# 7 Giving voice to nonviolence

In the previous two chapters we looked at perspectives on nonviolent action and on communication in order to extract insights into how to improve communication in nonviolent struggles against repression, aggression, and oppression. It turns out that different communication theories give different sorts of insights relevant to the specific issues involving nonviolent action. How to use these insights depends on the purpose of the investigation. If the purpose is primarily theoretical, namely to understand communication dynamics in relation to nonviolent struggle, then the next step might be to construct a single theoretical model. If the purpose is primarily empirical, then more evidence might be sought in relation to the various insights. If the purpose is primarily social scientific, then a process of iterative theory construction, hypothesis formation, and empirical testing could be pursued. However, here we take a different course.

To pursue a "better" theory is to follow what Nicholas Maxwell calls the "philosophy of knowledge," which presumes that knowledge has a value in and of itself. Maxwell argues instead for a "philosophy of wisdom" in which scholarly endeavor is oriented to dealing with major social problems such as poverty and war.[1] This book is an attempt to follow the philosophy of wisdom, in that it focuses on problems of repression, aggression, and oppression and examines how to support nonviolent action. Of course, this does not rule out building better theory; however, theory-building is not the goal but only a means. Rather than propose a better theory, in this chapter we outline a practical approach to communication strategy, in the spirit of the philosophy of wisdom, drawing on the material in previous chapters. After outlining this approach, we illustrate how it can be used to look at the case studies covered in chapters 2 to 4.

## Steps to a communication strategy

Consider a situation in which there is repression, aggression, or oppression that warrants greater attention and action, in which communication is an important factor in inhibiting or facilitating this attention and action. Individuals and groups concerned about this can consider the following steps as a way to help develop a communication strategy, which in turn would be part of a more general nonviolence strategy. Note also that these steps deal only with getting information about a situation to an audience. Another whole dimension to communication strategy — not dealt with here — is communication among members of a resistance or campaign.

STEP 1 List the major means by which people can, in principle, obtain reliable information about the situation. This includes direct observation, direct reports (for example, telephone, e-mail), alternative media, mass media, and word of mouth. List the major chains through which information flows, such as government statements reported by the mass media.

STEP 2 For each major chain, list the most significant obstacles or barriers to reliable information and action on the basis of it. In particular, consider:
• communication blockages, including censorship and absence of suitable information technology;
• inducement of passivity in audiences;
• construction of meanings that distort understanding or inhibit effective action;
• control over communication processes;

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1. Nicholas Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Revolution in the Aims and Methods of Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Nicholas Maxwell, "What kind of inquiry can best help us create a good world?," *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, Vol. 17, 1992, pp. 205–227.

• shaping of messages through organizations, especially government bodies and the mass media.

STEP 3 For each major chain, consider methods of overcoming the obstacles or barriers. In particular, consider:
    • using different communication media;
    • targeting different audiences;
    • changing the way messages are constructed;
    • working through or challenging organizations that shape messages.

STEP 4 Undertake the approach under step 3 that is most likely to be effective, taking into account one's own resources and social location.

Step 4 makes explicit the point that the choice of a course of action depends on who is taking the action. A religiously-based nonviolent action group has different opportunities to a ginger group of journalists, a dissident within a government bureaucracy, or a network of telecommunications experts. Choosing a course of action also depends on who else is available to take action. In other words, action should be pursued in the context of what other action is occurring or likely to occur.

To illustrate the application of these steps, we use examples drawn from the case studies in chapters 2, 3, and 4. For each example, we select several chains and explore obstacles and methods for overcoming them.

Before beginning, it is important to emphasize that our intent with these examples is to illustrate the steps, not to pass judgement on what people did or didn't do in actual situations. In some cases, people might have tried some of the methods we suggest here; in others, they might have thought of these methods but rejected them for reasons known only to them. It is reasonable to expect that participants often know more about a situation than any outside observer does. On the other hand, as commentators, we have the advantage of hindsight. Activists are not omniscient. They can misjudge situations and make mistakes. This is nothing to be ashamed about.

The key thing is to learn from the past in order to do better in the future.

## Communication strategy against Indonesian repression in East Timor

After the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor in 1975, control of communication was a key element in the Indonesian military's operations. In order to mobilize opposition to Indonesian atrocities and support for East Timorese independence, it was crucial to obtain and disseminate reliable information about what was happening. Consider then the four steps.

STEP 1 List the major means by which people can, in principle, obtain reliable information about the situation.
    Here are some chains through which information about the situation in East Timor could flow to people in Indonesia, Australia, United States, Portugal, and elsewhere.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

• Indonesian troops directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

• Visitors directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

• Indonesian government officials receive reports from East Timor and then make official statements; journalists write stories for Indonesian media based on the statements.

• Government officials from Australia, US, Portugal, and elsewhere receive reports from East Timor and receive Indonesian government statements, and make statements of their own; journalists write stories for the media based on the statements.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor and talk to

overseas spokespeople of the East Timorese resistance, who make statements that are reported in Western media.

• East Timorese directly observe events, then talk to members of the East Timorese independence movement who send information by short-wave radio to receivers in Australia, who then pass the information to sympathizers and journalists.

• Visitors record events on video, smuggle the videotape out of East Timor, and broadcast it on Western television.

We have listed only a selection of possible chains. It should be obvious that there are numerous other possibilities. The aim in step 1 should be to list a wide variety of chains so that diverse options can be considered. Step 1 can be revisited if desired.

STEP 2 For each major chain, list the most significant obstacles or barriers to reliable information and action on the basis of it, focusing on communication blockages, inducement of passivity, construction of meanings, control over communication, and organizational shaping of messages.

For each of the chains listed in step 1, we comment on obstacles.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

A major obstacle is that only some East Timorese were allowed to leave. Many who did leave were afraid to speak widely due to possible reprisals on relatives in East Timor. Few had sufficient language and public speaking skills to make a big impact on Western audiences. Finally, speaking directly to individuals or groups (without using mass media) has a limited impact.

• Indonesian troops directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

Few Indonesian troops would have had an incentive to expose atrocities committed against the East Timorese, since it would probably mean leaving family and friends and going into permanent exile, with the possibility of reprisals against family members. Limited language and public speaking skills would be additional obstacles.

• Visitors directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

The primary obstacle in this case is getting permission to enter East Timor and be in a position to observe atrocities. There might be hesitation in speaking out due to possible reprisals on East Timorese informants. The credibility of reports by visitors could be questioned. Finally, speaking directly to individuals or groups (without using mass media) has a limited impact.

• Indonesian government officials receive reports from East Timor and then make official statements; journalists write stories for Indonesian media based on the statements.

Indonesian government officials almost invariably toed the government line; contrary information was censored or distorted. Officials who contemplated saying something different — telling the truth — knew they could expect to be dismissed or imprisoned. Similar pressures operated on Indonesian journalists, who furthermore were hampered by lack of direct information.

• Government officials from Australia, US, Portugal, and elsewhere receive reports from East Timor and receive Indonesian government statements, and make statements of their own; journalists write stories for the media based on the statements.

The Western government line on East Timor downplayed Indonesian repression. Individual officials who tried to buck the line would have found their input censored or sidelined and possibly their careers put in jeopardy. Hence those journalists who relied on Western government statements would typically report a very watered down account of events.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to overseas spokespeople of the East Timorese resistance, who make statements that are reported in Western media.

One obstacle is the perceived credibility of the East Timorese representatives, who are perceived as partisan. Second-hand reports are not as arresting as eye-witness accounts. Another obstacle is that Western media give more attention and credibility to government statements than to statements by East Timorese representatives.

• East Timorese directly observe events, then talk to members of the East Timorese independence movement who send information by short-wave radio to receivers in Australia, who then pass the information to sympathizers and journalists.

The availability and reliability of short-wave systems is a crucial barrier. Australian government intervention to shut down Australian short-wave receivers is another.

• Visitors record events on video, smuggle the videotape out of East Timor, and broadcast it on Western television.

Barriers include getting into East Timor, being able to film significant events, getting the videotape out of the country, and getting the mass media to broadcast it.

Note that in focusing on obstacles, solid steps in chains are not discussed — though they should not be forgotten. For example, eye-witness accounts by East Timorese have the power of authenticity and are far more likely to trigger action in audiences than routine mass media stories. A videotape brought back by a Western journalist has a different power of authenticity: it is harder for Indonesian government apologists to discredit.

STEP 3 For each major chain, consider methods of overcoming the obstacles or barriers. In particular, consider using different communication media, targeting different audiences, changing the way messages are constructed, and working through or challenging organizations that shape messages.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

There seems no easy way to get more East Timorese out of the country or to reduce the risk of reprisals on relatives for speaking out. The obstacle of limited language and public speaking skills potentially could be overcome by intensive training.

• Indonesian troops directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

More troops might be induced to leave if given moral and financial support. Thinking more generally about communication from troops, thought could be given to setting up a system for dissident troops to share their perceptions with outsiders, for example through anonymous postal or email routes. Setting up such a system would require considerable ingenuity, since it can be assumed that Indonesian officials would do everything possible to track down any military dissidents.

• Visitors directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor, and talk to people elsewhere.

More information could be obtained about what sorts of people are given permission to enter East Timor, and people recruited who fit the specifications. Perhaps bribery could be used to gain entry, though some activists would surely have reservations about this. Those who are able to gain entry could be trained in techniques of observation and investigation and later in public speaking skills.

• Indonesian government officials receive reports from East Timor and then make official statements; journalists write stories for Indonesian media based on the statements.

The problem here is the imposition of the government line and the acquiescence of most Indonesian media. One way around this would

be for dissident officials to leak information to independent media. Another would be for concerned bureaucrats and journalists to develop a manner of expression — a type of public code — that would reveal what was going on in East Timor to sophisticated readers. Yet another approach would be to push for greater editorial freedom and for journalists to seek out East Timorese, Indonesian troops, or visitors to East Timor for first-hand accounts, thereby overcoming reliance on government statements.

• Government officials from Australia, US, Portugal, and elsewhere receive reports from East Timor and receive Indonesian government statements, and make statements of their own; journalists write stories for the media based on the statements.

Methods of getting around communication obstacles in this chain are similar to those for the Indonesian media: leaks by government insiders to independent media; a type of code, understandable by journalists, in official releases; greater media support for investigative journalism, including seeking out first-hand reports of events in East Timor.

• East Timorese directly observe events, subsequently leave East Timor and talk to overseas spokespeople of the East Timorese resistance, who make statements that are reported in Western media.

To improve the credibility of spokespeople, a study could be made of what factors influence their credibility — appearance, speaking style, content of statements, etc. — and steps taken to improve, assuming they are compatible with the values of the resistance. Methods for spokespeople to dramatize their use of eye-witness accounts could be explored. Pressure could be put on Western media to always provide "balance" by quoting East Timorese spokespeople alongside Indonesian government reports.

• East Timorese directly observe events, then talk to members of the East Timorese independence movement who send information by short-wave radio to receivers in Australia, who then pass the information to sympathizers and journalists.

Cheap and easy-to-use short-wave units, capable of transmitting great distances, could be smuggled into East Timor. As for the short-wave transmitter in Australia, instead of or as well as going into hiding, activists could make more of a public issue of their efforts for human rights being illegal, thereby highlighting the complicity of the Australian government.

• Visitors record events on video, smuggle the videotape out of East Timor, and broadcast it on Western television.

Development of easy-to-conceal micro-video systems — such as those used by spy agencies — would make recording and smuggling of video recordings much easier. Production and distribution of large numbers of such systems — so that East Timorese as well as visitors could use them — would make it hard for any atrocities to occur without some recording.

In any one of these chains, there is much more that could be said about methods of overcoming barriers to communication. Our comments here are intended to give an idea of the issues that can be traversed.

In practice, many of these possibilities were thought of and discussed by opponents of repression in East Timor. What we suggest here is that more systematic attention be given to communication strategy and that this can be aided by listing possible communication chains, listing obstacles, and then considering methods of overcoming the obstacles.

STEP 4 Undertake the approach under step 3 that is most likely to be effective, taking into account one's own resources and social location.

Implementing step 4 depends crucially on "one's own resources and social location," namely who one is and what one can do. An East Timorese, for example, can contribute to some chains but not others. If emigration is possible, then leaving and subsequently speaking about experiences and observations is an option. Another option is speaking to

visitors. Learning another language, such as Portuguese or English, and improving speaking skills would be helpful for these options. Another possibility is to develop skills in using short-wave equipment. Yet another possibility would be to befriend an alienated Indonesian soldier who might, later, decide to leak information to the media.

Choosing between such options involves assessment of one's situation and personal values. There are no right or wrong answers, but some choices are more likely to be effective than others. It is at this point that access to information and informed analysis becomes especially important.

Imagine that there are activists who are carefully examining communication chains, scrutinizing obstacles, and creatively proposing methods of overcoming them. For this analysis to be really effective, it has to be communicated to everyone who can contribute to making chains effective. If the most promising chains involve East Timorese, then they need to know what they can do to make those chains effective. The same applies to Indonesian soldiers, Indonesian journalists and editors, Australian government officials, and so forth.

Making a communication strategy known to potential supporters raises an additional complexity: it is likely that opponents will find out about the strategy. That is a possibility even when there is tight security, since there is always a risk of infiltrators or surveillance. When a strategy becomes semi-public — which, if a much greater number of supporters are to be involved, it must — then account needs to be taken of countermeasures by opponents. For example, if a strategy involves smuggling of video recorders into East Timor, plus training in their use, then it is likely that the Indonesian military will make greater attempts to screen all incoming goods and to harass anyone suspected of providing video training. This needs to be factored into assessment of this option. The basic point is that communication strategy cannot be developed in isolation from the opponent's responses: strategy has to take account of what the other side is likely to do.

## Communication strategy against Stalinist repression

Far more than the case of East Timor, to talk of communication strategy against Stalinist repression is to speak hypothetically. As noted before, our aim is to illustrate how the steps for developing a strategy can be used, not to pass judgement on what did or did not happen in a particular circumstance.

In the East Timor example, we started with a series of complete chains, beginning with observation or experience of events in East Timor and ending with audiences in other countries. After analyzing these chains — specifically key barriers and ways to overcome these barriers — we noted that, for step 4, the choice of a chain should be made "taking into account one's own resources and social location."

An alternative way to proceed is to begin the analysis specifying one's resources and social location, selecting chains from the very beginning with these in mind. To illustrate this approach, we pick a challenging case: an illiterate peasant in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s who is witnessing brutality and famine due to forced collectivization.

STEP 1 List the major means by which people can, in principle, obtain reliable information about the situation.

In this case, "people" refers to those who may not know what is happening or how serious it is and who are in a position to take action. Here are some possible chains.

• Tell a Communist Party official about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on. This might be, for example, (a) a personal story of hardship, (b) what is happening to the village: a collective story of hardship, (c) negative consequences for the country in terms of lower productivity and the like, (d) negative impact of the Party's policies on support for the Party and Communism generally, or (e) tales of heroic resistance to repression.

• Tell a visitor about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on.

• Travel to the largest accessible town and seek out an influential person; tell the person about what is happening, asking for action to be taken.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to Communist Party officials in Moscow.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to someone in another country.

STEP 2 For each major chain, list the most significant obstacles or barriers to reliable information and action on the basis of it, focusing on communication blockages, inducement of passivity, construction of meanings, control over communication, and organizational shaping of messages.

• Tell a Communist Party official about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on.

The biggest problem here is that the official will not pass on the message, due to fear or lack of sympathy. Even worse, the official may organize reprisals. Alternatively, the official may pass on the message and as a result suffer reprisals.

• Tell a visitor about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on.

Even though there may be some "visitors" — traders, itinerants, relatives, or travelers — their willingness and reliability for passing on a message will probably be unknown. There is always the possibility that trying to pass on a message may lead to informing and reprisals.

• Travel to the largest accessible town and seek out an influential person; tell the person about what is happening, asking for action to be taken.

Who is influential and which influential people can be trusted? It may be difficult to find out. Again, reprisals are possible. Even

traveling to a town and asking about contacting influential people may generate suspicion.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to Communist Party officials in Moscow.

There may be no person in the village who is both literate and trustworthy. Furthermore, the literate person would have to be willing to take the risk of writing a letter that could lead to reprisals. Communist Party officials in Moscow may just ignore a letter or see it as a sign of rebellion.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to someone in another country.

Again, there may be no person in the village who is both literate, trustworthy, and willing to take the risk of writing a letter that could lead to reprisals. There may be difficulty in deciding to whom to write. The biggest obstacle would be getting the letter out of the country.

STEP 3 For each major chain, consider methods of overcoming the obstacles or barriers. In particular, consider using different communication media, targeting different audiences, changing the way messages are constructed, and working through or challenging organizations that shape messages.

• Tell a Communist Party official about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on.

To get around the problem that the official may be afraid or unwilling to pass on a message — not to mention organizing reprisals — it would be worth observing officials and talking to trusted friends about them, in order to figure out which ones are most open to an approach. Unfortunately this, in itself, does not protect the officials from reprisals along the chain.

The next thing to consider is what sort of message to provide. As noted in step 1, some possibilities are (a) a personal story of hardship, (b) what is happening to the village: a collective story of hardship, (c) negative

consequences for the country in terms of lower productivity and the like, (d) negative impact of the Party's policies on support for the Party and Communism generally, or (e) tales of heroic resistance to repression. Which sort of story would be most effective may depend on the individual. It might be possible to get an idea by noticing how the official responds to comments about hardship, about the Party, or about resistance. An official who is sympathetic to the people's struggles might respond best to personal or village stories, whereas an official concerned more about the achievements of the Soviet Union might respond best to arguments couched in terms of productivity or support for the Party. Tales of resistance seem unlikely to be the best approach unless the official is actually an opponent of the Party's policies.

Another possibility would be to change the emphasis from stories of hardship and lowered productivity to a more positive angle: the benefits that would accrue if policies were modified in certain ways.

By listening closely to the rhetoric of Party officials, it should be possible to frame comments in language that does not overtly clash with the dominant discourse. This is where a semiotic analysis becomes useful. It may be possible to use the language of the oppressor to convey critical messages.

In order for any of the messages to be as effective as possible, it would be worthwhile collecting information, developing a persuasive story, practicing speaking, and rehearsing the approach to the official. To tell one's own personal story, a selection of episodes and facts needs to be made and then the raw material put together into a touching or telling account. A lesson can be embedded in such a story in a subtle fashion.

To tell a story about a village, information needs to be collected from others, including some personal stories as well as data about illness, deaths, loss of morale, and so forth. This could be a risky process since collecting information may arouse suspicions. On the other hand, collecting information may reveal others who are willing to speak out.

Developing an account about lowered productivity or negative consequences for the Party requires yet a different process of information gathering, including figures on yields, outputs, and attitudes. This is likely to be risky and may depend on co-operation of key individuals.

After gathering information, developing a story, rehearsing it, and picking out a seemingly receptive Party official, care then needs to be taken in selecting the right occasion and moment to talk to the official. If the official seems suspicious, then the discussion can be terminated or side-tracked into safer ground. On the other hand, if the official seems receptive, the full account can be given. Of course, there is always the risk that the official may feign receptiveness in order to gather information for later attack. To avoid this, observation of the official's behavior in previous circumstances may be helpful.

From this single case, it is apparent that a seemingly simple thing — talking to an official — can involve lengthy preparation and careful planning, with many difficult decisions to be made. These same complexities apply to the other chains, but will not be spelled out in such detail.

• Tell a visitor about what is happening, asking for the message to be passed on.

A key issue here is the reliability of the visitor for passing on a message. Information could be sought, discreetly, from anyone who knows about visitors. The approach to the visitor could be planned with the same care that an approach to a Communist Party official might be.

• Travel to the largest accessible town and seek out an influential person; tell the person about what is happening, asking for action to be taken.

To begin, it would be valuable to get in a position where traveling to a town would not arouse suspicion, for example through delivering goods or accompanying an ill person seeing a doctor. Finding out who is influential could be accomplished by general conversation about people in the town. Quite a lot of

such conversation might be needed. The next challenge is talking to the person. Some pretext would be needed: the closer it is to a genuine reason, the better. Then, of course, there is the choice of what story to tell.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to Communist Party officials in Moscow.

To find a trusted literate person, the same caution might be needed as finding out about a Party official who could be approached. The person could be tested by getting them to write letters on less sensitive topics and seeing whether they can be relied upon. Ultimately, the person would have to be considered totally trustworthy before broaching the issue of writing a letter to Communist Party officials. Then comes the task of composing the letter and getting it delivered.

• Tell a trusted literate person who is willing to write a letter to someone in another country.

After finding a trusted literate person — as in the previous chain — the biggest obstacle is selecting a person in another country and getting a letter to that person. Any possible routes by which letters could be delivered would need to be explored and assessed. Without knowledge of a moderately reliable method of delivery, this chain has little chance of success.

STEP 4 Undertake the approach under step 3 that is most likely to be effective, taking into account one's own resources and social location.

After examining various options, a choice needs to be made. Given that there are large uncertainties in every chain — especially the receptiveness of the individual to be approached or written to — there is no guaranteed way of making the "best" choice.

This analysis has been from the viewpoint of an illiterate peasant, who is most unlikely to be in a position to analyze chains all the way to their conclusion. For example, whether a visitor can or will use a peasant's story in an effective fashion is largely unknown. Therefore, to complete the analysis of chains, it would be necessary to start again from the perspective of a different link-person: a Party official, a visitor, or a foreign recipient of a letter. Any one of such individuals could perform an analysis of chains in which they are a link. But for their efforts to be effective, it is a great advantage for there to be peasants who tell their stories in an effective fashion.

## Communication strategy against the MAI

As described in chapter 4, the successful campaign against the MAI was a model of effective communication, especially in using the net. Yet it is always possible to do better. As a contrast to the cases of Indonesian and Soviet repression, where we focused on communication chains in situations with relatively little effective resistance, in the case of global corporate domination we look at communication chains early in the anti-MAI campaign. In order to illustrate examination of obstacles and methods to overcome them, we select chains that were less commonly effective than the ones actually used.

STEP 1 List the major means by which people can, in principle, obtain reliable information about the situation.

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information about the issue to the families and friends of politicians and government officials; the families and friends then pass concerns on to the politicians and officials. (This is a supplement to the normal approach of providing information directly to politicians and officials.)

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information to local media, which then report on the issues.

• Anti-MAI campaigners provide information to international media (such as wire services and CNN), which then report on the issues.

• Campaigners produce anti-MAI television and radio spots and pay stations to broadcast them.

• Anti-MAI campaigners go door-to-door providing information to residents about the issues.

STEP 2 For each major chain, list the most significant obstacles or barriers to reliable information and action on the basis of it, focusing on communication blockages, inducement of passivity, construction of meanings, control over communication, and organizational shaping of messages.

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information about the issue to the families and friends of politicians and government officials; the families and friends then pass concerns on to the politicians and officials.

Influence on public officials via their families and friends occurs quite often; when a social movement raises the profile of an issue sufficiently, then all sorts of people become concerned, including families and friends of even the most ardent opponents. To operate through families and friends as a conscious strategy, though, runs the risk of seeming to be intrusive and manipulative.

Another obstacle is getting access to families and friends of key officials. To be most effective, contacts should be already in place rather than contrived.

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information to local media, which then report on the issues.

The obstacles here are that local media often are reluctant to take up stories at the instigation of pressure groups, may be more receptive to the government line, may not have resources to undertake their own investigations, and may perceive the MAI as a distant international issue with little relevance to the local audience.

• Anti-MAI campaigners provide information to international media, which then report on the issues.

International media seldom recognize something as "news" when all they have is information provided by nongovernment organizations. They are highly responsive to government agendas and perspectives.

• Campaigners produce anti-MAI television and radio spots and pay stations to broadcast them.

Producing quality spots can be expensive and time-consuming. Costs for prime-time spots are very high. Stations may refuse to broadcast them. Tensions can arise among activists about the use of such tactics, which support the commercial media.

• Anti-MAI campaigners go door-to-door providing information to residents about the issues.

Getting enough knowledgeable volunteers willing to repeatedly approach strangers door-to-door would be a big challenge. In addition, many people who are approached would not see international economic treaties as immediately relevant to themselves.

STEP 3 For each major chain, consider methods of overcoming the obstacles or barriers. In particular, consider using different communication media, targeting different audiences, changing the way messages are constructed, and working through or challenging organizations that shape messages.

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information about the issue to the families and friends of politicians and government officials; the families and friends then pass concerns on to the politicians and officials.

One way to overcome the appearance of intrusiveness and manipulation would be to run targeted campaigns — leaflet drops, public meetings, talks at workplaces — in areas where families and friends of officials are known to live or work. Another approach is to make a special effort to recruit activists or supporters from areas where contacts with

families and friends of officials are more likely.

• Local anti-MAI campaigners provide information to local media, which then report on the issues.

To overcome the resistance of local media to an issue that is seen as remote, special efforts could be made to tap into news values for local media. For example, impacts on a local business or individual workers could be dramatized. Potentially sympathetic journalists and editors could be approached and asked what would make the issue relevant to local audiences.

• Anti-MAI campaigners provide information to international media, which then report on the issues.

Contacts within the international media could be cultivated and used to find out the most effective ways of putting globalization issues on the media agenda. The most receptive media organization, outlet, or program could be targeted with the most experienced and well prepared material, tailored exactly for its requirements, and any coverage received might then be used to attract interest from other international media.

• Campaigners produce anti-MAI television and radio spots and pay stations to broadcast them.

Sympathetic media workers can be approached to produce spots on a volunteer basis, at no cost to campaigners. Initially, approaches could be made to purchase cheap broadcast time, for example during the night. If stations refuse to broadcast the spots, this can be made into a campaigning issue, with the spots shown at public meetings and put on the net as examples of what is not allowed to be seen.[2]

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2 Experience with this technique is described by Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America*™ (New York: Eagle Brook, 1999), pp. 194–196. Lasn and friends produced "anti-commercials" and tried to buy TV advertising time, but TV stations refused to run them.

• Anti-MAI campaigners go door-to-door providing information to residents about the issues.

Workshops can be run for volunteers to improve their knowledge and door-to-door canvassing skills. A careful analysis of the images and issues in the MAI and how they might resonate with local people could be undertaken in order to develop the most effective approach for door-to-door canvassing.

STEP 4 Undertake the approach under step 3 that is most likely to be effective, taking into account one's own resources and social location.

It may be that the methods used by anti-MAI campaigners were in fact the most effective in the circumstances. However, by systematically analyzing a variety of communication chains, including ones such as those above, the possibility of overlooking a fruitful option is reduced.

One risk of net-based activism is that some activists become fixated on the net and become less receptive to using a variety of media and associated options. Analyzing a variety of communication chains is an antidote to excessive reliance on the net — or on any other medium or type of approach, for that matter.

## Conclusion

We began this book with the claim that nonviolent action is a potent and promising option for challenging repression, aggression, and oppression, and that there is much to be learned and done to improve its effectiveness. We presented three case studies demonstrating that nonviolent action can work: the toppling of Suharto in Indonesia in 1998, the thwarting of the 1991 Soviet coup, and the stopping of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. However, there is a risk in looking primarily at successes of nonviolent action: the lessons of failure or nonaction are less evident. So we also examined parallel cases where nonviolent action was lower profile, less effective, or virtually absent: the 1965-1966 massacres in

Indonesia and the repression in East Timor in the decade after 1975; Stalinist repression in the Soviet Union; and structural adjustment programs.

Ideally, a nonviolent campaign should have succinctly set out goals that are clearly understood and agreed upon by a sufficient number of people who are willing to act. It is also important that the methods of achieving these goals are discussed and agreed upon and that these methods have been chosen both for their compatibility with the goals and for their chances of success.

While there are no guarantees for the success of nonviolent struggle — just as there are no guarantees of the success of armed struggle — we believe that attention to communication has the potential to greatly enhance the chances of success. Communication is vital within groups and for groups to communicate with potential audiences and negotiate with or make demands of opponents. We have focused on how to use communication in order to promote one's cause in an effort to overcome repression, aggression, and oppression. Communication is also important in other areas of nonviolent struggle and needs to be thought about deeply and analyzed for the best means of attaining goals in a self-consistent manner.

Communication strategy should be one component of any nonviolence strategy. The cases of Indonesian repression, Soviet repression, and global corporate domination illustrate the importance of communication both in prominent, active, and successful campaigns as well as in circumstances when resistance is less developed or less successful. Activists have been remarkably resourceful as well as courageous in their use of communication methods. Yet there is always more to learn, which is why a close analysis of previous campaigns and periods of repression is worthwhile.

In order to understand better how to use communication more effectively, in chapters 5 and 6 we surveyed perspectives on both nonviolence and communication. We found that most analyses of nonviolent action give little overt attention to communication.

However, Johan Galtung's idea of "the great chain of nonviolence" provides, with suitable modification, a suitable foundation for analyzing communication to support nonviolent struggle.

There are many perspectives on communication, but few have given any attention to nonviolence. Nevertheless, from nearly every type of communication theory it is possible to draw insights that are relevant to nonviolent action. Building on these insights, we constructed a model of communication against repression, aggression, and oppression in which there are various potential communication chains, each subject to different obstacles.

The combination of case studies and theory can be used for a variety of purposes. One possibility is to undertake a detailed assessment of nonviolent campaigns using a well-developed theoretical framework. For example, using the communication framework we developed in chapter 6, it would be possible to carry out a close analysis of the anti-MAI campaign or other antiglobalization initiatives. This would be a worthwhile endeavor, revealing much about the power and limitations of activist communication practices and strategies, taken in political and organizational context. Such analyses could then be used to modify, refine, and elaborate the theoretical framework, with the aim of developing a nuanced model of communication for nonviolent struggle.

We hope others will undertake such analyses. Our chosen path in this book was somewhat different. Rather than attempt to build up a comprehensive and sophisticated model of communication against repression, aggression, and repression, we chose in this chapter to propose a series of steps that may help activists to examine their communication strategies. These steps by themselves are not a strategy but are intended to encourage activists to think systematically about how they use communication to achieve their goals. The steps themselves are simple enough: list potential communication chains, note the barriers that may make them ineffective, examine ways to overcome the barriers, and then choose those chains that are most likely

to be effective. To make use of these steps more effective, it is helpful to have knowledge of the role of communication in both successful and unsuccessful actions — such as described in chapters 2 to 4 — and to understand basic ideas about nonviolent action and communication, as covered in chapters 5 and 6.

The steps are themselves readily open to revision or replacement. The key thing is analyzing communication, not the precise method of doing it. The temptation for activists is to rush to do something immediately without carefully assessing options. While the thing done immediately may be worthwhile, the risk is that better options are overlooked in the rush or by making implicit assumptions about what will or won't work or what should or shouldn't be done. The temptation for scholars, on the other hand, is to build impressive models or intricate analyses that are rigorous and satisfying intellectually but have little practical relevance. We have tried to steer a course between these temptations.

There are two principal sources for future development of communication theory for nonviolent action. One is further theoretical work by scholars. There is certainly ample material to work with, both case studies and concepts, whose possibilities are largely untapped. The other source for theory development is nonviolence practice. As activists develop new communication strategies, and especially when they use, reflect on, and modify prior theory and practice, they provide rich new resources for theorizing. Of course, from the point of view of activists, the aim of action is not to contribute to theory development but to effectively confront injustice. For them, theory is a tool rather than a goal. Our preference is to emphasize "theory for activists" over "theory for theorists," recognizing that these categories are blurred and that each can enrich the other.

Finally, it is always important to remember that, for the purposes of nonviolent action, communication is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Communication strategy is but one component of the wider task of developing strategy for nonviolent action.

Given the central and increasing importance of communication, though, it is a component that deserves much greater attention.