**WHAT REALLY IS NONVIOLENT, CIVILIAN-BASED NATIONAL DEFENSE?**

How do we define it and why does it work?

Nonviolent, national defense is: (1) total (2) collective (3) nonviolent resistance or noncooperation with the invading army, occupying force or oppressor. As Gene Sharp, the foremost authority in the field, points out, oppression can only exist with the Consent of the oppressed. Remove that consent and the oppressor is helpless.

What the oppressor or invading army relies upon is the fear of the citizens to provide the needed consent. While the resistance of one person can educate or inspire others, it really cannot be enough to disarm the opponent. That is why it has to be total and collective to be effective. Every citizen from all walks of life must come together and act in concert.

An interesting exercise is to envision an invading or oppressive army marching toward your community. What could you and the body of citizens do to defend yourselves, to render the occupying forces ineffective? First, you would need uninterrupted, reliable and secretive means of communication to organize efforts. In Iran, when the Shah was overthrown, audiocassettes were produced, widely distributed and elsewhere, clandestine radio stations were established. Think of other things you would need.

Next, What would the invader require? Directions, reliable street signs, fuel, food, water, etc.? What could you do to deny them to an invader? The Cases included with this Workbook will give you many ideas, some very unique and surprising.

Why does civilian-based national defense work? Ronald Sider and Richard Taylor in their book Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope attribute it to four things:

(1) The power of mass involvement.

In ordinary warfare, the actual fighting or resistance is done by a small percentage of the total population. The enemy can march in and take over a demoralized nation. In CBD, the enemy occupation is considered the beginning, not the end of the battle. The whole population resists young and old, men and Women, educated and uneducated.

(2) The power of resistance and non-cooperation.

An occupying army’s power is in the fear and obedience of the people because of the enemy’s Weapons. The people refuse to give in to that fear. Realizing that their consent is required in order for them to be ruled, they determine not to obey. They defy the enemy and dramatize public disapproval of the occupation.

(3) The power of nonviolence.

Not encountering threat or fear, the occupying soldiers are thrown morally off-balance. The soldiers will find their sense of justification for killing these people undermined. They will begin to doubt the propaganda about the conquered people and may even develop sympathy or respect for them.

(4) The power of good will.

In ordinary warfare, contempt and hatred of the enemy are the fuel that drives the machine. In the practice of CBD, resisters show concern for the enemy as persons: to speak to their antagonists, to forgive those who inflict evil upon them and. to heal their enemy’s wounds.

Is this all impractical, far-fetched? Few know that even the Pentagon has provided grant money to Gene Sharp to study ways our government might use these methods!

Do our present military policies provide real security? What is national security? Does it not include political, social, economic health? Do you really feel secure?

Everyone agrees that our country is experiencing serious economic problems. Unemployment, homelessness, poverty all have been growing. Communities are finding it harder and harder to fund such basic needs as good education and health care. It is said we do not have enough money for those things. Is there any logical source for such funding?

Our enemy the Soviet Union has disintegrated. Yet, relying solely on arms for national security, the military budget has remained essentially the same. To justify high arms spending we are told other enemies threaten: Iraq, Iran, China, North Korea, Cuba.

Are we really in danger? Or, somehow, are our hard earned military tax dollars being wasted? Could they safely be diverted to other needs? Is our military program really practical? Because military spending per dollar creates fewer jobs than most other spending, could we not create more rather than lose?

What are we advocating? Not having an army? All we are advocating, as does this entire course, is that we need to look at all alternatives. If we have all the facts, if we know all of the options, maybe we could find a better, more practical way of going.

This article was written by John Looney.