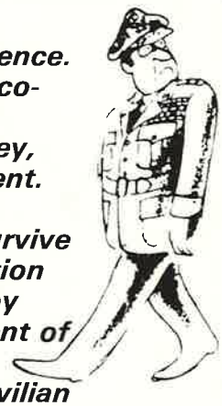
Social Defence

Nonviolent Community Resistance to Aggression

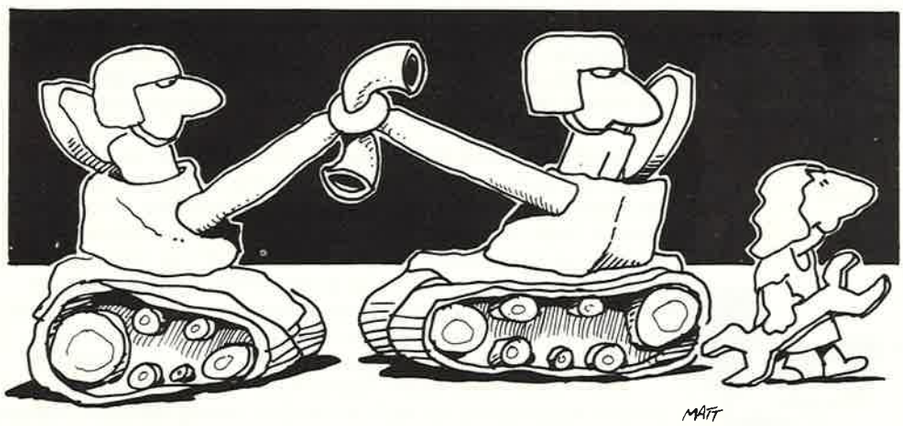


Social Defence is a nonviolent alternative to military defence. It is based on widespread political, economic and social noncooperation in order to oppose military aggression or political repression. It uses methods such as boycotts, refusals to obey, strikes, demonstrations, and setting up alternative government.

Social defence is based on the principle that no regime—whether democracy or military dictatorship—can survive without the passive support or nonresistance of a large fraction of the population. Since social defence relies on resistance by large sections of the population, it is the nonviolent equivalent of guerilla warfare.

Social defence acts as a deterrent by appealing to the civilian population in the aggressor country through its broad base, its nonviolence and the justice of its cause. The methods of social defence maximise political opposition within the aggressor country.

Social defence is not automatically successful, just as military defence is not automatically successful. Its effectiveness can be improved by advanced planning and practice. Although social defence is based entirely on nonviolent methods, violence and suffering caused by the aggressors are still likely. Social defence is not an easy road to peace, but it does offer some hope for creating a world in which social struggle continues but large scale war and violence are greatly reduced.



The Methods of Social Defence

The methods of social defence can be divided into three types: Symbolic actions, noncooperation, and intervention and alternative institutions.

[a] Symbolic Actions, such as:
- —formal statements (speeches, letters, petitions);
- —slogans, leaflets, banners;
- —demonstrations, protest marches, vigils, pickets;
- —wearing of symbols of opposition (such as the paper clips worn by Norwegian civilians during the Nazi occupation);
- —meetings, teach-ins.

[b] Noncooperation, such as:
- —social boycott, stay-at-home;
- —boycotts by consumers, workers, traders; embargoes;
- —strikes, bans, working-to-rule, reporting 'sick';
- —refusal to pay tax or debts, withdrawal of bank deposits;
- —boycotts of government institutions;
- —disobedience, evasions and delays;
- —mock incapability ('go slow', 'misunderstandings', 'mistakes').

[c] Intervention and alternative institutions, such as:
- —fasts;
- —sitins, nonviolent obstruction and occupation;
- —sabotage (such as destruction of information and records);
- —establishment of parallel institutions for government, media, transport, welfare, health and education.

Why is Social Defence Needed?

(a) The danger of war and of nuclear war.

The rhetoric of those who advocate spending money on weapons is that military hardware is needed in order to deter potential aggressors or invaders. But is the goal of deterrence best achieved by expenditure on weapons? After a great deal of military expenditure by many governments, the threat of war is as great as ever.

Talk of 'winnable' nuclear war and 'limited' nuclear wars suggests that the idea of nuclear war is being seriously considered by political and military leaders. Nuclear war seems even more likely if one considers that much of the 'defence' capability depends on the 'defender' being the first to strike.

Australia's position as a link in the United States defence system means that if a nuclear war were to occur between the superpowers, Australian citizens might also be attacked.

(b)Reduction of the threat of invasion.

Social defence is an alternative to military defence which can reduce the threat of invasion in a number of ways.

Firstly, other governments cannot pretend that their military arsenals are for defensive purposes if the supposed opponent relies on social defence and has no arms. It becomes harder to convince soldiers of the justice of their government's war if they are attacking an unarmed opponent.

Secondly, since with social defence there is no military defence capability, nuclear attack and aerial bombing to overcome such defences become useless exercises and hence much less likely. The notion of pre-emptive attack becomes meaningless.

Thirdly, if social defence is seen by potential aggressors as being well coordinated and strong, the estimated cost of an invasion escalates. Because of the broad base of social defence it is extremely difficult to overcome: as long as there are committed people there is resistance. In this situation the deterrent effect is large since the benefits of aggression are greatly reduced.

Historical evidence suggests that social defence could be as effective or more effective than military methods in deterring or resisting attack, if as much money and energy were devoted to nonviolent means of resistance as are now devoted to violent methods.

(c) Reduction of suffering.

Adoption of social defence as an alternative to military defence can reduce suffering in a number of ways. Firstly, the money now spent on weapons manufacture and testing can be spent on more socially useful projects.

Secondly, by reducing the threat of war the potential suffering is also reduced. Thirdly, in the event of invasion or military takeover, social defence over a wide area precludes the use of many conventional weapons which are unsuited to combatting such defence, including nuclear weapons.

Social defence has a further tendency to reduce suffering since it is difficult to gain support for use of violence against a population which is defending itself in a totally nonviolent manner. Thus large scale and indiscriminate violence is less likely.

(d) Guarding the guardians.

The existence of military forces is normally justified by the threat of 'enemies'. But one of the greatest dangers to freedom and democracy in many countries today is the military forces themselves. If military forces take over the government, who will stop them? Who guards the guardians?

With social defence this problem does not arise, since social defence is based on widespread popular participation and so eliminates the dependence on a professional defence force. In the meantime, the nonviolent methods used against a foreign aggressor can also be used against local military forces that try to take power, as in the case of the Kapp Putsch and the Algerian Generals' Revolt. For these reasons, social defence is the form of defence most compatible with the ideals of freedom and democracy.

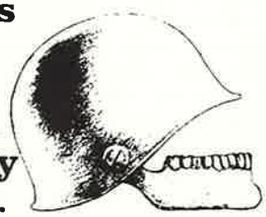
Why is Social Defence Needed in Australia?

Social defence is not limited to resistance to a full scale invasion. It can be used to preserve threatened civil rights. Although military invasion or military takeover in Australia are unlikely, any of the following could well occur.

(a) A political coup which the military does not oppose (as in 1975), but in which elections or parliament are suspended indefinately. Social defence

The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at $17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money

...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.



The Kapp Putsch

In 1920 in Berlin a coup d'etat (or putsch) led by the right-wing Dr Wolfgang Kapp and backed by several army officers was defeated by nonviolent action.

The coup was an attempt to overthrow the new Weimar Republic (the Ebert Government) which had already faced many difficulties such as economic dislocation, military unrest and attempts at revolution. The coup was rather amateurish, but despite their limited preparation the Kappists occupied Berlin without military resistance, and the Ebert Government fled to Stuttgart. The states were instructed by the government to refuse all cooperation with the new Kapp regime. When the Kappists took over two government newspapers, all the printers went on strike. Thousands of other workers spontaneously went on strike all over Berlin.

Following this, a call for a general strike was issued, and was supported by workers of all political and religious groups including the bureaucratic departments, who refused to head ministries under Kapp. Workers tried to influence Kappist troops. After only four days and an unsuccessful attempt to compromise, the limited power of the occupiers became more obvious, strikes spread, military commanders resumed loyalty to the Government, and leaflets entitled "Collapse of the military dictatorship" were showered over Berlin from a plane. All this served to further weaken the regime, forcing Kapp to resign and flee, followed by the troops who were now under the order of the Ebert Government.

So the coup was thus defeated and the Weimar Republic preserved, providing a good illustration of the potential of nonviolent, cooperative action. If it had not been for the immediate intervention and noncooperation of the people, the military takeover might well have been successful.

could be used to support demands for a return to democratic principles.
(b) Acts of violence (such as the Hilton bombing) which provide an excuse for police or military powers to be expanded. Social defence could be used to preserve rights such as no arrest without trial, the right to march and congregate in public places, and freedom of speech.

(c) Declaration of a state of emergency following an attack on a military installation such as Pine Gap. Such a state of emergency could be used as a pretext for suspending civil rights and gaoling 'dissidents'. Social defence could be used to challenge government or military control.

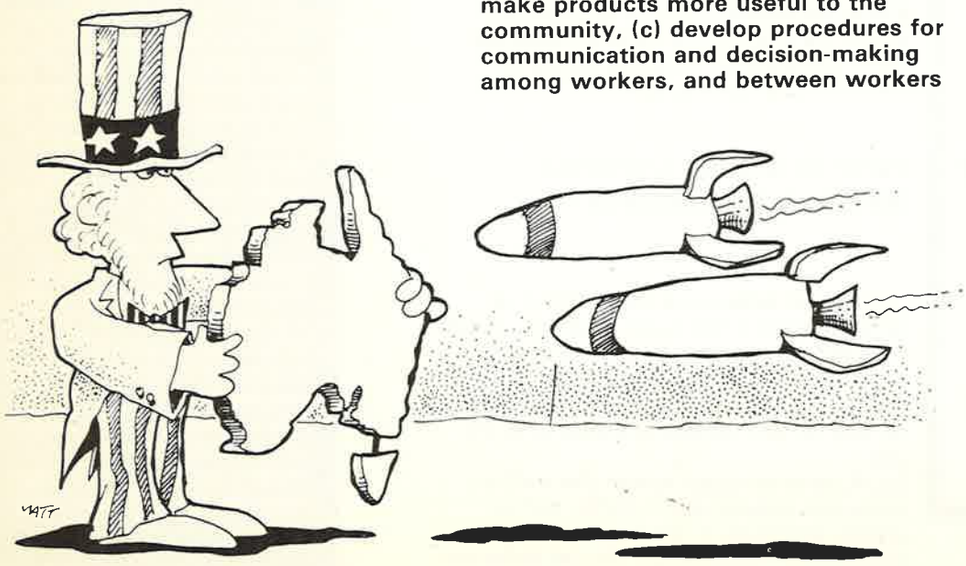
What People Can Do

Because social defence is largely dependent on a closely knit network of alliances throughout the community, it is important for people to strengthen these community ties. They already exist in the form of sporting clubs, childcare centres and trade unions. They include informal friendships and links between neighbours, work-mates and students. All these relationships are crucial to the success of any social defence operation. They provide support and ideas for people resisting either an occupying army or a military takeover. In any community action, it is important for people to act together, knowing that thousands of others are doing the same, for example in a general strike to frustrate the occupying force. This ability to coordinate actions happens only when community links are developed.

Local Communities

Starting in streets and suburbs, people can work out with their neighbours plans for resistance. There are many possible methods for resistance. Street signs can be turned around or removed, as was done in Czechoslovakia to resist the Soviet invasion of 1968. Local people will still know their way around, but invaders will be hindered.

Conversations can be struck up between local residents and soldiers in order to establish friendships. Grafitti can be used to promote messages of nonviolence and solidarity in the resistance. People can learn the location of and use of local equipment such as typewriters, printing facilities and citizens band radio.



Factory Workers

Factory workers can deny the end product of their labour to an aggressor by knowing how to control their production process and, if necessary, to stop it. The exact course of action to be taken will depend on the circumstances. If, for example, a general strike is held, workers should know how to disable their factory so no one else can use it. In a long drawn-out struggle, workers producing goods for the general population (clothes, housing, etc.) may decide to continue operation. Others in areas vital to an aggresor or repressive ruler (armaments, fuel, etc.) probably should disrupt their factories as much as possible.

Johan Galtung suggests that for the strongest resistance, factories should be designed around a small number of simple but vital components, which if removed and destroyed, cannot be quickly replaced. Copies could be held in a safe place, perhaps even in a foreign country. No aggressor could get the factory to operate, and the use of force or even torture would not be of any help, so probably would not be used.

Factory workers can (a) learn how to disable or halt production with the minimum damage, (b) learn how to quickly alter production methods to make products more useful to the community, (c) develop procedures for communication and decision-making among workers, and between workers

and other groups, (d) carry out workshops and 'trial runs' in disrupting or changing factory production to resist aggression, and (e) share experiences with other workers and the public.

Computer Programmers and Operators

Computers are vital to many activities in modern industrial society, including industrial processes, communications, military planning and the operation of bureaucracies. As a result, computer workers are in a strong position to help oppose any group which wished to take over society for its own purposes, by interfering with or changing the operation of computers.

Computer workers are in an especially strong position to oppose aggression, since outsiders cannot easily take over computing jobs, and not even the use of force can guarantee to an aggressor that 'bugs' are removed from computer systems or that computer output is exactly what was desired.

To prepare for effective resistance, computer workers can (a) learn how to terminate or disrupt the operation of computers, preferably without being detected if necessary, (b) prepare alternative programmes, or subtle alterations to existing programmes, which could be used in an emergency, (c) liaise in these efforts with other sympathetic programmers or operators, (d) carry out 'trial runs' in which the operations of computers are disrupted or altered to resist aggressors, and (e) communicate information about resistance by computer workers to others in the computer field and in the general public.

Other Examples

Detailed responses to aggression for nearly every group in society could be developed, as in the case of local communities, factory workers and computer workers. Here are a few other possibilities.

(a) Government employees can destroy or 'misplace' files on 'dissidents' and others who might be targets for security forces.
(b) Communications workers, secretaries and others can 'accidently' pass vital information to opposition groups.
(c) Sympathetic members of the armed forces can warn resistance members about impending attacks and other operations, can sow seeds of doubt within the military, and can 'misunderstand' or quietly neglect to carry out orders.
(d) People can 'go slow' or 'misunderstand' in carrying out any task forced upon them by aggressors. This is a good method against really brutal rulers, since it is very hard to tell whether inefficiency is genuine or not.

There is much to be learned from the experiences in other countries, as well as from discussions by people in Australia. Information can be printed and distributed widely as basic resource material for community resistance. It would be wise to prepare such information ahead of any crisis.

The only publication currently available to the community to cope with social crisis is a 'civil defence' booklet describing how to make shelters against nuclear attack. This suggests that the only open conflict on Australian soil in which Australians could be involved is one in which we will be nuclear targets. This no-win possibility can be avoided by both nuclear disarmament *and* preparation for nonviolent resolution of conflicts. In fact, a successful programme of social defence opens the possibility for a totally nonviolent resolution of internal *and* international conflict.

As well as preparing written resources for nonviolent defence, it is extremely useful to hold workshops to allow people to become acquainted with some of the tactics and methods involved. Simulation exercises, performed like fire drills, can accustom people to rapidly responding to an emergency like an invasion or coup. One example is setting aside half a day at the local primary or high school for discussing and training in ways that school students can best help in any locally based resistance.

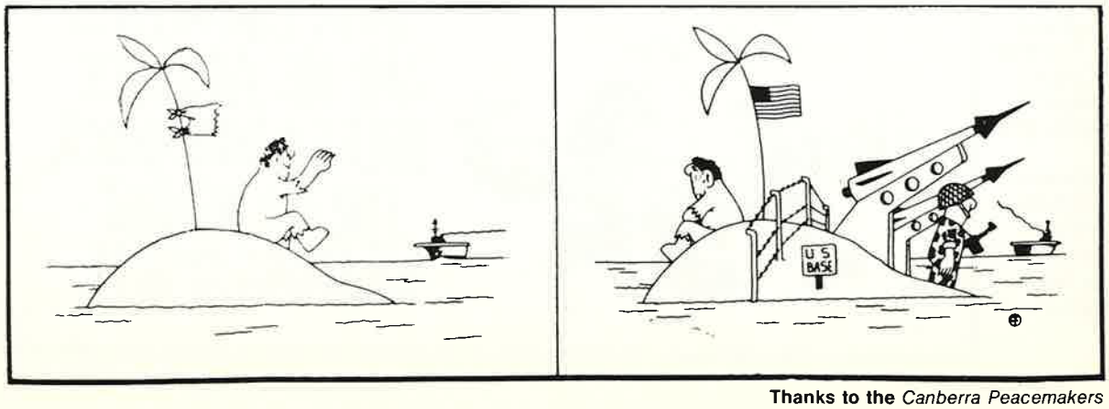
Social defence skills must be promoted gradually throughout all communities in the world if we are to have a viable alternative to the nuclear arms race.

What About Severe Repression?

Social defence may sound promising when used against aggressors who must pay attention to 'public opinion', as in most Western democracies. But can it work against really ruthless attackers? Can it work against repressive regimes such as the dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin?

Historical examples suggest that the answer is yes.

Effective nonviolent resistance to the Nazi occupiers occurred in the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway during World War II. For example, the Nazi regime in Norway run by Quisling tried to force the schools to teach Nazi doctrines.



Czechoslovakia 1968

In the 1960s, a number of reforms were made in Czechoslovakia which reduced the repressive aspects of communist rule. These moves—so called 'socialism with a human face'—were strongly supported by the Czechoslovak people and government, but bitterly opposed by the Soviet Government. In August 1968 a Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia was launched, with the expectation of quickly installing a pro-Soviet government in Czechoslovakia. There was no military resistance to the invasion, and such resistance would have been futile anyway.

But the Czechoslovak people, from the political leadership to the workforce, were unified in nonviolent resistance to the occupation and this slowed and obstructed the Soviet occupation considerably. The clandestine radio network played a crucial role. It convened the Extraordinary Fourteenth Party Congress, called strikes, gave tactical instruction on street confrontations, requested rail workers to slow the transport of Soviet jamming equipment, cautioned against rumours, and counselled nonviolent resistance. Due to the unified civilian resistance, to the lack of a pro-Soviet government and to the demoralisation of Soviet troops, directives were issued from Moscow offering reforms and other concessions.

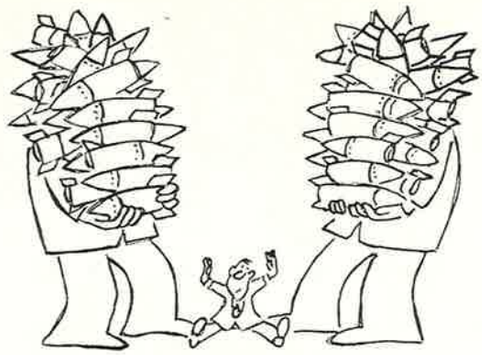
The Czechoslovak leadership considered these offerings and so adopted a more cooperative stance than had the previously unified defence network. Further noncooperative acts were now without official sanction and as the Czechoslovak position weakened, the Soviet forces consolidated the occupation, removing the 'unnecessary' concessions.

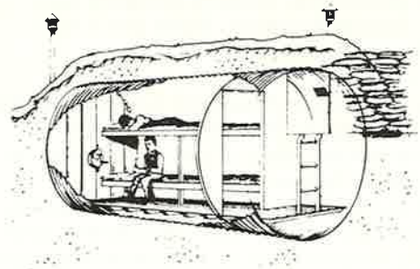
Because Soviet economic and political interest in Czechoslovakia were so strong, long-term resistance was successful in delaying and frustrating acheivement of Soviet aims, with very little loss of life. But the reforms achieved prior to August 1968 were lost, partly due to loss of unity in the resistance.

Thanks to the *Canberra Peacemakers*

The teachers publicly refused, and many were arrested and sent to concentration camps. But they continued to resist, and finally the Quisling Government—worried about angering the Norwegian people too much—released the teachers. The schools were never used for Nazi propaganda.

Even in Nazi Germany itself, nonviolent resistance was effective in some cases. In 1943 in Berlin, thousands of non-Jewish wives of Jews arrested by the Gestapo demonstrated outside the detention centre. Eventually the prisoners were released. Nonviolent resistance also has been used with some success in the Soviet Union, for example in prison labour camps at Vorkuta in 1953.

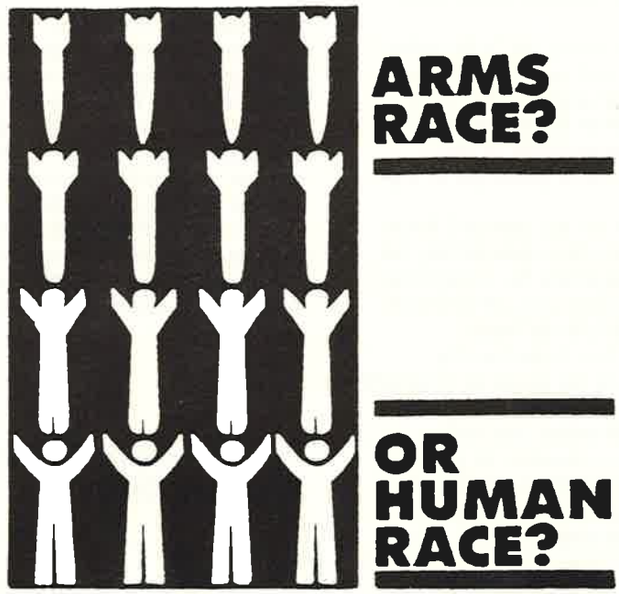




Even the most ruthless dictatorship depends for its existence on passive support or nonresistance by a large fraction of the population. No government in history has been so powerful that it could function without a fair degree of consent or acquiescence. If the regime adopts unpopular policies and tries to repress all oppostion violently, this will cause ever larger numbers of people to oppose and resist the government.

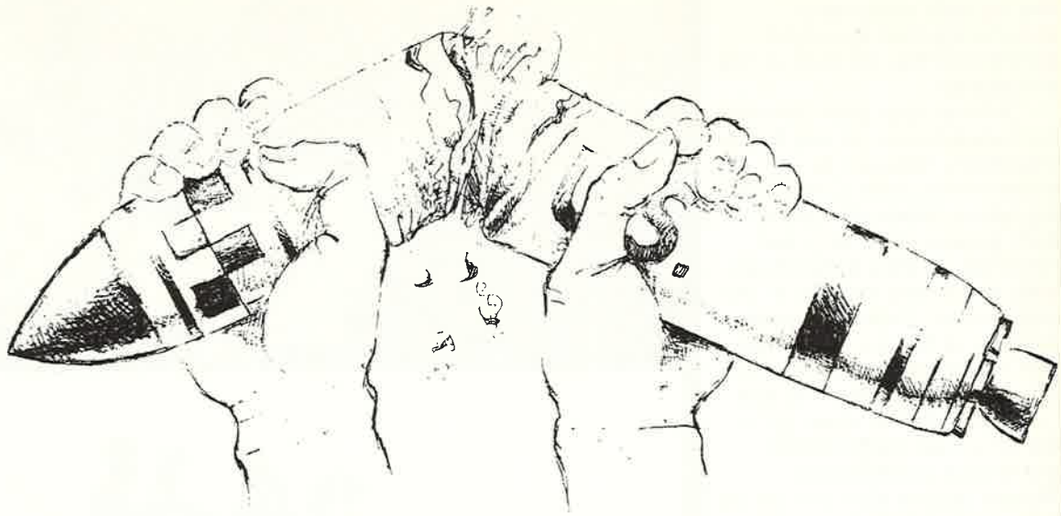
Social defence *can* be successful against severe repression. But the methods and tactics used need to be specially chosen if repression is harsh. More use can be made of quiet 'mistakes' in carrying out tasks and 'misunderstandings' of orders. And when support for the resistance is widespread, open defiance becomes possible.

If Social Defence is so Effective, then why hasn't it been tried before?



Social defence is at variance with our present political and economic system. It advocates shared control as a replacement for the military defence hierarchies which keep power and knowledge in the hands of the minority. The continuance of the military system is in the interests of a powerful few, including weapons manufacturers, top government bureaucrats and other vested interests.

A second reason is that the idea of social defence is fairly new. It is true that the methods of social defence, such as strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and 'go slow' campaigns, have been used for many centuries. Furthermore, organised campaigns of nonviolent action have been developed, for example under Gandhi's leadership during India's struggle for independence and as part of the black civil rights movement in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s under Martin Luther King. But it is only in the last 25 years or so that social defence has been proposed as a full-scale alternative to military defence.



Algerian Generals' Revolt 1961

Until 1962 Algeria was a colony of France. Beginning in 1957, an armed independence struggle was waged by Algerian nationalists against French settlers who were supported by French military forces. By 1961, moves were under way by the French Government, led by de Gaulle, to grant independence to Algeria.

Leading sections of the French military in Algeria, who were strongly opposed to Algerian independence, staged a coup on 21-22 April 1961 in the city of Algiers. It was rumoured that there would be an invasion of France by the French military leaders in Algeria in order to topple the French Government and institute a strict colonialist policy.

The population in France demonstrated its solidarity against such an invasion. French airports were shut down, trade with Algeria ceased and a one-hour strike was held by ten million workers. Dissident elements within the army in Algeria performed noncooperative acts, largely by adopting an attitude of mock incapability.

After four days the coup disintegrated. Large-scale violence was avoided and thus many lives saved. It was largely the force of community resistance which deterred the threatened invasion of France and caused the collapse of the short-lived Algerian Generals' regime.

The Keys to Successful Social Defence

Social defence is more than a collection of nonviolent techniques of resistance. It must be based around defending basic principles and around a sound strategy.

The principles to be defended are those which are understood by people as basic to their way of life.

The key to a successful nonviolent strategy is maintaining the unity and morale of the resistance. Decisions about demonstrations, strikes and other actions should be made with careful consideration of their effects on unity and morale.

Success also depends on persistence. Nonviolent resistance is not guaranteed to succeed quickly, any more than violent resistance is. In a long struggle, tenacity is vital.

Finally, preparation to use nonviolent methods is important, just like it is with violent methods. Most historical uses of nonviolent resistance have been spontaneous. With thorough preparation, the chance of success is increased. People can learn about what to do and train in the use of methods and strategy of nonviolent action.

In summary:

—defend basic principles;
—maintain unity and morale;
—be persistent;
—prepare in advance.

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