



Can Nonviolent National Defence Be Effective If The Opponent is Ruthless?: The Nazi Case

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Much has been written which is sympathetic to nonviolent action, especially about the struggles led by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. It is, however, common to draw a sharp distinction between the use of nonviolent methods against opponents who are restrained by civilizational or moral limits and their use against opponents who are ruthless or unscrupulous. Against adversaries or governments of the latter sort, it is said, nonviolence is simply ineffective.

The distinction between restrained and ruthless opponents is often specified as amounting to that between totalitarian or highly authoritarian governments on the one hand, and democratic or pluralistic regimes, on the other. A related distinction is not infrequently made between the differing social milieu found within domestic societies and in international relations. It is claimed that in the international sphere, characterized as it is by stark struggles for power, agreed upon and enforceable moral norms are apt to be lacking. The methods or sanctions of Gandhian nonviolence are thus not regarded as very reliable in such an environment.

An extreme case in which the opponent was totalitarian and the sphere was that of relations between nations was that of the attempt to employ nonviolent resistance in some of the countries occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II. In this article I will examine the efficacy of the use of nonviolent methods of resistance to the Nazi authorities in some of the conquered countries. I will be concerned with the degree to which resistance which is internal and nonviolent, rather than external and military, can be successful.

To sharpen the focus of the problem and place it in the context of contemporary debate I will refer to a

few critics who see the effort to oppose very ruthless regimes with nonviolence as largely futile. In her account of the holocaust, Lucy Dawidowicz asserts that "(i)n 1938, after Kristallnacht, when Gandhi advised the Jews in Germany to employ *Satyagraha*, the Indian version of passive resistance, he disclosed his inability to distinguish between English and German political morality."¹ Manus Midlarsky makes a similar pronouncement in his review of a book by Boserup and Mack on nonviolent defence: "If, as in the case of the Nazis during World War II, the occupying power is willing to engage in the destruction of entire population groups such as the Jews or to destroy whole villages as in Czechoslovakia, then the nonviolent enterprise obviously fails."¹ The same idea, though with more detailed argumentation has been expressed by two noted scholars who have contributed to the areas of both

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political theory and international relations: Raymond Aron and Michael Walzer.

The late Professor Aron referred to the arguments of Commander Stephen King Hall and George F. Kennan, whom he interpreted as saying that it "is enough that a population, even without arms, be resolved to make a conqueror's life impossible for the latter to discover, little by little, the vanity of conquest." However, Aron maintained that the theory, "insofar as it claims to be realistic," is open to decisive objections because it envisages certain facts and overlooks others." He claimed that this approach "assumes that the day of massacres or exterminations is definitely over." But he saw no basis for "subscribing to this act of faith", and he educed as examples the massacre of ten thousand Polish officers by the Russians, and Stalin's proposal to Roosevelt and Churchill to shoot tens of thousands of Wermacht officers. He said of the Incas and Aztecs that their educated classes were "decimated by the Spanish invaders", and that their masses, "robbed of their traditional culture, vegetated for centuries, with no reason to live, treated as subhuman by the victors who had become the privileged class of colonial society." Aron insisted that the "effectiveness of passive resistance, as practiced by the Indians under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, is subordinate to the respect, on the part of armed men, for certain rules." For Aron the "state without arms, at the mercy of an armed state, has no security."³

In his widely reviewed and influential book, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer of Princeton University included an afterword on "Nonviolence and the Theory of War". Written about a decade after Aron's critique, Walzer's essay is all the more interesting in that he refers to works by several of the leading writers on civilian-based, or nonviolent, defence (i.e. Sharp, Bose-rup and Mack). Walzer says that the picture he finds in these works of citizens using disobedience, noncooperation, boycott, and the general strike in order to respond to invasion and to turn aggressive war into political struggle is one which he finds "attractive" and "conceivable". In fact Walzer would prefer a "nonviolent test of wills" to war, "even when victory is uncertain".

The problem which Walzer, like Aron, sees with nonviolent defence is that its effective use is possible only if invaders have a commitment to "the war convention", in which noncombatant immunity is respected. But in his estimation occupiers will not always have this commitment. Walzer says that civilian resistance would not "work well against invaders who sent out squads of soldiers to kill civilian leaders, who arrested and tortured suspects, established concentration camps, and exiled large numbers of people from areas where resistance was strong to distant and desolate parts of the country". In fact he sees nonviolent defence as "no defence at all against tyrants or conquerors ready to adopt such measures". If one cannot count on a foreign army observing "the moral code", then "nonviolence is either a disguised form of surrender or a minimalist way of upholding communal values after a military defeat". Like Midlarsky and many others Walzer chooses the Nazis as the prime example of an unscrupulous opponent.⁴

Although Professor Walzer seems more sympathetic to the case for nonviolent defence than Professor Aron, their critiques are similar enough so as to refer to their common objections as 'the Aron-Walzer critique'. I believe that it is important for students of nonviolent defence to answer the Aron-Walzer critique insofar as that is possible, for it articulates objections and doubts about civilian-based defence which are widely held by both the general public and elites. In searching for a response I have turned to the writings of Gene Sharp, who has devoted considerable attention to the use of nonviolent methods in struggles against dictatorships.

Sharp describes as "false" the view that "one must choose between massively destructive war and passive submission to tyranny."⁵ He has read Walzer's essay on nonviolent struggle, and when I interviewed him at Harvard University in October 1985 he responded as follows to the claim that nonviolent action can only be effective if the invaders have a commitment to the war convention . . .

But this isn't a matter of speculation. There are cases of nonviolent resistance during Nazi occupations and cases of resistance in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in

which there were violations of rules of war dealing with resisting populations. There are other cases of nonviolent struggle against quite repressive regimes. Some of these have produced moderate successes, although the opponents were very brutal. So that in making categorical statements that in such circumstances nonviolent resistance is a form of surrender of only minimal utility, I think Walzer is just wrong.

Thus there is a fairly clear contrast here. I do not know if Aron ever read any of Sharp's writings, but he read George Kennan on civilian-based defence. Kennan's favourable review of Sharp's *Making Europe Unconquerable* in *The New York Review of Books* of February 13, 1986 illustrates well how close Kennan and Sharp are in their thinking on the subject.

I will examine whether one can find an answer to the Aron-Walzer critique in the writings of Gene Sharp. I shall try to cover only one, albeit important, part of this enquiry — namely to examine that portion of Sharp's work which deals with nonviolent resistance to the Nazis. The extent to which Sharp's discussions of other cases of nonviolent struggle helps answer the critique is a topic for another study. If Sharp has even partially met the conventional critique with respect to the Nazis and nonviolence, that is an important development.

Nonviolent Resistance in Denmark and Norway

Sharp has described nonviolent resistance to the Nazis as being "especially important in the Netherlands, Norway and, probably to a lesser degree, Denmark." He emphasizes that these efforts to oppose occupation rule were improvised, i.e. without advanced preparations or training or special knowledge of nonviolent techniques. Yet, according to Sharp, these and "certain other anti-Nazi struggles" resulted in "some modest but significant victories."⁶

To begin with Denmark: it admitted German troops without armed resistance and was, in turn, assured by Germany that its own government and liberties would be protected. Methods used to protest the occupation included the wearing by students of caps symbolizing opposition to the Nazis and the social boycott, in which Danes did not reply when spoken to by Germans and

shoppers remained silent or left when Germans entered a store. Danes refused to go to concerts where German military music was played. By 1943 German policy had become more severe and acts of Danish resistance increased. In Copenhagen, in June 1944, there was a widespread general strike to protest martial law. Thousands of Danes were killed for their defiance.

The Danes strongly opposed anti-Semitic legislation, and there was no such legislation, nor expropriation of Jewish property. The Nazis planned to round up and deport the 8,000 Danish Jews, but the Danish underground transported the great majority of them to Sweden and safety. Sharp states that Nazi racial policy was here "confronted by Danish, Jewish and German noncooperation", for the "German military commander refused to put troops at the disposal of the Reich plenipotentiary in Denmark." Only some 477 Jews were captured and shipped to Theresienstadt, and the government was able to prevent even these from being sent to Auschwitz.

Sharp points out that "the Nazis were unable to destroy a single Danish resistance organisation of any importance throughout the occupation, although they were able to arrest, deport and execute members of those organizations." Moreover, he cites Hastrup as saying that the conclusion from the Danish case must be that "suppression only gave birth to more vigorous resistance" and is thus "a two-edged sword."⁸

A key feature of the situation was the tradition of humanism in Denmark. There was a milieu of political and religious freedom in which differences were tolerated. The attack on the Jews of Denmark was regarded by the Danes as an assault on the very fabric of Danish society and thus on their national pride and integrity. The deep hostilities between ethnic groups which existed in many of the East European countries were largely absent. The Nazis did not make an all-out effort to destroy the institutions of the country or to kill or enslave its population. These elements all contributed to — and made possible — nonviolent noncooperation by the Danes. It was these conditions which seem to me to be of more fundamental importance than the choice of techniques

of nonviolent resistance. Without the conditions it is not likely that the methods would have been chosen, and even less likely that they would have had the degree of success that they did.

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There was well-organized nonviolent resistance to the Nazis in Norway during World War II. Sharp has provided us with a detailed account based on interviews of how Norwegian teachers refused to cooperate with plans to introduce a fascist teacher's organisation. About 10,000 teachers wrote signed letters of protest to Quisling's Ministry of Church and Education and tens of thousands of signed protest letters were sent by parents of the pupils. About 1,000 teachers were arrested, and some 687 sent to concentration camps run by the Gestapo, where they were subjected to torture-gymnastics, hard work, and almost no food. Only some 32 gave in. 499 of the teachers were then sent to Kirkenes, north of the Arctic circle, where they were transferred from the control of the Gestapo to that of the German army. Some time later Quisling went to a high school and declared: "You teachers have destroyed everything for me." The new teacher's organisation was stillborn, and the schools were not used for indoctrination. The remaining teachers were returned home from Kirkenes, and the large majority of them had not signed the statements the German authorities sought.

In his pamphlet, **Tyranny Could Not Quell Them**, Sharp draws the following conclusion:⁹

The 1942 Norwegian teachers' resistance does not prove that non-violent resistance is always successful, or that it can always bring a totalitarian State to its knees. There were circumstances operating in the teachers' favour which are not always present. But the Kirkenes journey does prove a point which is often denied; that non-violent resistance can be successful under

occupation by such a regime as Hitler's Nazi Germany.

Resistance by other sectors of Norwegian society to Nazi occupation included noncooperation by the churches and boycotts by sportsmen of Nazi organised events. The Jews fared less well than in Denmark, for at least half of the 1800 Jews of Norway were interned during the war. About 800 were deported, mostly to Auschwitz, and only 23 of the deportees survived. The Norwegian teachers and others who resisted the Nazis achieved a modest success through their courage and determination. Their nonviolent noncooperation and the spirit accompanying it were far from the 'helplessness' which Aron argued will be the condition of a state without arms. The event supports Sharp's contention that nonviolence is "the opposite of passivity" and "is not simply persuasion", but the "wielding of power".¹⁰

The Norwegian civilian resistance was in many ways the most remarkable one during World War II. The fact that — in contrast to Denmark — an illegitimate regime was imposed from the outset, probably helped stiffen the resolve of the population. In my interview with him, Sharp went as far as to suggest that if the Norwegians had been better prepared in advance for resistance of this type, the Quisling regime would have known that the one thing it could not do was to take over the schools.

I believe it is important to recognize that the victory for nonviolence which actually took place was confined to the moral and ideological realm. The occupiers failed to impose their vision of a new order on church, professional, educational, and sporting organisations. It was only in these "comparatively limited spheres" that the "Norwegian experience offers any evidence about the power of nonviolence."¹¹

It is apparent that moderate successes were achieved in Norway and Denmark against aspects of the Nazi programme. Now Walzer concedes that since soldiers are not always prepared to kill civilians to break their resistance, "civilian defence has had a certain limited effectiveness — not in expelling an invading army, but in preventing the attainment of particular goals set by its leaders." Walzer quotes Liddell Hart as saying, however, that these

effects have only been possible against opponents whose code of morality is fundamentally similar.¹² Yet it is clear the Nazis did not have a code fundamentally similar to the Norwegians or the Danes. How then can these achievements be explained?

Several interpretations or explanations are possible. One is that the Nazis did act as ruthless totalitarians in these countries and that the Aron-Walzer position is thrown into question by the nonviolent success that was achieved. A second is that restraint was shown by the Nazis and that this restraint resulted from the choice of nonviolent sanctions by the activists. Yet another is that in Norway, as in Denmark, there were conditions or circumstances which were decisive, apart from the actions of the resisters.

Both the second and the third elements were operating, but it is primarily the third or the unusual conditions which accounts for what happened. One special circumstance was that Norway had a long frontier with a neutral country, which facilitated contact with the outside. In addition, the Nazis viewed the Norwegians and Danes as fellow members of the 'master race'. William R. Miller says of Norway and Denmark that "unlike any of the other countries invaded by Nazi Germany, these two nations were given preferential treatment." Miller states that "the Danes and Norwegians (and to some extent the Dutch) were punished in a much milder way when they resisted, and not at all when they did not." He views the Norwegian nonviolent resistance as "a defensive operation — at best, a holding action which gave way in 1943-1944 to a programme of sabotage led by trained guerrillas parachuted from British aircraft . . ."¹³

Sharp has acknowledged that the Norwegians were regarded by the Nazis as Aryans and that "their treatment early in the occupation was relatively better than that of the Jews and other Untermensch . . ." But he insists that despite "relatively better treatment, the occupation was very harsh." Indeed for those tortured or killed in Norway during this period, the Nazis were ruthless enough. By the end of 1942 about one hundred Norwegians had been executed, 7,000 were in concentration camps, and 1,000 had been deported to Poland.

Sharp notes that "34 prominent men were shot in a single day in revenge for Norwegian sabotage."¹⁴ For these victims and their relatives, Miller's use of the term "mild" to describe the occupation would no doubt seem highly inappropriate.

In spite of these brutalities, the Nazis followed a relatively restrained policy in Norway, at least compared to what they did elsewhere; and it was mainly this which made a limited success with nonviolent action possible. The different treatment meted out by the Nazis to different nationalities is brought out, not only by Miller, but by Sharp's interview with Haakon Holmboe, one of the Norwegian teachers. Mr. Holmboe said that at the Kirkenes camp there were also some Russian prisoners; they were "treated terribly", and some of them were shot. The contrast is also apparent in light of what happened in Poland and the Ukraine. Sharp points out that Quisling might have been more ruthless and had the Norwegian teachers shot, but that he finally ordered them released because he was "(f)earful of alienating the Norwegians still further from his regime . . ."¹⁵ However, in Poland rule was based more on violence, and there was correspondingly less concern by the Nazi overlords about what the Poles thought of them. Aron cited as an example of what unscrupulous dictators can do the fact that during World War II "the Germans had closed all the Polish universities and effectively suppressed even secondary education." In the Ukraine libraries, museums, and scientific institutions were destroyed or transported to Germany at the same time that the population was being subjected to enslavement, decimation, and starvation.¹⁶ It seems that nonviolent resistance as it was practiced in Norway had little or no chance of being effective in Poland or the Ukraine.

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Two other points made by Holmboe in his interview seem pertinent. One is that there were military organisations and resistance in Norway during the occupation, and many teachers, including Holmboe, were active in organising

illegal military groups. This raises a question as to whether the armed resistance in the anti-Nazi struggle was not more central than the non-violent aspect in the minds of many, or most, resisters. Second, Holmboe said that if he and others "had to oppose the Quisling regime without support from the outside, they would never have succeeded." His comment may prompt one to wonder how long the Norwegian school system could have resisted the effort to impose indoctrination if Nazi Germany had won in World War II and Norway's occupation had continued.¹⁷

The importance of outside support is also emphasized by Paul Wehr, who points to the ability of contemporary governments and occupying forces to use modern surveillance vehicles to detect the broadcast and reception of radio and television signals and thus to disrupt "the flow of information from outside the country so essential to resistance." Near the end of his study of nonviolent resistance in occupied Norway, Wehr observes that because "governments and occupying forces are likely to have the greater if not the exclusive access to state of the art equipment, it would seem difficult to repeat the Norwegian experience."¹⁸

Norway's occupation was distinctive not only because of its **relative** mildness and the contact with other countries and outside aid, but also due to the character of the Norwegians, resulting from their history and social arrangements. Their democratic outlook and institutions, their solidarity among social classes, and their combination of individualism with the capability for close cooperation, stemmed from a high standard of education and long traditions of freedom from war and peaceful resolution of domestic differences.¹⁹

In conclusion, there were a considerable number of favourable circumstances for the operation of nonviolent resistance in Norway and Denmark, which cannot readily be duplicated. Even with these advantages there is little to indicate that it could have brought about the demise of Nazi occupation or rendered these countries ungovernable. The accomplishments of nonviolent struggle in these cases are noteworthy for the historian and the student of nonviolence, but they do not provide an answer to sceptics such as Walzer.

Nonviolent Resistance in the Netherlands

Resistance in the occupied Netherlands was distinguished by major strikes in 1941, 1943, and 1944; these were accompanied by religious opposition and the circulation of underground newspapers. Economic noncooperation was used in the general strike in Amsterdam of February 25 and 26, 1941 following the arrest of some 400 young Jewish men who were subsequently sent to Mauthausen concentration camp. Political noncooperation of a sort, consisting of escape, hiding, and false identities, was widely used by Jews, members of the Dutch armed forces, students who refused to declare loyalty to the regime, and workers used to bolster German production.

The costs of the German occupation of the Netherlands were heavy. About 240,000 persons died as a result of the war and occupation, including 105,000 Jews or seventy-five percent of Dutch Jewry. Although Hitler established a civilian administration in the Netherlands, the S.S. played a major role there, which helps to account for the much higher losses than in Denmark and Norway. Hiding was made more difficult by houses without cellars and a lack of forests or mountains.

The question before us concerns how significant were the nonviolent actions of resistance in the Netherlands. Jorgen Hastrup says of the Dutch strikes of

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1941 and 1943 that they "were pin-pricks, and nothing more than pin-pricks, but their psychological and political effect reached a great deal farther than their material importance." He credits the actions with being a useful reminder that the Dutch people would be an "incalculable factor" and that there "could be no question of secure, unchallenged possession and exploitation of the country, conquered by force of arms . . ." ²⁰ For Warmbrunn, the strikes of April-May 1943 demonstrated that the people of Holland had retained their national identity and had not accepted national socialism. They helped revive a sense of unity that further stimulated the resistance

movement and the underground press.²¹

The Netherlands case does not lend much support to a claim that non-violent resistance alone could have undermined the Nazi tyranny. Although the February 1941 general strike was valuable for morale, Warmbrunn points out that it clearly showed the strength of the German police apparatus and that "open opposition to the enemy was not feasible if the occupying power chose to use force." There were no other major popular demonstrations in Amsterdam for the rest of the occupation. The strike was not able to halt or slow down the anti-Jewish measures, but simply resulted in the authorities carrying them out more quietly. The German police had shown that it was master of the situation and "made it obvious that no uprising could prevail against the occupying power without external military assistance."²²

The importance of the external military situation and its implications for possible assistance was manifested by the population closely following events in the various theatres of war. In 1942, Allied reverses discouraged people from active opposition to the German administration. But the invasion of Normandy raised hopes for liberation. Instructions from the Dutch government in exile in London fostered popular resistance, and such resistance grew further after the establishment of the Netherlands Forces of the Interior and the arrival of Allied forces on Dutch soil in September 1944.²³

In the Netherlands, as in other occupied countries, it is not easy to isolate nonviolent from violent resistance and measure its efficacy. For one thing, the various types of resistance probably reinforced each other. But if we ask whether non-violent resistance alone could have ended the occupation, the answer has to be no. It is also unlikely that internal violent and nonviolent resistance together could have done the job. This was the conclusion of Werner Warmbrunn, and for several reasons I think it is significant for this article that he reached it. One is that he displays an intimate knowledge of Dutch society and institutions, and he was able to gain access to important documents on the occupation of the Netherlands.

A second is that Sharp takes Warmbrunn's book as the definitive study of the Netherlands during the German occupation and cites it ten times in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.

The German authorities were able to realize the primary objectives of their occupation of the Netherlands. These were to exploit Dutch resources and to ensure that no disturbances of order would get in the way of the German war effort. The Nazi authorities were able to put between 300,000 and 400,000 Dutchmen to work in the German Reich. More than 5,000 of these workers did not survive their stay in Germany. If Hitler had been victorious, Warmbrunn believes Germany "probably would have annexed the Netherlands unless unforeseen political conditions had made annexation unprofitable." It is true that the attempt to impose national socialist concepts aroused strong hostility to the Germans and was a failure.²⁴ On balance, however, the events in the Netherlands from 1940 through 1944 are consistent with Walzer's assertion that "(i)f one faces an enemy like the Nazis and armed resistance is impossible, it is virtually certain that the men and women of the occupied country . . . will yield to their new masters and obey their decrees."²⁵

The use of nonviolent methods by teachers, students, members of religious organisations, sportsmen and others in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands was, given the circumstances, probably a more prudent, less costly way of protesting occupation than greater resort to violent methods would have been. Nonviolent action in these situations fits Walzer's description of it as "a minimalist way of upholding communal values after a military defeat." There was no question of undermining the German regime or bringing an end to occupation. This was so in spite of the occupations in Denmark and Norway being comparatively mild, and German policies in Holland being, as Warmbrunn puts it, "relatively mild and restrained, if compared with German conduct in Eastern Europe."²⁶

Warmbrunn's pessimism with respect to the possibility of defeating the German occupation without outside help is reinforced on a more general level by Boserup and Mack who refer to "the paramount importance of the

prevailing international power relationship and the historical and geographical context within which the resistance takes place." These authors point to the fact that there was a prospect for change — and thus a motive for undergoing the hardships of resistance — in the occupied countries in the latter part of World War II. They draw a contrast with the collapse of resistance on various occasions in the post World War II Eastern European countries, as it became apparent that the major powers were willing to accept the previous *status quo*.²⁷

Nonviolent Resistance to the Nazis in Other Areas

In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* Sharp enumerates many other actions by the people of Nazi occupied countries which sought to thwart Nazi objectives. In France, for example, there were instances of noncooperation by Jews and others with the decree that Jews, and only Jews, should wear the yellow star. There was extensive use of hiding and false identities in France and Poland, as well as Belgium. Prayers were said at spots where national monuments were destroyed and flowers were placed at the graves of national heroes in Poland and Czechoslovakia. In Poland the underground movement had Poles rename most of the country's streets. Moreover, this underground directed that both Polish and German operated theatres should be boycotted. Meetings to provide education at the elementary level and beyond were held in the homes of citizens.

Such actions at times saved lives, and they can be seen as vitally important for maintaining national identity and morale. They demonstrate that, Aron's comments notwithstanding, even in conditions of severe occupation it is possible that many will not only survive but continue to educate and develop themselves. These activities are an important part of the historical record all too often overshadowed by the traditional accounts focusing on politicians, generals, and battles. However, all these actions in the aggregate do not provide us with evidence that a Nazi-type regime could be seriously undermined, much less overthrown, by nonviolent methods, or that nonviolent resistance can be viewed as an efficacious alternative to military resistance in such a situation.

Non-cooperation and the Jews

In a review essay on Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Sharp has stated that World War II "provided the necessary precondition for the extermination" of the Jews. He thus describes as "false" the "lesson" that "Jews were doomed because of too little violent opposition to the Nazis and were saved by the war." Indeed, he maintains that "nonviolent non-cooperation was responsible for saving millions of Jews." Sharp relates how in Denmark, Norway, Belgium, France, Italy and Bulgaria non-cooperation by "the Jews themselves, the general population, the Government bureaucrats, or even the German officials" led to saving high proportions of the Jewish populations. He concludes that these events demonstrate to a large degree that the will of a totalitarian regime can be thwarted by internal resistance."²⁸

The contrast with Walzer and Aron is here pronounced. Aron declared that there "is no need to evoke the wholesale execution of six million Jews in order to conclude that *the cost of enslavement, for a people and a culture, can be higher than the cost of war, even atomic war.*"²⁹ Of course, Aron did evoke what has come to be known as the holocaust, and his conclusions are the opposite of Sharp's. For Aron, war is the only way to effectively resist a regime such as Nazi Germany.

I can only deal briefly with Sharp's points, which call for a more thorough examination. But for several reasons I do not think that nonviolent non-cooperation by the Jews, or in their behalf, provides much evidence that nonviolent action can work on a large enough scale to be viewed as an answer to an opponent such as the Nazis. First, as I have earlier indicated, Denmark's tradition of humanism was of crucial importance in explaining the relatively small number of Jewish casualties in that country.

Second, I have doubts as to whether such methods as hiding, false identity, bureaucratic obstruction, and so on, can be viewed as very effective means of resistance in themselves. We can certainly praise the courage and ingenuity of those who employed these methods, often risking their lives to help others. However, if the military struggle had been lost, there is every

reason to believe that the Jews and others in hiding from the Nazis would eventually have been found and destroyed. Moreover, it is not clear to me that such methods are of much significance for assessing the relative merits of nonviolent and violent alternatives for resisting a ruthless opponent. They seem to be what any intelligent, courageous person would do in a desperate situation. In this respect there is a fundamental difference from, for example, Gandhi urging his followers to seek India's independence by nonviolent means rather than by armed uprising. In the India case there was a choice of nonviolent struggle, where violence might have been chosen. In nonviolent noncooperation to aid the Jews, there often was no feasible alternative. Or in some cases those who engaged in such noncooperation, in another role or at another time, also took part in military resistance to the Nazis.

A third reason is that Sharp's various accounts differ occasionally in details, but more importantly in emphases, from the accounts of leading scholars of the holocaust.³⁰ For example, whereas Sharp credits nonviolent non-cooperation with saving "over 80% of all Jews in France", Dawidowicz estimates the number of Jews who were deported, executed or who perished in internment camps in France at 90,000. Perhaps it is a case of the glass being half-full or half-empty, and to me it appears half-empty. When 90,000 persons undergo horrible sufferings and death (and I am sure Sharp sees it as being as great a tragedy as I do), it is not a strong argument for nonviolent struggle to observe that most of their associates were not killed. To be sure, it was very positive that noncooperation accomplished what it did. But we need to ask whether these results are likely to inspire people to adopt a nonviolent defence if they have a military option which appears to have a chance of success. The answer can hardly be affirmative.

In view of the important Sharp attaches to an incident in Berlin, I do not want to ignore it. He describes — based on an autobiography by Heinz Ullstein — the case of about six thousand non-Jewish wives who demonstrated for their arrested Jewish husbands at the gate of an improvised detention centre. According to Sharp,

the nearby Gestapo headquarters was "(s)pared by an incident which had no equal in the history of the Third Reich" and "finally released the prisoners." He quotes Ullstein as saying that "the public eye missed the flickering of a tiny torch which might have kindled the fire of general resistance to despotism."³¹

I will assume the accuracy of this account, which, as Sharp notes, has also been cited by Theodore Ebert, another exponent of nonviolent defence. The question is what conclusions we ought to draw from it. Sharp says that the "defiance not only took place, but was completely successful, even in 1943." In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* Sharp suggests that events such as this, and the stopping of the so-called euthanasia programme by public pressure, were "minor defeats" in the history of Nazism. But in his interview with me he said that "the 1943 demonstration got 1500 or 1600 Jewish men released — saved from the gas chambers — and that this certainly showed that although the Nazis were quite willing and capable of killing all these demonstrators, they were forced to back down against Jews, which represented a major political defeat because it meant neither Berlin nor Germany as a whole became Jew free." And in a video series on "Alternatives to Violence" made a few years ago, Sharp says of this demonstration that "except for the end of the war" it was "the most major defeat Hitler had ever suffered — and again without a stone, a gun, or a bomb."³²

The release of the Jewish husbands — and a similar incident in which Goebbels suspended the evacuation of a home for aged Jews following a demonstration — do illustrate that even a regime as brutal as Nazi Germany's was not indifferent to public opinion, at least in its own homeland. For Sharp, events such as this and the open defiance expressed in the East German Rising of 1953 show that "the case against the open operation of nonviolent action against totalitarian systems is not as firm and closed as many might believe."³³ Even in such systems there are sources of power other than the dictates of rulers and their capacity for violence, an important theme in Sharp's works. Yet as an example of successful nonviolent struggle, the Berlin incident seems to me of rather limited import.

The event must be seen in the context of the prevailing racial theory. Under the "Reich Law of Citizenship" Jews in the Greater Reich were second degree citizens. Supplementary decrees progressively removed restrictions on how Reich Jews could be treated, until the last, published on July 1, 1943, made the Jews outlaws, wholly at the mercy of the police. In practice, Jews were being sent to Buchenwald as early as 1938. But some Jews, notably those characterized as half-Jews and those in mixed marriages, managed to survive the war. Gerald Reitlinger attributes this basically to decisions by Hitler and other high Nazi leaders, and he describes the outcome thus:³⁴

In the end, the deportation of the Jews in mixed marriages was ordered, but only to Theresienstadt, and the movement did not begin till 1945. In the meantime the 'privileged Jews' of the Greater Reich had led the lives of hostages of the Gestapo.

We can respect the courage and determination of those who engaged in the demonstration which Ullstein and Sharp recount; for the demonstrators, for those released, and for their relatives, it was crucial. For some reason the event is absent from books on the holocaust that I have surveyed. In any case, the release of some 1500 when viewed against a backdrop of some 125,000 German Jews who perished seems a fairly minor event. When the Nazis seized power in 1933 there were about 500,000 Jews in Germany. When the war was over "the 28,000 Jews surviving in Germany and Austria were, for the most part, Jews only by National Socialist racial standards."³⁵

Conclusions and Implications

One of the difficulties of making solid estimates and reaching conclusions about the potential of nonviolent defence and nonviolent national liberation is the small number of precedents. In a list of twenty-four cases of non-violent action in *Social Power and Political Freedom*, Sharp includes about a dozen cases in which one nationality or country struggled against a dominant group or country for independence.³⁶ Among the dozen are the Danish, Norwegian, and Dutch resistance already discussed, the Indian independence movement, and the

Czechoslovakian attempt to improvise civilian struggle for purposes of national defence in response to the Soviet invasion of 1968-69.

Thomas Schelling has observed that whether civilian defence will work is based on the proposition "that a regime could actually be overthrown, or made to retire, or dissuaded from conquest in the first place, by the use of the prospect of nonviolent resistance." Otherwise, Schelling believes that "we are dealing not with 'defence' but with protest, with political action . . ."³⁷ Now Sharp has acknowledged that there "are as yet no cases in which prepared civilian defence has caused an invader to withdraw . . ."³⁸ He also notes that "no totalitarian system has been permanently overthrown by nonviolent struggle . . ."³⁹ Now if there has not been a clear historical victory against any invader, or if we take the ambiguous Indian case as the sole example, it makes it all the harder to argue convincingly that nonviolent struggle could repel or oust a very ruthless invader. Sharp suggests that the reason for there not being a single clear case is that "there has never yet been a case of prepared civilian defence being used as a country's official defence policy."⁴⁰ However, Schelling, who believes that nonviolent action can often be an effective bargaining technique as well as a path to decolonization, states that "if one is actually trying to make a tyrant retreat or withdraw, it is not clear that nonviolence by itself is up to the job, at least within the time span that the word 'defence' suggests."⁴¹ The case of the Nazi occupations supports Schelling's reservations about nonviolent defence being up to the job.

We cannot exclude the possibility that some, or even all, of the countries under Nazi Germany's occupation might have regained their independence over a period of decades or centuries through nonviolent methods. However, the notion of 'effective defence' implies that the defence will work, if not right away, at least within a matter of months or years. My conclusion is that although nonviolent resistance to Nazi occupation produced some limited achievements, notably in Denmark and Norway, and was important for national morale and identity in these countries and the Netherlands, there is little to indicate that these occupations

could have been ended by nonviolent means alone, or mainly by nonviolent means.

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Further, when we take into account all other instances of the use of nonviolent resistance to the Nazis in other European countries, as well as nonviolent noncooperation by, and in behalf of, the Jews, this conclusion remains unchanged. Thus the Aron-Walzer position that efficacious nonviolent defence depends on certain moral limits, including the rules of war, being respected by invaders, is on the whole supported by the case of Nazi Germany and the occupied countries.

Of course, Sharp and others can point out that in addition to nonviolent resistance not having the status of official defence policy, there was an initial period of military resistance by Norway and the Netherlands. Moreover, countries the size of Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands probably could not be expected by themselves to throw off an invader the size of Nazi Germany by any means whatever. Sharp has not stated that nonviolent action could have enabled its users to have defeated the Nazi regime or Nazi occupation. There is thus not a precise juxtaposition of opposing views between him and Walzer on this question. Yet while Walzer asserts that nonviolent defence is no defence at all against tyrants and conquerors ready to use torture and concentration camps, Sharp emphasizes what has been accomplished in struggles against Nazi and other dictatorships even in the absence of advanced preparation and training. The notion of advanced preparation and training thus comes to assume a very important role in the Sharp argument.

We cannot replay history to find out what would have happened had nonviolent resisters had greater knowledge and advanced preparations and training. We may ask how much difference it would make if defence measures were focused entirely on nonviolent action and noncooperation, and if the countries adopting these measures were of comparable size and

population as their invaders. I agree with Sharp that we ought to explore the potentialities in nonviolent resistance. But even with greater knowledge, preparations, and training on the part of nonviolent actionists, it is my estimation that the advantages of ruthless regimes generally are likely to prove decisive.

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There are many reasons for this view, but I will mention only two here. One is the frequent presence of severe cleavages along ethnic, class, and religious lines among the population of the occupied country, and the other is the crucial importance of who controls the government. In Eastern Europe in the 1930's and 40's cleavages, and related hostilities, were pronounced. Once the Nazis had control of governments across Europe, they were able to exploit and magnify such divisions and hostilities. They employed their control of government for the passage of anti-Jewish legislation and to incite the coarse and vulgar parts of the population to attack Jews and take their property. For example, in Belgium the Nazis exploited the demand of the Flemish-speaking Belgians for social, cultural, and economic equality with the French speaking half of the population. In April 1941 two synagogues in Antwerp were burned down by Flemish supporters of the Nazis before a large crowd of onlookers.⁴²

Another phenomenon which was partly a manifestation of divisions, as well as of the variegated types of individuals one finds in any country, was collaboration. Hastrup points out that there "were enough men in spite of all the bitterness and all the national solidarity, who were willing to run the errands of the Occupying Powers, for the sake of gain, of opportunism, ambition or political convictions. . . ." As he observes, in all the occupied countries the fear of newly formed ad hoc corps, which included fanatics and possibly criminal elements, "could only be compared with fear of the German SS Corps or the Gestapo. . . ."⁴³ In Norway when the War ended 46,000 were found guilty of

treason and collaboration.

Those who control governments are able to employ rewards and punishments, which the Nazis did skillfully. Like other dictatorships they took advantage of the strong human needs for economic security and physical safety. Those who went along could usually hope to keep their jobs. Opponents faced cruel punishment and death. To the unscrupulous they offered a chance for position, power, and confiscated wealth. Through such means tyrants and conquerors have generally been able to get the obedience they need.

At the beginning of this article I cited Sharp as saying that we do not have to choose between destructive war and passive submission to tyranny. That is, there is nonviolent struggle. Moreover, he has claimed that with "advance preparations and training based on major work on how to prevent and defeat future attempts at genocide, civilian-based defence might be capable of defeating even foreign invaders intent on genocide."⁴⁴

Clearly there have been cases, such as India's independence struggle, in which nonviolent action contributed to constructive change and was a better choice than violence. With our knowledge of the outcome of World War I, it appears that Germany, Austria, and Russia would certainly have been better off in 1914 had they ceased reliance on their armaments and turned to a policy of civilian-based defence, and it is also likely that the other participant countries in World War I would have fared better this way. Moreover, Sharp has made a plausible case that the American colonists had already largely won their independence from Britain in 1775, when both sides turned to violence.⁴⁵ In these cases the various opponent governments, although capable of brutalities, were not monstrous.

But when we consider the massacres by Japan of the Chinese before and during World War II, and by the West Pakistan military government of the Bengalis in 1971, as well as the near-genocide by the Khmer Rouge government on its own people, it does not seem that nonviolent resistance could have stopped these fanatics. As with the Nazi case, these massacres were finally stopped or checked only by the military power of another government, although the motivations of the inter-

vening governments were not always, or solely, humanitarian.

In Afghanistan today the Soviet government probably does not intend genocide, but has, in its determination to prevail, inflicted enormous casualties on the people there in what has been called "migratory genocide". If the *mujahideen* resistance fighters somehow had given up their notion of *jihad* and instead used nonviolent resistance and urged noncooperation with the Soviets, it is hard to imagine their having stalemated their opponent to the degree they have with military resistance. The Soviets would presumably have imprisoned and isolated nonviolent activists, and the unity and other factors needed among the rest of the population for even a good chance at effective resistance would probably have been lacking. Of course, violent resistance has here entailed enormous losses and suffering, a consideration which I believe ought to be weighed heavily when alternative policies are contemplated. If there is a hope in the situation, it is that the Soviet government will decide that a settlement and gradual withdrawal are more prudent than seeking complete domination.

The main implication of this study seems to me that there is more hope in striving to keep Nazi-like groups and individuals from seizing control of governments in the first place than in trying to remove them by nonviolent methods. Then the choice will not have to be between war and tyranny.

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