

Chapter 1: Third-Party Nonviolent Intervention

We do not know the way out of the marasmus of the world, and it would be an expression of unforgivable pride were we to see the little we do as a fundamental solution, or were we to present ourselves, our community, and our solutions to vital problems as the only thing worth doing. [Yet] the real question is whether the brighter future is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already, and only our own blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it?

VÁCLAV HAVEL¹

The peace activist from the United States watched helplessly as an Israeli settler in the West Bank began pointing his gun at a crowd of unarmed Palestinians harvesting olives.² Attempts at reaching a compromise with the man had not lessened the danger. All of a sudden, an elderly Israeli stepped in front of the settler's gun. "Every time the settler pointed his gun at someone," the peace activist wrote, "this 70-year-old man would block it, the barrel pointed at his chest." This act of courage emboldened the Palestinian villagers, who sat down in the olive grove as an act of civil disobedience as Israeli soldiers began to arrive. Other activists — from the United States, Israel and Palestine, all members of the International Solidarity Movement — negotiated with the Israeli military over the Palestinians' right to harvest. Having prepared themselves with knowledge of Israeli military codes, the activists successfully convinced the soldiers to escort the armed settlers out of the olive grove.

The approach increasingly becoming known as third-party nonviolent intervention, an example of which is sketched above, is a collection of techniques used to support, rather than direct, movements for social change in divided societies other than those of the activist

¹ Havel, Václav (1991). *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965–1990*. Trans. Paul Wilson. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

² This opening account of third-party intervention is from Petrovato (2003), 161–162.

organizations. Rather than providing humanitarian aid or attempting to control the movement themselves, groups involved in this method focus on creating or widening the “space” necessary for nonviolent social movements to operate.

In my own terminology, I choose to call it “transnational” rather than “third-party” because there are often more than two parties in a conflict, and reducing it to two generally obscures the complexity of the issues. Moreover, while *international* implies a relationship between states, *transnational* implies “a broader system of relations oriented beyond the existing nation-state system.”³ I use *empowerment* rather than *intervention* in order to foreground the principle of solidarity rather than control; that these organizations are — or should be — working to support existing movements, not to create new ones.

Drawing on a conceptualization of power as relational, interventionists work to enable local movements to create alternative sources of autonomy and democracy — literally, to empower them. Sociological analyses of protest movements suggest that external aid can play an influential role in ensuring a movement’s success, but that external involvement necessarily changes the dynamics of the situation. As a result, the only way for interventionists to prevent their work from reinforcing the very systems of oppression they seek to destabilize is to recognize their own role in the international political order.

Many times, third-party intervention operates through the privilege of the interventionists themselves — their skin color, nationality, spirituality or other characteristics. Because of this, members of an intervention team must commit to learning about their own privilege and strategizing around ways to employ it, lest transnational empowerment become restricted to white, Christian men from the West.

³ Kavaloski (1990), 175.

Though there are antecedents to the intervention movement, such as Maude Royden's "peace army," Mohandas Gandhi's Shanti Sena, Friends Peace Teams and the Balkan Peace Team, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and other mediation and conflict resolution programs, organizations specifically focused on protecting and nurturing local nonviolent movements have only developed in the past two decades.⁴ Though small, the growing number of third-party intervention organizations includes Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Nonviolent Peaceforce and the International Solidarity Movement, each of which will be addressed below. Some organizations, like Witness for Peace, the Quaker Alternatives to Violence Project and Servicio Internacional Para la Paz engage in some intervention techniques in the course of broader campaigns, and are not, for reasons of space, included in this study. Other groups, also not included here, existed for shorter periods of time for particular actions, such as the 1993 march of 2,000 internationals from the Adriatic Sea to Sarajevo as part of Mir Sada (Peace Now).⁵

A primer on intervention

Nonviolent Peaceforce, one transnational intervention group, identifies four aspects of nonviolent intervention: observing and monitoring, protective accompaniment, interposition and presence. Over the two decades in which explicit third-party nonviolent intervention has been practiced, these techniques have emerged as the most effective means of intervention for small teams.

Those who are *observing and monitoring* "are expected to carry cameras, notebooks, and in other ways provide a physical reminder that 'the whole world is watching,' thereby restraining

⁴ For a full history, see Weber (1993).

⁵ Schneider (2003), 83. This particular march produced a cease-fire — after months of attacks on humanitarian aid and UN officials.

the violence.” Teams engaged in *protective accompaniment* act to “put the local activists in a glare of publicity, which reduces the chance of assassination.” *Interposition* is “used when two forces are moving into a confrontation (or preparing to) and a third force intervenes — usually physically — to prevent or reduce the violence.” *Presence* is marked by entering risky situations and “influencing the dynamics of the conflict itself.” It can also involve “modeling behavior which stretches the boundary of what local people believe might be safe to do.”⁶

Unlike traditional forms of intervention such as UN peacekeeping, nonviolent intervention relies on nonviolent means, and ultimately aims at reconciliation rather than adopting the “dissociative approach” of simply keeping apart parties in conflict.⁷ Transnational movements “scramble the distinction between national and international politics that grounds the Westphalian system,” rejecting both the Hobbesian and liberal understandings of human government as systems based on fear. Transnational groups establish a new type of security based on participation rather than resignation.⁸ Transnational empowerment exists in the interstices between traditional conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, diplomacy and the “soft power” exercised by states and multinational powers. For this reason, methods of engagement and legitimacy have not yet been fully developed.

Peace Brigades International

Peace Brigades International, organized in 1981, draws heavily on the idea of Shanti Sena, “peace soldiers” inspired by Gandhi who would go to places of conflict in India, speaking to individuals about the need to reduce violence and putting themselves between warring

⁶ Quotes in this paragraph are from Hunter and Lakey (2003), 34–38 and 23.

⁷ Galtung (1976), 282. The closest, in UN terms, is the proposal for a “volunteer UN force” advanced by Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali. See Brian Urquhart. “For a UN Volunteer Military Force,” *The New York Review of Books*, 13 May 1993, pp. 3–4.

⁸ See Thiele (1993), 278.

factions. The first truly third-party intervention organization, PBI engages primarily in protective accompaniment, escorting peace activists who are at risk of attack from oppressive governments or violent sectarian groups. They deploy only when asked to do so by local activists. Though originally designed to “promote, support, and coordinate local peace brigades,” their efforts have focused not on developing large interpositionary armies but rather small-scale intervention by PBI activists.⁹ They are also involved in peace education, “to accompany both political and social processes through a strategy of deterring violence and promoting active nonviolence.”¹⁰ PBI has never lost a single person during nonviolent accompaniment — from their group or the activist groups they protect. As of 2005 they have active projects in Colombia, Indonesia, Guatemala and Mexico.

Christian Peacemaker Teams

The motto of Christian Peacemaker Teams, “getting in the way,” provides a concise description of their approach to intervention and, in particular, interpositioning and presence. First conceived in 1984, CPT “provides skilled support to individuals and groups committed to faith-based nonviolent action in situations where violence is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy.”¹¹

In addition to providing support, CPT aims “to inspire people and governments to discard violence,” to provide information and “interpret a nonviolent perspective to the media.”¹² They have a permanent “Christian Peacemaker Corps” of several dozen people deployed in three-year intervals around the world, and around one hundred “Reserve Corps”

⁹ Weber (1993), 58.

¹⁰ “[PBI] Annual Review 2002–2003,” 2.

¹¹ “[CPT] 1996 Annual Report.”

¹² Lyke and Bock (2000), 3.

who devote between two weeks and two months each year. Strongly faith-based, they profess to live out the testimony of Jesus “by loving and humanizing enemies, and transforming violence into opportunities for reconciliation and truth-telling.”¹³ They currently have active delegations in the Palestinian Territories; Iraq, where they were present before, during and after the US- and UK-led war; Colombia; Asubpeeschoseewagong, Ontario, Canada; Viéques, Puerto Rico; Oneida, New York, United States of America; and Secwepemculecw, British Columbia, Canada.

Nonviolent Peaceforce

The newest third-party intervention organization, launched in 2002, Nonviolent Peaceforce is directed by a governing council composed of two representatives each from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America, as well as one youth member and two at-large members. Many of the individuals were involved in peace and nonviolent social change organizations in their native countries, and 75 such organizations officially pledged to support the Peaceforce. Intervention is based specifically on partnership with these local organizations, in situations in which “members apply proven nonviolent strategies to protect human rights, deter violence and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work.”¹⁴ Members of intervention teams are paid and professionally trained.¹⁵ Currently Nonviolent Peaceforce is active at four sites in Sri Lanka, where it focuses on presence, accompaniment and monitoring.¹⁶

Prior to its founding, Nonviolent Peaceforce put together a “feasibility report,” informing the steering committee of the exploratory meeting of the history of nonviolent intervention and

¹³ “[CPT] 1996 Annual Report” and “[CPT] Year in Review 2003.”

¹⁴ Murphy and Ford (2003).

¹⁵ Shatz (2004).

¹⁶ Interestingly, however, Nonviolent Peaceforce refers to the intervention in its brochures as the “Sri Lanka Peacekeeping Project.” See Murphy and Ford (2003) and “Nonviolent Peaceforce.”

possible strategies of intervention.¹⁷ It drew heavily on the histories of Peace Brigades International and Christian Peacemaker Teams, as well as other types of third-party nonviolent action.

The International Solidarity Movement

The International Solidarity Movement is a “Palestinian-led” campaign of nonviolent direct action in the Palestinian Territories intended to “raise awareness of the struggle for Palestinian freedom” and end the Israeli occupation.¹⁸ Formed in 2001 by Palestinians and people of other nationalities living in Palestine, the ISM hosts outside activists primarily from Europe and North America who stay from a week to a few months working in affinity groups.¹⁹ They work closely with Palestinian nonviolent organizations, including the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People and the Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People.²⁰ They require a commitment to nonviolent direct action and a belief in “the rights and freedom for the Palestinian people based on all resolutions and international law.”²¹

ISM began using primarily presence and interpositioning, but as the severity of the military situation increased accompaniment and observation were also employed. The specific activities vary but include placing their bodies between Israeli forces and Palestinians, escorting Palestinians to marketplaces and other public locations, observing demonstrations and rallies to monitor violence, providing education to Palestinian youth and replanting olive trees uprooted by the Israeli military. “What differentiates ISM from other international solidarity work is the

¹⁷ See Schweitzer (2001a); Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001); Howard and Levine (2001); Junge and Wallis (2001); Schweitzer (2001b).

¹⁸ Sandercock et al. (2004), 20.

¹⁹ White (2005).

²⁰ Andoni et al. (2003), 65.

²¹ Arraf and Shapiro (2003), 72.

focus on reciprocity,” Rachel Neumann writes. “Internationals take an active part in the resistance, as observers and economic and physical resources but also in the daily physical struggle to end the occupation.”²² Trained by local Palestinians in the tradition of nonviolent Palestinian resistance, participants also stay in the homes of local families. In the most widely-publicized ISM confrontation, Rachel Corrie from the United States was crushed under an Israeli bulldozer when she stood between it and a Palestinian building set to be demolished. Two other ISM activists have also been seriously injured.²³

Training for Change

Training for Change is not a third-party intervention organization, but it has developed a 23-day curriculum for third-party intervention, a “training of trainers” for individuals involved in such activity.²⁴ In addition to drawing on the experiences of Peace Brigades International and Christian Peacemaker Teams, the manual is also influenced by the principles of humanitarian groups like the International Committee for the Red Cross and Médecins sans Frontières. Many of the techniques themselves were field-tested in Southeast Asia. The manual contains not only techniques for intervention and the training of interventionists, but conceptual work based on Paulo Freire’s liberation pedagogy, often referred to as “experiential education.” Nonviolent Peaceforce worked closely with Training for Change to develop the curriculum and advised the authors on core proficiencies to cover.

Training for Change identifies seven areas or skill sets required for nonviolent interventionists: mission (the four types of third-party activity as well as theoretical knowledge); environment (history of the conflict and the status of international nongovernmental

²² Neumann (2004), 449.

²³ See Sandercock, et al. (2004).

²⁴ See Hunter and Lakey (2003).

organizations in the region); large-scale conflict analysis (theories of power, nonpartisanship, and triage); immediate conflict skills (crisis management and de-escalation); team dynamics (trust-building, privilege and logistical concerns); personal well-being (safety, health and self-awareness); and technical skills (languages, map reading and use of electronic equipment).²⁵

Personal background

In the fall of 2002, I took a year off from college and pursued internships and job experience, including a position with the just-developing Pendle Hill Peace Network. That fall and the following spring coincided with the construction of what would become the largest peace movement in history, pre-emptive pressure against the United States' intention to invade Iraq, which came to pass on 20 March 2003. I became active in a variety of organizations of varying levels of formality in the Philadelphia area, including the interfaith group Unite for Peace, the youth-and-student alliance Youth Philadelphia Area War Resistance and the coalition Philadelphia Regional Anti-War Network.²⁶ In each of these organizations I helped plan and implement rallies and some forms of direct action. In the spring of 2003 I was arrested for posting antiwar signs in Philadelphia; the charges were dismissed in court. In 2001, I had helped begin an organization with other students at Swarthmore College, Why War?, which focused particularly on providing a wide range of news and information on the war as well as analysis and commentary on the direction of the antiwar movement, and I continue my work with that organization to this day.

As part of this organizing effort I made lasting contacts and friendships within several Philadelphia communities: Quakers and others associated with the American Friends Service

²⁵ See Hunter and Lakey (2003), 25–39.

²⁶ For more information on these organizations: Why War? (why-war.org), Unite for Peace (uniteforpeace@afsc.org), Youth PAWR (pawr.why-war.org), PRAWN (prawnblog.blogspot.com).

Committee, anarchists and members of the Industrial Workers of the World, and queer youth and young adults, many of whom had led the protests at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. I also began learning for the first time about critical race theory, queer theory and trans theory, first and most importantly through workshops on anti-racist work by white people, led by Training for Change.

My experiences in Training for Change's workshops and my subsequent readings of writers such as Cornel West, Manning Marable, David R. Roediger, Judith Butler and Riki Wilchins heavily influenced my understanding of United States society and the "peace movement" societal subset of which I was part. My struggles within the movement around issues of direct action, coalition-building and street-level democracy informed my approach within the field of "peace and conflict studies." My participation in the movement was also made possible as a function of my own privilege, that of being a white male college student. Needless to say, the opportunities available to me also made possible this study of intervention.

I identify heavily with principles of the anti-authoritarian approach recently articulated in the compilation book *We Are Everywhere*.²⁷ Inspired by the global justice and Zapatista movements and coming out of indigenous networks sometimes called "anti-globalization," the values of the movement can be summarized as those of autonomy, networks, carnival and power. *Autonomy* arises from Paulo Freire's "co-intentional education," the principle that only those under oppression can liberate themselves, and that supporters cannot simply sell them or persuade them of revolutionary rhetoric but rather empower them to make their own determinations.²⁸ *Networks* are most powerful in the manner of the Zapatistas' declaration of a "collective network

²⁷ Notes from Nowhere (2003).

²⁸ See Freire (2000), 63-69.

of all our particular struggles,” acting not as an organizing structure or blindly modular ideology (such as Marxism) but as a means for solidarity.²⁹ *Carnival* is critical because of the historically important role of creativity in fostering and sustaining social movements, from the development of the Pinkster Festivals in New York as a moment of independence for slaves in the United States to the use of jazz by working-class blacks in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰ More recently Argentine *cacerolazo* protests, Reclaim the Streets-style direct action and “temporary autonomous zones,” in which festivals of resistance occur in the middle of streets or public squares, have offered psychological and tactical justification for such an approach.

While many of the other values come out of an understanding of more traditional forms of anarchism or anti-authoritarianism, the role of *power* is more influenced by poststructuralist thought. In particular I see futility in acting against particular “sites” of power when the power is dispersed throughout an all-encompassing system.³¹ In addition, while traditional anarchism views power as primarily suppressive, I see it as potentially productive as well, because of a reformulation of “power” as something that can be constructed rather than something that needs to be acquired. An opposition to all power, conceived of as that which is solely restrictive, has kept many anarchist organizations stuck in patterns of oppression and informal hierarchies.³² For this reason, unlike traditional anti-authoritarianism I view particular practices (rather than a subject or structure) as the fundamental unit of analysis.³³

²⁹ For a complete description, see the EZLN’s “2nd Declaration of La Realidad,” available online at <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3849/dec2real.html>>

³⁰ Kelley (1994), Chapter 7.

³¹ See Critical Art Ensemble (1994) and Hardt and Negri (2000).

³² Crass (2004).

³³ For an excellent account of the interplay between poststructuralism and anarchism, see May, Todd (1994). *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pa.

I see the field of transnational nonviolent empowerment as one of the most exciting fields of peace work, a method of nonviolent action that has the potential to embody the peaceful values and methods long sought by social justice activists. Even among nonviolent activists, encouraging nonviolent action has too often been about “cover[ing] the world with the knowledge of how oppressed people can liberate themselves through nonviolent conflict.”³⁴ This ignores the individual stores of knowledge embedded in every society, and positions Western activists as the sole purveyors of nonviolent strategy. As George Lakey writes in theorizing transnational nonviolent empowerment, “it’s a welcome relief to find an inherently modest way of intervening in the affairs of another country, by keeping alive the local people who themselves need to forge the destiny of their community.”³⁵ For those of us coming of age at the turn of the millennium, third-party intervention may indeed be the “Freedom Rides of our generation.”³⁶ In the year 2000, there were nearly 2,000 sustained armed conflicts on the globe.³⁷ Intervention offers the possibility of transforming these conflicts, one by one, into new forms of democracy for the years ahead.

Outline of the study

Nonviolent intervention comes out of a long history of nonviolent action and subsequent analysis on the nature and strategy of that action. Thus in Chapter 2, I outline the important contributions of theories of social change. I identify the importance of viewing power as relational rather than a zero-sum proposition, and the history of seeing power in collective struggle. The sociological theories involving mobilization, political opportunity and repertoires each offer tools

³⁴ DuVall (2004a).

³⁵ Lakey (2002).

³⁶ White (2002), 42.

³⁷ Hardt and Negri (2004), 31.

heavily used by nonviolent intervention. Most particularly, Gene Sharp's analysis and categorization of strategic nonviolent action sets the foundation for third-party intervention.³⁸

In Chapter 3, I take a critical view of the history of humanitarian intervention and cross-border organizing. Often these histories involve structures of imperialism and racism reinforcing the very systems humanitarianism seeks to work against. This genealogy is vital to constructing forms of third-party intervention that empower rather than control, and marks the break from humanitarian aid to experiential training and empowerment. I also address the role of identity formation and nationalism in an effort to determine what the target of third-party intervention work should be.

Because of its relative novelty, strategic intervention has not yet been fully theorized, and so Chapter 4 looks at different methods used by existing third-party intervention organizations and their relative levels of success. I also suggest in this chapter that culture plays a particularly important role in resisting hegemony and oppression, and that because of the nature of the world political system in the beginning of the twenty-first century, a focus on societal targets may be the most fruitful approach. Further, I highlight Freire's liberation pedagogy as the key to training and development, both of the interventionists themselves and in their work with local activists.

Chapter 5 seeks to address some of the difficult questions faced by a form of third-party intervention drawing so much on a history of paternalism and redeploying structures of privilege to its own end. I argue that anti-oppression training is crucial for all nonviolent interventionists to understand their own privilege and role in the international political system. I also caution against relying too heavily on coverage through the international media, and suggest some models for structural organization of the intervention groups.

³⁸ Somewhat unintentionally, given Sharp's pessimism about the value of third-party intervention.

In Chapter 6, I attempt to distinguish between the approach of an intervention organization in terms of its strategy, “ideological proximity” and principles. Previous analyses of intervention have sometimes conflated these items, and in this chapter I propose a new format by which to judge an intervention organization’s effectiveness. Moreover, I argue, interventionists will have to determine whether they are willing to rely on the threat of military incursion from the West to back up their claims, or strategize some alternative source of legitimacy.

Third-party intervention is a young field strategically and theoretically, and I hope this study will be one more brick in its foundation. In 1964, Ed Lazar, a member of the World Peace Brigade, a predecessor to Peace Brigades International, recommended that nonviolent intervention be implemented at the local level before being further developed internationally.

It seems to me that there first must be developed local, regional and national shanti sena. A very short term project is possible with a top heavy international group but weakness at the base becomes increasingly apparent with the passage of time.³⁹

Four decades later, nonviolent intervention has been theorized and practiced around the globe, emerging in many cases with substantial success. What is left to determine is whether transnational nonviolent empowerment can serve as a viable alternative to armed intervention in the future. I believe it can.

³⁹ Quoted in Weber (1993), 53.