviolent defense," *Philosophy and Social Action*, Vol. 17, Nos. 3-4, July-December 1991, pp. 75-88.

14 This section is adapted from Brian Martin, "Social defence: arguments and actions," in Shelley Anderson and Janet Larmore (eds.), *Nonviolent Struggle and Social Defence* (London: War Resisters' International, 1991), pp. 81-141, at pp. 99-107.

15 Jacques Semelin, *Unarmed Against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe 1939-1943* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993).

16 Stephen King-Hall, *Total Victory* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), appendix 3.

17 Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1961). See also Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982).

18 Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (New York: Vintage, 1982).

19 Ralph Summy, "Nonviolence and the case of the extremely ruthless opponent," *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, May-June 1994, pp. 1-29.

20 Thomas Weber, "'The marchers simply walked forward until struck down': nonviolent suffering and conversion," *Peace & Change*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1993, pp. 267-289.

21 Johan Galtung, "Principles of nonviolent action: the great chain of nonviolence hypothesis," in *Nonviolence and Israel/Palestine* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Institute for Peace, 1989), pp. 13-33.

22 Godfrey Boyle, Peter Harper and the editors of *Undercurrents* (eds.), *Radical Technology* (London: Wildwood House, 1976); Ken Darrow and Mike Saxenian (eds.), *Appropriate Technology Sourcebook: A Guide to Practical Books for Village and Small Community Technology* (Stanford, CA: Volunteers in Asia, 1986); Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1973)

23 Johan Galtung, Peter O'Brien and Roy Preiswerk (eds.), *Self-Reliance: A Strategy for Development* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1980).

24 For an excellent treatment of the psychodynamics of killing, see Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995).

25 See especially Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), pp. 7-62 and Gene Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980), pp. 21-67 and 309-378. The following analysis is drawn from, and includes extracts from, Brian Martin, "Gene Sharp's theory of power," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1989, pp. 213-222.

26 Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom*, p. 22.

27 The term "the state" is used to refer to the system of government and government-run institutions, including the military, police, courts, government departments for taxation, welfare, education and so forth, and government-owned enterprises.

28 Sharp, *Social Power and Political Freedom*, p. 27.

29 Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 12.

30 Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 16.

31 On patriarchy and consent theory, see Kate McGuinness, "Gene Sharp's theory of power: a feminist critique of consent," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1993, pp. 101-115.

3

Capitalism from the viewpoint of nonviolence strategy

In order to develop a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it is necessary to analyse capitalism, assessing its assumptions, problems, weaknesses, strengths and driving forces. This is potentially an enormous task. Innumerable scholars and activists have analysed capitalism from various viewpoints, and there is no agreement about the best way to proceed.

The approach here is a bit different since the starting point is nonviolence strategy. This means that the challenge to capitalism cannot use violence or rely on systems of violence and should lead toward an alternative that is not built on violence. In short, nonviolence is both the means and the end. The challenge needs to be a popular, grassroots challenge, since a nonviolent struggle by a small elite has little chance of success. A nonviolence-oriented analysis of capitalism needs to be geared to this strategy. Furthermore, the analysis needs to be one that can be readily understood and implemented by grassroots activists; it cannot be something that is the preserve of a small band of intellectuals.

Of course, it is sensible to draw on insights from various analyses of capitalism and its effects, including Marxism, political economy, environmentalism, feminism, and theories of underdevelopment and neocolonialism, among others. However, rather than starting with one or more of these theories and then developing a nonviolence strategy to implement a strategy based on the theory, the starting point here is nonviolence strategy, with theories of capitalism used to inform it and offer guidance about directions, opportunities, dangers and overlooked areas.

Given the size of this task, this can be only a preliminary assessment. To set the stage, a brief overview of problems with capitalism is given. Some of the strengths of capitalism are mentioned, followed

by capitalism's links with other systems of domination. Finally, three crucial areas are presented: capitalism's links with systems of violence; belief systems; and the need for alternatives.

At the core of capitalism is private control of the means of production, including land, factories and knowledge. This is backed up, ultimately, by the coercive power of the state. Generally speaking, the system of ownership and control encourages individuals and groups to put special interests above general interests. This is responsible for many of the problems with capitalism.

What is called capitalism can be many things.¹ It is typically a system in which a small number of large corporations dominate in most sectors of the economy. This is commonly called "monopoly capitalism" though "oligopolistic capitalism" would be more accurate. Capitalism is never a pure or free-standing system but in practice is always intertwined with other systems of power, including the state, patriarchy and the domination of nature. Free-market libertarians advocate a totally free market, perhaps maintained by a "minimal" state, but such a system is, as yet, hypothetical. "Capitalism" as discussed here refers to "actually existing capitalism."²

Capitalism is not homogeneous. There are major differences between capitalist societies, with adaptations to local political, religious, cultural and other features. The use of the label "capitalism" can tend to obscure the variability in capitalist systems.

Capitalism has shown a remarkable capacity for regeneration in the face of crises. Some Marxist analysts have referred to today's system as "late capitalism,"³ but it is possible that it will, centuries hence, be known as "early capitalism." As capitalist economies move from the industrial era to postindustrial society or information economy and move from national economies to a global economy, what people recognise as capitalism is transformed.

The word "capitalism" is used because the system is based on private control of capital, namely the means of production. To call this a free market system is a misleading euphemism. Markets are quite possible without private ownership. The "free" in "free market" implies freedom from state control, but actually it is the state that protects the conditions that make capitalist markets possible. So the term "capitalism" is used here, with the understanding that this refers to "actually existing capitalism" of the kind involving large corpora-

tions and state support rather than some libertarian ideal market system.

Problems with capitalism

Since problems with capitalism are well known, only a summary is given here. This is the “case against capitalism”; the generalisations do not apply to every circumstance or individual.

- Social inequality is fostered within and between societies: the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. There is nothing in systems of exchange that promotes equality, and in practice countries or individuals that amass wealth can use the wealth to gain advantages over others. One of the rationales for government is to control and compensate for the tendency of markets to generate inequality.

If a person has a serious disability, they may be unable to produce as much as an able-bodied worker, or perhaps unable to obtain a job at all. In a society built around people, the person with a disability would be given support and training to become a productive member of society. Capitalism has no process for achieving this. Similarly, a country that is much poorer in natural resources or skills cannot compete with richer countries. Rather than helping that country, international capitalism keeps it in a dependent position.

- Work is unsatisfying. Under capitalism, work is a means to an end, namely to get money to purchase goods and services, rather than an end in itself.

- Workers are alienated from the product of their labour. Because decisions about products and methods of work are mostly made by employers, workers essentially become cogs in the workplace, often with little personal connection with the ultimate outcome of their labour. This is especially the case when there is a fine division of labour, as when workers in Malaysia produce one component of a car that is assembled in Korea and sold in the US.

- Those who cannot obtain jobs suffer poverty and boredom. Markets do not guarantee jobs for everyone, and employers benefit from a “reserve labour force” of unemployed people, the existence of which keeps those with jobs in line. Since work is one of the things that gives many people their sense of identity, those who are unemployed suffer boredom, greater health problems and loss of motivation as well as poverty.

- Consumers buy goods as substitute gratification in place of satisfying work and community life. Companies make money by selling goods and services and collectively promote a “consumer society.” Advertisers prey on people’s fears and inadequacies to encourage purchases.

- Opportunities for economic gain foster antisocial and dangerous practices, such as bribery, workplace hazards and legislation to protect monopolies. When profits and corporate survival become the prime concern, all sorts of abuses occur. Corporations bribe government officials (legally or illegally) for special favours. To save money, unsafe working conditions are allowed to persist and injured workers fired and given as little compensation as possible. Lobbying and pay-offs are used to encourage politicians to pass legislation to benefit the most powerful corporations, by giving them trade concessions, preferential treatment, government contracts, and guaranteed monopolies.

- Selfishness is encouraged and cooperation discouraged. Since wealth and income are acquired primarily by individuals, capitalism fosters individualism and encourages selfishness. Sharing of ideas and labour is discouraged when only a few reap the benefits.

- Men use positions of economic power to maintain male domination. It is well known that most of the wealthiest owners and powerful executives are men. Capitalism obviously is quite compatible with patriarchy. Similarly, dominant ethnic groups can use economic power to maintain their domination.

- Military and police systems, which are needed to protect the system of private property, are also used for war and repression. This will be discussed further later.

- The profit motive encourages production and promotion of products with consequences harmful to human health and the environment, such as cigarettes, pesticides and greenhouse gases. It is common for products such as pharmaceuticals to be sold even though they have not been adequately tested or are known to have dangerous side-effects, and for efforts to be made to boost sales and avoid paying compensation to victims. Most environmental impacts are treated as “externalities”: their cost to society is not incorporated in the price. Consequently, there is no built-in market incentive to eliminate environmental impacts that are borne by others, and a strong profit incentive to oppose attempts by governments or others

to incorporate these costs in prices of goods. An example is the strenuous efforts by soft drink manufacturers against legislation to require a refundable deposit for bottles. In contrast, there is little or no profit incentive to promote certain options that are healthy and environmentally sound, such as walking to work or sharing goods.

As noted before, this is a stark presentation of the case against capitalism. Obviously not every generalisation applies universally. For example, though work is often unsatisfying, for some workers it is satisfying much or all of the time. The problem is that providing satisfying work is not a goal or design principle of capitalism. Similarly, some owners and managers make decisions for the public interest at the expense of profits. But although individuals can do good things, the capitalist system has no built-in method of encouraging this. The key problems with capitalism are predictable consequences of the way it is organised.

Strengths of capitalism

It is possible to get carried away with the problems of capitalism. Problems always need to be taken in context; especially important is comparison with alternatives. Capitalism may have problems but some other systems have worse ones.

As well as countering one-sided anticapitalist critiques, examination of capitalism's strengths is also important in order to formulate better strategy. By understanding what capitalism does well, it may be possible to avoid unrealistic hopes and plans—such as the expectation that capitalism is on the verge of collapse.

Capitalism has repeatedly demonstrated the capacity to promote great increases in the productive capacities of societies, harnessing individual and social drives for improved living standards.⁴ This is not guaranteed, as periodic recessions, depressions and collapses have demonstrated; also, increased economic productivity is possible in other systems such as state socialism. However, capitalism has an impressive record, with economic growth in numerous countries being far greater globally than in the days of feudalism. Comparisons between North and South Korea and between East and West Germany suggest that capitalism fosters economic growth far more effectively than state socialism. This can be attributed to the harnessing of self-interest, competition and the search for profits,

compared to the bureaucratic constraints of state socialism. True, rampant capitalism growth is responsible for many problems, from inequality to environmental destruction, but the positive side is dramatically increased productivity.

Although capitalism is compatible with dictatorship, it also thrives in societies with representative government in which certain civil liberties are maintained, at least for most people most of the time. The “creative destruction” by which new products and new markets supersede old ones is facilitated by a moderately flexible society in which there is a degree of open dialogue and adaptation to new conditions. Furthermore, representative government provides social supports and opportunities for some citizen participation that can mitigate some of the worse excesses of capitalism, thus protecting the system against itself. For example, a free press and freedom of assembly together can operate to expose harmful products and damaging policies, thus protecting workers and consumers and ultimately ensuring a greater productive capacity.

Although many harmful and wasteful products are produced, capitalist markets are responsive enough to produce and distribute many largely beneficial products, such as vegetables, bricks, beds and recorded music. Indeed, the amazing range of consumer choice is one of the most enticing features of the capitalist system. In buying screws, breakfast cereals, travel packages or building materials, there are options for nearly every taste and requirement. Obviously there are limits to choice: taxpayers are *de facto* consumers of “defence services” but do not have a choice between military troops, conflict resolution services and peace brigades. But where choice is catered for by markets, even a small market segment can attract entrepreneurs, such as book publishers or cleaning services for tiny niche markets.

Capitalism judged by principles for a nonviolent alternative

Any challenge to capitalism needs to have some alternative in mind. In chapter 5, some nonviolent alternatives to capitalism are assessed against five principles, which themselves can be viewed as features of an expansive interpretation of nonviolence. Here is an evaluation of how capitalism rates.

Principle 1: Cooperation, rather than competition, should be the foundation for activity.

Contrary to this principle, capitalism is founded on competition between firms and between workers, and discourages cooperation, except for the purposes of competition. It appeals to people's worst impulses with the claim that pursuing self-interest serves the greater good. However, all available evidence from every field suggests that cooperation works better than competition.⁵

Principle 2: People with the greatest needs should have priority in the distribution of social production.

Capitalism does not operate according to this principle. Instead, the standard idea is that allocation of the economic product is through jobs: people get rewarded for doing the work to keep society going. This is a sort of meritocracy. However, although jobs do some of the allocation, there's far more to the story. What actually determines a large proportion of the allocation of goods and services are:

- ownership of capital (providing profits to owners);
- credentials (providing high salaries to those with the background and opportunities to obtain degrees and enter occupational areas with protection against those without credentials⁶);
- executive salaries and perks (providing high return to managers with more power);
- state interventions (welfare, pensions);
- unpaid work (housework, child rearing).

Within the framework of the regulated market, solutions to economic inequality include reducing working hours, increasing wages, reducing credential barriers, taxing wealth and paying for housework. However, none of these challenges the foundations of capitalism.

Philosophers who look at "just desert" find little justification for unequal rewards.⁷ Why should someone receive more simply because they have rich parents or high natural ability?

There is plenty of production in the world today to satisfy everyone's needs but not, as the Gandhian saying goes, anyone's greed. The problem is distribution.⁸

Principle 3: Satisfying work should be available to everyone who wants it.

Under capitalism, this principle is not fulfilled. People are expected to adapt to fill available jobs, rather than work being tailored to the needs of people.⁹ A job is typically regarded as an unpleasant activity that is necessary to obtain income for a good life.

Compared to a society that distributes goods to those who most need them, under capitalism there is a great deal of inappropriate production, wasted effort and pointless activity, including advertising, planned obsolescence, military production, provision of luxuries for the rich and unnecessary work and jobs that serve only to help justify receiving a share of society's resources.¹⁰ In contrast, there is a great deal of work that is needed but for which there is little or no pay, including child rearing, provision of goods and services for the poor, environmental improvements, and friendship and support for people who are lonely or have disabilities.

Principle 4: The system should be designed and run by the people themselves, rather than authorities or experts.

Contrary to this, capitalism is founded on control by those with the most money and power. Participation by the people is fostered only to the extent that it helps firms compete or maintains managerial control (as in limited forms of industrial democracy).

Principle 5: The system should be based on nonviolence.

Contrary to this, capitalism is founded on the state's use of its police and military power to protect the system of ownership.

Thus, capitalism fails on all five of these principles. Every one of them is a challenge to the capitalist way of doing things.

With this brief background on problems with and strengths of capitalism, it is time to turn to key areas from the viewpoint of nonviolence strategy. Three are outlined here: systems of violence, belief systems and alternatives. These arise from central aspects of nonviolence strategy. First, since the strategy is based on nonviolence, it is obvious to focus on the violent foundations of capitalism. Second, since the consent theory of power underlies nonviolent action, it is valuable to look at how capitalism fosters consent. Third, the other side to nonviolent action's role in challenging oppressive systems is the constructive programme, namely the building of a nonviolent society. This leads to the issue of alternatives, in particular the way in which capitalism destroys or coopts alternatives.

Capitalism's link with systems of violence

From the point of view of nonviolence, a crucial feature of capitalism is its links with systems of violence, notably the military and police. For some capitalist countries, which are run as repressive states, this connection is obvious. But for capitalist countries with representative governments, the connections between the military, police and capitalist social relations are less overt.

For most of the time, overt state violence is not required to defend capitalism, since most people go along with the way things are. If the challenge to capitalism is violent, such as by a revolutionary party that uses bombings or assaults, then police and military forces are used to crush the challengers. But sometimes there are serious nonviolent challenges, especially when workers organise. Troops are typically called out when workers in a key sector (such as electricity or transport) go on strike, when workers take over running of a factory or business, or when there is a general strike. Spy agencies monitor and disrupt groups and movements that might be a threat to business or government. Police target groups that challenge property relations, such as workers and environmentalists taking direct action.

At the core of capitalism is private property.¹¹ Military and police power is needed to maintain and extend the system of ownership, but this is hidden behind the routine operation of the legal and regulatory system, which is seldom perceived as founded on violence. If a person or corporation believes that their money or property has been taken illegally—for example through insider trading or patent violation—they can go to court to seek redress. The court decision, if not obeyed voluntarily, can be enforced by police, for example confiscation of goods or even imprisonment. For most of the time, property rights, as interpreted by the courts and various other government agencies, are accepted by everyone concerned. That goes for billion-dollar share transactions as well as everyday purchases of goods.

Petty theft, big-time swindles and organised crime are not major challenges to the property system, since they accept the legitimacy of property and are simply attempts to change ownership in an illegal manner. Criminals are seldom happy for anyone to steal from them. Principled challenges to property, such as squatting and workers' control, are far more threatening.

Many people, especially in the United States, believe that government and corporations are antagonistic, with opposite goals. When governments set up regulations to control product quality or pollution, some corporate leaders complain loudly about government interference. But beyond the superficial frictions, at a deeper level the state operates to provide the conditions for capitalism. The state has its own interests, to be sure, especially in maintaining state authority and a monopoly on what it considers legitimate violence, but it depends on capitalist enterprises for its own survival, notably through taxation. In capitalist societies, states and market economies depend on and mutually reinforce each other.¹²

In recent decades there has been an enormous expansion of private policing. In the US, for example, there are now more security guards, private detectives and others privately paid to carry out policing duties than there are government-funded police. In the military arena, there are now private mercenary companies ready to intervene if the price is right. However, these developments do not change the basic point that capitalism is built on relationships between people, production and distribution ultimately protected by armed force.

As capitalism is increasingly globalised, international policing and military intervention become more important to protect and expand markets and market relationships. For example, economic blockades, backed by armed force, can be imposed on countries such as Cuba. Usually, though, the lure of the market for elites in weaker countries is more effective than military coercion.¹³ Investment has done more to promote capitalism in Vietnam than decades of anticommunist warfare.

Belief systems

Although capitalism is backed up by violence, in day-to-day operation no coercion is required. Most people believe that the world works according to capitalist dynamics, and behave accordingly. Quite a few of them believe, in addition, that this is the way things *should* work, and exert pressure to bring nonconformists into line.

Here are a few common beliefs in capitalist societies, with comments in brackets.

- Capitalism is superior to alternatives. (Many people assume that success, in other words dominance, means superiority or virtue. Logically, this doesn't follow.)

- Capitalism is inevitable. (In the face of everyday reality, many people cannot easily conceive of an alternative that is fundamentally different.)

- It is fair that people receive what they earn. (The system of jobs operates as a method of allocating the economic product to individuals and groups. This system is arbitrary and built on the exercise of power. There is nothing inherently fair about it.)

- The market is the most efficient method of matching supply and demand. (In practice, many "markets" are artificial constructions, as in the case of copyrighted software. The market is not used for things people hold dearest, such as allocating affection in a family.)

- Selfishness is innate and justified; it makes the profit system operate. (Humans have the potential for both selfishness and altruism.¹⁴ Social systems can foster either.)

- People who are poor have only themselves to blame. (Blaming the poor ignores the exercise of power in creating poverty and denies the social obligation to help those in need.)

- Greater production and consumption lead to greater happiness. (Actually, happiness is not closely correlated with objective measures such as income.¹⁵ Happiness is more related to how people subjectively compare themselves with others, which suggests that inequality fostered by markets reduces happiness.¹⁶)

- Politics is something that politicians do; ordinary citizens are not involved except through voting and lobbying. (If politics is taken to be the exercise of power, then capitalist economic arrangements are intensely political. That workers do not vote to choose their bosses does not mean there is no politics at the workplace, but rather that workplace politics is authoritarian.)

Beliefs do not arise out of nothing: they are an adaptation to the situations in which people find themselves, sometimes challenging these situations. There are three main ways in which beliefs supportive of capitalism develop and are maintained: daily life, schooling and mass media.

First, most people adjust their beliefs to be compatible with their daily life. This is a process of reducing “cognitive dissonance,” namely the difference between reality and thought. If daily life is filled with buying and selling, this makes market exchange seem more natural. If daily life involves working as an employee along with many others, this makes selling one’s labour power seem more natural. If daily life involves noticing that some people are very rich and some very poor, this makes great economic inequality seem more natural.

But just because something seems natural does not necessarily make it positive or desirable. There is, though, a general tendency for people to believe that the world is just. When someone is poor, this is a potential challenge to the assumption that the world is just. One way to cope is to believe that the poor person is to blame.

Of course, for wealthy and privileged people, it is tempting to believe that they deserve their wealth and privilege, and that others deserve their misfortune. Beliefs in the virtues of capitalism are commonly stronger among its greatest beneficiaries.

Part of day-to-day experience is interacting with other people. If others share certain beliefs, it can be hard to express contrary views, and easier to keep quiet or adapt one’s beliefs to standard ones.

A second source of beliefs is schooling. Children learn conventional views about society, learn that they are supposed to defer to authority and learn that they need to earn a living. Just as important as what is learned in the classroom is what is learned from the structure of the schooling experience: pupils are expected to follow the instructions of their teachers, a process that is good training for being an obedient employee.

A third source of beliefs about capitalism is the mass media, especially the commercial media, which “sell” capitalism incessantly through advertisements, through pictures of the “good life” in Hollywood movies and television shows, and in plot lines in which good guys always win. Due to global media coverage, basketball star Michael Jordan became a cult figure even in countries where basketball is not a big sport. Jordan is a symbol of competitive success. He embodies the assumption that someone can become rich and famous by being talented and that being rich and famous is a good thing, worth identifying with and emulating. Jordan thus is living testimony to the capitalist marketplace, even setting aside the products that he endorses. Sport generally is something that is sold through the mass

media, especially television, and used to sell other products, such as Nike running shoes and McDonald's.¹⁷

As well as the beliefs listed above, there are others commonly found in capitalist societies, but of course not everyone subscribes to every one of these beliefs. Nevertheless, the passionate commitment to certain core beliefs by some people (especially those with the most power) and general acceptance by many others makes it possible for capitalism to carry on most of the time without the overt use of force to repress challenges. This process is commonly called hegemony.

There are quite a few contradictions within usual belief systems. Here are some examples.

- The ideology of capitalism is a free market in labour. This implies unrestricted immigration, but all governments and most people oppose this.¹⁸
- Sexual and racial discrimination is incompatible with a labour market based on merit.
- A free market in services implies the elimination of barriers based on credentials. For example, anyone should be able to practise as a doctor or lawyer.

A key group involved in shaping belief systems is intellectuals. Although universities are attacked by right-wing commentators as havens for left-wing radicals, in practice most academics, journalists, teachers, policy analysts and other knowledge workers support or accept the basic parameters of the capitalist system. Through advertising, public relations, policy development and public commentary, intellectuals give legitimacy to beliefs supportive of capitalism. Many of the most vehement intellectual disputes, for example over employment, public ownership and taxation, are about how best to manage capitalism, not how to transcend it.

Destruction of alternatives

For the past several centuries, alternatives to capitalism have been systematically destroyed or coopted. Sometimes this is through the direct efforts of owners and managers and sometimes it is accomplished by the state.

- The family-based “putting-out” system of production was replaced by the factory system. The new system was initially not any more efficient but gave owners the power to extract more surplus from workers.¹⁹

- Workers' control initiatives have been smashed. Sometimes this is at the factory level. In revolutionary situations, such as Paris in 1871 or Spain in 1936-1939, it has been at a much wider scale.

- Provision of welfare from the state, including pensions, unemployment payments, disability and veterans' supports and child maintenance, undercuts community-based systems of collective welfare and mutual support.²⁰ This helps to atomise the community, making state provision seem the only possibility.

- Worker-controlled organising is opposed. Trade unions are often tolerated or cultivated as a way of coopting worker discontent, so long as the unions focus on wages and conditions rather than control over production.

- Left-wing governments have often acted to dampen direct action by workers.²¹

- Affluence and the promotion of satisfaction through consumption have bought off many dissidents, actual and potential.

- Socialist governments, especially those that provide an inspiring example to others, have been attacked by political pressure, withdrawal of investment, blockades, destabilisation and wars.

- International agreements and agencies, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation, are used to expand opportunities for capitalism, especially through opening national economies to international investment.

- The production and promotion of attractive new products and services make people want to join the consumer society.²² Many commodities appeal to people's wants, including junk food, television, stylish cars and trendy clothes, especially targeting people's worries about relative status.²³ An orientation to commodities serves to displace achievement of human values that are possible without commodities, including friendship and work satisfaction.

Alternatives to capitalism can provide both a material and symbolic challenge. For example, socialist governments provide a material challenge by preventing capitalist investment and reducing markets. The symbolic challenge is that an alternative is possible, and this can be a more far-reaching threat. This is why even small countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua, with little impact on the global economy, may be seen as such a dire threat by elites in dominant capitalist countries. To reduce this symbolic challenge, such governments have been attacked militarily and economically

and by sustained disinformation campaigns designed to reduce their credibility. One way to defend against such attacks is through a more authoritarian socialist government, which then serves to discredit the alternative.

This was the scenario following the Russian Revolution, which occurred without much violence and had significant libertarian aspects. The invasion of the Soviet Union by eight western countries over the period 1918-1920 had the impact of militarising the revolution, helping set the stage for the repression under Stalin and making the Soviet Union a far less attractive model than it might have been otherwise. To this was added an unceasing campaign of anti-socialist propaganda that was only interrupted by the military alliance with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany during World War II.

Attacking and discrediting alternatives is one approach. Another is cooption, namely incorporating the alternative, or part of it, into the capitalist system, or winning over adherents of the alternative view. This happens frequently at the individual level. Vocal critics of capitalism may seek to rise in the system so as to be more effective in their challenge, only to become much more accepting of capitalism, and sometimes even advocates of it. Cooperatives that are set up as alternatives to commercial enterprises often gradually become more similar to them, with workers becoming employees and cooperative members becoming consumers. Some anti-establishment rock groups become commercial successes, with their iconoclastic fashions and angry lyrics a selling point.

Alternatives do not need to be “somewhere else,” namely in another country. There are small islands of noncapitalist practice and belief in the middle of every capitalist society. Public parks and libraries are based on sharing resources rather than buying and selling. Taking care of a friend’s children is cooperative rather than individualistic and competitive.

The implication of these and other examples is that a nonviolence strategy needs to both build alternatives and to inhibit the power of the capitalist system to smash or coopt alternatives.

Other systems of domination

Besides capitalism, there are various other systems of domination, including:

- patriarchy;
- the state;
- bureaucracy;
- the military;
- racial domination;
- domination of nature.

(Note that to call something a “system of domination” is to put a label on a complex, ever-changing set of relationships between people and between people and nature. Any such label is bound to be a simplification and can be misleading if it suggests rigidity and permanence. It can be useful if it captures important regularities in relationships.)

The relation between these systems is a matter of some debate. Some argue that one particular system is fundamental, with the others being subsidiary or derivative. Of special interest here is the view, common among Marxists, that class domination is fundamental, with other systems of domination being secondary. The implication is that the central struggle should be against capitalism, with other issues being given second billing until “after the revolution.” Needless to say, this view is not well received by those whose personal concerns are focussed on one of the other areas.

From the point of view of a strategy of nonviolent action, a final resolution of this issue is not essential, since the same methods—namely nonviolent action—can be used directly against all the systems of domination. (In contrast, while armed struggle may be used against the capitalist state, it is never advised as a method to challenge patriarchy.) It is useful, in this context, to outline some of the connections between capitalism and these other systems of domination.

Patriarchy. There was collective domination of men over women long before capitalism arrived on the scene. What has happened is that these two autonomous systems of power have largely accommodated each other, each changing in the process.²⁴ It is a commonplace observation that most wealthy owners and top managers are men. In some societies, women are formally excluded from high level jobs in business; in others there are psychological and structural

barriers including those associated with parental expectations, educational opportunities, job discrimination, expectations for child rearing, sexual harassment and a male executive style. Individual men may be sexist, to be sure, but the main effect comes from the system of expectations, roles and behaviours that prevents or discourages women from succeeding as big-time capitalists.

Down the job hierarchy, male domination is entrenched in many occupations, for example in civil engineering and driving tractors. However, this can change with time and vary from country to country. For example, when typewriters were first introduced, typing was a male occupation. Later it became stereotypically female. Now, with the introduction of personal computers, most users do their own typing. Most job differentiation by sex has little to do with different capabilities and much more to do with advantages for bosses and for men.²⁵ Bosses, by catering for men's interest in having preferment over women for prize jobs, maintain men's willingness to accept subordination to other men.

One way to interpret this is to say that men have used their power as men to prevent women from gaining equality within capitalism. There are some exceptions, especially in the case of inherited wealth. The liberal feminist push for equal opportunity has made significant inroads into male domination in business, though there is a long way to go.

If women gained equality within corporations, would this be a threat to capitalism? Not really, unless women brought different values and behaved differently from men in equivalent positions. All the evidence suggests that women do not behave all that differently: they are much more likely to adapt to the business ethos than to change it.

There is nothing about the system of capitalism that requires men to be in charge. Women can own property and run businesses and in general keep the system going just as well as men. The exception would be if having women in charge was so unacceptable to men that capitalism itself came under attack by men. If capitalism became a uniquely nonsexist system in a sea of male domination, then it could be vulnerable. But this is far from the case. By accommodating women's demands no faster—and often considerably slower—than other sectors of society, capitalism is in a sort of equilibrium or accommodation with patriarchy.

In principle, the expansion of capitalist relations is a threat to male domination. If women can do an equal or better job, then there is more profit to be made by hiring them and promoting them. A full expansion of the market to child rearing would involve massive expansion of paid child care, with most mothers in the paid workforce. Capitalism thus provides some pressures to undermine patriarchy, but again the outcome in practice is more like an accommodation.

The relations between capitalism and patriarchy are thus complex and variable, sometimes mutually reinforcing and sometimes destabilising. (There are important social and cultural dimensions to patriarchy as well as the economic dimension that is emphasised here.)

The state. One definition of the state is that it is a set of social institutions based on a monopoly within a territory over what is considered the legitimate use of force. Legitimate use of force is by police against violent criminals and by troops against invaders. Private militias would be illegitimate use of force, unless sponsored by the state itself. Who decides what is legitimate use of force? The state itself. However, feminists have pointed out that this definition is incorrect, since violence by men against women, especially husbands against wives, has long been treated as legal in most countries. This is violence that the state considers “legitimate” but which it does not control itself.

The key point here is that the state claims a monopoly over collectively organised violence that underpins capitalism.²⁶ This is one of the crucial areas that needs to be addressed in a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, as discussed above.

Marxists have often treated the state as an agent for the ruling class, as in the phrase the “capitalist state.” While it is certainly true that the state serves capitalists in various ways, the state can have its own interests and dynamics, not all of which are supportive of capitalists and capitalism.

One key issue, of special interest to nonviolent activists, is war.²⁷ Wars are primarily engagements between military forces on behalf of states—corporations do not run wars directly, though mercenary operations and other nonstate groups are playing an increasing role.²⁸

Many Marxists, though, claim that wars are driven by capitalist interests.²⁹ The idea is that states engage in war to protect markets. The best example is the Gulf war in 1990-1991, in which the US government organised the military effort to defend Saudi Arabia and

drive Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, which can be seen as ensuring access to oil in the interests of US-based oil companies.

However, the claim that capitalist interests are the driving force behind war looks much thinner in other cases, such as US involvement in the war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s,³⁰ US and Australian government support for the 1975 Indonesian military invasion and occupation of East Timor, and NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 to drive Serbian troops out of Kosova. There are natural resources in Vietnam, East Timor and Kosova, but there is little evidence that expected profits from these were big enough to justify the enormous expense of war.

Even a purely destructive war has benefits for corporations that produce weapons for the military. But these benefits have to be weighed against costs. If the government is funding massive military expenditures, then there is less money for other functions, including corporate subsidies and consumer expenditures.

The elimination of capitalism is unlikely to eliminate war, if states still exist. After all, there have been wars between socialist states, such as between China and Vietnam in 1979.

The key point is that the state is not simply a tool of capitalists, nor solely an “arena for class struggle,” but in addition has interests of its own. Capitalism and the state system have grown up together and are mutually supportive, but neither can be reduced to a puppet of the other. Hence a nonviolence strategy needs to address both systems of power.

Bureaucracy. The word “bureaucracy” conjures up images of government agencies that cause people headaches with their rules and regulations, commonly known as red tape. Sociologically speaking, though, bureaucracy is a way of organising work based on hierarchy, division of labour, rules defining tasks, and promotion by merit. The keys here are hierarchy and division of labour. In a bureaucracy, a worker is simply a replaceable cog.

Government departments are bureaucracies, to be sure, but so are most corporations. There are bosses at the top, layers of middle management, all sorts of rules, with everyone doing specialised jobs. Many other organisations are organised bureaucratically, including trade unions, churches, professional associations and environmental bodies.

Compared to slavery, serfdom or nepotism, bureaucracy is a great step forward. It offers predictability, reliability and accountability within its own rules and so can compare favourably to informal systems where decisions may be based more on personal favours, vindictiveness or whim (though these play a role in bureaucracies too). For all its advantages over previous systems, though, it is still a system that gives power to a few at the top and subordinates most others. It also makes it easy for outside bodies to control an organisation: only the bureaucratic elites need to be dealt with.

There are various non-bureaucratic modes of social organisation, including families (where individuals are certainly not replaceable cogs!), networks and workers' control (where workers collectively make decisions about how to organise their work and what to produce).

Bureaucracy has become dominant only in the past few centuries, along with the rise of capitalism and the state system.³¹ It is an integral part of both, yet has its own dynamics. Bureaucratic elites operate to serve their own interests, even if this is at the expense of the organisation or its mandate. This is illustrated by the enormous salaries and share packages that many chief executive officers receive. This level of remuneration is seldom required to make the corporation more profitable, especially in cases where the company is losing money but the president gets a larger bonus. It is best explained by the power that organisational elites have to reward themselves, irrespective of the advantages to the organisation.

There is a lot of managerial rhetoric about flat hierarchies, team building, the network organisation and so forth, but the reality is that traditional bureaucratic hierarchy is alive and well. Bureaucracies are similar to authoritarian regimes: there is no freedom of speech, no freedom of assembly, no right to organise opposition movements and no ability to choose leaders.³² It is often said that democratic rights end when you walk in the office door.

Some of the greatest advances for workers have been through organising in order to claim the right to strike and bargain for better wages and conditions. Yet in most workplaces rights are very limited indeed. Aside from legally protected actions, such as strikes—and these are legally protected only in some countries and under specified conditions—nonviolent action by employees is likely to lead to dismissal. Often just speaking out against the boss, or criticising the

organisation on television, leads to harassment, demotion or dismissal. The same fate faces those who refuse to cooperate with instructions, who hold vigils or set up alternative decision-making methods. Most nonviolent action is considered illegitimate when carried out by employees.³³

Other systems of power. As well as patriarchy, the state and bureaucracy, there are quite a few other systems of power worth considering, including the military, racism, industrialism, domination of nature (including domination of nonhuman animals) and heterosexism. In each case, there are strong links to capitalism but the system of power is not easily reduced to purely a symptom of capitalism. These are not issues that can be resolved easily or finally. The main implication, in any case, is that overthrowing capitalism will not necessarily lead to solving other problems. Nor will addressing the other problems necessarily help in the struggle against capitalism.

There is no need to decide which issue is the “most important.” All systems of domination need to be challenged and transformed. Capitalism is certainly one of them, and that is sufficient rationale for developing a nonviolence strategy against it. In order to make this strategy as effective as possible, it is useful to recognise that there are other systems of domination also worth opposing and transforming, and that if possible the struggles against these systems of domination should be designed to be mutually reinforcing.

Other issues

Whether capitalism is about to collapse or actually will collapse cannot be easily predicted. Nor is it obvious that collapse is a good thing. It might open opportunities for grassroots alternatives,³⁴ but it might create a demand for state repression. The collapse of the Russian economy under capitalism in the 1990s—with a 50% drop in gross national product—did not seem to improve prospects for a better alternative. In any case, the possibility of collapse should be taken into account in developing strategy.

Whether globalism is a new phase in capitalist development or simply an extension and revision of national capitalist systems is important,³⁵ but it is not clear how much this should affect the way a nonviolent struggle against capitalism is carried out.

Conclusion

There are many ways to analyse capitalism, so in choosing or developing an analysis it is essential to keep in mind what it is to be used for. The analysis of capitalism in this chapter is for the purpose of improving nonviolence strategy against capitalism. Three areas were singled out: the role of state power, founded in violence, in protecting private property and the capitalist system more generally; the shaping of belief systems to support capitalism; and the squashing or cooption of alternatives to capitalism. Later, in chapters 6 to 12, strategies will be examined to see whether they address one or more of these areas. In this sense, the analysis of capitalism presented here is one made from the viewpoint of nonviolence strategy. Another connection between the analysis of capitalism and the assessment of strategy comes through the five principles for assessing economic alternatives, applied in this chapter to capitalism and in chapter 5 to nonviolent economic models.

It is important to remember that capitalism is not the only system of domination, nor necessarily the one with greatest centrality or priority. Therefore anticapitalist strategies need to be developed in conjunction with strategies against other forms of domination. Nonviolence has the great advantage of being applicable, as both method and goal, to a whole range of systems of domination.

Notes

1 The word “capitalism” is used here to refer to a set of social relations which have significant regularity and are constantly being both reinforced and challenged. At times I refer to “capitalism” as an entity in itself; this is just a shorthand for a persistent set of social relations and should not be taken to imply that these relations are monolithic, unchanging or autonomous. A poststructural approach might avoid the word “capitalism” altogether and refer instead to the multitude of contingent and problematic negotiations, behaviours and the like. My main aim is to raise the issue of nonviolent action as a means of challenging capitalist social relations. No doubt this analysis could be rewritten from a rigorous poststructuralist perspective. However, I doubt that it would be any more valuable in that form.

2 This expression is by analogy to the use of “actually existing socialism” to distinguish Soviet-type societies from the ideal of socialism. See Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: NLB, 1978).

3 Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1975).

4 See for example David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Norton, 1998).

5 Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986).

6 Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Ronald Dore, *The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification and Development* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976).

7 On the psychological aspects, see Morton Deutsch, *Distributive Justice: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

8 On the way that social and economic changes are causing greater inequality, see Robert H. Frank and Philip J. Cook, *The Winner-Take-All Society: Why the Few at the Top Get So Much More Than the Rest of Us* (New York: Penguin, 1996).

9 There is a large body of writing on the nature of and rationale for work. See for example P. D. Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* (London: Tavistock, 1977); Vernon Richards (ed.), *Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society* (London: Freedom Press, 1983).

10 On the enormous surplus of production over needs, see J. W. Smith, *The World's Wasted Wealth 2: Save Our Wealth, Save Our Environment* (Cambria, CA: Institute for Economic Democracy, 1994).

11 Capitalism based on exchange of owned properties may be transforming into a postmodern system of negotiated access in a networked world, such as through borrowing, renting, outsourcing and franchising. See Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2000). However, even with such changes, the role of state power in maintaining the system's elements of control remains crucial.

12 Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1985), p. 105, says "remove the state and the regime of capital would not last a day." See also Michael Moran and Maurice Wright (eds.), *The Market and the State: Studies in Interdependence* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*,

AD990-1992 (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992). Note that there are areas of obvious friction between state and corporate interests. For example, businesses want secure encryption whereas government spy agencies want only encryption that they can break. The clash is most obvious in total economic mobilisation for war, during which the state overrides the market. See Lionel Robbins, *The Economic Problem in Peace and War: Some Reflections on Objectives and Mechanisms* (London: Macmillan, 1950).

13 Another factor is US policy elites' support for elite-dominated representative government in Third World countries as a better method of domination in a globalising world, using methods that appear more consensual than authoritarian: William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

14 Alfie Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life* (New York: BasicBooks, 1990).

15 Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Happiness* (London: Methuen, 1987).

16 Relevant here is Paul L. Wachtel, *The Poverty of Affluence: A Psychological Portrait of the American Way of Life* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989).

17 Walter LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1999).

18 Principled libertarians support unrestricted immigration.

19 Stephen Marglin, "What do bosses do? The origins and functions of hierarchy in capitalist production," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1974, pp. 60-112.

20 Community-based systems should be distinguished from private charities. The key distinction concerns who controls the provision.

21 Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969). A specific example of the way state-led transformation discourages popular initiative is given by Ed Brown, "Nicaragua: Sandinistas, social transformation and the continuing search for a popular economic programme," *Geoforum*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1996, pp. 275-295.

22 Martin P. Davidson, *The Consumerist Manifesto: Advertising in Postmodern Times* (London: Routledge, 1992).

23 On status and economics, see Robert H. Frank, *Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

24 Sylvia Walby, *Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

25 Cynthia Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How* (London: Pluto Press, 1985).

26 On the state and the military, see Ekkehart Krippendorff, *Staat und Krieg: Die Historische Logik Politischer Unvernunft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), as reviewed by Johan Galtung, "The state, the military and war," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1989, pp. 101-105; Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1992).

27 On grassroots strategy against war, see Brian Martin, *Uprooting War* (London: Freedom Press, 1984).

28 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

29 Karl Liebknecht, *Militarism* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1917); Martin Shaw (ed.), *War, State and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1984), especially Michael Mann, "Capitalism and militarism," pp. 25-46.

30 An excellent attempt to explain the US military involvement in the Vietnam war as in the interests of capitalism is given by Paul Joseph, *Cracks in the Empire: State Politics in the Vietnam War* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), but his material suggests that the interests of state managers took priority over the interests of capitalism.

31 Henry Jacoby, *The Bureaucratization of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

32 On bureaucracies as similar to authoritarian states, see Deena Weinstein, *Bureaucratic Opposition: Challenging Abuses at the Workplace* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979).

33 On nonviolent action within and against bureaucracies, see Brian Martin, Sharon Callaghan and Chris Fox, with Rosie Wells and Mary Cawte, *Challenging Bureaucratic Elites* (Wollongong: Schweik Action Wollongong, 1997; http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/Schweik_cbe/).

34 L. S. Stavrianos, *The Promise of the Coming Dark Age* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1976).

35 See chapter 11.

4

Conventional anticapitalist strategies

Since its very beginning, there has been opposition to capitalism, due to its disruption of communities, exploitation and creation of poverty. In spite of courageous resistance, capitalism in a matter of a few centuries has become the dominant economic system, penetrating into every part of the world and into ever more aspects of people's lives. In order to develop a better nonviolence strategy, it is useful to examine other strategies.

One approach is to try to persuade those with power and wealth, such as landowners and corporate presidents, to voluntarily relinquish their privileges. This approach has repeatedly failed. A few individuals respond to religious and moral calls for using wealth to serve the poor, but not enough. The movement for *bhoodan*—the donation of land for use by the landless—led by Vinoba Bhave in India beginning in 1951, showed the human capacity for generosity. But ultimately, despite massive efforts to encourage *bhoodan*, not nearly enough land was donated to fundamentally transform the system of ownership.¹

The basic problem with the approach of seeking change by persuading the powerful is that power tends to corrupt.² Some individuals can resist the temptations of power, but there are many who can't and plenty more who seek power precisely because they can use it for their own ends, whatever the cost to others. Many of those with power use every available means to protect it. Rather than relying on persuading individuals, the alternative is collective action by large numbers of people.

Until now, the socialist tradition has provided the major source of sustained collective challenge to capitalism. Here, two socialist approaches are considered, Leninism and socialist electoral strategy. Obviously, these are enormous topics, and only the briefest treatment is possible. The focus here is on how these strategies rely on violence.

Leninist strategy

Marx provided a penetrating analysis of capitalism. However, he devoted far less attention to alternatives to capitalism and strategies for achieving them, and consequently there are various interpretations and extensions of Marxism to anticapitalist strategy. One of them is Leninism.³ The basic idea is that a vanguard communist party will capture state power in the name of the working class, an outcome called the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” The power of the state is then used to destroy capitalist social relations. Subsequently, the state is supposed to “wither away,” leading to a classless, cooperative society.⁴

Leninist strategy relies centrally and heavily on violence, in at least two ways. First, capture of state power by the vanguard party is expected to involve armed struggle against the police and military of the existing state. Second, once control of the state is achieved, the power of the state—backed by the police and military—is used to smash capitalism. Thus, Leninism is completely contrary to a nonviolence strategy. Leninists seldom discuss what is supposed to happen to the police and military after the state withers away.

In practice, Leninism has performed true to expectations up to the stage of smashing capitalism. Communist parties came to power in many countries through armed struggle or military conquest, including Russia, China, Vietnam and Eastern European countries. In these countries, traditional capitalism was crushed. However, there has never been any sign in any state socialist country of any withering away of the state.

The costs of attempts at violent revolution are enormous. Millions of people have died in revolutionary wars in China, Angola, El Salvador and dozens of other countries. Many attempts at armed liberation have ended in complete failure,⁵ including all attempts to overthrow governments of industrialised countries. Yet for decades many on the left remained attached to the idea of revolution through armed struggle.

Even when armed struggle succeeds in bringing about state socialism, there are serious problems. In many cases the wars of liberation lead to militarisation of the revolution.⁶ The human costs of state socialism have been enormous. Under Stalin, tens of millions of Soviet citizens died in purges and avoidable famines. In China, perhaps 20 million died of starvation in the aftermath of the 1957

Great Leap Forward, a bold socialist initiative, but this horrific toll was hushed up for decades. Most state socialist countries have been highly militarised, have curtailed freedom of speech, movement and assembly, and imprisoned many dissidents.

While state socialism has brought a range of benefits, including land reform, women's rights and economic improvements, it has been a failure from a nonviolence point of view, for two main reasons. First, state socialist regimes have relied on violence for military defence and internal repression. Second, the routine exercise of nonviolent action, such as speeches and strikes, has been ruled illegal and met with full force of the state.

That state socialism "failed" in economic competition with capitalist societies is not the key issue. If the goal is a society without class domination, economic productivity is not the key criterion. Even if state socialism had produced more goods than capitalism, it would have been a failure from a nonviolence viewpoint.

One of the fundamental problems with the Leninist approach is its reliance on violence. The power of the state is supposed to be used to benefit the working class, but in practice it is used to benefit the communist party elite. Leninists argue that violence is simply a tool, a means to an end, but history shows that the tool is not neutral, since it tends to corrupt those who control it.

One possible antidote to corruptions due to the power of violence is to arm the people. If the working class is fully armed, this is a potent challenge to both capitalism and to communist party usurpers. Guerrilla struggles are the prime example of the strategy of arming the people. Some guerrilla struggles have had a high level of participation, with many women involved (though not so many participants who are physically unfit, elderly or have disabilities). However, after the triumph of guerrilla armies, it has been standard for conventional military structures to be set up. The only socialist country to rely heavily on an armed population for national defence was Yugoslavia, which may well have contributed to the scale of violence in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Another problem with state socialism is that although capitalist ownership is eliminated, domination of workers continues in the workplace in much the same way as in capitalism. Some critics even argue that state socialism is really a form of capitalism run centrally by the communist party, which should be called "state capitalism."⁷

Many members of vanguard parties are quite antagonistic towards nonviolence. One possible explanation of this is the heavy reliance of Leninist strategy on violence, seen as necessary because the ends justify the means; if arming the people is seen as necessary, then nonviolence is seen as antirevolutionary. Or perhaps this antagonism is due more to the lack of a vanguard in nonviolence strategy. If there is no vanguard, there is no privileged place for those in it. Another explanation is that creation of dialogue is at the foundation of nonviolent action, something not attractive to vanguard parties since they believe they are exclusive bearers of the true way to revolution. Finally, vanguard parties are built on the premises that capitalism is the central form of oppression and that action in the name of the working class is central to its overthrow. Few nonviolent activists subscribe to these premises.

Socialist electoral strategy

Rather than using armed struggle to capture state power, another option for socialists is to gain state power legally, through election of a communist or socialist party. This, arguably, is just as compatible with Marxism as is Leninism. The first thing is creation of a suitable party, but rather than being or remaining a vanguard party, it must become a mass party in order to win elections. This requires developing popular policies, forging a strong but flexible party organisation, engaging in political debate at local as well as regional and national levels, and campaigning in elections at all levels.

The success of socialist electoral strategy obviously requires victory in elections, but being able to form a national government is only the first step. It is then necessary to use the power of the state to move towards socialism, which means such things as nationalising key industries, introducing or expanding government services such as education and health, putting constraints on corporations and the market, and supporting popular movements for greater power to workers and local communities.

This strategy does not rely on violence for getting elected, but once in government, party leaders seek to use the power of the state to help restrain and gradually replace capitalism. As this process proceeds, the power of the state increases and is more effectively controlled by the government. In the crucial part of the strategy, the actual transition to socialism, the power of the state—including

police and military—is maintained or increased, and used to implement the policies of the socialist government. To support this process, mass mobilisation, possibly including armed workers' groups, may be used.

Socialist electoral strategy has failed in a variety of ways. Many socialist and communist parties have been unable to get enough votes to form a government. When the parties have been very popular, with a chance of winning national elections, sometimes there have been interventions by antisocialist forces to sabotage their efforts, as when the CIA supported nonsocialist parties in Italy and Chile. In some cases after being elected, socialist governments have been “destabilised.” The most famous case is Chile, where the elected socialist government led by Salvador Allende was overthrown in 1973 by a military coup, a process helped along by the CIA.

Whatever the difficulties of gaining and maintaining power, there is a far greater risk of failure from cooption, namely loss of a drive for socialism as the party accommodates itself to the capitalist system. Capitalist interests oppose socialist parties at every stage, from formation to election to policy implementation. Party leaders may be tempted to tone down their rhetoric or to delay introducing socialist initiatives if this means reducing some of the opposition from capitalists, who are able to apply pressure to media, fund opposition parties and withdraw investment.

A communist or socialist party must appeal for votes but operate in a society in which capitalists hold much of the power. Pushing too hard against capitalists may cause a backlash, with capitalists throwing their weight strongly behind less radical parties. However, not pushing hard means disillusionment among some of the most enthusiastic supporters. But left-wing supporters are not likely to vote for conservative parties, so the easiest way to remain electorally viable is to gradually move towards the centre of the political spectrum. Along the way, the rhetoric and actual programme of bringing about socialism is watered down or lost altogether. In this way what started as a socialist strategy becomes a social reform strategy.

This has certainly been the experience of the socialist parties in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, the so-called Eurosocialists. These parties started out with commitment to democratisation, Keynesian economic restructuring, cultural renewal and independent foreign policy. However, in adapting to the require-

ments of getting elected and exercising power, they jettisoned their radical goals, while the social movements that supported them were disempowered. In all major areas—the economy, the structure of state power, and foreign policy—Eurosocialist governments have retreated from their initial goals and become much more like traditional ruling parties.⁸

Less ambitious than the quest for socialism is the use of state power to bring about social reforms that, among other things, ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism. Examples are minimum wages, unemployment insurance, occupational health and safety regulations, antipollution measures, maternity leave, advertising standards, unfair dismissal legislation and taxation on wealth. While many measures are designed to protect workers, consumers and the environment from the consequences of capitalism, others are intended (as well) to make the capitalist economy work better, such as job training, tariff policy and laws restricting monopolies. The strategy of state-led social reform is often called social democracy, but a better name might be “capitalism with a human face.” It has been the rubric for many reforms that are today seen as essential in a humane, enlightened society.

Social democracy relies routinely on the power of the state to implement and enforce reforms. In this it is not greatly different from the socialist electoral strategy, except that the intended reforms are usually far less sweeping.

The basic problem with social democracy is that it just manages capitalism, not changing its central dynamic. In recent decades, with the rise of a more aggressive procapitalist movement commonly called neoliberalism, many social democratic reforms have come under attack and been whittled away. For example, reforms in western industrialised countries such as the minimum wage, unemployment insurance and a progressive income tax, designed to bring about greater economic equality in society, have been undermined by casualisation of employment, corporate relocations to low-income countries and skyrocketing income for the wealthy.

Another shortcoming of socialist electoralism lies in the electoral approach itself. It seems to be an inherent dynamic of political parties that party elites develop a vested interest in their own power, often at the expense of the public interest. Party organisations over time tend to become more hierarchical and less participatory, a

process that applies to labour parties, communist parties and green parties as well as others.⁹

Another side to elections is the legitimacy that they confer on states. When citizens can vote, they are encouraged to believe that state power can be used in their interests. This may have had some basis in reality when populations and states were much smaller, but today with enormous and complex states, popular control through elections is largely an illusion. Yet this illusion is deeply embedded and fostered by education systems and media attention to electoral politics.¹⁰ Most people see government as the avenue for fixing social problems—even those problems created by government. Socialists see government as the ultimate means for dealing with capitalism, rather than as an essential prop for its survival.

Conclusion

Obviously there is considerable overlap between the strategies of Leninism, socialist electoralism and social democracy. For example, many vanguard parties contest elections and many socialist parties gradually become social democratic parties. Meanwhile, social democratic parties, such as the New Labour Party in Britain, become virtually indistinguishable from their conservative opponents.

From a nonviolence perspective, these strategies have several common problems.

- They all rely on violence, especially the power of the state to implement socialist policies and social reform.
- They all rely on party elites to lead the challenge to capitalism.
- They are all built on productivist, managerial assumptions. The party, the state and the economy are all run on the same lines, with elites at the top to make key decisions, while others are supposed to reap the benefits and support the elites.
- They all provide a key role for intellectuals. Although many intellectuals tie their careers to capitalism, others support the state in its management of society, since this puts intellectuals in a privileged position.¹¹ Close scrutiny needs to be made of any anticapitalist movement led by intellectuals, to ensure the movement is not a way to put a group of them in privileged positions. Radical intellectuals may become involved in revolutionary parties.¹² Successful socialist revolutions almost always are led by intellectuals (Lenin and Mao are

the most prominent examples) and result in power to a stratum of intellectuals.¹³

It is important to acknowledge that these strategies have been the most powerful source of challenge and reform to capitalism. Furthermore, socialist activists have a long record of organising and campaigning at the grassroots, often in a way that builds community solidarity and initiative more than it supports party elites. So socialist strategies, whatever their formal limitations, can provide a framework for day-to-day work that is quite compatible with a nonviolence strategy. The challenge is to link this sort of organising with a different goal: the goal of a nonviolent alternative to capitalism.

Notes

1 Geoffrey Ostergaard and Melville Currell, *The Gentle Anarchists: A Study of the Leaders of the Sarvodaya Movement for Non-Violent Revolution in India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

2 For impressive evidence from psychological experiments, see David Kipnis, *The Powerholders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 2nd edition); David Kipnis, *Technology and Power* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990).

3 For an insightful critique of Marxism-Leninism, see Michael Albert, *What Is to Be Undone: A Modern Revolutionary Discussion of Classical Left Ideologies* (Cambridge, MA: Porter Sargent, 1974).

4 This classless society is called communism, but this meaning of the word “communism” has been fatally corrupted by its association with “actually existing socialism,” namely the actual societies ruled by communist parties.

5 Examples include Bolivia, Burma, East Timor, Greece, Hungary, Malaya, Palestine and South Africa.

6 Prominent examples are China, Soviet Union and Vietnam.

7 See, for example, Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* (London: Pluto Press, 1955). The category “state capitalism” is contentious given the significant differences with monopoly capitalism.

8 Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power: Emerging Forms of Radicalism in the West* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

9 Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies* (New York: Dover, [1915] 1959).

10 Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control and Popular Acquiescence* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982). See also Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

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12 For withering critiques, see Max Nomad, *Rebels and Renegades* (New York: Macmillan, 1932); Max Nomad, *Aspects of Revolt* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1959).

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5

Nonviolent alternatives to capitalism

To develop a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it is essential that there be a nonviolent alternative: a system for economic production and distribution, including methods for making decisions. It is no good just being *against* capitalism without an idea of what is going to be better. From a nonviolence point of view, the trouble with the conventional socialist strategies is that they depend ultimately on violence, via reliance on state power, to both end capitalism and bring about a socialist alternative.

A useful way to proceed is to spell out the principles that the alternative should fulfil and then to examine some proposals and visions to see how well they measure up. The principles in the box were presented in chapter 3, where it was noted that capitalism does not satisfy any of them.

- Principle 1: Cooperation, rather than competition, should be the foundation for activity.
- Principle 2: People with the greatest needs should have priority in the distribution of social production.
- Principle 3: Satisfying work should be available to everyone who wants it.
- Principle 4: The system should be designed and run by the people themselves, rather than authorities or experts.
- Principle 5: The system should be based on nonviolence.

The principles are simply a device for helping to think about what is desirable. There are other principles that could be proposed. Principle 5 alone is quite sufficient to rule out most economic systems, real or ideal.

Actually, the first four principles can be interpreted as aspects of principle 5, interpreted in an expansive fashion. Nonviolence as a

tool for social struggle allows maximum participation, and therefore any system that is run by a few people is open to nonviolent challenge. The logical outcome of a process of nonviolent struggle over system design is a participatory system, which is in essence principle 4. If the system is participatively designed, then opportunity for satisfying work (principle 3) is almost certain to be built in, since satisfying work is something widely recognised as worthwhile. Serving those in need is an integral part of the nonviolence constructive programme, thus leading to principle 2. Finally, nonviolent action is a method for engaging in dialogue and seeking a common truth, which in essence is a process built around fostering cooperation rather than one person or group beating another.

To illustrate nonviolent alternatives to capitalism, in this chapter four models are examined: sarvodaya, anarchism, voluntaryism and demarchy. Each of these satisfies most or all of the principles, but they are different in a number of respects. In the following, each alternative is briefly described and assessed in relation to the principles, with some additional comments about background, strengths, weaknesses and implications for strategy.

Sarvodaya

The Gandhian ideal of village democracy and economic self-reliance, going under the name sarvodaya, is a fundamental rejection of capitalist economics.¹ Gandhi described it as follows:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured, in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour. In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one

life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral parts. In this, there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place.²

In sarvodaya, ethics and economics are intertwined. The aim is an improved quality of life, and this means that increasing the material standard of living should not be at the expense of social and spiritual values.

There are a number of key concepts underlying sarvodaya: swadeshi, bread labour, non-possession, trusteeship, non-exploitation and equality.³ Swadeshi, which can be thought of as self-reliance, can be interpreted narrowly as self-sufficiency or more broadly as the ability of a community to support itself without undue dependence on others. This rules out domination of economic life by governments or large corporations.

Bread labour is the participation by individuals in work to produce the necessities of life. It is analogous to self-reliance but at the individual rather than collective level. Work is seen as a positive activity, rather than something to be avoided or minimised.

The idea of non-possession is that one should possess only those things that one needs (as distinguished from what one might *want*), and nothing else. This of course rules out capitalist ownership. Non-possession is compatible with the principle of “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”

The principle of trusteeship is that those who use resources look after them for the benefit of the community. This includes both material resources, such as land and tools, and people’s abilities. People who possess natural talents should consider them as community resources rather than private possessions.

Non-exploitation means not taking advantage of others. Equality can be interpreted in a limited fashion as equality of opportunity or more deeply as a process by which all community resources are used to help each person achieve the greatest possible quality of life. This is compatible with diversity but implies that those with greatest needs will have a greater claim on community resources.

In sarvodaya, people are educated for social consciousness, namely to ensure that they are aware of wider obligations and connections,

and see themselves as part of and serving something greater. Discrimination is eliminated. At a political level, the basic organising principle is self-rule at the village level. Technology is chosen so that it maintains the principles of the system, including equality and useful work.

Principle 1: cooperation. Sarvodaya is based on cooperation rather than conflict. The key to getting things done is commitment, which is built through community solidarity and education.

Principle 2: serving those in need. This principle is at the core of sarvodaya: its fundamental requirement is to eliminate discrimination and serve those with greatest need. The use of trusteeship is intended to prevent private wants taking precedence.

Principle 3: satisfying work. Bread labour, namely everyone working to produce the necessities of life, has the potential of being satisfying to nearly all. However, there are other types of work that can be satisfying, such as brain surgery and computer programming (though these can also be soul-destroying if done just to make a living). These are not bread labour, so how do they fit into sarvodaya? It is not clear whether sarvodaya can be made compatible with the elaborate division of labour (that is, occupational specialisation) common in industrialised countries.

Some types of work can be satisfying to the individual but may be the basis for inequality or serving only those who are better off. Sarvodaya would need to have mechanisms to limit such work or, alternatively, to ensure that special privileges did not accrue to those doing such work.

Principle 4: participation. Being organised at a village level, sarvodaya is participatory and self-managing. There is direct democracy at the village level, with federations of villages up to the level of the state. Exactly how decisions would be made at the higher levels is not fully specified.

Principle 5: nonviolence. The essence of sarvodaya is commitment to nonviolence as a way of life and as a method of social change.

One possible clash with the principles could arise from the role of the state, which is basically a federation of village democracies. In some models of sarvodaya, the state owns heavy industry as well as all other property that is directly used under trusteeship. The state is not supposed to interfere with society. But what about the individuals with responsibility for operations at the level of the state, for example

heavy industry? Is there not a possibility that the greater power at the state level could be corrupting, and used to increase the power and wealth of officials? Since the state in current-day societies is built around violence, namely the military and police, the way in which a sarvodaya state would operate needs careful attention to ensure that a different dynamic is possible. Alternatively, sarvodaya might be reformulated without any state at all.

Sarvodaya has been the focus of considerable organising in India and Sri Lanka since the 1950s.⁴ Sarvodaya adherents have gone into villages and worked at fostering self-reliance through practical means such as constructing housing and schools, installing energy systems and instituting soil conservation measures. These practical measures also serve to awaken individuals and groups to their own potentials for compassion, sharing and cooperative endeavour or, in other words, personal development and community building. Organisations and networks in what can be called the sarvodaya movement have supported such village work by recruiting volunteers, providing training and evaluating progress.

In spite of the enormous grassroots effort that has gone into promoting sarvodaya, the main path of development in India and Sri Lanka has been capitalist, to a large extent due to efforts by leading politicians. In India, national leaders have given lip service to Gandhian ideals but in practice given virtually no support to Gandhi's vision of village democracy and self-reliance. This gives added weight to the reservation about the role of a sarvodaya state: the state, being a location of centralised power, is unlikely to provide much genuine support for a decentralised economic structure.

Outside India and Sri Lanka, sarvodaya is largely unknown. In developed countries, the principle of serving those with greatest need clashes with negative or hostile attitudes towards the poor and homeless, though serving the needy is not an enormous leap from familiar traditions of welfare, charity and mutual help. The idea of village democracy would require adaptation to be relevant to urban and suburban living, but it is not so far from notions of participatory democracy and experiences of community organising. However, sarvodaya's commitment to bread labour is so alien as to be almost incomprehensible. Occupational specialisation is so elaborate in capitalist economies that bread labour appears only possible in some

reversion to an agricultural society. Therefore this component would need some revamping to be relevant to a society with a high division of labour.

As a vision for an alternative, the possibility that sarvodaya might include a state can cause some difficulty. Although a sarvodaya state, namely the culmination of village democracies, is supposed to be very different from a capitalist state, nevertheless the concept gives more credibility to existing states than a model of stateless sarvodaya.

The greatest strength of sarvodaya as both a vision and a strategy for change is its total challenge to capitalist assumptions of inequality, competition, consumerism and alienating work. To raise sarvodaya as an alternative is to question the fundamentals of capitalism. Sarvodaya as a strategy for change has the advantage of being modular: local initiatives can be taken wherever possible, immediately, without waiting for wider changes.

Several of sarvodaya's strengths are also its weaknesses. Because it is such a contrast to capitalism, it seems totally impractical in an industrial or postindustrial society. The method of local development is fine, but in itself contains no strategy for challenging the foundations of capitalism, namely the synergy of state power and corporate bureaucracy, including the influence of consumer goods, advertising and wage labour.

Anarchism

As a political philosophy and strategy for change, anarchism dates back to the 1800s, when in European socialist circles it was the major contender with Marxism. Whereas Marxism is primarily a critique of capitalism, anarchism is principally a critique of the state.⁵

While many anarchists still consider the state the main source of oppression, there has been a gradual broadening of concern among anarchists, so that anarchism has become a general critique of domination, including in its ambit the state, capitalism, patriarchy and domination of nature, among others. Given that many activists have taken on board feminist, antiracist, environmental and other causes, what continues to distinguish anarchist analysis is attention to problems with state power.

The anarchist alternative to the state can be called self-management which, contrary to the name, means direct collective control over decisions, typically at the level of workplaces and local

communities. Rather than someone else having decision-making power—elected representatives, bosses, experts—groups of people have this power themselves. In workplaces, self-management means workers directly making decisions about what is produced, how the work is done and who does what. This is also called workers' control.⁶

The word anarchy is commonly used in everyday speech and the media to mean chaos. In contrast, anarchy to anarchists means a society based on principles of freedom, equality and participation, without government or domination. Far from chaotic, it would be very well organised indeed—organised by the people in it.

Concerning capitalism, anarchism does not have its own separate analysis, but pretty much adopts the Marxist critique. Furthermore, anarchism shares Marxism's ultimate goal, "communism" in its original sense of a classless society, without a state. Where anarchism dramatically departs from Marxism is in how to achieve a classless society. Since anarchists see the state as a central source of domination, they completely oppose the revolutionary capture of state power by vanguard parties—this is the core of the historical antagonism between Marxists and anarchists—and also reject socialist electoral strategies. Instead, anarchists favour self-management as the means as well as the goal: workers and communities should take control over decisions that affect their lives. In either a gradual expansion or a rapid, revolutionary upsurge in self-management, the existing sources of state and capitalist domination would be superseded. Thus anarchists, like Gandhians, believe that the means should reflect the ends.

How an anarchist economic system would operate has not been given a lot of detailed attention, partly because it is assumed that the system would be set up by those participating in it rather than according to a theorist's blueprint. One general vision is of free distribution.⁷ Self-managed enterprises would produce goods for community needs. These goods would be available to anyone who needs them, without any system of monetary exchange. In order to coordinate production, enterprises would share information. For making higher-level decisions on all issues, the organising principle would be the federation. Each self-managing group would send one or more elected delegates to a delegate body which would make recommendations for the groups to consider. Delegates are bound by their groups' decisions and can be recalled at any time, unlike repre-

sentatives who are able to follow their own whims whatever the electorate prefers. The federation structure can have many layers, with delegates from delegate bodies meeting together and so forth. Delegate bodies would not have the power to make binding decisions. The function of federation is coordination, not rule.

It is now possible to consider anarchism according to the five principles of nonviolent economics.

Principle 1: cooperation. With the system of self-management, decisions are made collectively in a participatory fashion. While there can be disagreements and disputes, the basis for economic decision making is cooperation rather than competition.

Principle 2: serving those in need. The system of free distribution is designed to provide for human needs, in accordance with Marx's principle of "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" (a principle rejected in actual socialist economies in favour of economic reward according to contributions). Unlike sarvodaya, anarchism does not make serving those in need a central moral principle. Instead, satisfying needs is treated more as a pragmatic issue, namely as a sensible goal that ought to be built into the way the economic system works.

Principle 3: satisfying work. Through self-management, work is organised by the workers. This means that the way work is done can be designed to provide work satisfaction, though of course efficiency and production for human needs are also vital considerations. Work satisfaction might be promoted through job rotation, multiskilling, automation of unpleasant tasks, designing of production systems to offer individual challenge and group interaction, and designing of tasks around individuals' specific needs, abilities and capacities for learning.

Principle 4: participation. Self-management is a system for direct participation by people in decisions that affect their lives. Participation at higher levels is through delegates and federations, and here there may be difficulties. Although delegates are supposed to have no independent power, and delegates can be changed at any time by the groups that selected them, in practice delegates may gain considerable power. A group is likely to pick more articulate and knowledgeable individuals to be delegates and, with their experience on federated bodies, they are likely to become harder to replace. Further up the federative structure, accountability is more attenuated. Participation

is thus strongest at the group level and more problematical at upper federated levels.

Principle 5: nonviolence. There have long been two strands within anarchism, those supporting only nonviolent methods and those believing that some armed struggle by the people will be necessary. The nonviolent strand dates back to pacifist anarchists such as Leo Tolstoy, who was an early inspiration for Gandhi. Those anarchists who accept a role for people's violence usually see this occurring only in defence of revolutionary changes against the violence of the state. The idea of an armed vanguard seeking to capture state power is alien to anarchism, since it opposes the state.

A popular conception of the anarchist is of a terrorist who practises "propaganda of the deed" as a means of sowing chaos. This is very far from most anarchist thinking and practice. There are some individuals who have undertaken assassinations and bombings and called themselves anarchists, but usually they have little connection with anarchist groups and are rejected by most anarchists. Nevertheless, anarchism has been tarred with a violent image, which is convenient to and has been fostered by its opponents on both the right and left.

Suffice it to say that only the nonviolent strand of anarchism is fully compatible with the principle of nonviolence. But violence is not central for even those anarchists who believe armed struggle will be necessary in a transition to self-management. In the usual anarchist model of economics, there is no state, no standing army and no system of private property.⁸

Anarchism was a considerable force in the international socialist movement prior to World War I. It reached its most dramatic expression in Spain, where it was behind the 1936 revolution but within a few years was crushed by the fascist armies led by Franco on the one hand and by the communists in the republican movement on the other. A type of spontaneous anarchism is apparent in many revolutionary situations, such as the Paris Commune of 1871, the early stages of the Russian Revolution in 1917-1918, Germany 1918-1919, Hungary 1956, France 1968 and Chile 1970-1971. In such cases, workers and communities organise themselves to run society, without a government.⁹

Another side to anarchist action is cooperatives, which are enterprises in which the workers manage everything without bosses. There are food cooperatives, media cooperatives and manufacturing cooperatives.¹⁰ Cooperatives could be considered to be a feature of a Gandhian constructive programme. They are an attempt to “live the alternative” or, in other words, to use means for social change that contain within them elements of the sought-after goal.

For all their strengths, cooperatives have seldom been able to provide much of a challenge to capitalist enterprises. Few cooperatives have the capital or size to compete effectively, and with larger size there is a serious risk of reverting to conventional working arrangements, with a hierarchy developing and workers becoming like employees.

Another economic initiative with links to anarchism occurs when workers take over existing enterprises and run them without bosses. As noted earlier, this often occurs in revolutionary situations, but it can happen at other occasions too, especially when jobs or the entire enterprise are under threat.¹¹ Such instances of direct action by workers are commonly met by concerted action by government and other companies to put owners and managers back in command. Workers’ control is a serious challenge to capitalists and their government allies. It can occur in government enterprises too.

In a wide range of areas, there are initiatives and ongoing activities that can be interpreted as practical manifestations of anarchism.¹² Examples include:

- free schools, in which teachers and students collaborate in learning¹³;
- housing constructed by dwellers, often in a community where mutual help is provided¹⁴;
- citizen control over town planning;
- workers collectively making decisions to get things done at work despite bosses and regulations;
- voluntarily organised children’s play;
- informal systems in families and local communities for supportively responding to delinquent or deviant behaviour;
- sharing of information on the Internet.

Although in recent decades there have been many activities and initiatives that are compatible with anarchism, groups that are explicitly anarchist have not been prominent. There are quite a

number of small groups, newsletters and local activities, but the activity is usually low profile. To complicate the picture, there are many individuals who call themselves anarchists but who have little idea of anarchist theory or practice and mainly use this label because of its antiestablishment connotations.

Although the explicit anarchist movement is not well developed, anarchist sentiments are quite common in social movements, especially the feminist, environmental and nonviolence movements, though members may not describe their beliefs with the anarchist label. They are opposed to systems of rule, whether capitalist, communist or representative, and support instead methods of direct democracy such as consensus. They reject reform solutions of achieving power through individual advancement or parliamentary election, seeing bureaucratic hierarchies as part of the problem. Their aim is to empower individuals and communities rather than to gain power and use that power to “help” others.

This type of anarchist sensibility is widespread. Activists would agree that in many countries it has much more support than do vanguard left parties. This sensibility is seldom due to the direct influence of anarchists or anarchist writings. Rather, it appears to be a response to hierarchical systems of power, reflecting a belief that a more egalitarian society is both possible and desirable.¹⁵

Anarchism’s greatest strengths are its general critique of domination and its alternative of self-management, which is both a means and an end. Although its critique remains focussed on the state, anarchism has broadened its ambit, a process that could easily be continued as new sources of oppression develop or are discovered.

Unlike Marxism and feminism, anarchism has only a small academic following, so anarchist theory has not received all that much attention. In particular, anarchism’s critique of capitalism is undeveloped. The lynchpin of anarchist critique is the state, but if the power of multinational corporations is overshadowing that of states, anarchist critique needs updating or augmenting.

Anarchism is built on an assumption of rationality, and much anarchist activity centres around providing information about problems with the state and the advantages of self-management. Yet in a world in which commercial speech and government disinformation are becoming ever more sophisticated, and in which voices of rational critique remain in the margins, anarchism may need some-

thing more than small-scale alternatives and reliance on spontaneous self-management in revolutionary situations.

Nonviolent action provides an ideal complement to anarchist theory and practice. Anarchists have often used nonviolent action but, as noted, many anarchists believe that armed popular struggle may be necessary. By instead seeking an alliance between nonviolence and anarchism, much more progress may be possible.

Voluntaryism

Imagine a market economy in which all interactions are based on voluntary agreements, and in which there is no state or other agency that can use force to protect property or enforce laws. That is the essence of voluntaryism.

“The Voluntaryists are libertarians who have organized to promote non-political strategies to achieve a free society. We reject electoral politics, in theory and in practice, as incompatible with libertarian principles. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy. Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the co-operation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends.”¹⁶

Voluntaryism is a spin-off from libertarianism.¹⁷ Libertarians are opposed to government, but then divide into libertarian socialists—who are more or less equivalent to anarchists—and free-market libertarians. Free-market libertarians oppose government, but most of them see a need for a minimal state whose main role would be to protect private property and run the legal system. Most of the other functions of the state would be dropped, such as running schools, providing welfare, and regulating workplace safety and pollution. All these functions would be handled by the market. For example, enterprises would offer education services and employees injured on the job could sue their employers. Libertarians trust the market to solve many problems, such as unemployment. For example, without minimum wage legislation, some enterprises would find it profitable to provide jobs for most of those presently unemployed. Charity would provide for those few still in need.

Voluntaryists adopt much of this model, but are opposed to the minimal state and the use of force to defend property. Instead, they argue that all economic arrangements should be entered into voluntarily. If one side breaks an agreement, for example by not providing goods promised in exchange for services rendered, then the aggrieved party could respond by not entering into further agreements and by notifying interested parties about the other side's behaviour. Since a bad reputation would have damaging effects in the long term, there would be a strong incentive to keep agreements.

But without the state, and without military forces, what is there to maintain order? The answer for voluntaryists is nonviolent action, for defence against aggression, enforcement of agreements and opposition to oppression. Voluntaryism can be considered to be a combination of a market economy and nonviolent action.

Voluntaryism is highly principled in terms of method. Because it is based on a rejection of the state, voluntaryists reject any method of change that relies on the state, including lobbying or voting. On the other hand, noncooperation with the state, such as refusing to pay taxes, serve on juries or send children to government schools, fits the voluntaryist model perfectly. This is in contrast with the Libertarian Party in the US, in which voting and getting elected are seen as means to gain power with the ultimate end of reducing the scope of the state. In voluntaryism, like sarvodaya and anarchism, the means are compatible with the ends.

Principle 1: cooperation. Voluntaryism is based on cooperative arrangements in a competitive economy. If someone else is offering a better deal, then there is an incentive to trade with them.

“People engage in voluntary exchanges because they anticipate improving their lot; the only individuals capable of judging the merits of an exchange are the parties to it. Voluntaryism follows naturally if no one does anything to stop it. The interplay of natural property and exchanges results in a free market price system, which conveys the necessary information needed to make intelligent economic decisions.”¹⁸

Principle 2: serving those in need. Voluntaryism does not have a built-in method of serving those most in need. For this, the system relies on voluntary service. However, this is far more likely than in a capitalist economy, since there is no state to monopolise welfare

provision. The routine use of voluntary agreements and nonviolent action would provide a favourable environment for helping others. Nevertheless, like other market systems, provision for those in need, especially those who have no way of helping themselves, is not a built-in feature of voluntaryism.

Principle 3: satisfying work. A voluntarily run market system would create many opportunities for satisfying work, because it would not be run by a few bosses for their own ends. Enterprises, like all activities, would be voluntarily organised, which would encourage cooperatives and other egalitarian structures rather than bureaucratic ones. Hence workers would have a strong influence on the work they did. They could choose to work individually (at least in certain occupations), in a small group or a larger organisation. This means that having satisfying work is a reasonable prospect. However, the market would drive down economic returns in areas where there are excess workers or low productivity, providing an incentive for workers to shift into other areas.

Principle 4: participation. Since all economic and other arrangements are voluntary, participation is built in to voluntaryism.

Principle 5: nonviolence. Voluntaryism relies on nonviolence in place of the state or any other form of organised violence. Nonviolent action is both a method of settling disputes and for defending communities. Thus nonviolence is both method and goal for voluntaryism.

Libertarianism has its greatest level of support in the US, which may be because that is where belief in the market is strongest. The Libertarian Party candidate has received the third highest number of votes in a number of presidential elections. Voluntaryism, though, is a tiny offshoot of libertarianism and has no organisational presence. Its principal vehicle is the newsletter *The Voluntaryist*, edited by Carl Watner.¹⁹ Currently, then, voluntaryism exists primarily as an idea rather than a movement.

Watner, though, argues that the voluntaryist approach has been the de facto foundation of many productive economic and social activities, such as the evolution of industrial standards, private postal systems and philanthropy.²⁰ Another example is when corporations settle disputes using an outside arbitrator, independently of any government requirements or mechanisms.²¹ This is far cheaper and

quicker than fighting through the courts. Any corporation that refuses the arbitrator's decision would lose credibility for any future arbitration, which provides a strong check on bad faith.

Watner argues that when activities are organised cooperatively, without government regulation, things usually work far more efficiently. It is when government steps in, with laws and regulations, that problems arise, including higher costs, unfair dealings and monopolies. While arbitration can be done entirely on a voluntary basis, often the state steps in to regulate the procedure, providing legal penalties for noncompliance. This can be taken to be an example of capitalism either crushing or coopting alternatives, as described in chapter 3, with the qualification that capitalism in this case means "state-regulated monopoly capitalism" or "actually existing capitalism."

The sort of capitalism supported by voluntaryists is indeed quite different from actually existing capitalism. With no state to defend private property, it would mean that large accumulations of capital would be impossible to sustain unless others respected them. For example, workers in an enterprise would have to reach agreement about entitlements to wages and equity in capital. The full implications of the voluntaryist picture remain to be worked out, but it is quite possible that large corporations of the present sort would be unsustainable, because they would not have state power to protect their far-flung operations if workers or consumers decided exploitation was occurring and withdrew cooperation or used direct action to push for changes. Furthermore, corporate owners and managers would have a hard time exercising dictatorial power since workers could withdraw to form separate companies or just refuse to accept directives. The upshot might well be a proliferation of much smaller enterprises, many of them self-managed internally, held together by networks and systems of agreement, themselves managed by enterprises that had built up high levels of trust. Just as an arbitrator who makes fair-minded decisions is more likely to be called on again, all sorts of "brokerage agents"—the necessary go-betweens in an efficient market—would have a strong incentive to be fair and be seen to be fair. This occurs already in areas such as judging or umpiring for sporting events. All participants have an interest in having fair judges, and those who are perceived as talented and fair will be given greater responsibilities.

Although the law might appear to be the source of order in communities, in many instances it is unimportant to the way people behave. Robert C. Ellickson, in a study of neighbourly dispute resolution in a ranching area in California, showed that local people use informal methods in accordance with local norms, even when those norms conflict with the law.²² Voluntaryism thus has some basis in everyday behaviour.

As a strategy against capitalism, voluntaryism has the advantage that it accepts the market—which is what capitalism’s defenders portray capitalism as being—while rejecting the power of the state. Voluntaryism thus highlights the violence that underpins capitalism. Voluntaryism builds on historical and current experiences of voluntary agreements, a process that can be expanded in small ways in all sorts of areas.

Voluntaryism, in its full-blown form involving total noncooperation with the state, is difficult for most people to follow, especially tax refusal, which is not easily possible in most occupations. Most people rely on or accept state-based services or impositions at least part of the time. If voluntaryism is to gain a wider appeal, then partial adherence to its principles would become common, as is the case with sarvodaya and anarchism, where supporters “live the alternative” to varying degrees depending on their circumstances.

A bigger problem is how voluntaryism can widen its appeal. Should some sort of a movement be built? How should it be structured? (Naturally, it would be a voluntary arrangement.) Are there campaigns to be undertaken? What should be the targets?

Voluntaryism has the greatest natural affinity to libertarianism, but has attracted only a small following by comparison. Is there scope for links with other social movements such as environmentalism and feminism? It is interesting to note that along with liberal feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism, one of the lesser but still significant strands of feminism is anarcha-feminism, a synergy of anarchism and feminism. But there is, as yet, no voluntaryist feminism. Is it a possibility? And are there similar possibilities for other movements? If voluntaryism is to become a powerful vision for an economic future, and a basis for organising, then these are among the questions worth exploring.

Demarchy

Representative government is based on election of government officials who then make decisions that citizens must obey. The power of the state is used to enforce decisions. This system of rule is commonly called democracy, but at best it is indirect democracy, since citizens do not make political decisions themselves but only occasionally get to vote for representatives. Furthermore, the representatives are not bound by their election promises or by majority views in the electorate. Representative government might be said to give the illusion of popular control while ceding most power to elites, both those who are elected (politicians) and those who are not (corporate executives, government bureaucrats).²³ Representative government thus is an ideal accompaniment for capitalism, giving maximum legitimacy with minimal direct citizen control.

In contrast, direct democracy or participatory democracy is when people make decisions themselves. Self-management is basically another word for direct democracy.

One of the dilemmas of direct democracy is how to maximise participation without using up everyone's time. One method is the electronic referendum, in which an entire electorate votes immediately on a measure after a television debate. But even here participation is attenuated, since few people can actually join the discussion, much less help formulate the referendum proposal.

The anarchist solution is delegates and federations. However, those who are not delegates are not directly involved in higher-level discussions. The possible danger is that delegates gain excess power through their positions, and use this power to cement the resulting inequality.

Demarchy²⁴ is built around a different solution to direct democracy's participation dilemma. It is based around random selection and separation of functions. Imagine a community of some thousands or tens of thousands of people. Instead of there being a single decision-making body—an elected council, for example—there would be dozens of groups, each one dealing with just a single function, such as transport, land, harvests, manufacturing, education, arts, water, building, health and so forth. Each group would be made up of perhaps a dozen individuals chosen randomly from volunteers for that group. The groups would make decisions about their particular area.

Thus, rather than everyone being involved in every decision—a sure prescription for overload with direct democracy, or for concentration of power with representative government—every volunteer has an equal chance of being selected for groups of their choice. Everyone would still have full opportunity to lobby, write letters to newspapers, give testimony to groups and in various other ways be involved in debating the issues.

In demarchy, there is no state and no bureaucracies. All decision making and implementation is handled by the functional groups.

Some current systems of local government, such as town meetings in part of the US and municipalities in Norway, achieve high levels of citizen participation and government responsiveness to people's needs.²⁵ Demarchy builds on the advantages of this scale of decision making through random selection of decision makers and separation of functions, both of which reduce opportunities for a few individuals to entrench themselves in powerful and lucrative positions.

The advantage of random selection is that no one, however eloquent, devious or talented, is guaranteed a decision-making role. Furthermore, no one who is selected has a mandate. After all, they were selected by chance. So terms of office would be limited, with a staggering of the random selections to provide continuity.

So far demarchy is a model for a political alternative. It can be extended to economics in various ways. Functional groups responsible for economic matters, such as industry and agriculture, could contract work to bidders, which could be conventional enterprises or cooperatives. There could be functional groups that make decisions about land, for example requiring a rent for various uses or non-uses of types of land. There could be functional groups regulating the money supply. The basic principle is that groups of randomly selected citizens would decide how the economy runs.

Demarchy is a challenge to capitalism in two major ways. First, since it dispenses with the state, there is no military and hence no ultimate resort to organised violence to protect private property. Second, demarchy puts control over the operation of the economy directly in the hands of citizens.

Principle 1: cooperation. Demarchy relies heavily on trust in other citizens to make sensible decisions. Even those who are currently members of a functional group cannot be a member of *other* functional groups. This trust is bolstered by the process of random selec-

tion and the limited terms of office, rather like the reasons why citizens put trust in the jury system for criminal justice: there is far less potential for bias and corruption than when a few individuals have much more power, whether judges or politicians.

The trust aspect of demarchy suggests that cooperation would be more prominent than competition in economic decision-making. Even if a market is used, it is a grassroots-citizen-controlled market.

Principle 2: serving those in need. Demarchy does not explicitly specify policies in relation to need. Indeed, it is useful to note that demarchy is a framework for decision making that does not specify the content of decisions made. However, all the evidence available suggests that citizen decision makers, who are typical of the community in most regards, are more likely to be sensitive to those in need than are elected representatives, who are for the most part wealthier, more articulate and more power-seeking than average citizens. Furthermore, those people who are most concerned about serving those in need would have a strong incentive to nominate themselves, and other sympathisers, for those functional groups that make the most relevant policies.

Principle 3: satisfying work. As in the case of serving those in need, demarchy does not specify the nature of work but provides a framework that is conducive to making work satisfaction a priority. Work satisfaction is a high priority for most workers and there would be a strong incentive for people interested in this to nominate for relevant groups.

Principle 4: participation. Demarchy does not guarantee anyone a formal decision-making position, but instead gives everyone an equal chance of being members of groups of their choice. In addition, anyone who wants to can join in public debate, give testimony to groups and protest against unpopular decisions. The level of participation in the groups can be made as high as a community desires, by having more groups. In reality, not everyone wants to be involved in decision-making tasks.

On some controversial issues, such as abortion and drugs, partisans will try to get as many supporters as possible to nominate for the relevant groups, to increase their odds of having greater numbers. But since groups hear testimony, study evidence and discuss the issues in depth, not just any supporter will do. To be an effective advocate of a position, a partisan would need a deep grasp of principles and a

sophisticated understanding of arguments. A superficial prejudice could readily break down in the face of new information and dialogue, including awareness that those with contrary views are sincere and well-meaning. Therefore, the process of mobilising supporters to nominate for groups in controversial areas would have to be one promoting genuine understanding. This would be, in essence, a participatory process of community education, quite a contrast to the usual dynamic of advertising, lobbying and getting the numbers, with the aim of winning rather than educating.

Principle 5: nonviolence. Since there is no state in demarchy, the only way for the community to defend itself would be through direct citizen struggle, whether armed or nonviolent. With no state, demarchic groups have no means for enforcing their decisions, instead relying on argument and public trust: if there were such a means, it would be the equivalent of military forces. So the only really self-consistent foundation for demarchy is nonviolent action.

Historically, the closest thing to demarchy in practice was democracy in ancient Athens.²⁶ The Athenians used random selection for most public offices, typically selecting 10 individuals, one from each of the ten tribes, for a term of just one year. While any citizen could attend the assembly, much business was carried out in the council whose members were selected randomly. The Athenian system worked well for hundreds of years. It gave priority to participation over competence, and with multiple occupants of public offices, there were enough competent people to make the system work. Ancient Athens was far from an ideal participatory democracy, especially given that women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from decision-making, but it does show that random selection can serve as the foundation for a participatory society.

Since the 1970s, there have been a number of experiments with decision making by groups of randomly selected citizens, especially in Germany, the US and Britain.²⁷ Groups have been drawn together to look at challenging and contentious policy issues such as energy scenarios, town planning, transport options and dealing with mental illness. A typical “policy jury” or “planning cell” involves 10 to 25 people meeting for three to five days, hearing testimony from experts and partisans, discussing options and making recommendations. These experiments have been remarkably successful in showing the

power of participation. The randomly selected group members, many of whom had no prior knowledge of the topic nor much confidence in their ability to contribute, soon became enthusiastic participants. Most have reported very favourably on the experience, while the groups have usually come up with recommendations that seem sensible to others. What these experiments show is that making ordinary citizens into decision makers in today's world is a viable option. This provides strong support for key aspects of demarchy.

However, there are only a few people exploring demarchy and not even the beginning of a social movement to promote this as an alternative. So demarchy for the moment is primarily an idea. Furthermore, it requires much more theoretical development, especially in its economic dimensions.

Demarchy's greatest strength is its model of participation that does not give anyone a formal position of influence, no matter how brilliant, ambitious or ruthless. Whereas a village leader in sarvodaya or a high-level delegate in a federation of self-managing groups can use talent or influence to gain a significant position, this is not possible in demarchy, which is functionally decentralised.

A major weakness of demarchy is that it is difficult to turn it into a strategy for change. Unlike consensus or voting, which can be used with small groups, random selection and functional groups only come into their own in larger groups. This is not an overwhelming obstacle, though, since a local community or a large organisation could decide to try it, but it does mean that considerable effort is needed to build support. Another difficulty is that leaders of challenger groups, such as women's, environmental and peace groups, may not be supportive. After all, they would not be guaranteed a special role when decision makers are chosen randomly.

Comments on alternatives

Sarvodaya, anarchism, voluntaryism and demarchy are four possible alternatives to capitalism that are compatible with nonviolence both as a means and an end. There are other possible nonviolent alternatives, and no doubt further ones will be developed in the future. The point of describing these four is to show how alternatives can be assessed using a set of principles.

It is noteworthy that in each of the four models, the economic alternative is closely linked with a political alternative. In sarvodaya,

economic self-reliance is linked with village democracy. In anarchism, self-management systems are used in both economic and political domains. In voluntaryism, the political realm seems part of the process of voluntary agreements. In demarchy, random selection and functional groups are used in all spheres. Partly this reflects the rather arbitrary distinction between economics and politics, which always interact. In any case, it suggests that the process of seeking an alternative to capitalism should be tied to the process of seeking alternative decision-making systems, both in the corporate sphere (including in organisations) and in the sphere of governance.

One value in looking at alternatives is to give guidance for strategy. For a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it is quite sufficient for most purposes to use nonviolent action and foster grassroots empowerment. That is very likely to move things in a useful direction. But at some point, it is necessary to look at social arrangements: the way society is and could be organised. More than looking at social arrangements, it is essential to experiment with them. It takes an enormous amount of trial and error to get the capitalist market working moderately well, and even then there are periodic crashes. Similarly, elections require a lot of social preparation, including education, rules, agreements, expectations and the like. The same sort of trial and error will certainly be needed to make any nonviolent alternative to capitalism work decently. A rigid plan is not appropriate, but general principles and some ideas for alternative arrangements can be helpful. To use nonviolent action simply as a technique, without some connection to creating different social arrangements, is a prescription for reform without any change in the basic system.

Examining alternatives gives some idea of goals for a consistently nonviolent challenge to capitalism. And because, in a nonviolence strategy, means need to be consistent with ends, this also gives guidance about suitable strategies, the topic of the remaining chapters.

Notes

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2 Quoted in Chowdhuri, pp. 66-67.

3 Romesh Diwan and Sushila Gidwani, "Elements in Gandhian economics," *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 1, No. 5, August 1979, pp. 248-258, reprinted in Diwan and Lutz, pp. 54-65.

4 Detlef Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980). The movements in India and Sri Lanka are different in a number of respects but are grouped here for convenience.

5 On anarchism, see for example Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

6 See chapter 7.

7 Ken Smith, *Free is Cheaper* (Gloucester: John Ball Press, 1988), presents a case for free distribution, though not from an anarchist starting point.

8 This is the model of collectivist anarchism. An alternative model is free-market individualist anarchism, which accepts private property. Voluntaryism, discussed later, falls in this latter tradition.

9 See Guérin, op. cit.; Michael Raptis, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile: A Dossier on Workers' Participation in the Revolutionary Process* (London: Allison & Busby, 1974).

10 George Melnyk, *The Search for Community: From Utopia to a Co-operative Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1985); Jenny Thornley, *Workers' Co-operatives: Jobs and Dreams* (London: Heinemann, 1981). For a critique of cooperative practice, see Charles Landry, David Morley, Russell Southwood and Patrick Wright, *What a Way to Run a Railroad: An Analysis of Radical Failure* (London: Comedia, 1985).

11 Ken Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy: The Implications of Factory Occupations in Great Britain in the Early 'Seventies* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1981).

12 Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1982).

13 Allen Graubard, *Free the Children: Radical Reform and the Free School Movement* (New York: Random House, 1972); John Holt, *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); Jonathan Kozol, *Free Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Joel Spring, *A Primer of Libertarian Education* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975).

14 John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

15 This point is developed in Brian Martin, "Eliminating state crime by abolishing the state," in Jeffrey Ian Ross (ed.), *Controlling State Crime: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 389-417,

16 "Statement of purpose," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 1, October 1982, p. 1. See also Carl Watner, "What we believe and why," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 57, August 1992, pp. 1, 7.

17 Voluntaryists can also draw links with a number of prior thinkers, such as the Stoics of ancient Greece. See Carl Watner, "Thinkers and groups of individuals who have contributed significant ideas or major written materials to the radical libertarian tradition," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 25, April 1987, pp. 1, 7.

18 Carl Watner, "The fundamentals of voluntaryism," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 40, October 1989, pp. 1, 3.

19 *The Voluntaryist*, PO Box 1275, Gramling SC 29348, USA. See also Carl Watner (ed.), *I Must Speak Out: The Best of The Voluntaryist 1982-1999* (San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999), in which most of the articles cited here are reproduced.

20 Carl Watner, "Voluntaryism and the evolution of industrial standards," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 52, October 1991, pp. 1, 4-7; Carl Watner, "The most generous nation on earth: voluntaryism and American philanthropy," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 61, April 1993, pp. 1, 3-7; Carl Watner, "'Plunderers of the public revenue': voluntaryism and the mails," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 76, October 1995, pp. 1-7.

21 Carl Watner, "Stateless, not lawless': voluntaryism and arbitration," *The Voluntaryist*, No. 84, February 1997, pp. 1-8.

22 Robert C. Ellickson, *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

23 Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control and Popular Acquiescence* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982); Thomas S. Martin, "Unhinging all government: the defects of political representation," *Our Generation*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Fall 1988, pp. 1-21; Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

24 The word "demarchy" was coined by John Burnheim, whose book *Is Democracy Possible? The Alternative to Electoral Politics* (London: Polity Press, 1985) is the pioneering treatment of the model. See also F. E. Emery, *Toward Real Democracy* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Labour, 1989); Brian Martin, "Democracy without elections," *Social Anarchism*, No. 21, 1995, pp. 18-51.

25 On New England town meetings, see Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). I thank Ellen Elster for comments on Norwegian municipalities.

26 Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

27 Lyn Carson and Brian Martin, *Random Selection in Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

6

Nonviolence strategy

A strategy is essentially a plan of action for getting from a current situation to a desired future situation. So a nonviolence strategy against capitalism is a plan of *nonviolent* action for transforming capitalism into a *nonviolent* alternative. Note that strategy is something in the realm of ideas. Its implementation involves action.

To think about strategy, it can be helpful to distinguish between the realm of actions and the realm of ideas, though in practice they are interlinked. Consider first the realm of actions. Figure 6.1 shows capitalism—itsself composed of actions such as producing, selling and consuming—becoming something else: an actual nonviolent alternative. The means for this transformation is nonviolent action.

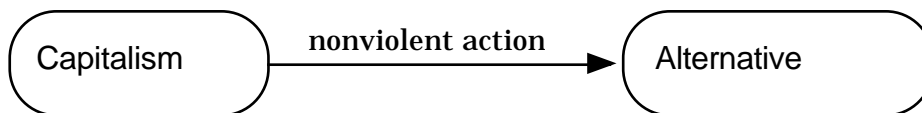


Figure 6.1. Capitalism being transformed into an alternative system through nonviolent action

Figure 6.2 shows how the realm of ideas applies to this picture. Analysis is a way of conceiving or thinking about capitalism, while a goal is an imagined and desired alternative. Strategy is the way of planning a way to get between the current reality and the goal. To develop a strategy, it is necessary to have some analysis of reality as well as some goal. To implement the strategy, methods are needed.

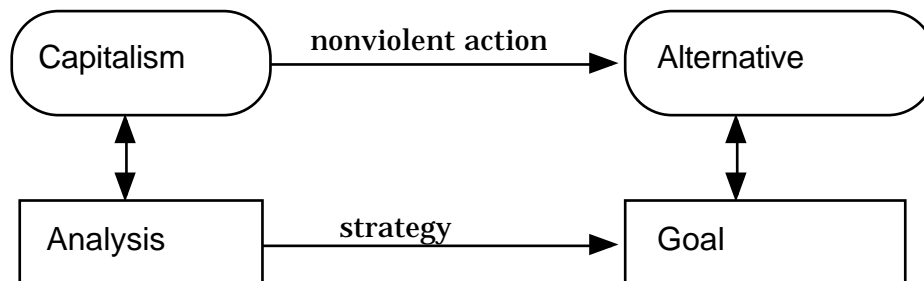


Figure 6.2. Strategy against capitalism. The top level portrays capitalism being transformed into an alternative system through nonviolent action. The lower level portrays thinking about this transformation.

To develop a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it makes sense that all components of this process are consistent with a nonviolence framework. The analysis of capitalism should be one developed from a nonviolence perspective. That was the task in chapter 3. The goal—an alternative to capitalism—should be a nonviolent alternative. Some possibilities were discussed in chapter 5. Finally, of course the methods should be nonviolent. These were covered in chapter 2.

Figure 6.2 shows a static picture, but actually all components are subject to change. The analysis can change due to new information or new perspectives. Also, the analysis depends to some extent on the goal: because the goal is a nonviolent alternative, the analysis should be from a nonviolence point of view. Similarly, the goals depend in part on the analysis. By examining what works and what goes wrong, such as the conventional anticapitalist strategies covered in chapter 4, goals can be revised or rejected.

Most importantly, the strategy needs to be constantly reexamined and revised as the analysis and goals change and as more people become involved and contribute.

A strategy is much more than a collection of methods. It involves organised goal-directed activities, typically having roles for groups, campaigns and visions, tied together to some extent. Examples are the Third World Network, the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and a vision of support for poor peoples (rather than exploitation).

How can strategies be assessed? One way is to use the principles for assessing nonviolent alternatives to capitalism, applying them in this

case to strategy. Here are the principles as stated in the previous chapter, adapted to deal with strategy. These principles can be applied to both the formulation and implementation aspects of strategy, namely both the thinking and doing aspects.

- Principle 1: Cooperation, rather than competition, should be the foundation for the strategy.
- Principle 2: People with the greatest needs should have priority in the strategy.
- Principle 3: A satisfying role in developing and using strategy should be available to everyone who wants it.
- Principle 4: The strategy should be designed and run by the people themselves, rather than authorities or experts.
- Principle 5: The strategy should be based on nonviolence.

Principle 5 is the easiest to deal with. Because the strategy relies entirely on nonviolent methods, then the strategy is based on nonviolence, at least in the narrow sense of absence of physical violence. The other principles bring in other dimensions of nonviolence in the wider sense.

Principle 4 is very important. There can be no presumption of formulating a grand plan for bringing about an alternative, since that would be incompatible with the full participation of those involved. The actual strategy has to be worked out by participants, and that is yet to occur. Therefore, any discussion of strategy by an individual, such as in this book, can at most be a small contribution to a much wider process.

Indeed, any overarching plan is vulnerable to attack or cooption, precisely because it is something that can be observed and targeted. Far more threatening to capitalism is a wide variety of challenges and alternative practices, each contributing to a general change of belief and behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is not wise to leave everything to spontaneous and uncoordinated initiative. Thinking strategically is essential so that actions are effective. The goal should be that strategy is democratised. All sorts of individuals and groups need to think about and debate visions, methods and paths, so that the “big picture” is not left to a few high-level theorists or key activists.

Principle 3—providing satisfying roles in developing and using strategy—can be interpreted as an extension of principle 4. Not only is strategy democratised, but satisfying participation is available to all. That means that the prestige roles and tasks should not be monopolised by a few intellectual elites, experienced activists or pioneer organisers. On the other hand, it is essential to recognise that skills and experience are crucial in every aspect of social change, including nonviolent obstruction, engaging in dialogue with strangers, organising meetings, writing media releases and analysing capitalism. To achieve principle 3 requires a process for involving interested people in thinking and doing, developing their skills and experience while not succumbing to the illusion that every committed person can do everything equally well.

Principle 2 is a useful reminder to keep the focus on those most in need. There have been many revolutions made in the name of “the people” that only ended up replacing one elite group by another.

Finally, principle 1 is that the strategy should be developed and implemented cooperatively. That seems obvious enough but the reality is that social movements and action groups can become involved in competitions of various sorts, including for recognition, priority or purity. One of the longest standing conflicts is between those who think class struggle must take priority over all other struggles, and those who think it should be treated as one struggle among many. Whether or not a nonviolence strategy against capitalism can be truly cooperative, it is a worthwhile goal. However, this should be subordinate to other principles such as being nonviolent.

For capitalism to be replaced or transformed into a better social system will take decades or centuries. To imagine that a brief revolutionary struggle can bring about lasting change can be a dangerous delusion. It is far better to think of strategies that bring short-term improvements while contributing to long-term change. If things proceed more quickly than expected, so much the better. But it is quite possible that capitalism will become more powerful and pervasive in spite of all efforts to the contrary. A strategy needs to be viable in that circumstance too.

A check list for campaigns

The five principles are quite general. Furthermore, they were formulated for assessing nonviolent alternatives to capitalism and so may

not be ideal for assessing strategy. On a day-to-day basis, activists are involved in campaigning. For practical purposes, a check list for assessing campaigns can be helpful. Here is one possible check list.

Check list for nonviolent campaigns against capitalism

1. Does the campaign help to
 - undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
 - undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
 - build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?
2. Is the campaign participatory?
3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?
4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

The first point grows out of the analysis of capitalism from a nonviolence perspective in chapter 3, which pinpointed three key ways in which capitalism is maintained: by ultimate resort to violence, through supportive belief systems and by crushing or coopting alternatives. An effective nonviolent campaign could be expected to address one (or possibly more) of these three key areas.

Point 2, that a campaign is participatory, can be seen as an outgrowth of the principle of nonviolence, given that any nonparticipatory approach is open to challenge by nonviolent action.

Point 3 about the compatibility of methods and goals also can be interpreted as an aspect of the principle of nonviolence, in that both the methods and goals are nonviolent. Point 3 also applies to participation, which is part of the goals and methods.

Point 4 grows out of the analysis of capitalism and especially of the failures of conventional anticapitalist strategies. Leninist strategies are now largely discredited. The dominant mainstream strategies, which involve working through the system to promote reform or gradual transformation, are highly susceptible to cooption: they become taken over by the system itself, so that there is little or no change in the structure of capitalism. Therefore, it is wise to pay special attention to a campaign's ability to resist cooption.

Others may wish to revise the points on the check list or add their own. There may be points that are specific to a particular country, issue or action group. The aim here is not to provide a definitive list, but rather to illustrate how such a list can be used.

It is important to remember that check lists and sets of principles are simply tools to use to try to improve effectiveness. They should not be treated as rigid prescriptions or as means to end debate. Quite the contrary: they should be used to encourage discussion. If they are a good choice, they will encourage discussion of things that make a difference.

In the following chapters, campaigns and methods of various types are analysed. Chapter 7 looks at workers' struggles, focussing on campaigns for better wages and conditions, jobs, workers' control, green bans and whistleblowing. Chapter 8 looks at sabotage, which is a method of struggle often perceived as operating at the border between nonviolence and violence. Chapter 9 deals with environmental campaigning, focussing on the issues of pesticides, nuclear power and local antidevelopment campaigning. Chapter 10 deals with social defence, namely nonviolent community resistance to aggression as an alternative to military defence. Although social defence is not normally seen as having economic implications, it is relevant since it challenges the system of violence that supports capitalism. Chapter 11 covers examples relating to global trade, specifically the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and genetically modified organisms. Finally, chapter 12 examines three economic alternatives—community exchange schemes, local money systems and voluntary simplicity—assessing them as strategies. In each case, the check list is used as a foundation for discussing the potential of campaigns to challenge capitalism using nonviolent action.

The campaigns examined in chapters 7 to 12 are some of the important avenues for a nonviolent challenge to capitalism, but there are certainly others, including some feminist and anti-racist campaigns, squatting¹ and culture jamming.²

What knowledge is needed in order to assess campaigns? Obviously it helps to have both intimate experience of campaigning plus a full knowledge of history, arguments and outcomes. But to demand such a comprehensive understanding would mean that only a few experts and experienced campaigners could make assessments. Actually, the questions on the check list do not require such a comprehensive understanding. Often the answers come immediately from an awareness of general features of the issue and methods.

Let's look at the questions on the check list to see what it's helpful to know for answering them.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

For answering this question, it is necessary to understand how capitalism is sustained by violence, as described in chapter 3; what is involved in people accepting or rejecting capitalism; and what a nonviolent alternative to capitalism might look like, such as described in chapter 5.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

This question is straightforward: how many and what sorts of people are involved, and what roles do they play?

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

This is the ends-means question. It can be tricky, since goals and methods are so often different. In some instances answering the question is easy: if a goal is participation, then the methods should be participatory. Answers are more complex when there are multiple goals and methods. The examples in the following chapters illustrate ways to use this question for making assessments.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

This question can be difficult to answer, since cooption can occur in many ways, some of which look like success from the point of view of a particular campaign. It is important to keep in mind the ultimate goal, namely transforming and replacing capitalism. If the campaign does not continue to make a significant contribution towards attaining this goal, then cooption could well be responsible. The examples in the following chapters illustrate how this question can be answered.

What I have done in the chapters 7 to 12 is to present rough assessments, based on my own experiences and analysis, relying on studies when appropriate. These assessments are certainly not definitive. Rather, they are intended to illustrate the process of using the check list.

There is a vitally important qualification to the assessments in the following chapters. They are for the purpose of challenging, transforming and replacing capitalism—not for other purposes. A campaign might be extremely worthwhile even though it doesn't oppose or hurt capitalism. So this process of assessment is for a specific anticapitalist purpose, a point that will be emphasised on various occasions.

Notes

1 Anders Corr, *No Trespassing! Squatting, Rent Strikes, and Land Struggles Worldwide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999).

2 Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America™* (New York: Eagle Brook, 1999) and the magazine *Adbusters*.

7

Workers' struggles

The industrial revolution caused incredible hardship on many workers and their families, with long working hours, harsh and unsafe conditions, poor pay and brutal treatment on the job, which can be summed up by the word exploitation. In many parts of the world such exploitation continues today. These conditions—a commonality of experience—helped form a collective identity and a unity of purpose to change the situation.

This commonality of identity and purpose was the foundation for the rise of the organised working class. Most of its gains were achieved through the power of nonviolent action, supplemented by enlightened employers and governments. Nonviolent action by workers includes strikes of various types, bans on certain types of work, workplace occupations, working-to-rule and pickets, plus a host of other actions that are less specific to the workplace such as ostracism, meetings, marches and fasts.¹ Violence by workers has played only a small role in workers' action, though violence by employers has been frequent.

The aim here is to assess workers' struggles for their potential to undermine capitalism. Suppose we start with the strike. Does a strike help to undermine capitalism? That's a difficult question, because it depends on what the strike is intended to achieve or, in other words, how it fits into the wider picture. This suggests that it is not so useful to start with a type of nonviolent action. It is more useful to look at the purpose of a workers' campaign.

Wages and conditions

Let's begin with a familiar campaign: for higher wages and better conditions. The better conditions might include improved lighting, safer machinery, clean toilets, greater flexibility in working hours, employer-provided child care facilities, and any of a host of other items. Better wages and conditions are certainly beneficial to workers.

The question is, what potential do campaigns for better wages and conditions have for transforming capitalism? The check list is a good place to start.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

To begin: does a workers' campaign for better wages and conditions undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism? Capitalists can rely on the power of the state to back up private property. Does such a campaign challenge this? In nearly all cases, the answer is no.

Next, does a workers' campaign for better wages and conditions undermine the legitimacy of capitalism? This is more difficult to answer, since capitalism's legitimacy is not a fixed entity, but varies from person to person, issue to issue and in other ways. A few examples may help. Imagine a highly exploitative industry, with low wages and horrible conditions. The industry's practices, if widely known, might discredit capitalism more generally. A campaign to improve wages and conditions could contribute to this by publicising the industry's practices. On the other hand, if the campaign leads to improved wages and conditions, then capitalism as a system may appear not so bad.

This points to a general feature of legitimacy: if problems due to capitalism are fixed up promptly and fairly, this actually increases capitalism's legitimacy. That means, ironically, that workers' campaigns that succeed quickly without much fanfare can lead to an increase in system legitimacy. In contrast, drawn-out campaigns, especially those that fail, or conspicuous problems where there is no campaign at all, can reduce system legitimacy.

To take a somewhat different example, the world's most serious industrial accident was in 1984 at Bhopal, India, where release of poisonous chemicals from a pesticide plant killed thousands of people and injured hundreds of thousands.² This was bound to be bad publicity for capitalism, but it was seriously aggravated by the failure of the owner Union Carbide to make prompt and fair restitution. Quite the contrary: Union Carbide made every effort to minimise responsibility. This means that Bhopal is a "running sore" for the image of capitalism.

Consider a different sort of campaign: some very highly paid and privileged workers—such as doctors or lawyers—take industrial action to improve their salaries even further. This does nothing to undermine capitalism's legitimacy and in fact may increase it, because the "normal" salaries, before the campaign, might be perceived as due to the fair operation of the market.

Thus, whether a campaign undermines or strengthens the image of capitalism depends on perceptions of fairness as well as on how the campaign is carried out. This is further complicated by the fact that the operation of capitalism has a big impact on whether people perceive particular wages and conditions to be fair.

In general, campaigning for better wages and conditions does not challenge the legitimacy of capitalism at its foundations, including private ownership, the boss-employee relationship and the market. Improved wages and conditions are important, but occur within capitalism rather than against it.

Finally, does a campaign for better wages and conditions help build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism? Except in special cases, the answer is no. So for point 1 on the check list, it can be concluded that campaigns for wages and conditions seldom satisfy any of the options, except sometimes helping undermine capitalism's legitimacy.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

The answer to this depends on the campaign. A strike or a work-to-rule, to be effective, needs as many workers as possible to participate. But sometimes a strike can be effective if just a few key workers, in vital positions, take action. So sometimes a workers' action can achieve immediate goals with relatively low participation.

Another aspect to participation is in planning and decision making. Is the campaign plotted by a few trade union bosses and announced to the members, or are all planning meetings open to all members, with special efforts to involve members from all sectors of the workforce?

Some trade unions are more autocratic and corrupt than the corporate executives they confront. Union-led campaigns in such circumstances are seldom fully participatory.

A further dimension to participation is involvement of others besides the immediate workers, including customers, workers elsewhere, other organisations and the public at large. If teachers go on

strike for higher pay, that does not by itself generate participation by anyone else. But if the campaign involves rallies and teach-ins with involvement by students, parents, administrative staff and prospective employers, the participation level is far higher.

One group often overlooked in workers' struggles is the unemployed. A campaign for higher wages can result in job losses. Trade unions typically look after their members and neglect others.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

The answer here is "not very often." A campaign to improve wages seldom has any potential to use improved wages as the method! Quite the contrary: going on strike, especially for an extended period, reduces wages.

For improving conditions, there are some possibilities. Requests for rest breaks could be pursued by taking the breaks, as a form of disobedience on the job. Demands for safety measures could be pursued by workers bringing in equipment, organising their own training and taking time on the job to follow the desired procedures. A push for procedures to protect against unfair dismissal could be accompanied by establishing a "workers' tribunal" to judge the evidence for a dismissal, set up alongside existing procedures. However, these sorts of initiatives are the exception. Most campaigns for improved conditions rely on methods such as bargaining with management or strikes, which as methods have little in common with the goal.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

A campaign for better wages and conditions, far from being resistant to cooption, can be interpreted as an attempt to *be* coopted. After all, it is not a campaign for workers to own and manage the enterprise themselves. Improvements to wages and conditions are changes within the capitalist framework.

In summary, campaigns for better wages and conditions are unlikely to be effective means for transforming capitalism into a nonviolent alternative, especially because they do not challenge the foundations of capitalism and are an open invitation to cooption. That said, such campaigns are vitally necessary for the many poor and exploited workers of the world.

Of course, campaigns for better wages and conditions can be part of wider struggles to transform capitalism. But they are unlikely candidates to be prime movers.

This very general analysis of these campaigns suggests two areas of potential strength. First, participation can be broadened as much as possible, both among workers and others, and include planning and decision making. This is a good prescription for a broad-based workers' movement in any case. Second, in some cases campaigns for better conditions can incorporate ends within means.

Jobs

For most workers in a capitalist economy, jobs are necessary to escape poverty and sometimes just to survive. This is not universally true. Some jobs are so poorly paid that those holding them remain in poverty. On the other hand, in some countries unemployment payments are ample enough to provide a decent life. Finally, of course, owners of capital do not require jobs in order to make a lot of money. Still, for many people a job is seen as absolutely essential for income. Furthermore, having a job is often crucial for self-esteem.

Individuals seek jobs and so do trade unions for their members. For governments, creating jobs is seen as a fundamental goal. Nonviolent action is possible at any of these levels but is most commonly pursued by trade unions, through strikes, rallies, work-ins, work-to-rule and the like. Campaigns for jobs have a high priority, but do they provide a challenge to capitalism?

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

The answer to this question is almost always "no." Having jobs or creating jobs does not provide any challenge to the violent foundation of capitalism.³ Campaigning for jobs is little threat to the legitimacy of capitalism, since allocation of work and income via jobs is the standard way that capitalism is supposed to operate. If there is massive unemployment, the legitimacy of capitalism can come under threat, as occurs during periods of economic depression or crash. A campaign to maintain or increase the number of jobs does not question the job system. Quite the contrary, it endorses it. Finally,

campaigns for jobs, since they are built on the job system, seldom do much to build an alternative to capitalism.

It is vital to distinguish between jobs and work. A job involves providing one's labour power to an employer in exchange for payment. A job, therefore, is part of a market, namely a labour market.

Work is productive labour. Much work is carried out without pay, such as subsistence farming and parenting. In growing food for one's own needs and in rearing one's own children, there is no employer. In producing cash crops and in undertaking child care for pay, one is also working, but it is reasonable to speak of having a job.

As well, jobs are possible that involve little or no work. Many people in high-paying office jobs do very little productive work. Many members of corporate boards receive high pay for attending a few meetings. So, in summary, work is possible without jobs and jobs are possible without work.

In a nonviolent economic system, people's basic needs would be satisfied and there would be satisfying work for everyone who wanted it. The job system is not a good way to achieve either of these goals.

It is for this reason that campaigns for jobs are not a challenge to capitalism. In contrast, campaigns for satisfying work and for provision for those in greatest need are much more of a challenge.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Job campaigns can be and often are participatory, but the participation is usually restricted to job-holders and their families, and perhaps a few others. The existence of a significant level of unemployment means that workers are pitted against each other for those jobs that exist. A campaign to retain jobs in a particular sector of the economy may not attract support from job-holders and job-seekers elsewhere.

Trade union bodies, though, can help to create a more general concern about employment, and in some cases there is mass action over job issues.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

The goal is more jobs. Work-ins, where employees stay at the workplace continuing to do their work in spite of employers seeking to terminate their jobs or to shut down the entire workplace, are quite compatible with this goal. However, the more commonly used

methods, such as leafletting, meetings, rallies, strikes and pickets, do not directly incorporate the goal of more jobs.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

A successful campaign for jobs is itself cooption into the capitalist system.

In summary, job campaigns, like campaigns for better wages and conditions, are unlikely to be effective means for transforming capitalism in a nonviolent direction, especially because they do not challenge the foundations of capitalism. They are a type of cooption. They are essentially about making capitalism work a bit more fairly. Capitalism is retained but with some adaptation for people's needs. Although they do little to challenge the foundations of capitalism, job campaigns are essential for the survival, standard of living and self-esteem of many people and communities.

Consider now some other goals for workers' struggles. One important goal is the right to organise legally, especially to form trade unions. Going through the check list, it turns out that the answers are much the same. The campaign doesn't do much to challenge the violent underpinnings or legitimacy of capitalism, nor much to build a nonviolent alternative. Participation often has to be high in order to be successful, but it might only be to vote in favour of having a union. Cooption is a big risk, because with legal recognition of workers' organisations, there is a greater possibility that trade union officials will act to dampen worker radicalism. The officials often find that their power is greater when workers "play by the rules," namely obey all laws and regulations governing worker organisation.

There is one question for which the answer could be different: Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods? The goal in this case is an official worker organisation. One way to seek this is to set up a "shadow" or parallel organisation—namely, an organisation that is run the same way a legal one would be. This is often a powerful way to proceed, since it gives participants ideal training for running an organisation.

Workers' control

For a strong contrast to campaigns for better wages and conditions, jobs or the right to organise, consider a campaign for workers' control, namely for the alternative in which workers collectively and democratically control all aspects of work in an enterprise, including who does what, who gets paid what, and what gets produced. With workers' control, owners and managers are eliminated or made irrelevant to the actual operation. This is also called workers' self-management.⁴

There are various ways a campaign for workers' control could proceed. It might be by lobbying government to introduce it as a more efficient method of production. It might come about by enlightened owners turning a company over to the workers, as has happened on a few occasions, such as with the Scott Bader Company in Britain. It might come about when workers join together to buy out a failing company. Finally, it might come about by a direct takeover by workers.

The focus here is on scenarios in which direct worker action is the primary driving force behind introduction of workers' control. Few governments have ever supported it and few private owners have relinquished their role. The exceptions most often occur during revolutionary upsurges, for example during the Russian Revolution when workers took over factories (making them into "soviets"). The Bolsheviks supported this while it served the purpose of helping overthrow the existing regime but introduced bureaucratic control once the party had solidified its power.⁵

So to the check list.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Most obviously, workers' control is a nonviolent alternative to capitalism, since it dispenses with the need for owners and managers. One self-managed enterprise itself does not constitute an alternative, but as a model, workers' control provides a fairly comprehensive alternative, typically along anarchist lines.

If workers do a reasonable job in running an enterprise themselves, this undermines the legitimacy of capitalism. The standard ideology

is that organisational hierarchy is essential for purposes of efficiency. A functioning workplace based on participatory principles is a living rebuttal of this ideology.⁶ This is one good reason why workers' control is so often attacked by governments.

If workers' control is introduced by workers buying an enterprise, or by owners voluntarily relinquishing their role, there is no challenge to the use of state power to enforce property rights. But if workers' control comes about as a takeover of private property, without going through legal requirements—as in the case of a revolution—then this also becomes a challenge to the violent underpinnings of capitalism.

In summary, workers' control satisfies point 1 extremely well.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

If workers' control is brought about through the initiative of workers, it is almost bound to be participatory. On the other hand, if workers' control is a "gift" from owners or imposed by government, participation may be much lower. Indeed, it may require considerable effort to convince workers that it is a good thing.

Participation of the wider community—namely, those who are not workers—is not automatic in workers' control. If workers decide how to do their work, that doesn't really affect others all that much. But what if workers decide what products to produce? That certainly affects others, and a fully participatory campaign would involve community members in such decision making.

One of the most famous workers' campaigns involved the British firm Lucas Aerospace in the 1970s. Responding to the possibility of job cuts, the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards' Committee took the initiative to investigate and propose possibilities for producing alternative products using the highly skilled workforce. The alternatives proposed, including road-rail vehicles, kidney dialysis machines and artificial limb control systems, included some products that were socially beneficial even if not as profitable as other options.⁷ The Lucas workers' initiatives were repeatedly rebuffed by management but inspired many people around the world. They do provide evidence that workers, if given a say over what is produced, are likely to think more about community needs than a traditional management.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Compatibility between means and ends is greatest when workers start exercising control as a method to bring about workers' control. Compatibility is least when the method is to lobby governments.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Workers' control seems like such a radical alternative that cooption would be difficult, but the reality is closer to the opposite. There have been a host of ways to give workers some semblance of participation and control over their work while falling far short of full workers' control.

One option is to have worker representatives sitting on the board of management, along with executives and owners. This is a type of "industrial democracy" modelled on representative government.⁸ It preserves the conventional structure of a corporation with board, chief executive officer and various levels of management down to workers at the coal face. The worker representatives on the board are usually outnumbered but, more importantly, they often adapt to the corporate way of doing things. They can serve useful purposes for workers, to be sure, but they can also help management by soothing the relationship between management and workers.

Industrial democracy can also be introduced at lower levels, with various committees formed allowing workers at different levels to be represented. Again, this can serve useful purposes but may also give greater legitimacy to the hierarchical structure, since workers seem to have some input into decisions but are very far from controlling things fully.

Further down the hierarchy, it is possible to have "semi-autonomous work groups," which are groups of workers who make many of the decisions about how they do their work. Rather than being given very narrow and rigid tasks by bosses, groups of workers decide how to achieve a more general work goal, including who does what and what methods to use. The groups are not fully autonomous since the overall work goal is set higher up in the enterprise.

Greater worker autonomy at this level usually makes work far more stimulating, drawing on and developing a wider range of skills, while interactions between workers can offer great work satisfaction. As a result, productivity is often much greater. However, bosses may be less than enthusiastic since some managerial roles are eliminated.

From the point of view of most workers, semi-autonomous work groups are a great improvement, but they fall short of workers' control. If introduced as a result of campaigning by workers, they provide a considerable challenge to capitalism, but they can also be a form of cooption.

In recent decades, management gurus in developed countries have touted the virtues of flat hierarchies, self-managing teams, open organisations and a host of other wonderful-sounding developments that move away from traditional authoritarian management practice.⁹ These messages about the benefits of giving greater power to employees can be interpreted in several ways. One response is that this is nice rhetoric but that the reality has hardly changed in workplaces.¹⁰ Another response is that changes in this direction make sense in a world where flexibility and cost-cutting have become essential for corporate survival. A third response is that moves to give greater freedom to workers serve admirably to coopt any deeper challenge, given the enormous job losses, career changes and general disruptions of previous certainties caused by globalisation. For all the talk of flat hierarchies and self-management, the changes being recommended do little to challenge core features of capitalism.

In summary, campaigns for workers' control can provide a powerful challenge to capitalism, especially if the primary method is for workers to proceed by taking greater control. Workers' control is potentially a full-scale alternative to capitalism, and successful examples of workers' control provide a powerful challenge to capitalism's legitimacy. A campaign for workers' control can be highly participatory, especially if it proceeds by direct implementation of control, in which case the ends are incorporated in the means. However, cooption is a serious risk. It is not so much that a workplace controlled by workers will be given an offer of lesser control but more money: it is much more likely to be attacked or undermined. Rather, various form of limited participation and autonomy, including worker representatives on boards and semi-autonomous work groups, may serve to pre-empt more radical challenges.

On the other hand, limited forms of worker participation and autonomy may improve work life tremendously. This should not be ignored. It just needs to be taken into account in assessing the potency of workers' control campaigns for challenging capitalism.

A deeper issue is that many workers, given collective control over the workplace, may not want to work! Evidence from the French Popular Front and from the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s suggests that workers resist work in reformist and revolutionary situations, rather like they do in conventional circumstances.¹¹ If this applies more generally, it means the strategy of workers' control requires creative rethinking and possibly reformulation.

Green bans

In the early 1970s, construction workers in the Australian state of New South Wales pioneered a new form of workers' action. The militant trade union covering the workers was the NSW Builders' Labourers Federation (BLF). Union officials were approached by residents living near some park land called Kelly's Bush, in Sydney, that was threatened by a proposed building development. The officials proposed to the union membership to put a ban on any work that impinged on Kelly's Bush, and this was approved. Not long afterwards, all Sydney trade unions banned work at the site. This was the first of what were called "green bans"—industrial action in support of environmental goals.¹²

The employers tried to overturn the ban, but at this period the BLF and the trade union movement were too strong. There was a building boom and workers were in short supply. Any developer that used non-union labour could suffer union retaliation through refusal to work on existing sites. Furthermore, green bans captured public imagination through creative tactics that gained favourable media coverage.

The initial ban over Kelly's Bush was soon followed by many more, including some massive projects. In most cases, the primary motivation was to protect environmental or heritage values. While the circumstances and details varied, there were several fundamental features.

- There was wide local support for a ban in the area affected, including endorsement at a public meeting. Bans were not undertaken solely at the initiative of the union.
- The union membership considered the proposal for a ban. Bans were not ordered by officials on their own initiative.
- Proposals for bans were considered on a case-by-case basis.

After several years of dramatic action, the leadership of the NSW BLF was toppled by the leadership of the national BLF, acting in concert with the government and employers. However, the example set in the green bans had by then been taken up elsewhere in the country and was an inspiration around the world. Union bans on development continue to be instituted to this day.

There were special circumstances in Australia that encouraged the rise of green bans. There was a long tradition of militant trade union action that often went beyond the narrow self-interest of the workers. The early 1970s were a period of rising environmental consciousness, and some unions were leaders in action on environmental issues. (Later on, employers were able to create or exploit divisions between workers and environmentalists.) The legal system did not offer effective opportunities to intervene in the urban planning process. Therefore, middle-class environmentalists had a greater incentive to approach trade unions than might have otherwise been the case.¹³

The projects that were stalled or blocked entirely by green bans came from both the commercial and government sectors. In any case, government was very pro-development, so that in nearly every case it was a struggle between government and corporations on one side versus residents and workers on the other.

Now consider green bans according to the check list for anticapitalist campaigns.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Green bans undermine the legitimacy of capitalism by emphasising the importance of environmental and other non-market values, demanding that these be taken into account rather than decisions being made simply on the basis of profitability or bureaucratic fiat. Furthermore, by involving residents and workers in decision making, green bans challenge the assumption that owners and managers have the right to do whatever they like.

Green bans have elements of a nonviolent alternative to capitalism, namely participatory decision making, but usually this is for the purpose of blocking development proposals. There is little scope

for actually taking charge of urban planning. The bans do not challenge the state's control over organised violence in support of property. The main value of green bans in relation to question 1 is in undermining capitalism's legitimacy.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Green bans involve citizen participation on the community side and worker participation at the trade union side. Depending on the community groups and trade unions, the actual level of participation can vary considerably. However, the long-term success of green bans depends on a reasonably high level of support from residents and workers. If bans are placed inappropriately, workers may become disgruntled and residents withdraw support.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

In as much as one of the goals is participation in decision making about development, green bans build this goal into its methods, which are quite participatory. On the other hand, if the goal is environmental protection, the method is separate—a ban on development—rather than constructive work with the environmental areas in question.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Cooption is a great risk at the community consultation side of the development process. There are all sorts of procedures that give some semblance of participation: opinion polls, meetings called by local government, planning displays, calls for submissions, environmental impact statements and a host of others. Most of the methods of community participation in planning are at the low end of the "ladder of participation," closer to manipulation or consultation rather than genuine citizen power.¹⁴ If residents of local communities think they can influence decisions through various official procedures, they are less likely to build links with workers.

Green bans are less open to cooption at the worker side. Employers strongly resist giving workers—especially blue collar workers—any say in what work should be done.

In summary, green bans appear to have a great potential as part of a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, especially in bringing

together residents and workers in ways that challenge the assumption that capitalism works automatically for the benefit of all.

Whistleblowers

A whistleblower is someone who speaks out in the public interest.¹⁵ The classic whistleblower is an employee who discovers corrupt practice or danger to the public and reports it to superiors, regulatory agencies, politicians and the media. One of the most famous whistleblowers is A. Ernest Fitzgerald, an employee in the US Department of Defense, who exposed vast cost overruns in which the US government was paying exorbitant prices to companies contracted to produce goods for the military.¹⁶ There are police whistleblowers who report police corruption, pharmaceutical company whistleblowers who expose the dangers of certain medical drugs, tobacco company whistleblowers who leak documents about what the company executives knew about the hazards of smoking, church whistleblowers who expose sexual abuse by clergy, and a host of others from every occupation and walk of life.

Whistleblowers usually come under heavy attack from their bosses and by others who are threatened by the revelations. Whistleblowers usually suffer reprisals, including ostracism, threats, harassment, reprimands, demotions, punitive transfers, referral to psychiatrists, dismissals and slander. As a result of these sorts of attacks, it is common for their careers to be set back greatly and their physical and emotional health to suffer.

Most whistleblowers are remarkably ineffective.¹⁷ The problem they blew the whistle on remains unchanged, but instead they come under attack in the classic "shoot the messenger" syndrome. Whistleblowers often seek redress through official channels such as grievance procedures, ombudsmen, legislators, anticorruption agencies and courts, but seldom with any success.

This outcome can be understood by thinking of an organisation as a system of power in which those at the top exercise control over those further down.¹⁸ A whistleblower is someone who challenges the hierarchy, for example by exposing corruption that is perpetrated or tolerated by those higher up. To support the whistleblower is essentially to support a challenge to the standard system of power. Instead of addressing the problem, the whistleblower is attacked as a heretic who threatens the normal operation of the system.

Whistleblowers have the greatest impact when they go public, getting their message to large numbers of people, often via the media. If they link up with social action groups, this is a potent combination: whistleblowers have inside knowledge and the credibility that goes along with this, while the outside action groups are relatively safe from the types of reprisals that can be visited on employees. For example, three nuclear engineers in 1976 spoke out about the hazards of nuclear power, giving an enormous boost to the anti-nuclear campaign.¹⁹ Prior to that time, most insider experts had either supported nuclear power or kept quiet. By speaking out, the engineers punctured the apparent monopoly of expert support for nuclear power. When they spoke out, they resigned from General Electric, realising that their survival as employees would have been impossible. The impact of the GE engineers was great because of the existence of a broad-based antinuclear-power movement.

Employees who blow the whistle challenge the organisational hierarchy; in many cases they challenge corporate power, either as corporate employees or by exposing government connivance with corporations, as in the case of A. Ernest Fitzgerald. So there is a potential to challenge capitalism. In assessing this challenge using the check list, the most potent type of whistleblowing—namely, when it operates in alliance with social movements—will be considered.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Much whistleblowing reveals flaws in organisations, policies or individuals. It seldom sets out to question the purpose of organisations or policies, but rather is an attempt to get them working correctly, namely without corruption or injustice. Nevertheless, whistleblowing can contribute to a general undermining in public confidence in institutions. When there are continual news stories about massive swindles by wealthy entrepreneurs, often aided and abetted by governments, this undermines belief in the automatic beneficence of capitalism.

Sometimes whistleblowing can help stop expansion of corporations into new sectors of activity. Exposures of large-scale corruption by hospital corporations, for example—some companies have been

fined hundreds of millions of dollars for their transgressions—can be a factor in stopping expansion of corporatised medical systems.

Whistleblowing seldom builds an alternative or challenges systems of violence. Fitzgerald's exposures of waste by the Pentagon were intended to make the military more efficient, not to dismantle it.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Whistleblowing is mostly an individual activity, though it is far more likely to be effective when carried out in groups. When whistleblowers liaise with social action groups, there can be participation at the activist end, but the whistleblowing itself is seldom participatory.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

The method of a whistleblower—speaking out, typically through official channels—is quite different from the goal, which is dealing with a problem such as corruption. Whistleblowing is indirect action, an attempt to get someone else—usually someone in a position of power—to do something about a problem.

On the other hand, it is possible to interpret whistleblowing as an attempt to bring about a society in which people are free to speak out without reprisal. In this, whistleblowing combines means and ends.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Whistleblowers are more likely to be attacked than coopted. The attacks serve both to discredit the whistleblower and discourage others from speaking out. However, cooption has a role in preventing people from becoming whistleblowers. The whole system of official channels, including grievance procedures, government agencies, parliamentary inquiries and the courts, serves to encourage people who have a complaint to use those channels. This takes them down a path that chews up time and energy with little result. So, from the perspective of a social movement that could benefit by building links with insiders who are aware of problems, the existence of official channels serves as a way of coopting employee dissent. It could almost be said that whistleblowing through official channels is itself a manifestation of cooption, when the alternative is linking with social activists or becoming one.

In summary, whistleblowing is seldom a great danger to capitalism as a system, though it can sometimes threaten individual capitalists. The best way for whistleblowers to help challenge capitalism is by teaming up with social action groups.

Notes

1 There is no definitive work on nonviolent action by workers. Lots of material is available in writings on nonviolent action (see chapter 2), studies of workers' control (see below) and history of the labour movement. See for example Root & Branch (ed.), *Root & Branch: The Rise of the Workers' Movements* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1975).

2 T. R. Chouhan and others, *Bhopal: The Inside Story. Carbide Workers Speak out on the World's Worst Industrial Tragedy* (Goa, India: The Other India Press; New York: Apex Press, 1994); Sanjoy Hazarika, *Bhopal: The Lessons of a Tragedy* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1987); Paul Shrivastava, *Bhopal: Anatomy of a Crisis* (London: Paul Chapman, 1992, 2nd edition).

3 It is possible to imagine rare exceptions, for example jobs in designing nonviolent alternatives to the military.

4 Gerry Hunnius, G. David Garson and John Case (eds.), *Workers' Control: A Reader on Labor and Social Change* (New York: Vintage, 1973); Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (London: Merlin, 1978); Ernie Roberts, *Workers' Control* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973); Jaroslav Vanek (ed.), *Self-Management: Economic Liberation of Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); H. B. Wilson, *Democracy and the Work Place* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1974).

5 Oscar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905-1921* (New York: Pantheon, 1974). For an insightful analysis of workers' control and revolutionary action, see Carl Boggs, "Marxism, prefigurative communism, and the problem of workers' control," *Radical America*, Vol. 11, No. 6–Vol. 12, No. 1, November 1977–February 1978, pp. 99-122.

6 Seymour Melman, *Decision-Making and Productivity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) is one of many studies showing that productivity can be increased by extending workers' capability in decision making.

7 Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott, *The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making?* (London: Allison and Busby, 1982).

8 Paul Blumberg, *Industrial Democracy: The Sociology of Participation* (London: Constable, 1968); Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer, *Economic Democracy: The Challenge of the 1980s* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1980)

9 For example, Donald Ralph Kingdon, *Matrix Organization: Managing Information Technologies* (London: Tavistock, 1973); Charles C. Manz and Henry P. Sims, Jr., *Business Without Bosses: How Self-Managing Teams are Building High-Performing Companies* (New York: Wiley, 1993).

10 On the changing rhetorics in management consulting, see Robert Jackall, *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 137-144.

11 Michael Seidman, *Workers Against Work: Labor in Paris and Barcelona during the Popular Fronts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For a briefer treatment, see Michael Seidman, "Towards a history of workers' resistance to work: Paris and Barcelona during the French Popular Front and the Spanish Revolution, 1936-38," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, April 1988, pp. 191-220.

12 Jack Munday, *Green Bans and Beyond* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1981).

13 Richard J. Roddewig, *Green Bans: The Birth of Australian Environmental Politics* (Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1978).

14 Sherry R. Arnstein, "A ladder of citizen participation," *AIP Journal*, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

15 David W. Ewing, *Freedom Inside the Organization: Bringing Civil Liberties to the Workplace* (New York: Dutton, 1977); Myron Peretz Glazer and Penina Migdal Glazer, *The Whistleblowers: Exposing Corruption in Government and Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Alan F. Westin, with Henry I. Kurtz and Albert Robbins (eds), *Whistle Blowing! Loyalty and Dissent in the Corporation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).

16 A. Ernest Fitzgerald, *The Pentagonists: An Insider's View of Waste, Mismanagement, and Fraud in Defense Spending* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

17 C. Fred Alford, *Whistleblowers: Broken Lives and Organizational Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Brian Martin, *The*

Whistleblower's Handbook: How to Be an Effective Resister (Charlbury, UK: Jon Carpenter, 1999).

18 Deena Weinstein, *Bureaucratic Opposition: Challenging Abuses at the Workplace* (New York: Pergamon, 1979).

19 Leslie J. Freeman, *Nuclear Witnesses: Insiders Speak Out* (New York: Norton, 1981).

8

Sabotage

A blast furnace operator at a steel mill purposely makes a slight slip-up, causing a cold shut-down. An ex-employee cuts telephone cables serving half a million people. A plumber puts small nails in the pipes of a new building. A computer programmer deletes all copies of data on a computer system. An anti-tobacco activist creatively disfigures and rewrites a billboard advertising cigarettes. A member of Ploughshares uses a hammer to dent the nosecone of a nuclear missile.¹ A forest activist surreptitiously pulls up survey stakes put in by a logging company. An environmental activist pours sand into the fuel tank of a bulldozer. An animal liberationist torches a laboratory used for animal experiments.

These are all examples of sabotage, which can be thought of as purposeful action to damage, destroy or displace physical objects in order to achieve a social objective.² There is a long history of sabotage by workers, for example to obtain a break by forcing a halt to a relentless assembly line. Nonworkers can “disrupt production”—in other words interrupt business as usual—in a wider sense by a range of actions against physical objects.

In the workplace, sabotage as a strategy is commonly portrayed as resisting progress. In the late 1700s and early 1800s in Britain, in the dawn of the industrial revolution, the livelihoods of cottage workers using handlooms were threatened by mechanised looms in factories. Some of them responded by smashing the factory machinery. Inspired by the example of leader Ned Ludd, these workers were called Luddites. Since then, “Luddite” has been turned into a term of derision, treated as synonymous with opposing progress.

However, this is a rewriting of history by the victors: the capitalists. The Luddites were not just machine-smashers; they were campaigning for a system that provided satisfying work and income, a system which had come under attack by the capitalist factory

system, which in the early years obtained higher output only through severe exploitation of employees.

Sabotage has only occasionally been an organised workers' strategy. There are a few who argue for this approach, notably David F. Noble in his book *Progress Without People: In Defense of Luddism*. He sees capitalism as a struggle between capital and workers in which capital has all the weapons and workers are not even in the fight. In his own words: "There is a war on, but only one side is armed: this is the essence of the technology question today. On the one side is private capital, scientized and subsidized, mobile and global, and now heavily armed with military spawned command, control, and communication technologies."³ On the other side, workers are in disarray. Noble argues that the way workplace technologies are constructed reflects the capitalist system of power and, once constructed, these technologies help perpetuate capitalism.⁴ For example, the assembly line subordinates workers to the pace and tasks set by the line, reducing their opportunities to exercise autonomous judgment and to design and run the production process themselves. This is compatible with Gandhi's analysis of mechanised textile production, which subordinates workers, compared to the hand-spun cloth khadi, whose production meshes with community self-reliance.

It can be said, in short, that certain technologies embody capitalist social relations. Capitalists choose or design machinery to serve their purposes, and in practice the machinery gives owners and managers power over workers.

Analysis of the role of technology in capitalism is one thing. How to challenge this is another. Noble observes that smashing the machines is one response by workers.⁵ But is it effective?

From a nonviolence point of view, sabotage falls into a borderline category. Nonviolent action always means no physical violence against humans. Sabotage can be interpreted as physical violence against physical objects. The type of sabotage of interest here involves no direct harm to humans.⁶

We can only be concerned with direct harm, since indirect harm is possible with any sort of nonviolent action. A boycott can lead to a business going bankrupt, a far more serious harm than a few broken windows.

Among nonviolent activists, there are different attitudes to sabotage. Some, taking a strong line against any form of physical

violence, would rule out sabotage altogether. Others think it is fully legitimate, while an intermediate position is that it depends on the circumstances.

It is worth keeping in mind that people do not always mean the same thing by the word “violence.” In the early 1970s, a group of researchers investigated attitudes to violence by surveying over 1000 US men. Among their revealing findings were that more than half the men thought that burning draft cards was violence and more than half thought that police shooting looters was *not* violence. The researchers concluded that “American men tend to define acts of dissent as ‘violence’ when they perceived the dissenters as undesirable people.”⁷ In other words, many of the US men used the label “violent” when they thought something was bad and “nonviolent” when they thought it was good. In contrast, from a nonviolence viewpoint burning draft cards is a form of sabotage—destroying physical objects—and of course shooting someone is definitely a form of violence.

Another way of defining sabotage is as violence against property. This definition highlights ownership rights under capitalism, since nearly every physical object is owned by someone or something, whether individual, corporation or government. Many people see violence against property as more despicable than violence against humans.

There may be significant cultural as well as individual variations in the way people respond to sabotage, as indeed in the way that they respond to nonviolent actions such as strikes and fasts. Responses will also vary greatly depending on what the sabotage involves. A giant explosion wiping out a shipping terminal is quite a different thing from deletion of a computer file, which affects only a few atoms. Yet if the computer file is of crucial importance—for example, a list of labour activists targeted for impending arrest—its destruction may have a greater impact than the destruction of the terminal.

Sabotage is a method and so cannot be assessed in total independence from the goal of an action or campaign. If the goal is improved wages and conditions, with little fundamental challenge to capitalism, then use of sabotage is unlikely to make the challenge any greater. What is possible, though, is to look at how a nonviolent campaign is altered by use of sabotage.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

In principle, sabotage can contribute to any of these. Whether sabotage adds to or subtracts from the campaign depends greatly on the circumstances, including cultural attitudes to the particular action taken. In some countries, property is seen as so sacred that any form of obstruction or damage is vehemently condemned. Owners of a shopping mall might be just as outraged by protesters handing out leaflets in the mall as by graffiti on shop windows. A key element here is the attitude of third parties: those observing the action, whether directly or through reports, including the media. Damage to property can evoke incredibly hostile attitudes. But again, does this mean the campaign is less effective, for example in undermining capitalism's legitimacy? That depends. No hard and fast conclusions can be drawn on this point.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Many types of sabotage, because they are dangerous and because they would be blocked if opponents knew about them in advance, must be planned in secret. If environmentalists announced they were going to put sand in fuel tanks or spikes in trees, they would be intercepted and probably arrested before succeeding. Many types of sabotage are kept secret from beginning to end, with no admissions afterwards. Participation in these sorts of actions is very limited, typically with no more than a few people involved.

Ploughshares actions are direct disarmament, such as damage to weapons systems, principally as a form of symbolic protest, though sometimes the financial and logistical costs to the military are substantial. In these actions, planning is in secret but once the action is taken, the activists acknowledge their responsibility and surrender to police. In these cases, participation in the detailed planning is limited but wider involvement in support for ploughshares actions is possible, especially in court struggles.

Widespread participation is not necessarily possible for any form of nonviolent action. In repressive regimes, even meetings of a few dissidents can be illegal and lead to surveillance and arrests. However, in anticapitalist struggles this level of repression is unusual, so that a

high level of participation is often possible. When use of sabotage leads to a drastic reduction in participation, that is a definite negative.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

It is hard to imagine a nonviolent society in which sabotage is routine. If workers control the production process, then there should be no incentive to damage equipment. That means that sabotage as a method is unlikely to ever reflect the goals of a campaign. Another way to express this is to say that sabotage will seldom be a part of "living the alternative."

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

At a commercial level, it is hard to imagine cooption of sabotage. Will there be firms advertising "Sabotage Services at Your Disposal" seeking to employ members of the radical environmental group Earth First!? In this direct sense, use of sabotage in a campaign is resistant to cooption. But there are other roads to cooption, notably via organised violence of the state.

Sabotage is a standard military method. Bridges are blown up and power lines severed. Today, in the "information age," militaries are deploying "information warfare," for example by spreading computer viruses in opponents' military information systems. In the sphere of ideas, spreading of disinformation—carefully designed false or misleading information—has long been a standard tactic. This incorporates propaganda but also includes techniques such as running clandestine radio stations that are not what they seem to be. All these techniques can be and are used against activists, who can be subject to intensive surveillance and "dirty tricks."⁸

Cooption can occur when activists start "playing the game" of deception, disinformation and dirty tricks, engaging in a sort of competition in which the object is to outwit and disrupt the opponent. One of the objects in this game is to discredit the opponent and one way to do this is to make the opponent appear, correctly or falsely, to be engaged in some unsavoury activity. Police do this when they use agents to foment violence during a protest in order to discredit the organisers in the eyes of the public. One of the risks of sabotage is that nonviolent activists may start to engage in underhanded tactics.

At a more serious level, sabotage can be a stepping stone to violence against humans. If destroying an unoccupied boat is acceptable, what about a building that *probably* is unoccupied? The line between violence and nonviolence can become blurred more easily.

One way to assess the risks of sabotage is to ask, would it be acceptable for the other side to use the same techniques? One of the great advantages of nonviolence is that if it is used against the “wrong people” the consequences are not so disastrous as violence: the harm from occupation of a building is far less than blowing it up and killing all the people in it.

Consider the tactic of damaging weapons, such as by Ploughshares activists. Most peace activists would be most happy for anyone else to damage or destroy weapons. So destroying weapons is a technique that is not harmful if used by the other side. However, spreading a computer virus is a different story. Having computer files destroyed by a virus is never welcome and can be catastrophic for nonviolent activists as well as police and corporations. So this form of sabotage is probably less suitable as a form of nonviolent action.

In principle sabotage can be considered just another method of nonviolent action but in practice it often has many disadvantages. It is much less likely to be participatory and it never incorporates goals into methods. It is open to cooption through engaging in games of deception and damage. Finally, it has an ambiguous relation to nonviolence.

However, there is a risk in becoming fixated with the problems of sabotage simply because it is perceived to be a form of violence, namely “violence against property.” This alone should not be the criterion for rejecting sabotage. Every method of nonviolent action needs to be assessed for its openness to participation, ends-means compatibility and susceptibility to cooption. The circumstances have a strong effect on how methods measure up according to these criteria. The key point is that assessment of all methods should be undertaken, without automatic acceptance or rejection in advance. Finally, to be compatible with nonviolence principles, this assessment needs to be a participatory one.

Notes

1 “Ploughshares” is a term generically applied to principled peace activists who, after taking direct action to damage or destroy components of the military system, then surrender themselves to police. See for example Liane Ellison Norman, *Hammer of Justice: Molly Rush and the Plowshares Eight* (Pittsburgh: PPI Books, 1989).

2 Pierre Dubois, *Sabotage in Industry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979). For numerous examples see Martin Sprouse with Lydia Ely (eds.), *Sabotage in the American Workplace: Anecdotes of Dissatisfaction, Mischief and Revenge* (San Francisco: Pressure Drop Press, 1992). See also *The Black Cat Sabotage Handbook* (Eugene, OR: Graybill, n.d.) and the magazine *Processed World*.

3 David F. Noble, *Progress Without People: In Defense of Luddism* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1993), p. 1.

4 David F. Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977). See also David Dickson, *Alternative Technology and the Politics of Technical Change* (London: Fontana, 1974).

5 Noble thinks it would be presumptuous to provide a programme of action for the labour movement. He does recommend intellectual work: “In essence, if workers have begun to smash the physical machinery of domination, so responsible intellectuals must begin deliberately to smash the mental machinery of domination.” (*Progress Without People*, p. 51).

6 Avoidance of harm to humans is emphasised in manuals for environmental saboteurs: Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood (eds.), *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Tucson, AZ: Ned Ludd Books, 1988, second edition); *Earth First! Direct Action Manual* (Eugene, OR: DAM Collective, 1997).

7 Monica D. Blumenthal, Robert L. Kahn, Frank M. Andrews and Kendra B. Head, *Justifying Violence: Attitudes of American Men* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1972), p. 86.

8 For excellent advice on how activists can respond to surveillance and harassment, see Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action Against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

9

Environmental campaigns

The environmental ravages due to capitalism are well known. They include air and water pollution, land devastated by mining, clearing of land for cash crops, wiping out of species due to commercial exploitation or destruction of habitats, use of dangerous chemicals and radioactive materials, reduction of stratospheric ozone due to aerosol sprays and other products, and climate change due to burning fossil fuels.

The market system does not work well to handle environmental problems, partly because the costs of environmental impacts are seldom included in the costs of production.¹ For example, there is no simple market mechanism to make automobile manufacturers pay for the costs of ill health due to vehicle emissions, traffic accidents, use of land for roads, greenhouse warming or wars fought to ensure access to cheap oil. These costs are borne by members of the public and the environment. So it can be said that the profits are privatised (captured by owners and users) and the environmental and health costs are “socialised” (borne by society as a whole). In economic jargon, environmental costs are said to be “externalities,” namely things external to normal market processes.

There have been extended debates about the cause of environmental problems. One school of thought, whose most prominent exponent is Paul Ehrlich, says that overpopulation is the prime culprit.² Another perspective, championed by Barry Commoner, is that use of new technologies—selected and introduced within a capitalist framework—is the driving force behind environmental assaults: even with the same population, new chemicals, for example, cause more far-reaching impacts.³ Much technological development is motivated by profits, so this perspective attributes much environmental degradation to capitalism.

Another debate is over the relative roles of capitalism and industrialism. State socialist economies such as the former Soviet

Union caused enormous environmental problems, including highly polluting cars, wasteful industrial processes and devastating destruction of habitats such as Lake Baikal.⁴ It is clear that state socialism can be at least as bad for the environment as capitalism, so it is reasonable to argue that the core problem is the cult of modern industry itself and not the economic system in which it grows.

There is also a debate about whether sound environmental practices are compatible with capitalism. In other words, within a capitalist system, is environmental sustainability possible?

While these debates are fascinating, it is not necessary to resolve them for the purposes of discussing nonviolence strategy against capitalism. It is sufficient to note that environmental goals and campaigns often challenge and constrain capitalist development. Indeed, environmentalism has been one of the major sources of challenge to capitalist prerogatives in the past several decades.

- Opponents prevented the creation of a massive fleet of supersonic transport aircraft, limiting production to a few Concordes.
- Campaigns have shut down most of the world's whaling industry.
- Forestry campaigners have opposed unsustainable and damaging forestry operations across the globe.
- Anti-freeway protesters have challenged the expansion of road systems.
- Opponents of nuclear power have stopped the nuclear industry across the world.
- Campaigners have pushed for controls on production of carbon dioxide emissions to prevent global warming.
- Local citizens have stopped innumerable commercial developments.

What is called the "environmental movement" is a complex and varied set of activists, sympathisers, organisations, campaigns and ideas, and might be better described in the plural as "environmental movements." There are powerful international groups such as Greenpeace, numerous national environmental organisations and a host of local groups. There are full-time activists, occasional participants, financial supporters and passive sympathisers. There are individuals and groups that try to live lifestyles with low environmental impact. There is an enormous range of viewpoints among environmental campaigners.

Nonviolent action is widely used by environmentalists. This includes rallies, street theatre, symbolic actions such as dumping nonrecyclable containers on the steps of the manufacturer, blockading shipments of rainforest timbers, sitting in front of bulldozers and occupying development sites. More conventional techniques are also used by environmentalists, including writing letters, giving talks, preparing teaching materials, lobbying, advertising, drafting legislation, making submissions, and suing polluters through the courts. A few environmentalists use sabotage, such as putting spikes in trees that are a target of logging, but always with a strong commitment to avoid harm to humans.

In the immense diversity within the environmental movement, there are some anticapitalist aspects, quite a few that provide no threat to capitalism and some that support capitalism. In the early years of the modern movement, environmental concerns were often portrayed as a middle-class preoccupation, for example to stop a factory or road that would disturb the lifestyle of affluent suburbanites. Left-wing analysts and parties at first derided environmentalism as contrary to the interests of the working class: industry and jobs were considered more important than the side-effects of industrial development.⁵ Belching smokestacks were once seen as a sign of progress. As the years passed, through, left-wing groups joined the environmental bandwagon, seeing it as a means to challenge capitalism. However, as noted earlier, socialist industrialism is not necessarily any better environmentally.

Unlike a traditional left approach, a nonviolence strategy cannot rely on the power of the state to challenge capital, and likewise it cannot rely on state power to solve environmental problems. In order to assess environmental campaigns from a nonviolence perspective, it is helpful to focus on particular environmental issues. Here, three areas are examined: pesticides, nuclear power and local antidevelopment campaigns.

Pesticides

Rachel Carson's famous book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, alerted the world to the dangers of pesticides and was a key stimulus for the formation of the environmental movement.⁶ Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill insects, plants, fungi, and other life that is considered to be undesirable for human purposes, especially agricul-

ture and public health. Supporters argue that pesticides are essential for these purposes whereas critics argue that many uses of pesticides are unnecessary or harmful to the environment and human health. The debate covers issues such as health risks, costs and alternatives.

Manufacture and sale of pesticides is a very large industry. A number of giant multinational chemical corporations, such as Monsanto, produce the bulk of pesticides used worldwide. To greatly reduce pesticide use would be to reduce profits. Hence campaigns against pesticides are definitely a challenge to a significant fraction of capital.

Critics of pesticides, or of their excessive and inappropriate use, have used a variety of methods, including investigation, education, publicity, lobbying, law suits, meetings and promotion of alternatives. Although actions such as strikes and occupations have not been as prominent as on some other environmental issues, a full range of nonviolent actions can readily be used to oppose pesticides and promote alternatives.⁷ A nonviolent campaign against pesticides can be assessed using the check list.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

The answer to this question, applied to antipesticide campaigns, is likely to be “no.” A campaign certainly can challenge the legitimacy of pesticide manufacturers, but this does not necessarily undermine capitalism’s legitimacy generally.

Of course, challenges to pesticides can be extremely valuable even if they do not challenge the capitalist system in any fundamental way.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

This depends on the campaign. Antipesticide campaigns can be participatory—for example involving most members of a local community affected by pesticides—but some lobbying efforts have very low participation.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Typical goals of antipesticide campaigns are to reduce pesticide use to much lower levels and to promote alternatives. Campaigns against pesticides cannot easily build goals into methods, except in the trivial sense that activists do not use pesticides in their campaigning. On the other hand, promotion of alternatives, such as organic farming practices to reduce pest levels, toleration of higher crop losses and use of biological controls, all have great potential for incorporating ends in means.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

The most effective form of cooption in the pesticide area is government regulation. Regulations on pesticide toxicity, use or distribution appear to deal with problems but easily fail due to lax limits, poor enforcement and negligible penalties for violations. Furthermore, regulations seldom provide much encouragement for alternatives. Therefore, campaigning that is oriented to improving regulation is enmeshed in an official system that doesn't work very well.

The route of promoting alternatives directly also can be coopted, though with much more beneficial results. The practice of organic farming involves elimination of synthetic pesticides. Organic farming can be taken in a collective direction, in which self-reliance, sharing and community solidarity are key elements, and in which control over the process is kept in the hands of the farmers. However, it can also be taken in a commercial direction, in which case organic produce becomes simply another means to make money. Companies can get involved by producing naturally occurring pesticides. Thus organic farming has the potential to be a significant challenge to capitalist agriculture but also can be coopted into the capitalist marketplace. Campaigns around pesticides can push in either direction.

In summary, campaigns against the excessive use of pesticides do not have a great potential for challenging capitalism, though they can be very valuable within themselves. The most anticapitalist direction for antipesticide campaigns is through promoting alternatives, especially in the noncommercial aspects of organic farming movement.

Nuclear power

Nuclear power is the production of electricity by harnessing the process of nuclear fission, using uranium as the fuel. Proponents claim that it is a clean and cheap method of power generation. Critics cite numerous disadvantages, including the hazards of long-lived radioactive wastes, the risk of nuclear reactor accidents, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by more governments (since nuclear power technology and expertise is linked to the capacity to produce nuclear weapons), high costs, the mining of uranium on indigenous people's lands, and reductions in civil liberties due to the need to protect against criminal and terrorist use of nuclear materials.

The first nuclear power plants were built in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, nuclear power was well on its way to becoming a major power source, with hundreds of large plants constructed, especially in the United States and Soviet Union.

Unlike pesticides, which have been manufactured primarily by corporations, nuclear power has been a creature of states.⁸ Some of the very earliest plants in Britain and the Soviet Union were designed to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons, with electricity as a by-product. Military research and development, plus government sponsorship, were crucial in getting the nuclear option going. In most countries, nuclear power has been totally owned and controlled by the state, with corporations only involved in a minor fashion. Partly this has been because of links to actual or potential military uses of nuclear materials. As well, in many countries the electricity sector has been government-run. Finally, the huge costs and the risks of catastrophic accidents have discouraged private investment.

Only in the US were corporations involved in a big way in early decades. Even there, the government eased the way through research and development, subsidies (such as through government-funded uranium enrichment facilities) and legal limits on insurance pay-outs in case of nuclear accidents. However, it is possible that nuclear power could have gone down the route of other technologies, such as telecommunications, that were first developed by states, in the risky and expensive trial periods, and later turned over to corporations once commercial viability was more assured. Thus, much of the British nuclear industry was privatised in the 1990s, with the government maintaining ownership of a portion that could not be made profitable.

The movement against nuclear power had its first stirrings in the late 1960s and expanded enormously in the 1970s. It has been a grassroots movement, involving a range of sectors of the population such as farmers in Japan, suburbanites in the US and trade unionists in Australia.⁹ Often the focus has been against nuclear power plants that are proposed or under construction, with opposition drawn from local communities. There has also been substantial opposition even among those far from any immediate risk. In Australia the main antinuclear goal has been to stop uranium mining that is remote from most of the population, and the movement has been as strong as anywhere else.

The movement against nuclear power has used a variety of methods of nonviolent action, including meetings, rallies, vigils, blockades, strikes and site occupations. Nonviolent action theory and training has played a large role in the movement, while in turn the movement has served as a means for spreading and developing understanding of and experience with nonviolent action. This has especially been the case in the United States and Western Europe, where nonviolence was the organising principle for major campaigns, with careful preparation, nonviolent action training, consensus decision making and fostering of nonviolent discipline.¹⁰

While the antinuclear movement has made great use of nonviolent action, to what extent is it anticapitalist? A look at the check list is helpful at this point.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Since nuclear power has been largely an initiative of states, antinuclear campaigns do not do a lot to undermine the legitimacy of capitalism. However, there is a connection with state violence. A society built around heavy use of nuclear power—the so-called “plutonium economy”—would require an unprecedented level of surveillance and police powers in order to guard against criminal and terrorist use of nuclear materials. Many nuclear power programmes have been accompanied by draconian legislation, special police forces and surveillance of nonviolent nuclear opponents. In a nuclear state, any form of dissent becomes criminalised. It is possible to imagine a

plutonium economy in which commercialisation of the nuclear fuel cycle is made possible by, and gives the rationale for, intensification of the police powers of the state.

The widespread introduction of nuclear power thus could have led to greatly increased state power in the service of capitalism. Antinuclear campaigning helps to prevent such a development, and thus undermines the violent underpinnings of a possible future nuclear capitalism. The case of nuclear power draws attention to the value of stopping capitalism from getting much worse or more deeply entrenched. Thus, although antinuclear campaigning has been largely against the power of the state, it has an anticapitalist dimension, namely prevention of a much more dangerous capitalism, where the danger would come from environmental impacts, nuclear war and attacks on civil liberties.

The movement against nuclear power has been accompanied by a constructive programme, namely promotion of an energy future based around energy efficiency, renewable energy sources (such as solar and wind power) and design of communities and lifestyle changes to reduce energy requirements.¹¹ Some elements of this programme offer an alternative to capitalist approaches, as described below.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Most of the grassroots antinuclear campaigns have been participatory, with many opportunities for involvement in a variety of ways. Campaigns built around nonviolence principles have made informed participation a priority. On the other hand, participation in some activities has been restricted, such as expert testimony at inquiries and direct actions by Greenpeace.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

While some participants have reform goals, such as building safer nuclear plants, most have opposed any use of nuclear power. An additional goal, sought by many activists, is an energy system that is environmentally sound, self-reliant and decentralised.

For the goal of a world without nuclear power, the methods used have been compatible with the goal in the trivial sense that they do not rely on nuclear power.¹² But most campaigning that is simply

against nuclear power has not gone further in building a positive alternative into methods.

Some campaigns for a “soft energy path” are exemplary for combining means and ends: installation of solar heaters and biogas cookers, promotion of solar design in construction, elimination of wasteful packaging, use of bicycles, and a host of other initiatives. These sorts of campaigns can be tied to opposition to nuclear power as well as opposition to nonrenewable, centralised energy sources including coal, oil and natural gas.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

If antinuclear activists had been satisfied with better safety audits, building nuclear plants underground, or deeper burial of radioactive waste, then campaigns would have been coopted long ago. Nuclear power, since it comes only in the form of large power stations and always brings along other elements in the nuclear fuel cycle, including uranium mining, enrichment and waste disposal, presents itself as an all-or-nothing proposition. Most campaigners have demanded the nothing option, making the movement fairly resistant to cooption.

Campaigning for a soft energy future is far more open to cooption. Automobile manufacturers can provide fuel-efficient cars; small companies can install solar hot water heaters; electricity utilities can offer special “green energy” schemes to encourage renewable energy; manufacturers can produce energy-efficient appliances. In short, a more energy-efficient future is compatible with capitalism, though it may not be the most profitable capitalist path. Many people would consider such an energy-efficient capitalism a great improvement. This means that cooption is a strong possibility.

The movement against nuclear power has been remarkably successful in stopping a powerful industrial juggernaut in its tracks, but whether it should be considered an anticapitalist movement is a vexing question, given that nuclear power has largely been a state initiative. To the extent that the nuclear industry might have been privatised with the full advent of a “plutonium economy,” the antinuclear movement has anticapitalist credentials. The movement has been highly participatory and played an important role in increasing the conscious use of nonviolent action.

As a movement *against* a form of technology, the movement has difficulty in incorporating its goals into its methods, but the parallel movement for a self-reliant energy future can be promoted with means-ends compatibility. However, the path to a low energy future is easily susceptible to cooption. So while the antinuclear movement may have stopped nuclear capitalism, the likely alternative is nonnuclear capitalism, which is not nearly as bad but is a far cry from a nonviolent economic system.

It is intriguing to speculate that one reason for the important role of nonviolent action in antinuclear campaigns is the role of the state, and especially of state repression, in promoting the nuclear option. The state has been involved because of the large scale, high costs and great potential risk of nuclear developments. Nuclear power is not a small, user-friendly technology that can be purchased at a local shop. As noted in chapter 2, the theory of nonviolent action applies most easily and obviously in the face of repression by clearly defined “rulers.” Nuclear power fits this model more readily than most technologies.

If nuclear technology had been available in consumer-sized bundles—such as plutonium-powered watches and vehicles—it might well have been accepted more readily, even if it ended up killing millions of people. (A good analogy is cigarettes.) By being large, concentrated, remote, run by large organisations and overtly backed by state power, nuclear power became an ideal target for nonviolent action.

This suggests once again the difficulty of confronting capitalism, in as much as it is a system of dispersed power. A careful analysis is especially important, since obvious points of attack may not get to the roots of the problem.

Local antidevelopment campaigns

When community members organise against a new development, such as a factory, apartment block, housing estate, stadium, freeway, airport, or just the cutting down of a few trees, the motivation is often self-interest, including maintaining property values, preventing noise and air pollution, ensuring nice views, reducing traffic congestion or preventing the “wrong sort of people” from moving into the neighbourhood. Local antidevelopment campaigns are often dubbed with acronym NIMBY, standing for “not in my back yard.” The

implication is that NIMBY campaigners do not care if the development occurs somewhere else. They just do not want it near where they live.

In spite of the derogatory connotations of the term NIMBY, many local activists do care about others. Local campaigning can be especially effective when it combines principled opposition to certain types of harmful development—such as nuclear waste dumps or high temperature incinerators—with concerns about local impacts or racial discrimination. In any case, local campaigns can be a potent mode of resistance to capitalist initiatives. Therefore they are worth considering.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

For most NIMBY campaigns, the answer is no. There may be undermining of the legitimacy of individual capitalists—namely the ones promoting the development being opposed—but seldom of the system as a whole.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

This depends on the campaign. High participation is important for campaign success.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

When, as is typical, the aim is to stop a development and the methods include meetings, letters, lobbying and rallies, there is little direct connection between goals and methods. Often there is, in addition, a more general aim: for local people to make decisions about local developments. One way to capture this general aim in methods is for local community members to develop their own participatory planning processes and to use them to reach agreement on desired plans. An alternative plan is a good way to help challenge an undesired development.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Cooption is always a serious risk for local antidevelopment campaigns. Sometimes this occurs through compromises: a height of

a proposed building is reduced or better emission controls are installed in a factory. Another method is buying off opposition, as for example when developers pay high prices to purchase existing dwellings targeted for removal. The community as a whole can be bought off when the developer or government allies provide facilities such as parks, pay higher taxes or make donations to schools.

In a wider sense, cooption occurs when developers go somewhere else: the development is not stopped but instead displaced, often to a community that cannot resist as effectively. The result is that undesirable developments often end up in the poorest and most oppressed communities (though effective resistance occurs in some poor communities).

By these criteria, local antidevelopment campaigns are weak vehicles for challenging capitalism, since they provide little fundamental challenge and are easily coopted. However, while this is true of most local campaigns, as a collective phenomenon they should not be ignored. Sometimes a combination of NIMBY campaigns constitutes a strong challenge to a type of development. A good example is disposal of high-level radioactive waste. No community wants to host this particular "development" and cooption strategies have not proved successful. In this case, local opposition results from and provides support to wider antinuclear consciousness built by the movement against nuclear power. Several of the limitations of individual NIMBY campaigns are overcome when they are part of a wider struggle.

Notes

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4 Boris Komarov, *The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union* (London: Pluto, 1981).

5 See, for example, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A critique of political ecology," *New Left Review*, No. 84, March-April 1974, pp. 3-31; James Ridgeway, *The Politics of Ecology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970).

6 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

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8 Joseph A. Camilleri, *The State and Nuclear Power: Conflict and Control in the Western World* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984); André Gorz, *Ecology as Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1980); Robert Jungk, *The New Tyranny: How Nuclear Power Enslaves Us* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1979).

9 Jim Falk, *Global Fission: The Battle over Nuclear Power* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982); Wolfgang Rüdig, *Anti-Nuclear Movements: A Worldwide Survey of Opposition to Nuclear Energy* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1990).

10 On the US experience see Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

11 For the technical side of this approach, see Amory B. Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths: Toward a Durable Peace* (New York: Ballinger, 1977).

12 Where nuclear power is part of the electricity generating system, it is hard to avoid using some nuclear-produced electricity without disconnecting from the electricity grid. Avoiding this has not been treated as significant in antinuclear campaigning.

10

Social defence

The power of the military and police lies at the foundation of capitalism, as described in chapter 3. Without organised violence to protect the system of private control and to contain challenges by workers and communities, capitalism could not survive. Therefore, in examining nonviolent challenges to capitalism, it is worth examining nonviolent challenges to military and police power.

Organised nonviolent action can be used as an alternative to military defence. Instead of using weapons and troops to defend, a community would defend itself using noncooperation, rallies, strikes, boycotts, occupations and other forms of nonviolent action.¹ This is not a cheap and easy option: resources and training on a scale similar to military forces might well be involved. Preparation would include designing energy, transport, agriculture, communication and other technological systems to be resilient against attack, training in foreign languages and intercultural understanding, fostering community solidarity, building links with sympathetic groups in other countries (especially potential aggressor countries), introducing comprehensive education and training in nonviolent action, running simulations (analogous to military training exercises), and setting up decision making systems and popular “intelligence” services to assess potential threats. Such a system for defence using nonviolent action has been given various names, including nonviolent defence, social defence, civilian-based defence and defence by civil resistance.

No society has ever systematically prepared itself for social defence. In this sense, nonviolence is in an early stage of development, equivalent to violence before the introduction of armies and organised weapons production. Therefore, it can be said that a full-scale nonviolent alternative to the military is yet to be tried.

One of the key implications of promoting the capacity to use nonviolent action against aggressors is that it provides skills and ideas for communities which they can use against more local targets. In a

social defence system, it would be desirable for workers to know how to shut down production quickly and completely, without damaging equipment. A crucial piece of equipment, such as a computer chip, might be designed so that, when removed, rapid resumption of production is impossible. A replacement could be kept in a safe place such as another country. With this sort of preparation, even torture would be useless to get production going again.

If workers had this capacity to shut down production, it could be used against employers. Indeed, workers' control provides the best sort of defence against repression, since a collectively run workplace is far harder for an aggressor to control, without the managerial chain of command in which top figures can be replaced or induced to support the aggressors.

Network communication systems, including telephone, fax and electronic mail, are ideally designed for nonviolent resistance to aggression, since the aggressor cannot shut down communication by controlling a few key points, as in the case of major television and radio stations, traditionally the first targets for capture in military coups.

If communities are self-reliant in energy and food and have skills in mutual help, they are in a far stronger position to resist being incorporated into a corporate-dominated commodity culture. Thus, virtually all the measures to build the capacity for nonviolent defence of a community are equally valuable for building the capacity to resist capitalist social relations and challenge the power of the state to support capitalism.²

The very idea of social defence is relatively new. Gandhi pioneered the use of nonviolent action as a systematic strategy for social change, but he did not formulate a comprehensive model of a defence system based on nonviolent action. It was not until the late 1950s that a number of writers and researchers began proposing social defence as a full-fledged alternative.

As well as individual advocacy for social defence, it has been promoted by organisations in a number of countries, including Netherlands, Italy, Germany, France, United States and Australia. The political party *Die Grünen* in Germany has social defence as part of its platform. Due to efforts by proponents—Gene Sharp has been especially influential—social defence has been considered as a serious option in some newly independent states, including Slovenia and

Lithuania, though in the end military systems have been adopted. Yet while acknowledging these initiatives, overall it must be said that very little headway has been made in making social defence a realistic policy option. The military is powerfully entrenched, as might be expected given that it is the ultimate defence against overturning various systems of domination, including dictatorship, capitalism and state socialism.

Though social defence as a policy option has a low profile—this is to put it politely, given that it is hardly known among the general public—nevertheless there are some foundations being laid by nonviolent activists. The methods of nonviolent action, from petitions to parallel government, are the methods for a social defence system. So every time workers go on strike, consumers join a boycott or environmentalists blockade a polluting factory, they are practising skills and gaining insight into methods that are the foundation of social defence. People with personal experience in nonviolent action are almost invariably the most receptive to the idea of social defence. They can more readily grasp what it might involve and how it might operate.

Social defence is more than just using nonviolent action. It requires planning, preparation, training, infrastructure and network building. No one would expect an army to have much of a chance if it had no plans, no method of recruitment, no training, no communication system and relied on weapons picked up on the spur of the moment. Likewise, a social defence system that relies on spontaneous use of nonviolent action is not likely to have much of a chance. To establish a social defence system requires more than people having experience with nonviolent action: it requires preparing the society in everything from intercultural skills to emergency drills.

To promote social defence is difficult because the very idea clashes with deep-seated assumptions about defence and the necessity of meeting violence with violence. For most people, “defence” means military defence.

1. Does the campaign help to
 - undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
 - undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
 - build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Social defence, as an alternative to the military, is a direct challenge to capitalism's violent foundation. A number of the obvious measures that would strengthen social defence, including self-reliance in energy, food, water, health, housing and transport, are highly compatible with nonviolent alternatives to capitalism. On the other hand, social defence makes little direct impact on the legitimacy of capitalism.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Social defence can only be successful with a high level of participation. This is unlike the military option, which relies on a small number of soldiers to defend or control a much larger population.

Because social defence is such a threat to governments, it is likely that only a participatory campaign has a chance of introducing it. However, there is not enough experience with campaigning for social defence to draw a firm conclusion on this point.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

There are two basic ways to campaign for social defence. One is based on trying to convince political and military leaders that social defence is a logical, superior option for defending a country. This approach uses a method—rational argument aimed at elites—that is different from the goal, popular nonviolent action as a mode of defence.

A second way to campaign for social defence is through community organising and nonviolent action. This can include running social defence simulations, building decentralised energy systems designed to survive blockades or attacks, and promoting network communication systems for coordinating resistance to aggression. This approach is, in essence, using the methods of social defence in order to achieve social defence as a goal.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Because social defence is such a fundamental challenge to the power of the state, it is highly resistant to cooption. A few governments have sponsored investigations into social defence, but not a single one has made substantial steps to introduce it.

However, cooption might become a greater possibility if campaigns for social defence were much stronger. One method of coop-

tion is for governments to introduce a small component of social defence as a complement or supplement to military defence, as in the case of Sweden's "total defence" which is primarily military but has as components economic defence, civil defence, psychological defence and social defence. The radical implications of social defence could be thwarted by a hierarchically structured nonviolent defence system, managed by government elites or perhaps contracted out to corporations.

What about cooption by capitalism? Could there be firms selling "social defence services" to local communities? It is hard to imagine. Full-scale capitalist cooption of social defence would only be possible if capitalism attained such a popular legitimacy that people would be willing to undertake nonviolent action to defend it.

On the surface, social defence may not seem to be a challenge to capitalism. As noted in chapter 2, few nonviolence theorists have even mentioned capitalism: their main focus has been systems of overt repression, such as dictatorship. Yet because capitalism relies on violence at its foundations, social defence is a deep-seated challenge: it gives people the tools to confront and replace unjust social systems of any sort. Grassroots campaigns for social defence provide the greatest challenge, since they maximise participation, build ends into means and are more resistant to cooption.

Notes

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11

Global issues

The increasing power of multinational corporations and the increasing pervasiveness of the capitalist system around the world is commonly called "globalisation." Properly speaking, this should be called capitalist globalisation, since there can be other types of globalisation, such as of science and nonviolence.

Capitalist globalisation includes increasing trade, rapid movement of investment capital, freely adjustable exchange rates, movement of production to low wage regions of the world, agreements on tariffs and other trade issues, global communication systems, increasing size of multinational corporations, and greater homogeneity in markets. Globalisation involves a shift in power from local communities and small-country governments to multinational corporations and the governments of the most powerful economies.

Global marketing means that local products and tastes are challenged by products and tastes from multinational corporations, such as Coca-Cola, Hollywood movies, synthetic pesticides, Toyota vehicles and professional golf. Along with products comes the attraction of a consumer lifestyle.

Critics of globalisation have argued that it largely benefits the rich while impoverishing the poor within both developing and developed countries, undermines local traditions and reduces cultural diversity, fosters wants that cannot all be satisfied, imposes unsustainable burdens on the environment and reduces public accountability. In short, globalisation intensifies and spreads some of the worst aspects of capitalism without doing much to foster the social infrastructure and habits that mitigate capitalism's excesses. There is globalisation of corporate power but relatively little globalisation of philanthropy, civil liberties, occupational health and safety or humanisation of work.

Opposition to capitalism thus entails opposition to capitalist globalisation. However, stopping, slowing or transforming globalisa-

tion is only part of the struggle. It is not much use opposing the power of multinational corporations if the alternative is supporting exploitative local corporations or a repressive government.

Globalisation is especially damaging for poor people in developing countries.¹ Indeed, it can be seen as the latest manifestation of centuries of exploitation, beginning with imperialism and colonialism—in which political subjugation was the foundation for economic exploitation—and followed, after colonies gained independence, by neocolonialism, in which economic exploitation continued via investment, loans, trade and corruption. The notorious “structural adjustment programs” imposed by the World Bank on debtor countries have forced them to adhere to a neoliberal economic model, subordinating local economies to the markets of rich countries. Loans, unproductive development projects and massive high-level corruption have perpetuated economic subordination. Globalisation is a continuation and more efficient form of this pattern of exploitation. These problems are well documented.² The question is what to do about them.

Although globalisation is presented as a rational process, it contains many contradictions. For example, the ideology of the market is that there should be free movement of all factors involved in production, but labour is not allowed the same country-to-country mobility as capital. Another myth of market economies is that economic failure is punished by bankruptcy, but in numerous cases large corporations in rich countries are propped up by governments rather than allowed to collapse. When governments of small countries cannot pay their debts, they are not allowed to go bankrupt—which would mean that foreign banks and governments would lose their money. Instead, structural adjustment programmes are imposed so that the people of the country are forced to pay the debt.

Nonviolent action against globalisation can occur in all sorts of ways, from protests against McDonald’s in India to setting up of local money systems. To illustrate the potential of global-local campaigning, three issues are examined here: the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, genetically modified organisms and free software.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)³

The MAI sought to codify a set of investment “rights” for corporations. The idea was that when multinational corporations deemed that regulations in a foreign country interfered with their “freedom” to compete in the marketplace, they could use the MAI to challenge them. Government authority to regulate with regard to environmental, employment, consumer and other issues would be curtailed. In an attempt to remove all barriers to free flow of capital, the agreement would have forced signatory countries to treat foreign competitors and investors as the equals of national companies and investors. This had implications for social welfare, the arts, research, non-profit organisations and much more.

As an exercise in working towards equalising the investment conditions faced by multinational corporations across the globe, the MAI probably would have brought about a “lowest common denominator” in the area of environmental, consumer and labour laws, overriding more protective legislation. While the proposal spelt out more certainty for investors, it meant further uncertainty for marginalised workers and the poor who, in many countries, are reliant on subsidised food, also under threat from the MAI.

In 1995, a draft MAI was prepared by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), representing the 29 wealthiest countries. Most of this work was done in secret.

A wide cross-section of groups opposed the MAI for a variety of reasons.⁴ The opposition included unions, environmental groups and green parties, some other small political parties, church groups, consumer and aid organisations. While there was certainly some right-wing opposition, for instance the One Nation political party in Australia and racist groups in the Netherlands, the bulk of the activism came from left-wing and socially progressive groups who generally saw the MAI as an attack on human rights and state sovereignty. They anticipated that it would further erode environmental and worker protection and indigenous people’s rights, as well as restricting the means for defending them.

Defending state sovereignty against corporate domination has its down side: governments, after all, frequently act against the interests of citizens and the environment, including when supporting local capitalist interests. Most social justice activists involved in the anti-MAI campaign opposed both national and global oppression, but felt

amply justified in targeting the MAI because it would have undermined socially beneficial national legislation while doing little to reduce state-level oppression.

In 1997, a photocopy of the MAI draft was leaked to Global Tradewatch, a citizens' organisation based in the USA. Using electronic mail and the World Wide Web, Global Tradewatch disseminated the information to numerous organisations, commencing a chain reaction that involved more than 600 groups worldwide.

There were public meetings, campaign meetings, ringing up radio stations, writing to newspapers, fundraising, placing newspaper advertisements, rallies and much more. Thus global networking through the Internet worked synergistically with local actions. Eventually action was significant enough to generate attention in the mainstream media and alert a wider public to the issues. The result was that the MAI was stopped, though versions of it are still on the global corporate agenda.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

The MAI would have involved powerful international enforcement of its trade provisions, including strong trade and other sanctions against violators. Underlying this enforcement is the power of the wealthiest states, especially the US government. So in essence the MAI would have internationalised the use of coercive power—backed ultimately by the military and police—to maintain a globalised capitalism. The anti-MAI campaign thus helped oppose an expansion of the violent underpinnings of capitalism.

The MAI would have given much greater legitimacy to the exercise of power by global capital. The anti-MAI campaign's success helped prevent this greater legitimacy, while the campaign itself challenged the legitimacy of globalisation. On the other hand, it did not seriously question national capital.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Based on global networking and local organising, involving hundreds of organisations without a "central command," the campaign was

highly participatory. Just about anyone who could tap into the networking process could choose to be involved. The contrast with the highly secretive and centralised process involved in promoting the MAI was stark.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Among opponents, the only obvious common goal was stopping the MAI. Since the opponents did not use investment agreements as a technique, at this trivial level the goals were built into the methods. As for other goals, opponents had enormous differences: some wanted to protect national cultural industries, others to build alternatives to capitalism and yet others to stop immigration and investment from certain foreign countries. A separate assessment of methods and goals would be needed for different groups within the anti-MAI coalition.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

This question is not easy to answer. The MAI became the symbol of globalisation that needed to be opposed, so it is unlikely to be resurrected under that name, since it would again become the target for a global campaign. Because it was promoted in secret and was a discrete, named proposal, it provided an ideal target for opposition. So in this sense the campaign was resistant to cooption.

But other, more incremental processes of globalisation may eventually give the same outcome as the MAI, such as transnational corporate mergers, global marketing strategies and the transfer of production to regions with cheaper labour. Campaigns against these are more open to cooption, though the bigger problem is not cooption but that these processes have a lower profile, operate gradually and do not seem to be so obviously unacceptable. Creeping corporate domination is more difficult to oppose than identifiable initiatives such as the MAI. The existence of the name "globalisation", in as much as it has become shorthand for increasing global corporate domination, helps in mobilising opposition.

The anti-MAI campaign pitted two types of globalisation: that based on large hierarchical organisations operating in secrecy and the other based on a variety of community groups promoting public education and citizen action. The campaign had the great strength

that, through a participatory process, it forestalled a great expansion in the coercive backing for international capital. However, to duplicate this success by stopping more gradual processes of globalisation is much more challenging. Many of the goals of the MAI are being achieved, more gradually, through individual cases brought before the World Trade Organisation, a process that is not so easily susceptible to activist intervention.

Corporate ownership of life forms

Scientists can now replace components of the genetic structure of plants and animals, creating new organisms that could not have been bred through conventional means. For example, a gene from a fish can be spliced into the genetic sequence for a cow or genes from bacteria can be put into corn. By careful choice and through experimentation, new types of organisms can be created with desired characteristics, such as cows with less fat in their milk or corn that grows well in acidic soils. The new organisms are described as genetically modified and the enterprise is called genetic engineering or biotechnology.⁵

Biotechnology has the potential for enormous human benefit, for example by cheaply producing life-saving drugs and creating crops that are more nutritious. However, many of the actual uses of biotechnology are designed to primarily serve vested interests. Three factors are important in this.

First, biotechnology, though initially funded by governments, is now largely a corporate endeavour and is oriented to corporate imperatives. Instead of focussing on producing crops that are more nutritious or can readily be cultivated by poor farmers, corporations such as Monsanto have designed crops that are highly resistant to pesticides. That means more sales of pesticides. Another innovation is crops whose seeds are not fertile. That means that farmers cannot set aside seed from the crop to sow the next season's crop, but must buy new seed from the corporation.

Second, biotechnology is highly reliant on experts and sophisticated technology. It is not a "people's technology" that can be used by ordinary farmers or community groups. The dependence of biotechnology on expertise makes it easily recruited for corporate and government agendas.

Third, there are serious potential risks in biotechnology. Plants have been created that produce the naturally occurring pesticide Bt. However, this could well accelerate the development of Bt-resistant pests, which would be devastating for organic farming, which relies on judicious spraying of Bt. Even more seriously, a new genetically modified organism could become a deadly disease. The risk may be small but the consequences could be enormous. This suggests that biotechnology, in its present form at least, is intrinsically unsuited to being a people's technology.

There has been concern about biotechnology from its beginnings. In early years, some scientists had serious reservations and this led to a period of tight controls. However, government regulations gradually became laxer in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, popular opposition began to develop in many countries. In countries like India, farmers' organisations have opposed the genetic exploitation of collective resources. Pharmaceutical companies have searched through the natural genetic resources of developing countries and, when finding something that can be commercialised, have sought patents on the genetic sequences. The companies are then in a position to sell the organism back to the country, sometimes with minimal transformation. In this way, the centuries of community wisdom that went into selecting and developing a certain species are appropriated by corporations, a process that has been called "biopiracy."⁶

In developed countries, critics have raised the alarm about genetically modified organisms and there is increasing concern among consumers. Corporate promoters oppose the labelling of genetically modified food, since this would allow consumers to reject it more easily. Activists and most consumers favour labelling, which would open genetically modified food to boycott. Some activist groups have engaged in sabotage, for example by destroying genetically modified crops, including experimental plots.

These campaigns combine concerns in two related areas. One is about genetic engineering, with its potential risks and corporate agenda. The other is about corporate takeover of genetic resources through patenting. Patenting gives an exclusive right to market an invention for a period of time, and is a type of "intellectual property." Biotechnology as a corporate enterprise depends on patenting.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Patenting of life forms and the development of new life forms that are controlled by corporations can be considered to be an expansion of the capitalist system to a new domain. The property system is extended to cover genetics. If this became established, it would be a wider scope for the violent underpinnings of capitalism—which are essential to protect corporate property—and a broader legitimacy to capitalism as the appropriate framework for handling the new realm of genetic modification. Therefore, campaigns against corporatisation of life forms can be considered a challenge to both the violent foundation and the legitimacy of capitalism, in the sense that they seek to prevent these becoming wider and deeper than before.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Participation is low in some forms of opposition, such as lobbying of governments and working through international agencies and professional associations. It is potentially very high in farmers' protests—rallies in India against multinational takeovers in agriculture have attracted up to half a million people—and consumer boycotts.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Opponents of genetically modified organisms do not use such organisms as part of their campaigning, so methods and goals are compatible in a trivial sense. On the other hand, some opponents of the corporate appropriation of the products of indigenous communities have argued for collective intellectual property rights for indigenous cultures, a clear case of fighting fire with fire rather than water.⁷ While such an approach may achieve the goal of protecting indigenous culture, it may also give greater legitimacy to intellectual property generally.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

A campaign to oppose all genetically modified food is hard to coopt, but a campaign to label such food could readily be coopted by corporations agreeing to labelling, but then winning over consumers by low prices, advertising, special deals or attractive packaging.

Tobacco companies opposed having health warnings on cigarettes packets but were able to maintain sales after warnings were required by law. Similarly, biotechnology companies may be able to overcome consumer resistance, though that remains to be seen.

Cooptation might also be possible through public participation in systems for evaluating genetically modified products. For example, farmer representatives might be brought onto government agriculture policy committees. However, these forms of cooptation currently seem both unlikely to occur and unlikely to work.

In summary, opposition to corporatisation of life forms is a challenge to the expansion of the capitalist system to a new realm. There are many ways to oppose this expansion, including distributing information, lobbying, organising rallies and destroying genetically modified crops. Depending on the methods used and the ways campaigns are run, there can be greater or lesser degrees of participation, means-ends compatibility and risk of cooptation.

Corporatisation of life forms is just one of the areas where capitalism is expanding on the basis of monopolies over the use of information: so-called intellectual property, which might be better described as monopoly privilege. The major industries dependent on this include pharmaceuticals, filmed entertainment (especially Hollywood), software and publishing. Property rights in the use of intellectual material are especially hard to justify since, once produced, it is cheap and easy to make copies. This situation is normally a justification for making such products public goods. Ownership is not needed to benefit from reading a poem. Even if a million other people have copies, the original version is not diminished. This is quite unlike shoes or houses, where making multiple copies requires considerable labour and resources.

In an economy based on cooperative use of resources, intellectual products would be freely available. This is far more efficient than the capitalist system of buying and selling rights to intellectual products, which creates an artificial scarcity and hinders both use and innovation. The public systems of everyday language and scientific knowledge work extremely well. Private ownership of words and formulas would reduce their use value, dynamism and flexibility.

However, the belief that intellectual producers deserve royalties and other benefits from their creative work is deep seated, especially among intellectuals, and allows corporate expropriation of intellectual work to occur without much organised opposition. The development of campaigns against a range of types of intellectual property is an important task for anticapitalist struggle.⁸

Free software

One of the most highly developed challenges to capitalist-owned intellectual property is the free software movement.⁹ Companies develop software for sale, and their efforts are characterised by secrecy, competition and high cost to consumers. Members of the free software movement develop software to give away. They make the code openly available, allowing others to scrutinise it and propose improvements. To prevent corporations copyrighting or otherwise controlling the software, it is protected by so-called “copyleft,” which allows others to use and adapt it freely but not to claim any exclusive rights to it.

The free software movement has been amazingly effective. Through voluntary contributions from programmers around the world, a vast library of free software has been produced. The most widely known is the operating system Linux, which has become a serious challenge to commercial software—primarily because it is so much more reliable—but there is much else available.

Considering its great achievements, free software has low visibility. A reader of the computer pages of newspapers—where the advertising comes from computer companies—would hardly know free software exists, much less that there is as much of it available as proprietary software.

Free software can be conceptualised as a campaign, though many of its participants are involved simply because they enjoy programming challenges.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Free software is a potent challenge to the legitimacy of capitalism because it shows that voluntary, cooperative work can produce better

products than some of the wealthiest corporations in the world. Free software is also part of a nonviolent alternative to capitalism, especially by challenging the expansion of the intellectual property system to cover software.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Participation in development of free software is on the basis of competent contributions: programmers can be involved if they have something useful to contribute. Others can be involved by using and promoting free software.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

The methods are much the same as the goals: development and use of free software. The main contradictory element is the use of copyright law to create "copyleft" in order to protect free software from commercial interlopers.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

The concept of free software is often confused with "shareware" which, though it sounds like a communal product, is actually commercial software that is available on a trial basis. Computers often are sold with software provided "free" (allegedly at no extra cost), but usually this is commercial software. In these ways the concept of free software is confused and appropriated by commercial software options.

Computer companies can adopt some free software as part of their own software packages, thus embedding the "free" elements in a commercial environment and obscuring the possibility of a more complete package of free software.

Much free software is written by programmers in their spare time who in their "day job" produce commercial software in a far more alienated environment. If computer firms could make programming more participatory and stimulating, programmers might not be so attracted to the opportunity to be involved with free software. However, since there are thousands of programmers contributing to free software worldwide, this form of cooption would need to be widespread to be effective in slowing the free software movement.

In summary, the free software movement is quite a challenge to capitalism, especially to the expansion of the property system to software. It combines means and ends effectively. As a practical alternative, it is participatory for programmers and software users while ensuring the highest quality products.

Global-local campaigning

Capitalism has operated in a national mode for a long time, with rival governments defending the interests of national capital. Internationalism—for example, the fostering of free trade—is usually only in the interest of the most powerful capitalist countries. That continues to be the case today, with corporate globalisation being promoted most vigorously by the governments of the US and other wealthy countries.

The socialist movement, in contrast, was internationalist from its start in the 1800s. The idea was that workers had common interests and would unite against their common oppressors, the capitalists. In practice, nationalism was often a stronger force, especially in the case of war. Prior to World War I, working class organisations were pledged to oppose war between states, but after the outbreak of war, internationalist ideals were forgotten as workers volunteered to fight against their counterparts in enemy countries.

As corporate globalisation proceeds, the need for globalisation of opposition increases, but this inevitably involves action in local situations. Campaigns against the MAI and against corporate control over life forms are two examples of campaigns that can be described as both global and local. Trade agreements and patents on life forms have global implications and the proponents of these initiatives plan on a global scale. Therefore opponents need to operate globally as well. This includes targeting international forums, coordinating actions in different parts of the world and trying to meld together participants from a range of countries and constituencies. To achieve this, a local dimension is vital. The impacts of corporate globalisation are felt most acutely in local communities, and it is in such communities that global campaigns must be built. Without local participation and initiative, campaigners operating at the level of international meetings and media can easily lose touch with grass-roots concerns and become more susceptible to cooption.

There is nothing all that new about global-local campaigning. Colonialism was a process of international exploitation, and independence movements were commonly aided by sympathisers and support groups within the colonial power. Many workers' struggles have had international dimensions, and the struggle against nuclear power has involved national movements with international networking. But with corporate globalisation, global impacts are becoming more significant in many areas.

In between the global and the local are a host of intermediate scales, including national and regional and all sorts of networks. This means that there is increasing organisational complexity in campaigning. Making campaigns participatory is an extra challenge when groups from around the world and from different cultures are involved.

Notes

1 John Madeley, *Big Business, Poor Peoples: The Impact of Transnational Corporations on the World's Poor* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

2 Richard J. Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (London: Earthscan, 1995); Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (eds.), *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn toward the Local* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996).

3 Portions of this section are adapted from Wendy Varney and Brian Martin, "Net resistance, net benefits: opposing MAI," *Social Alternatives*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 2000, pp. 47-52.

4 David Wood, "The international campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment: a test case for the future of globalization?," *Ethics, Place and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2000, pp. 25-45.

5 For critical views, see for example Kristin Dawkins, *Gene Wars: The Politics of Biotechnology* (New York: Seven Stories, 1997); Michael W. Fox, *Beyond Evolution: The Genetically Altered Future of Plants, Animals, the Earth—and Humans* (New York: Lyons Press, 1999); Brewster Kneen, *Farmageddon: Food and the Culture of Biotechnology* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1999); Vandana Shiva, *Stolen*

Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000); Martin Teitel and Kimberley A. Wilson, *Changing the Nature of Nature: Genetically Engineered Food* (London: Vision, 2000).

6 Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (Totnes, Devon: Green Books, 1998).

7 Tom Greaves (ed.), *Intellectual Property Rights for Indigenous Peoples: A Sourcebook* (Oklahoma City: Society for Applied Anthropology, 1994).

8 For some ideas about campaigning against intellectual property, see Brian Martin, "Against intellectual property," in *Information Liberation* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), pp. 29-56.

9 Free Software Foundation, 59 Temple Place, Suite 330, Boston MA 02111-1307, USA; gnu@gnu.org; <http://www.gnu.org/>.

12

Economic alternatives as strategies

One fruitful way to develop strategies is to work out components of the goal and then turn them into methods. This approach has the great advantage that the goal is built into the method, so that there is less chance of the strategy serving the wrong ends.

Nonviolence itself exemplifies this approach of using the goal as a strategy. The goal is a society without organised violence, in which conflict is dealt with using nonviolent methods. To achieve this goal, a key method is nonviolent action. This gives experience in using nonviolent action, refines understanding of nonviolence as a goal, and helps overcome reliance on violent methods.

For a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, turning goals into methods means working out a nonviolent economic alternative to capitalism and then turning the alternative—or a component of it—into a method for change. This can be a highly effective approach.

One economic alternative is promoting cooperatives, which are collective enterprises in agriculture, manufacturing, retail, services or any of a number of areas. In cooperatives, workers and users are in control, without bosses. Decisions are made participatively, typically by consensus or voting. Cooperatives are enterprises run by workers' control, a strategy that was analysed in chapter 7. As a strategy, cooperatives are more commonly built from scratch by a group of people committed to a collective, self-managing approach, whereas workers' control can occur by workers taking over an existing enterprise.

Here three other economic alternatives¹ are considered: community exchange schemes, local money systems and voluntary simplicity.

Community exchange schemes

A well-known community exchange scheme is LETS (Local Employment and Trading System), a not-for-profit, cooperative

information service to coordinate local exchange of goods and services.² Individuals who produce goods or undertake services receive “credits” that can be used to obtain goods and services from others who are participating. Unlike the anonymous market, formal barter systems such as LETS promote direct connections between people, fostering a more cooperative approach. LETS supplements the money economy but also challenges it, causing difficulty for the state to exercise its power through taxation.

LETS has been introduced in hundreds of communities in various countries. Usually the schemes are small, but some are quite extensive. Some governments tolerate LETS operations, while others obstruct or harass them. Government regulations and harassment limit the expansion of LETS, but at least as important is the attraction of the regular money economy for most people.

Setting up and running LETS schemes can be interpreted as a strategy against capitalism. In the questions in the check list, the word “campaign” should be interpreted as “building a LETS scheme.”

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

LETS challenges the legitimacy of capitalism because it is based on barter rather than currency, because it is non-profit and because it is mostly exchange between individuals, without large corporations. It also helps build a nonviolent alternative because it is based on cooperation rather than exploitation. LETS in its present forms is not a full-scale alternative to capitalism. For example, LETS participants gain many of their skills and tools of work through the conventional economy; LETS-based communities seldom run entire education systems and computer chip manufacturing. But LETS certainly can be a component of a wider nonviolent alternative.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Definitely. In as much as people engage in LETS, they are participating in the alternative. However, it is typical for just a few people to be responsible for setting up and administering LETS schemes, so there can be inequalities at the level of design and operation.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Yes.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Cooption occurs mainly through the attraction of the money economy. Since LETS normally operates as a partial alternative, with many participants also being involved in the money economy, which is far larger and offers much greater choice, there is a constant pull away from LETS as a full alternative.

Local money systems

Related to community exchange scheme are local money systems.³ Both LETS and local money systems are challenges to the construction of markets by states.⁴ Local money is planned, issued and controlled locally, rather than being imposed by a central government. Local money is directly connected to people in a community, greatly restricting the power of national governments and large corporations, especially major banks. It helps to make people aware of the social role of money, challenging the idea that it is a neutral exchange medium.⁵

In a number of cases, local money systems were introduced in desperation by communities during economic depressions, as an attempt to get the local economy moving. Sometimes the currency automatically depreciates with time—for example losing one percent of its value each day—so that people have a strong incentive to spend it quickly. Local money is a direct challenge to central government monopolies over currency, and central governments typically shut down local money systems as soon as possible.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Local money systems challenge the legitimacy of capitalism, but here distinctions between types of capitalism become important. What can be called “actually existing capitalism” is based on central government control over the money system, in alliance with banks and the largest corporations. Local money systems challenge the power of central government managers, bankers and corporations.

However, local money is compatible with local capital. So it might be said that local money systems challenge the legitimacy of “monopoly capitalism” while supporting the legitimacy of “local competitive capitalism.”

The same can be said of local money as an alternative to capitalism: it substitutes a different—namely local—version of capitalism for current national and global capitalisms. Whether this will help to build a full-scale nonviolent alternative to capitalism is difficult to judge.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Experience suggests that many local people may participate by using local money. The actual setting up of local money is usually the initiative of a small number of individuals, but it is possible to imagine a participatory process of establishing and running a local currency. One model for this is demarchy, discussed in chapter 5.

3. Are the campaign’s goals built in to its methods?

Yes.

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Governments find local money threatening and usually try to shut it down: repression is more likely than cooption.

Thinking a bit more broadly, there are cases of corporations that set up something like *de facto* currencies, especially for their own workers. This includes company loans, housing, cars and other services. In classic company towns, dominated by a single large corporation, employees may have few major economic interactions except with company-owned or sponsored enterprises.

This suggests that a key to the challenge offered by a local money system is the question of who controls the system. If the local money is the initiative of or dominated by a few local capitalists, there is little genuine challenge to capitalism. But if there are elements of local community control over the money system, this is potentially a major challenge.

Voluntary simplicity

One of the driving forces behind capitalism is ever-increasing consumption. If people always want better clothes, larger houses, fancier cars, more sophisticated computer software, and any number of other goods and services, there are ample opportunities for making money by providing for these desires. Much advertising is designed to make people feel inadequate and stimulate them to buy products to overcome this perceived inadequacy, whether it is soft drinks, kitchen cleaning products or holiday cruises. If most people want more than they already have, they are more likely to work hard in order to make money to spend.

However, if lots of people decided that they are satisfied with a few basic, long-lasting possessions, the economy would suffer. The voluntary simplicity movement aims at cutting back on unnecessary consumption.⁶

- Instead of seeking a large house or apartment, a lesser scale is preferred.
- Instead of two or three cars for a family, there is only one, or perhaps none with bicycles instead.
- Instead of buying lots of new clothing, a smaller amount of clothing is kept, which may be obtained second-hand.
- Instead of purchasing large collections of books and recordings, libraries are used instead.

There is a great flexibility in the ideal of simplicity. It might mean keeping only a very few possessions, or just a reduction from the norm to something a bit less.

The term “voluntary” is important. This is not poverty that is forced on people because they have no option. Rather, it is a choice to live simply, without the usual array of appliances and services.

There are various motivations for voluntary simplicity, including concern about the environmental impacts of production, a personal preference for an uncluttered and less hectic lifestyle, an escape from the treadmill of working to earn money in order to consume, an expression of solidarity with those who have less, and an unwillingness to support the ever-expanding capitalist system.

For millennia, some individuals have opted for voluntary simplicity, which is always relative to current standards of consumption. It takes on special significance in affluent societies and in affluent subcultures, since it challenges the prevailing ethos of consuming as

much as one can afford. Voluntary simplicity gained some visibility in western countries in the 1970s. It remains a preferred option for some individuals and in some communities, but has not become a major movement.

1. Does the campaign help to

- undermine the violent underpinnings of capitalism, or
- undermine the legitimacy of capitalism, or
- build a nonviolent alternative to capitalism?

Voluntary simplicity undermines the legitimacy of capitalism as a system of ever-increasing production and consumption. It is a threat, then, to the conventional picture of capitalism. Of course, capitalism does not always work well, and in periods of depression there is drastically reduced output, which may cause widespread “involuntary simplicity.”

Voluntary simplicity contributes to building nonviolent alternatives to capitalism, in as much as these alternatives are based on satisfying needs rather than pandering to unlimited wants. This applies especially to sarvodaya (see chapter 5). Establishing a culture where people are modest and realistic about their needs is a helpful step towards an economy based on cooperation and helping those with greatest needs.

2. Is the campaign participatory?

Participants are those who opt for voluntary simplicity. There might also be some who advocate voluntary simplicity but, for the time being, do not participate as fully as they might like.

3. Are the campaign's goals built in to its methods?

Yes. Voluntary simplicity is an ideal example of “living the alternative.”

4. Is the campaign resistant to cooption?

Voluntary simplicity can be marketed as a consumer option, with special products designed for those so inclined. However, this form of cooption has not been prominent compared to tempting people to become conventional consumers. Advertising becomes ever more sophisticated in targeting insecurities and selling goods through the promise of fulfilling fantasies. Consumerism is ever more convenient.

Many goods are produced so that, when they break down, it is cheaper and easier to buy new ones rather than undertake repairs. As prices drop and product convenience increases, voluntary simplicity may seem a pointless form of self-deprivation. In addition to this, the influence of peer pressure is very great. It can be extremely difficult to be an isolated individual who practises voluntary simplicity, living among others who do not question consumer culture. For this reason, voluntary simplicity thrives in communities of like-minded individuals. It can even become a matter of pride and prestige to be seen to live a simple life.

Voluntary simplicity can be taken up without much obstruction: state coercion is unlikely to be used to force people to consume! It is part of a constructive programme that mimics the desired alternative, namely a system which caters for people's needs but not their greed. The greatest weakness of voluntary simplicity as a strategy is its susceptibility to cooption. The promoters of consumption have developed sophisticated means of enticing people to join the consumer society. If a few people decide to opt out for a simpler lifestyle, that is not a fundamental threat to consumerism. Voluntary simplicity would be a greater threat if it became a popular option and was linked to other strategies for directly challenging and replacing capitalism.

Conclusion

Turning economic alternatives into strategies is a powerful approach. The biggest challenge is to do this on a significant scale. It is comparatively easy to take small initiatives, but these are also easy to marginalise or coopt.

For an individual to adopt voluntary simplicity is a useful step. A much bigger challenge is to turn voluntary simplicity into a social movement, with so many converts that it is mutually reinforcing.

Setting up a small cooperative enterprise may not be too hard though, to be sure, there can be great difficulties. The larger challenge is to set up a network of cooperatives so that they support each other, rather than having to battle for survival alone in a hostile environment.

Promoting sarvodaya in individual villages in India and Sri Lanka is one thing. It is a much greater challenge to turn this into a global movement.

It is possible to become a voluntaryist and to survive, as much as possible, through voluntary economic exchange while refusing any dealings involving the government. This is difficult enough. To make this an attractive option for lots of people is much more difficult.

Thus, whatever nonviolent alternative is envisaged, the biggest challenge is to develop it beyond local initiatives.

Notes

1 A useful review is Gary Moffat, "Building economic alternatives," *Kick It Over*, #29, Summer 1992, pp. 4-12.

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3 Douthwaite, *Short Circuit*; Thomas H. Greco, Jr., *New Money for Healthy Communities* (Tucson, AZ: Thomas H. Greco, Jr., PO Box 42663, Tucson AZ 85733, USA, 1994).

4 Also important here are microfinance systems serving the poor, such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh: see Muhammad Yunus with Alan Jolis, *Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle against World Poverty* (New York: PublicAffairs, 1999).

5 On the non-neutrality of money see Nigel Dodd, *The Sociology of Money: Economics, Reason and Contemporary Society* (London: Polity, 1994). On the psychology of money, see Dorothy Rowe, *The Real Meaning of Money* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

6 The Simple Living Collective, American Friends Service Committee, San Francisco, *Taking Charge: Achieving Personal and Political Change through Simple Living* (New York: Bantam, 1977).

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Conclusion

A nonviolence strategy against capitalism needs to be built on nonviolent analysis, nonviolent goals and nonviolent methods. The analysis of capitalism should be from a nonviolence perspective, with special attention to the violent foundations of the system. The ultimate goal is a nonviolent alternative to capitalism, in which there is no organised violence. The methods used to move towards the goal are the familiar techniques of nonviolent action.

Many courageous and committed people have undertaken nonviolent campaigns to challenge capitalism or aspects of it. However, seldom has this been linked to any overall strategy for nonviolent transformation of capitalism. Most nonviolent analysis has focussed on cases of overt repression, aggression or oppression, such as dictatorship, military attack and racial discrimination. The exercise of power in capitalism is more multilayered. Therefore an analysis of the dynamics of capitalism, from a nonviolent perspective, is absolutely vital for developing a nonviolence strategy.

The analysis in this book is one example of how to proceed, but there are other possibilities. For a nonviolent transformation of capitalism to occur, lots of people will need to be involved, and they need to have a grasp of how the system operates, how change can occur and what sorts of initiatives are likely to be most fruitful. That means that a useful nonviolent analysis has to be one whose fundamentals are readily understood. It is unwise to depend on a few experts or gurus. Circumstances will vary according to the local situation. Global capitalist dynamics will change. Participants in nonviolent activism need to be able to analyse, plan, evaluate and innovate. Nonviolent action is a participatory approach to social change, and likewise the analysis to accompany the action should be as participatory as possible.

Nonviolence strategy should be thought of as a tool, not a strait-jacket. It is a way of thinking and planning, but in all cases

judgement is needed. Local situations rarely fit the ideal model postulated in analyses. The perfect campaign is seldom possible. Adaptations or compromises need to be made. For these reasons, unthinking use of a formula for change is potentially disastrous. Analysis and planning needs to be participative, creative and adaptable. Understanding fundamentals is important, but there is no automatic path to the “correct” action.

The analysis in this book is at a fairly general level. As well as such general assessments, it’s vital to develop detailed strategies taking into account local history, culture, experience, opposition, allies and a host of other factors that are specific to the situation. That is something that can only be done effectively by people with local knowledge and experience.

Why nonviolence? For some people, a moral commitment is the foundation for their adherence to nonviolent principles. But it is also possible to support a path based on nonviolence for pragmatic reasons. The strategies against capitalism based on capturing state power, and using the state’s police and military power, have consistently failed. Nonviolence strategy deserves a chance.

A nonviolence strategy against capitalism has the great advantage that it is self-consistent: its methods are compatible with its goal. If one believes in a cooperative, egalitarian, nonviolent economic future, in which priority is given to serving those in greatest need, then a nonviolence strategy cannot be too damaging, because it incorporates those features in its methods.

It is important to remember that capitalism is not the only source of suffering in the world. There are other major systems of domination, including state repression, racism and patriarchy. Nonviolent action can be and has been used against these systems, probably more effectively so far than against capitalism. Nonviolence is thus a multipurpose approach to social change. It does not set aside certain problems until “after the revolution”—a common approach among old-style socialists. For many activists, other problems are more pressing or useful targets than capitalism. Nonviolent anticapitalist struggle should not take automatic precedence over other struggles, but instead should be one struggle among many.

It is also important to keep the focus on what the real problems are. Capitalism results in exploitation, death, alienation and many other ills. It is these that need to be opposed. Destroying and replac-

ing capitalism is pointless if there is the same level of suffering in the new system. The danger is that the abstract entity “capitalism” is seen as the embodiment of evil, rather than just as a system that causes unnecessary suffering.

Can capitalism be reformed? Certainly. It is far less damaging in some countries than others. Should reform be the goal? That depends.

One of the greatest challenges for activists is to live in a society, fully aware of its shortcomings, while keeping alive the vision of a radical alternative, and maintaining enthusiasm for actions that may only seem to move the slightest distance towards that alternative. Reforms are more achievable than revolutionary transformation and offer concrete evidence that change is possible.

The term “capitalism” can give the impression that capitalism is a yes or no proposition: either you have it or you don’t, so the only alternative to acceptance of capitalist hegemony is total eradication through revolution. In this way of thinking, reform is pointless. Actually, though, not all capitalisms are equally bad. Reforms do make a difference to people’s lives.

Rather than saying that we live in a capitalist society, it may be better to say that we live in a society with many capitalist aspects.¹ The goal then is to oppose and replace the damaging capitalist aspects while promoting positive noncapitalist aspects. The challenge is to make this a sustainable process.

One idea is to promote “nonreformist reforms,” namely reforms that lay the basis for further change.² Nonviolence strategies are excellent candidates since they have the advantage that ends are built into means, so reform is less likely to undercut the potential for long-term change.

Campaigning and cultural change

Chapters 7 through 12 discussed campaigns, namely organised efforts to bring about change. Campaigns are planned and are readily observed, making it easy to analyse them. However, there is another approach to change, based on small, local, individual actions.³ Manifestations of this sort of change include:

- not noticing or not commenting on a friend or neighbour’s purchase of fashionable clothes or the latest appliance;

- making information publicly available, by leaflets, newsletters or the web, in violation of intellectual property laws;
- bending business rules in order to help those in need rather than put profit first;
- spending extra time visiting friends rather than earning more money;
- refusing to buy goods from especially exploitative companies;
- not wearing clothing bearing commercial slogans or symbols;
- sharing possessions;
- doing things for others on a voluntary or barter basis, rather than using money;
- abstaining from unnecessary purchases;
- donating land, goods or labour for communal benefit;
- making critical comments about capitalist ways of viewing the world.

These are examples of the many possible “small ways” of acting that challenge or gently undermine the capitalist framework. Do these provide a real threat to capitalism as a system? They are not as easy to analyse as campaigns. Some of the “actions” may be quite subtle, such as the tone of voice used when friends discuss job options or when employees discuss corporate policies. Yet such small actions may have, in combination, significant effects.

The advantages of campaigns are obvious: they directly confront social problems and build alternatives. But because they are visible, they can be more readily attacked or coopted. And because they involve collective action, they are susceptible to internal conflict over status, positions and control.

Small ways of acting avoid these problems: they are too individual and fleeting to be the subject of major counterattack. They can be done by anyone at virtually any time, without requiring coordination or organisation. Their shortcoming is that they often have little or no effect.

Campaigns and small individual actions reinforce each other. Campaigns make issues visible, giving encouragement for individual action. Small actions provide a supportive climate for campaigning. In short, campaigning and cultural change go hand in hand. It is easier to observe and analyse campaigns. Perhaps it would be valuable to study and consciously use some of the small ways of acting.

No one knows for sure how to go about replacing capitalism with a better system. There are many possible ways to proceed, and not enough assessment of what works and what doesn't. It is almost certain to be a very long-term process. Therefore it makes a lot of sense to learn as much as possible about how best to go about it. There is a need for experimentation, innovation and evaluation. There is a lot to be done. With participatory approaches, there should be a lot of people to do it.

Notes

1 J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

2 André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

3 Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).