
The Voluntaryist

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"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

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Without Firing A Single Shot: Voluntaryist Resistance and Societal Defense

By Carl Watner

In his book review, "Security Without a State," David Gordon concluded that "The notion that only the [S]tate can provide an adequate defense is but one more statist myth - maybe the most dangerous one of all."¹ While I heartily endorse this statement, neither its author, nor the editor, nor the contributors to *THE MYTH OF NATIONAL DEFENSE* (the volume Gordon was reviewing) consider one important variant of non-state defense, namely, civilian-based nonviolence.² While pointing out that "some rough combination of [private] militias and 'insurance companies'," and "mass-based guerrilla war[fare]" would suffice to defend an anarchist society, practically none of the current advocates of non-state defense strategies suggest civilian-based nonviolence.³ What they overlook is the possibility of a non-state society defending itself "without firing a shot."⁴ The basic component of such a policy rests on the basic voluntaryist insight: that all government and hierarchies depend upon the consent and cooperation of those whom they would rule over. Or as Gene Sharp put it, "When people refuse their cooperation, withhold their help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance which any government or hierarchical system requires. If they do this in sufficient numbers for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power" or be able to function.⁵

The Strength of Barehands and Stubbornness⁶

To most people, the voluntaryist perspective is both incomprehensible and inconceivable. There are relatively few numbers of people that view the State as an invasive institution, one which is based on territorial aggrandizement and coercive revenues. There are even fewer who might ask the question: Can there be an alternative mode of societal defense which is not based on military means? Nonetheless, nonviolent struggle is rooted in a deep human propensity (also evidenced in many domesticated animals) to be stubborn, to persist in doing what has been forbidden, and to refuse to do what has been ordered. As we all know, this stubborn streak is present in children: they refuse to eat or do as they are told, or

engage in delaying tactics.⁷ Adults, too, can be recalcitrant, but fortunately human stubbornness can be directed toward admirable goals. We can cooperate with other human beings to resist what we collectively view as evil or wrongdoing. Nonviolent struggle or voluntaryist resistance is simply the widespread societal application of this obdurate trait for social, economic, or anti-political purposes.⁸

Revolutionary implications stem from the simple voluntaryist insight that no ruler exists without the cooperation and/or acquiescence of the majority of his or her subjects to be ruled.⁹ One might say that nonviolence is "the political equivalent of the atomic bomb."¹⁰ To call nonviolent resistance "passive" or "for sissies" is to totally misunderstand its import. As Hannah Arrendt pointed out, the use of nonviolent resistance is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised by human beings because it cannot be countered by fighting. Only mass slaughter will assure the violent opponent an ultimate victory, but even then "the victor is defeated, cheated of his prize, since nobody can rule over dead" people.¹¹ Furthermore, civilian resistance demands widespread unity of opinion among the population, and careful research and strategic planning; its adoption must be preceded by widespread preparation and training; and its execution calls for considerable courage and discipline.¹² Could an army be successful if its soldiers had no training? Nonviolent resistance is no different in this regard.

There are many advantages of nonviolent civilian-based defense. For one thing, a nonviolent army is not limited to the physically fit. Children, seniors, people of every age and condition, even the infirm, are capable of refusing to do what they are told to do. For another thing, even though suffering and death are an inevitable part of any social struggle, nonviolent resistance minimizes both the numbers of casualties and the amount of destruction.¹³ Another advantage of nonviolent resistance is that there is no such thing as final defeat, so long as a few people exist whose minds and spirits are not bent to the will of the ruler. For example "[a]fter more than forty years the Tibetans continue to resist the Chinese military occupation. ... [I]f the will to resist is maintained ... the defense cannot be defeated."¹⁴

Civilian-based defense would make a society and its institutions "indigestible to any invader" but such a society, itself, would be incapable of launching any foreign aggression or the invasion of another country since it possesses no weaponry and uses nonvio-

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lent resistance in a strictly defensive manner. If threatened with a nuclear attack, nonviolent defenders would have no nuclear deterrent with which to counter. They would have to be prepared to face down nuclear blackmail and be prepared to die for their cause, just as soldiers are prepared to die for their cause. If the global community was not prepared to ostracize and boycott a rogue government that possessed weapons of mass destruction until its nuclear threat was withdrawn, then little could be done except to let the bluff be called. "The would-be threatener would have little to gain from following through with his threat if it meant creating a wasteland of the territory he sought to control, for nothing of value would remain for him to exploit."¹⁵

The Tradition of Nonviolence

The term "people power" is part of a surprisingly long and robust tradition of waging social conflict by nonviolent means. Probably the first recorded act of civil disobedience in history is the refusal of the Hebrew midwives to obey the Pharaoh's order to kill male Hebrew babies in 1350 B.C. (Exodus 1:15-19). Those who have studied the history of nonviolent movements have cataloged a surprisingly long list of examples, often beginning with the American colonial boycotts, tax refusal, and acts of civil disobedience which culminated in the violent struggle for independence against Great Britain. The most pertinent observation about the American Revolution came from John Adams, who observed that the real revolution took place in the hearts and minds of the American colonists long "before the [official] war commenced" in April 1775.¹⁶ Nonviolent resistance played a significant role during the 19th and 20th Centuries, being found in a wide variety of "political, cultural, and geographic conditions." Gene Sharp lists some of the most prominent examples in his book, *SOCIAL POWER AND POLITICAL FREEDOM*.¹⁷

Hungarian passive resistance to Austrian rule, 1850-1867

Finnish resistance to Russia, 1898-1905

Nonviolent resistance to the Tsardom during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917

German general strike and non-cooperation

to the Kapp Putsch in 1920

Resistance to the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr 1923-1925

The Indian independence movement led by Gandhi, 1930 - 1947

The Muslim Pashtun (Pathan) Movement of the North-West Frontier of India, 1930-1934 led by Badshah Khan

The resistance of over 14,000 Norwegian teachers and clergymen to Nazi rule during World War II

Czechoslovakian resistance to Soviet invasion, 1968-1969

The Intifada, the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation, beginning in 1987.

Sharp concludes that "Much can be learned from these experiences" (of which the above are only a partial listing). For example, Badshah Khan's organization of Pathans, known as the Khudai Khidmatgar, exploded the myth that nonviolence can only be followed by those who are gentle (the Pathans were known as some of the most violent fighters in the world) and that nonviolence had no place in Islam.¹⁸ These examples also show that "resistance is possible in a wide variety of situations and conflicts, even in extremely difficult and repressive ones." Nevertheless, Sharp also points out that nearly all of these historical examples of nonviolent resistance suffered from the absence of strategic planning, preparation, and training.¹⁹ However, even where they failed, none of them invalidated the "proposition that all government, even totalitarian government, is based on the consent and cooperation of the ruled" and everyone of them tended to prove that if the consent of the populace is taken away, then every regime, even the most ruthless, must collapse.²⁰

But what of a Hitler or a Stalin: could such despotic dictators be resisted nonviolently? Does nonviolent resistance work against extremely ruthless opponents? Advocates of nonviolence have answered this question "Yes," based on their understanding of the theory of nonviolent resistance and an examination of history. They have concluded that nonviolent resistance has never failed because it was ruthlessly suppressed; but rather it failed because it was never systematically and consistently used.²¹ The key question is not how ruthless is the opponent, but rather how seriously are the practitioners of nonviolence committed to their strategy. Nonviolent struggles have a greater chance of success if they are strategically planned and systematically implemented. Even lacking this, nonviolent resistance "works" because it rests on a fundamental insight into the nature of political power.²² As Gandhi said, there are no guarantees in life, but if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. "All one can say with certainty about nonviolent ... [resistance] is that it will not succeed unless the dependency of the ruler's power is exposed and sucked dry."²³ Every ruler de-

pendes not only on the obedience of his subjects, but also on the cooperation of his agents, such as the police and bureaucratic officials. If the acquiescence of any of these groups evaporates, for whatever reason, the ruthless dictator is left high and dry. Finally as Mubarak Awad, the father of Palestinian nonviolence, observed that "There is no more assurance that a nonviolent struggle will be victorious than there is an assurance that armed struggle will achieve its end."²⁴ After all, in half of the armed struggles that are conclusively ended, one-half of the opponents are victors; the other half losers.

The social conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis offers an actual example of a people trying to defend their homeland. Since its beginning in 1967, there has always been "two parts of the Palestinian resistance movement, the paramilitary and the civil." Nonviolence has always been a critical component of the Intifada (Arabic for "to shake off"). This has included "strikes by schools and businesses, boycotts of Israeli-made products," tax refusal, marches and demonstrations, and civil disobedience (including refusal to carry Israeli identity cards).²⁵ Awad has described how the Palestinians might nonviolently occupy settler land, plant olive trees, and declare the land Palestinian territory. He has also suggested how Palestinians might nonviolently surround Israeli checkpoints and block roads to the West Bank settlements. "The Israeli army would probably react with brutalities and casualties, though far fewer than in the current climate of terrorism or retaliation. Television [and the Internet] now ha[ve] global reach and the whole world would be watching. ... The Israelis know well how to fight an armed antagonist, yet they have little understanding of how to deal with massive nonviolent resistance. They expect, and in fact need, for Palestinians to be either submissive or violent. The violence has not worked; and submission is intolerable. Nonviolence is thus left as the only alternative."²⁶

**"Endure unto the end,
but violence to no man"**²⁷

The idea that nonviolence might be applied to the defense of a community was probably first elaborated by Charles King Whipple in his 1842 booklet, *EVILS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR*. Whipple, an abolitionist and peace man" (pacifist in 20th Century terminology), challenged the assumption that "we could never have freed ourselves from British domination, except by war." His thesis was that Americans could have attained their independence "as effectually, as speedily, as honorably, and under very much more favorable circumstances," if they had not resorted to arms. Instead, Whipple maintained that Americans should have engaged in a "steady and quiet refusal to comply with unjust requisitions; publicly declar[ed] ... their grievances, and demands for redress; and patient[ly] endure[d] ... whatever violence was used to compel their sub-

mission."²⁸ Even if the signers of the Declaration of Independence had been executed for treason, even if hundreds or thousands of Americans had been jailed for their refusal to comply with British demands, Whipple believed that ultimately Britain would have tired of dealing with the contumacious Americans. After all, he points out, Great Britain was not so much defeated on the battlefield as much as "tired of fighting."

"Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. ... No power on earth can make a person do a thing against his will."

—M. K. Gandhi quoted in Gene Sharp,
**THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT
ACTION** (1973), p. 548.

Whipple was the first of many observers who noted that nonviolence might be used as a means of national defense. Indeed, some of the most notable cases of nonviolent resistance were carried out against foreign powers (Hungary against the rule of the Austrian Empire, India against British rule, and Germany against France and Belgium in the Ruhrkampf).²⁹ In the midst of World War I, in August 1915, Bertrand Russell published an article in *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY*. He wrote: "Let us imagine that England were to disband its army, after a generation of instruction in the principles of passive resistance as a better defense than war. Let us suppose that England at the same time publicly announced that no armed opposition would be offered to any invader, that all might come freely, but that no obedience would be yielded to any commands that a foreign authority might issue. What would happen in this case?"³⁰ First of all he noted that if England disbanded its army and navy, any would-be invader, such as Germany, would be hard-pressed to find a pretext for invasion. Suppose, however, that a German army invaded an England where no one offered violent resistance? After evicting the King from Buckingham Palace and taking over the Parliament building, what would the Germans do if all the existing British officials refused to cooperate?

Some of the more prominent would be imprisoned, perhaps even shot, in order to encourage the others. But if the others held firm, if they refused to recognize or transmit any order given by the Germans, if they continued to carry out decrees previously made by the English Parliament and the English government, the Germans would have to dismiss them all, even to the humblest postman, and call in German talent to fill the breach.

The dismissed officials could not all be imprisoned or shot; since no fighting would have occurred, such wholesale brutality would be out of the question. And it would be very difficult for the Germans suddenly, and out of nothing, to create an adminis-

trative machine. Whatever edicts they might issue would be quietly ignored by the population. If they ordered that German should be the language taught in schools, the schoolmasters would go on as if no such order had been issued; if the schoolmasters were dismissed, the parents would no longer send the children to school. If they ordered that English young men should undergo military service, the young men would simply refuse; ... If they tried to take over the railways, there would be a strike of the railway servants. Whatever they touched would instantly become paralyzed, and it would soon be evident, even to them, that nothing was to be made out of England unless the population could be conciliated. ...

In a civilized, highly organized, highly political state, government is impossible without the consent of the governed. Any object for which a considerable body of men are prepared to starve and die can be achieved by ... [nonviolent] means, without the need of resort to force. And if this is true of objects desired by a minority only, it is a thousand times truer of objects desired unanimously by the whole nation.³¹

Even though the 20th Century was dominated by two horrendous world wars, several other theorists followed in the footsteps laid out by Bertrand Russell. As early as 1931, Gandhi recommended a nonviolent defense policy to Switzerland, to Abyssinia in 1935, to Czechoslovakia in 1938, and to Britain in 1940. He even went so far as to suggest that "an invading army be met at some suitable place by a living wall of women and children, thus giving the invaders the choice of marching over them or of turning back. This advice ceases to seem so fantastic when one recalls that in Jena, on June 17, 1953, German women held up Russian tanks for half an hour by staging a sit-down in the street. A rifle volley in the air finally made the women flee, but special units trained in Gandhi's methods would have refused to flee and would have forced the troops either to fire or mutiny. The invaders would have thus had to give in or to reveal their brutality to the world."³² "The Congress Party in India rejected his proposal for a nonviolent defense in 1939, and again in 1940."³³ Gandhi recognized that India might use such a policy to defend itself from a possible Japanese invasion during World War II, and pointed out that if India were successful in driving out the British by nonviolent means, then India ought to be able to use non-violence to defend her newly won independence.

Martin Luther King was fond of pointing out that, "Violence is not only immoral, it is also impractical."

"Potesto in populo"
(Power lies in the people)³⁴

Even in the midst of war, American pacifists gave thought as to how nonviolence might be used. One such thinker was Jessie Wallace Hughan, one of the

founders of the War Resisters League. In her 1942 monograph, *PACIFISM AND INVASION*, Jessie Wallace Hughan asked: what if an unarmed United States should be invaded by a foreign foe?

[W]e contend that the country will not be under the necessity of submitting to the invader, but will have at its command the tactics of nonviolent non-cooperation, in other words, by a general strike raised to the nth power. Under this plan resistance would be carried on, not by professional soldiers but by the people as a whole, by refusing to obey the invaders or to assist them through personal services or the furnishing of supplies. ...

In the present discussion, however, we are disregarding the alternative of submission to any degree, and assuming a people firm in the determination to die rather than yield as individuals, or as a nation, to the demands of an invader. No surrender but resistance to the bitter end, is the national policy. ... [T]he soldierly virtue of enduring hardship and death for one's country will have become the ideal, not of a single profession, but of an entire population.³⁵

Near the beginning of the Cold War, in 1948, E. Stanley Jones, in a biography of Gandhi, presented a similar scenario. If Russia were to invade and conquer the United States, he asked, would all be lost? "No! We could organize every man, woman, and child in the United States in a nonviolent resistance. We could withdraw all co-operation with the conqueror. You cannot rule over a people if they will not let you. We could break the will of the conqueror in five years. ... If the objection is raised that this has not happened in the lands where Russia has overrun the country, the answer is that this method of nonviolent resistance has not been applied."³⁶ Jones concludes his discussion by noting that nonviolent resistance makes a nation "invincible."

Authors of two books published in the late 1950s supported the contention that nonviolent civilian-based defense could take the place of armies. Cecil Hinshaw, in his *NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE: A NATION'S WAY TO PEACE*, and Bradford Lyttle, in his *NATIONAL DEFENSE THRU NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE*, both asked what would happen if the United States "had demilitarized herself," and was then occupied by a Russian expeditionary force landing on our shores? They believed that every part of American culture would resist: Labor union members and unorganized laborers would refuse to cooperate with the Russians; managers, engineers, and administrators would do likewise; American policemen would refuse to enforce Russian rules and regulations; teachers would refuse to teach; commerce would be closed to the Russians unless they forcibly confiscated food, shelter, and clothing; the media would support the nonviolent resisters; and organized religion would bolster the spirit of the resistance, challenging the moral right of the occupying forces.

"Such a total non-cooperation resistance would force the Russians to resort to a policy of total enslavement if they wished to exploit America." The Russians would have to resort to direct coercion if they wished any American to work for them. After a few months, or years, the Russians would be worn down by the American attitude of resisting to death without fear or hatred, and recognize that their invasion had been an "abortive effort and withdraw their forces hastily."³⁷

During the 1960s, the idea of nonviolent resistance drew attention from a larger audience. Not only was nonviolence a prominent part of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, but prominent defense theorists in Great Britain (and elsewhere) began to question the efficacy of national defense by conventional armies. Stephen King-Hall in *POWER POLITICS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE* reinforced the point made by earlier advocates of nonviolent resistance, namely, that "it is impossible to make any profit out of an occupied country unless there is collaboration by the inhabitants."³⁸ King-Hall noted that in conventional military thinking, occupation by enemy forces represents the end of the war and victory for the enemy. However, in the case of nonviolent resistance, such thinking was wrong: contacts between the enemy and the civilian population "provide an opportunity of winning the second and maybe decisive battle," if the resistance is nonviolent in character.³⁹ Noting that if the professional armed forces of a State have failed to keep an invader out, it is unlikely that "ill-equipped and untrained civilians" will succeed in using violence to expel an enemy King-Hall went on to write that

What the civilian population must do is to shift the area of conflict into the sphere of non-violence, since (assuming the civilians have been trained in advance) this involves techniques in which the occupying troops have *not* been trained. ... These tactics require a nation trained in their use from school age upwards; they require staff colleges for teaching non-violent techniques and the production of handbooks.⁴⁰

Adam Roberts, editor of a 1967 British book, *THE STRATEGY OF CIVILIAN DEFENCE* explained that civilian-based defense was designed not only to change the will of the opponent (by wearing him down), but "to make it impossible for him to achieve his objectives."⁴¹ Non-cooperation with an opponent's orders; obstruction of his actions; defiance in the face of his threats and sanctions, attempts to encourage non-compliance among his troops and servants; and the creation of "parallel institutions to serve the country are some of the methods that could be used to resist an occupying force.

A similar study was published by the American Friends Service Committee in the United States in 1967. Titled *IN PLACE OF WAR: AN INQUIRY*

INTO NONVIOLENT NATIONAL DEFENSE, this Quaker tract pointed out that civilian-based defense "is based upon confidence in nonviolent methods rather than a belief in nonviolence in principle."⁴² Most of the nonviolent struggles of the past have involved masses of people who were not pacifists.⁴³ In other words, practitioners of nonviolence need not be pacifists nor Quakers. It also compared the differences and similarities between nonviolent resistance and guerrilla warfare. Though both modes of fighting attempt to win the hearts and minds of the people, the latter, depends on secrecy and sabotage; the former on openness and non-cooperation. Guerrillas would blow up the train tracks; nonviolent resisters would block the train by standing on the tracks or by convincing the train crew to refuse to fuel or operate it.⁴⁴ It was the studied opinion of the authors of this report that measures and policies based on non-violence could provide an effective means of national defense for the United States.

The tyrant "can have no power over the soul. The soul can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned."
—Gandhi

**"An army can beat an army,
but an army cannot beat a people."⁴⁵**

The final discussion of nonviolent resistance which will be considered here is a fictional account written by Harry Browne in 1974. In "A Visit to Rhinegold," Browne painted the picture of a country without political borders or political leaders which was invaded by the Germans during World War II.⁴⁶ Since the Rhinegolders had no "government," there were no "leaders" for the Germans to capture. The Rhinegolders ignored the Germans and went about their own business. The Germans, on their part, realized that they would require as many soldiers as there were Rhinegolders in order to force them to obey. Even the Germans saw the futility of such an approach. Browne's description of Rhinegold illustrates the point noted by a number of theorists: "the more that control over society is centralized in a single command center, the easier it is for an invading enemy to conquer the entire nation by conquering that command center."⁴⁷ In other words, a nation with a centralized military and political defense mechanism is in far greater danger of being "taken over" than a nation where members of the civilian population have been taught to think for themselves and have been instructed in the basics of nonviolent resistance.

This observation about "capturing centralized command posts" brings to mind Randolph Bourne's insightful essay "War Is the Health of the State." Writing after World War I, Bourne noted the distinction between state and country: "[W]e have the misfortune of being born not only into a country [i.e.,

one's homeland], but into a State, and as we grow up we learn to mingle the two feelings into hopeless confusion." It is States that make wars, not countries. "War is a function of this system of States." Countries do not make wars upon other countries. Bourne continues:

They would not only have no motive for conflict, but they would be unable to muster the concentrated force to make war effective. There might be all sorts of amateur marauding, there might be guerrilla expeditions of group against group, but there could not be that terrible war *en masse* of the national States, that exploitation of the [country] in the interest of the State, the abuse of national life and resources in the frenzied mutual suicide which is modern war.⁴⁸

As Bourne and others have noted, the State establishes a compulsory monopoly of defense services over a certain geographic area and obtains its revenues coercively. Thus, to maintain that the State might defend itself nonviolently from a threatened invasion, as some pacifist theorists have maintained, is both inconsistent and contradictory. Since the State is an inherently invasive institution, it would be impossible for it to defend itself nonviolently. Will government agents "force" you to be nonviolent? Will you be thrown violently in jail if you refuse to pay your taxes? How could a State violently enforce a nonviolent defense against foreign occupation? Furthermore, what State would be silly enough to instruct its own population in the means of nonviolent resistance? Couldn't enraged subjects turn nonviolently on their own State if they perceived it to be overstepping its legitimate authority? Would any national government wish to place such a weapon in the hand of its own people?⁴⁹

Voluntaryist Resistance

Voluntaryist resistance, which I have previously

General, your tank is a powerful vehicle.
It tramples the forests and crushes a hundred men.

But it has one flaw:
It requires a driver.

General, your bomber is strong.
It flies faster than the storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one flaw:
It requires a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He knows how to fly; he knows how to kill.
But he has one flaw:
He knows how to think.

—From Bertolt Brecht's A GERMAN
WAR PRIMER

discussed in an article by that title, is not a matter of repelling violence, but rather that of enlightening deceived subjects. People must be prepared mentally, spiritually, and physically (in the sense that a strong, healthy body, leads to a strong, healthy mind) to resist the demands of the illegitimate State, whether it be a foreign occupation force, or a domestic government. As Mubarak Awad has written, "You cannot stop people when they *want* to be liberated The greatest enemy of the people and the most powerful weapon in the hands of the authorities is fear. [Those] who can liberate themselves from fear and who will boldly accept suffering and persecution without fear or bitterness or striking back have managed to achieve the greatest victory of all." They have achieved self-control. "They have conquered themselves" when they recognize that they, as oppressed people, "have the option of refusing to cooperate if they are willing to pay the price."⁵⁰

"People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work' they go back to violence which hasn't worked for centuries."

—Theodore Roszak

A stateless country is far more likely to maintain its independence and remain free of threats of foreign occupation. For one thing, such an amorphous country would pose no threat to its neighbors since it would have no military establishment. For another, its development of nonviolent resistance as a means of societal defense, would make it exceedingly costly to be invaded by another State. Not only would such a strategy be less threatening to neighbors, and more daunting to would-be invaders, it would give "better results than war and at a lesser cost, and with a higher moral coefficient."⁵¹ Furthermore, for even such a community to exist, its members would have had to accept the idea that no State, whatever or wherever, has any legitimacy. Much as the Rhinegolders, their answer to the demand "Take me to your leader," would be to go home to their wives and families. Such a people would not even comprehend, much less begin to obey, demands that they answer to some "legitimate" political power.

The central lesson here is that even when threatened by government violence and government weapons, there is still that something which governments cannot seize. No government, foreign or domestic, can obtain the voluntary compliance of the citizenry without their consent. The Nazis found this out much to their dismay in Berlin in February 1943. A protest lasting several days on Rosenstrasse, involving over 600 women of mixed Jewish marriages, caused the Gestapo to release some 1500 prisoners. Some of those released had been scheduled to be shipped off to Auschwitz, and were the husbands of the protesting women. It was a novel experience for the Nazis to face unarmed men, women, and children offering nonviolent resistance.⁵²

Although the Berlin protesters were unharmed, the refusal to consent may be costly, dangerous, and even lead to death. Nevertheless the fact remains: Without the cooperation of the populace “maintaining power becomes costly or even impossible. All that is necessary to prevent” government domination “is to let the citizenry come to know its own strength. Or, in the timeless words of LaBoetie, ‘I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great Colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break into pieces.’”⁵³

Such a stance against a government who has thousands, if not millions of soldiers, and millions of dollars invested in the latest technological armaments may seem foolish, even insane. However as Leo Tolstoy noted, those who choose to resist “have only one thing, but that is the most powerful thing in the world - Truth.”⁵⁴ And in the truth of nonviolence we find the following pearls of wisdom:

“[T]he prim[ary] human obligation is to act fearlessly and in accord with one’s beliefs; that one should withdraw cooperation from destructive institutions; that this should be done without violence ... ; that means are more important than ends; that crimes shouldn’t be committed today for the sake of a better world tomorrow; that violence brutalizes the user as well as his victim; that the value of action lies in the direct benefit it brings society; that action is usually best aimed at one’s immediate surroundings and only later at more distant goals; that winning state power” should be eschewed; that freedom begins with one’s self because freedom is self-control; that freedom is oriented toward a love of truth; and that all power depends upon the consent of the governed.”⁵⁵ ▢

[Footnotes available on request]

“Naked coercion ... is an expensive affair for ... rulers. Even for them it is a painful and nerve-shaking ordeal, and they know well that ultimately it weakens their foundations. It exposes continually the real character of their rule, both to the people coerced and the world at large. They infinitely prefer to put on the velvet glove to hide the iron fist. Nothing is more irritating and, in the final analysis harmful to a Government than to have to deal with a people who will not bend to its will whatever the consequences.”

—Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in Gene Sharp, *THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION* (1973), p. 698.

“If they [the South Carolina backcountry folk] had had their druthers, they would just like to have been left alone.”

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holding office, suing in the courts, and even owning land, “or practic[ing] his profession. If a man left the state to avoid taking the oath, he would be considered a traitor and executed if he returned to South Carolina. *As the deadline approached for registering the oath, government officials discovered to their dismay that the overwhelming majority of the people simply could not be bothered. ... The deadline for compliance was extended several times, but not even avowed patriots bothered to take the [test] oath.*” [pp. 41-42, emphasis added]

As the fighting progressed in South Carolina, the British took the attitude “that those who are not with us, are against us.” [paraphrase from pp. 123-124] This eventually created a backlash among the country folk who “had just wanted to be left alone to plow their fields and raise their families.” [p. 44] The British imposed their own test oath after their successful invasion of Charleston. British atrocities, ill-treatment of civilians, and the pillage, burning, and confiscation of their homes, barns, and personal property eventually roused the ire of these frontier people. By early 1780 there “was no civil government in South Carolina.” The governor “was in exile in North Carolina,” Charleston had fallen to the British, and only “[a] few military men, such as Francis Marion ...,” had escaped to the coastal swamps. [p. 67] “In the absence of established authority, these backcountry soldiers decided to select their own leaders. They could not be concerned about official commissions from the Continental Congress or from Governor Rutledge [in North Carolina]. Their families were threatened and they needed to act ... ” [p. 68] This led to the formation of guerrilla bands that fought and harassed the British regulars, until the British were forced to retreat after their defeats at King’s Mountain, North Carolina in October 1780, and at Cowpens, South Carolina in January 1781.

Dr. Edgar’s remarks are some evidence that voluntaryist sentiments actually existed at the time of the American Revolution. Politicians, elected officials, and those who look to government to provide their livelihood, all, naturally support one State or another. However, those who support themselves and their families, and who do not desire to use State aggression to their advantage, would much rather just “be left alone.” When civil war breaks out between two States claiming the same land, at least some of the inhabitants will intuitively exclaim “a plague on both your houses!” ▢

‘If they [the South Carolina backcountry folk] had had their druthers, they would just like to have been left alone.’

By Carl Watner

At the conclusion of my article on voluntarism and the American Revolution, I wrote that a consistent voluntarist would have been inclined to take a position of strict neutrality with respect to both the American and British sides, and would have refused to obey the edicts of either. “One would have to say, ‘A plague on both your houses’.” In his book, **PARTISANS AND REDCOATS: THE SOUTHERN CONFLICT THAT TURNED THE TIDE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** (New York: William Morrow, 2001) Professor Walter Edgar explains that the Revolution in South Carolina represented “nothing less than the first American civil war—when neighbor battled neighbor, Tory fought Rebel, and families were sundered from within.” [Book flap]

Discussing the social and political conditions on the Carolina frontier, Edgar notes that “[a]fter 1771, for all practical purposes, royal government ceased in South Carolina.” [p. xv] A number of extralegal organizations, which originated in the political capitol of the colony, eventually evolved into “the independent government of South Carolina.” However, before that occurred, Edgar points out that the sentiments of the large majority of backcountry inhabitants were sim-

ply those of wanting “to be left alone.” [p. 32] “When forced to make a choice [about whether to support the Rebels or the Tories], backcountry folk did, albeit reluctantly in many cases. If they had had their druthers, they would just like to have been left alone.” [p. 30]

Edgar adds that “The public apathy was unsettling. Not many citizens took the trouble to exercise their right to vote. In the fall of 1776, elections for the Second General Assembly (1776-78) were held within a short time after the arrival of the news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Despite this momentous news ... the voter turnout was abysmal. [S.C.] President Rawlins Lowndes bemoaned the fact that some members of the Second General Assembly received only two or three votes; in some districts the only ballot casts were by the local polling officials. ... Thus, the important work [undertaken by the Second General Assembly] of creating a permanent state constitution fell to men who could hardly claim to be representing the people. And on a number of occasions when the assembly met, there were not enough representatives present to make up a quorum and conduct business.” [pp. 40-41]

The Second Assembly also passed a law requiring “former royal officials and others of dubious loyalty to swear an oath of allegiance to” the newly created government. This “law was ignored,” and so, too, was another law (passed on March 28, 1778) which demanded that “every free male inhabitant of the state to renounce support of the king and Parliament and to swear true allegiance to South Carolina.” Those who refused would be prevented from voting,

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