



The Future of Nonviolence: A Conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo

Gene Sharp

This interview took place in October 2011.

Ramin Jahanbegloo: The death of Gaddafi shows us that in the past ten years we have had four dictators which were demised. It's interesting that dictators do not take lessons from each other's defeats and failures. I think maybe that it's part of the nature of dictatorships to stay in power until the last minute they are ousted. What do you think about this psychology of dictatorships? I saw that dictatorship is one of the concepts that is brought up in your dictionary (Sharp, 2011).

Gene Sharp: Yes.

R: How do you explain this fact that they don't leave when they can. Will there come a time when political leaders, when dictators, seek guidance from the nonviolent experiences from the past and try to change their tactics?

G: I don't really know. Those are ideas about their psychology, and I am not really competent to evaluate that. I suppose that maybe when you have that much control and everyone gives you obeisance, you think that is supposed to be forever and of course it never is. Why do they do that? It's personal in terms of their own personal psychology. I don't know.

R: But in terms of mechanisms, as you say, it has actually to do with the fact that they are usually obeyed. So, as soon as they are confronted with civil disobedience, it doesn't change anything in their strategies.

G: That is probably true, I would guess. But I don't have any special insight.

R: Well, this factor of fear and fearlessness that is so important in civil resistance...

G: Yes.

R: We usually see either fear or fearlessness on the side of the population, on the side of the people who are fighting and struggling for nonviolent change. But rarely on the side of dictators. So, I think that the concept is mostly related to those that are struggling rather than those who are in power.

G: I don't know. Certainly fearlessness is required. Especially in extreme cases, you know. If you are going to be picketing the corner grocery store because of whatever, that doesn't require great fearlessness. However, if the person or group in charge has great desire and capacity for extremely brutal repression, then that does require a loss of fear. Otherwise the fear would require obedience to save your life. But it doesn't in all cases and all situations. I'm no good on this individual psychology. I've never studied that. I have noticed people do hang in there until the end, but they sometimes lose their lives, as some have done.

R: So, you would say that fearlessness is in nonviolent civil resistance mainly related to the strategies, the civil strategies?

G: I wouldn't call it a strategy. It's simply a requirement for effective participation.

- R: Participation: the more they participate the less they have fear?
- G: That is possible, but I don't know.
- R: You have written on the Syrian revolution. When you compare what is happening today in Syria with what is happening in Iran, you see that apparently people in Syria have ended their fears of dictatorship because they are fighting back. But I have the impression that when you talk with people in Iran there is still a fear to come onto the streets. How do you compare the two phenomena?
- G: I don't know either society well enough to know why that would be. It could just be that they are in different situations. And I really don't know traditions and detailed history of the nature of those societies. And the regimes are different, although both are brutal.
- R: But how do you evaluate the Syrian revolution?
- G: It's not finished yet, of course. It's been quite remarkable that they could persist with non-violent struggle all of these many months now and still not collapse. The movement has not collapsed and the struggle continues. That's really quite remarkable. And for the most part they have kept nonviolent discipline. And that is quite amazing to go for so long under those hostile conditions.
- R: How do you perceive the Green Movement in Iran?
- G: I don't know about it in depth well enough to evaluate it.
- R: Some Iranians doubt that nonviolent resistance is a viable strategy against a regime that does not hesitate to kill people. I suppose I'm asking you because they will ask me the question and I'm trying to get it from the mouth of the strategist.
- G: People are always very quick to say that nonviolent struggle is not viable anymore. Or even before it starts to ask "What's the limit?" "How far do we go?" This is because they still have that belief in the power of violence, without the evidence. They don't have evidence to conclude that if you use violence you are going to get quick victory. It's not there, the evidence isn't there. But people are quick to give up nonviolent action in many cases and it's amazing that they haven't given it up yet [in Syria]. But how quickly the regime disintegrates is related to, amongst other things, what strategies you've got, what timeline you have anticipated and how you do that. But I couldn't go into a detailed criticism or evaluation of their strategies or their attitudes because I don't know enough.
- R: One of the issues which is brought up in Iran is the idea of self-defense. What is the line between nonviolent resistance and self-defense?
- G: I've never focused on that, and I'm not sure why.
- R: Why?
- G: I'm not sure whether self-defense is an issue that is brought up to try to cut into the reliance on nonviolent struggle. It's not a new issue. In Burma, the ABSDF – All Burma Student Democratic Federation – also adopted, temporarily, nonviolent struggle, but violent defense for their leaders in that situation. And that was a group that really had strong reliance on violence and guerrilla warfare. I thought it was a way of not abandoning all that violence at once, that they wanted to keep some of it. Whether that's more of a psychological problem, it's certainly has strategic consequences.
- R: It could be a means to protect one's life or the lives of others without producing new murders.
- G: Yes, but... For your casualty rates, if you use violence, you are going to get a violent response. You are not becoming any safer because you are using violence. And if you look at the casualty rates for guerrilla warfare and casualty rates for major coups and nonviolent struggles, it appears that the casualty rates for people using nonviolent struggle are much less than if they resorted to violence. Violence gives a kind of OK for the opponents to be as brutal as they want to be. Although, they wouldn't say that, you know, but that's what they do.

So I think a fair evaluation of that issue requires an examination of casualty rates for the two techniques. It's a statistical question and I don't have those figures, but that's my impression.

R: That is very important. According to you, does nonviolent action make consensus easier?

G: Consensus of the general population? Yes, I think it definitely does.

R: Why?

G: I'm not sure. It's one of these cases where we need lots of basic research that we don't have, and to my knowledge it hasn't been done. It could be done. You could probably get casualty figures for different types of struggles and specific situations.

R: Is it because it makes alliance-building easier between resisters?

G: I'm not sure that would restrict the casualties...

R: Yes, but when people are using violent means against a dictator, they might use them against each other as well.

G: If people are in a violent struggle then, if they mutiny, in a violent struggle the standard response is execution. Instant execution as was used in Syria for example. So I think that could be pretty well established, but I haven't done that.

R: Let's take the Spanish Civil War, for example. You had the Republicans who were fighting against Franco and the Fascists. And at the same time the Communists were using violence against the anarchists.

G: That's quite possible. That follows the Russian pattern. In the early days of the Soviet Union, the anarchists were one of the main targets. Because the anarchists threatened the Bolsheviks' long-term control, that type of behavior develops and expands.

R: So one of the main issues when you're fighting against a dictatorship is not to create new dictators.

G: Yes, obviously.

R: What kind of strategies should nonviolent resisters use not to create new dictators?

G: You have to ... First of all you must prevent groups coming in to control the government whose very approach is control of the whole society, if this is part of their doctrine.

R: Is that all?

G: No, you have to have a plan. We have The Anti-Coup booklet that outlines how to prevent and how to defeat attempts at seizure of the State. And seizure of the State happens during those periods especially.

R: Is reconciliation also important?

G: It can be. And certainly what they've done in South Africa is quite amazing. I haven't studied it but I think it's naive to think that it is impossible. It may be hard to believe, but I think it can happen. I have not studied it.

R: So you put reconciliation as one of the main mechanisms in nonviolent struggle?

G: Not necessarily, no. The thing is to bring down the regime. That's crucial.

R: What is important is that with the demise of the dictatorships you have this period that it is not only about taking over new power, but rather the time to bring the population to a more pacific and peaceful reconstruction of the country.

G: That is desirable. That doesn't mean that if you don't have that you have achieved nothing. It's an achievement just to stop the brutalities and oust the leaders in control. And if you can do more than that fine, very good. And if you can't do more than that, but can do that much, it's worth it.

R: I saw that the word forgiveness is not in Sharp's Dictionary.

G: That's probably true. That would come in under the types of principled nonviolence... those individuals' beliefs that would be connected to a religious belief in loving your neighbor, for example.

- R: But forgiveness is not always religious. It could also be non religious, couldn't it?
- G: Well ... I might also call those things religious, but they don't have to have a creedal basis.
- R: Forgiveness might also be like reconciliation: one of the main mechanisms to invite the population not to take part in violence after the demise of dictatorships.
- G: You could say that, if that's your belief. But that wouldn't be a requirement for everybody. There are things that would ideally happen, those kinds of things that should go on but are not prerequisites.
- R: How about punishment? Is that a prerequisite?
- G: Not necessarily. You take someone's power away from them, that's a punishment on its own.
- R: I also saw that the word revenge is not in your dictionary.
- G: No.
- R: Revenge is not part of nonviolent struggle?
- G: No, not necessarily. In fact revenge often takes violent forms and pushes towards ...
- R: ... murder and crime?
- G: Yes, violent activity.
- R: And how do you distinguish between nonviolent revolution and nonviolent resistance? Is there a difference between the two?
- G: Yes, there is a definition for nonviolent revolution and there is a definition for nonviolent resistance. Nonviolent revolution is a whole almost ideological approach, the way it is developed in various parts of the world and has certain kinds of thinking. It aims toward a goal of social change in a major way using nonviolent means. Often it means to diffuse power and empower the population that has been repressed. Nonviolent resistance is a type of behavior that uses nonviolent action and nonviolent struggle. It is more descriptive of what people are doing than what they are trying to accomplish.
- R: So you might have a nonviolent resistance without changing many things in a society?
- G: You might use it to maintain the society as it has been and against possible changes.
- R: This is not what Gandhi said, actually. He claimed that even if you get engaged in nonviolence you need structural changes in the mentality.
- G: Again, that is not a description. That is his own view.
- R: So you stick to a very analytic approach to nonviolence and you just put aside all principle, moral and religious questions?
- G: Yes, but I list all of those elements. I describe them, based on earlier studies.
- R: Yes, of course.
- G: Yet, it's neither doctrinal nor ideological. You can use nonviolent struggle and not believe in or practice nonviolence as an ethic or a moral principle. And you can do things nonviolently which you might regard as unethical.
- R: Such as...?
- G: There is one example from Ireland. The people in that village tried to force the Protestants to send their children to Catholic schools by nonviolent means. Or they might ...
- R: ... as a form of coercion?
- G: Yes. But coercion is not necessarily immoral.
- R: This is why we talk about nonviolent coercion. In fact, you can coerce people nonviolently to do something. As you can do with regimes also.
- G: Yes.
- R: So do we need to distinguish between nonviolent coercion and nonviolent struggle? Are they not the same thing?
- G: No. Struggle is something that is ongoing: it is a process. Nonviolent coercion is a result of an action that has been taken.

- R: If you say that struggle is an ongoing process, it means that we need motives for this struggle. People need motives to come back to fight and to struggle. What are these motives? I am very interested to know it. Do they also change?
- G: I think they could be quite diverse. I never focused on that. I have never done a paper on motives. But they can be quite egoistic. They can be quite selfish. They can aim to improve their own status in society. They can try to block reconciliation.
- R: Do these motives change across cultures?
- G: Sure. They might also vary within the same culture, among different parts of the population, over different time periods, or in response to different kinds of opponents and issues at stake.
- R: Do we always need to link nonviolent struggle to a culture of democracy?
- G: No. That's nonsense. You can also get that kind of struggle going on in extremely authoritarian societies, in extremely repressive societies. One already finds discussion about a "culture of peace." I have never been comfortable with that discussion. Some of the people advocating that are really wonderful people. But I have never been comfortable with that. It's sort of like: we'd like the ideal society, Nirvana ... They sometimes use the term "nonviolent society," with varying meanings. Usually it means something that's very decentralized, but then it really means believing in a nonviolent ethic, and people behave accordingly, so supposedly that is a nonviolent society. That's probably not the way most people would define it, though.
- R: But could we talk about a nonviolent society? Does it make sense?
- G: Yes, sure we can talk about it.
- R: Does it make sense – a society that is totally nonviolent?
- G: That is different. That's not just talking about it. That becomes a belief in it. Then it becomes something that probably could not exist.
- R: So what do you mean by nonviolent society?
- G: I'm not sure if I have a definition in there (Sharp, 2011).
- R: You actually do not have it.
- G: You checked it out?
- R: I did. I read practically everything you wrote. I am asking these questions because they are often asked of me, as a nonviolent activist. What do you mean by a nonviolent society? Can a society be nonviolent? The first argument – a very Hobbesian argument – is that people can never be nonviolent because they are greedy. They have this idea of self-interest ... and so it doesn't make sense that we can have a thing such as a nonviolent society. I think that people like Gandhi, who called himself a practical idealist, talk about it as a process, as a work in progress. Gandhi doesn't say that we have attained it, hence my question: what comes to mind when we say "nonviolent society"? Does it mean anything?
- G: It's a certain way of looking at the world. It's not a phrase that I use normally. But it's a good goal, to work in that direction.
- R: There are two major aspects of nonviolent struggle. People usually give importance to the first part, which is to get rid of dictatorship and dictators. But the other part is what Gandhi called the constructive program. You have to go and construct a new society. That's an even more difficult task ... take Libya today, after the death of Gaddafi. People have gotten rid of the dictator: now it is time to rebuild the country, but they have to rebuild it in a democratic way, to avoid repeating dictatorship. You may need other forms of strategies to that effect.
- G: That's true.
- R: Does this second aspect interest you in your work or do you only focus on the first aspect?
- G: In an article on the constructive program that's in the Gandhi book (Sharp, 1979), I recognize that it is very important in Gandhi's thinking. That's one possible model for building a

more just and desirable society, yet it's probably not the only model. But I haven't set up a model that I would think is wonderful. I'm just not capable of doing that. I say, building a new society is very good and here's where Gandhi thought about that, but there may be other approaches. Go ahead and do something, just move in that direction. Don't just think about it, or talk about it. But what can you do? And that can be quite important if it is something wise. If you do something stupid it is harmful for your objective. Then it won't make things too much better.

R: Do you think that in nonviolent struggle different nations can take models from each other?

G: Maybe.

R: Could they copy each other?

G: Yes, but you have to wonder "does that work in our society?" It might be something that, for some special reason, is not applicable. You have to consider whether this is something we can do. Or is this something that we have to build from our own traditions and our own history? Maybe, something that has been pushed to the side can be resurrected.

R: Does a society come to your mind which has adopted the model from another society for its nonviolent struggle?

G: I do not think I would put it that strongly. It is certain that limited things have spread, like labor strikes. People have learned from other societies how they do that and the uses of that. But it's not a model for a whole society. It is a very particular type of action. Maybe a major section of the society could use it. And they could even imitate something else. They could see what strike is, you can learn how to do it and what happens ... you can examine its uses. And you might have labor strikes only for economic and working conditions. In some other place, they use labor strike for political change, including suffrage. Or you can use it for any socialist theory and change the ownership of the means of production.

R: Martin Luther King always affirmed that his method of nonviolent action was somehow copied from Gandhi's model ... partly.

G: Probably that's accurate. I am not sure what he would exactly have copied.

R: Well, noncooperation – and possibly civil disobedience.

G: Yes, but those aren't uniquely Gandhian, they are much more universal than that.

R: He was inspired by Gandhi. Though he is also certainly inspired by the American tradition of nonviolence or civil disobedience. Apparently he borrowed some of the strategies used by Gandhi in his struggle against British colonialism, and followed them.

G: But they are not uniquely Indian or Gandhian. So where you get that idea isn't clear to me. I haven't focused on what exactly King got from Gandhi. He said he was inspired by Gandhi but ...

R: So what we can conclude, generally, from reading your work, is that in nonviolent struggle the action itself and the experience that a population is having – a political experience, a social experience – is more important than the inspirations.

G: Yes, absolutely. No doubt.

R: ... because they learn from their own failures or from their own successes.

G: That is quite explicit in Poland. Poles went back and studied why the Poles were doing this and that and everything else. They concluded that they needed to do something differently than what they did in 1971, for example.

R: When you go back to your 60-year of experience in life with nonviolent struggle, which experience, which country that you visited and which struggle influenced or interested you the most? Was it in Eastern Europe, in Africa, in Asia, or in America?

G: I never thought about that. I just like to learn from any place I could learn. I never thought, "Well, this is uniquely Norwegian" or "This is uniquely Indian."

- R: For you, there is a general lesson from all of them.
- G: Yes, quite so.
- R: Are there any events or any nonviolent movements that you missed and you wanted to participate in ...?
- G: Participate in ...?
- R: ... or to witness more closely?
- G: Well, there were lots of nonviolent movements happening around the world that I haven't learned from.
- R: Any particular experience that interested you most, which you think it would have been great to have been there but you didn't participate closely or you haven't studied too closely?
- G: The Hungarian Revolution, in 1956–57: a powerful nonviolent struggle that turned into military conflict which was predictably defeated, before turning back to nonviolent struggle again. And that was combined with the restructuring of the society and restructuring of the government; a major way at least was attempted.
- R: So that is possible too. Are we having there an example of a violent and nonviolent struggle at the same time and during the same event?
- G: In time, they weren't simultaneous, except for certain limited periods, I think. But there is a sequence of nonviolent struggle, then the Hungarian army goes over to fight. It gets crushed, and then the population goes back to nonviolent struggle again. So it can happen – it did happen.
- R: But did it not happen in Czechoslovakia in 1968 ...?
- G: No, they maintained nonviolent means, but then they partially capitulated and gave the Russians some of the control they wanted.
- R: What exactly is the role that transnational networks in a nonviolent struggle can play?
- G: I don't know, but I am very skeptical about that. I haven't focused on that issue at all. I think outsiders, including transnational players, can mess things up.
- R: They usually do ...
- G: I don't have concrete evidence, but when I was asked – maybe it was in an interview about Egypt – “What should the United States do?” my response was: “Stay the hell out.” Because the US government doesn't understand nonviolent struggle and they are likely to mess it up, so stay out. That would be the biggest help. Let the Egyptians handle it.
- R: You asked the Americans to stay out?
- G: I said they should stay out. The US government wasn't paying any attention to me.
- R: But the idea of solidarity is important.
- G: It is. You can do certain limited things, from another country or from other parts of the world, but not in terms of the actual struggle itself. You could spread the word of what's happening, spread the news. You can practice moral condemnation, but not try to affect the action. That's a very different matter.
- R: Did you go to Ukraine?
- G: No.
- R: You just witnessed it from afar.
- G: Very little. I'd see something in the newspapers or on television, but that's not really understanding it.
- R: So your main focus was on your work and the places you visited, which was mainly in East Asia – China, Burma, India.
- G: I hadn't thought about that at all. We were in China for a very few days. I was in Burma a few times, and in Thailand.
- R: Have you been to Eastern Europe?

- G: I was in Moscow, Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.
- R: Is that after the fall of Communism?
- G: No, I was in the Baltic struggle to get the Soviets out. We consulted with the governments, the independence-minded governments. They followed my book, *Civilian-Based Defense*. It was being translated. It was a rough translation. It was used by the governments of those societies.
- R: So you functioned as a consultant?
- G: Yes.
- R: And what was your experience of those countries?
- G: Quite good. They should get strong credit for what they accomplished, because they did that themselves. That is quite amazing because they were actually part of the Soviet Union. And to get out of the Soviet Union is different than getting an army out. It's tougher.
- R: Have you been to Russia?
- G: Yes, to Moscow. Only once, I think.
- R: Did you have difficulties with the Russian government? The secret police?
- G: No. But I don't know what they were doing. They may have been watching me, I don't know. We actually gave a testimony to a committee on the Russian Parliament about coups d'état. And I don't know what they ever did with it.
- R: Was it in 1991?
- G: I don't remember the year. But it might have been.
- R: I think that you said in an interview with Amitabh Pal, in *The Progressive*, that you had some difficulties with the FSP (Foreign and Security Policy)?
- G: They didn't want me in Moscow.
- R: So that is the reason.
- G: They didn't want my *From Dictatorship to Democracy* to be translated and published in Russia. They raided the print shop while it was being printed. They instructed the presses to stop and they looked at what the document was. They said, "This book is a bomb." The people who brought the manuscript to be printed then took the manuscript quickly. They got it printed outside of Moscow and spread it again. That was the fourth or fifth Russian translation that had been prepared independently. Then we tried to pick the best one and use that as the standard translation to maintain some editorial control over it. Mostly we didn't have much control over it.
- R: So your manuscript *From Dictatorship to Democracy* is banned in many countries actually?
- G: I don't know how many. But certainly some countries' governments, like Burma, sent people to prison for having a copy. It's not really welcomed.
- R: But you have many translations on the internet. And it's not a book that you can buy in a bookshop – it's mainly on the internet.
- G: That's probably accurate. We often don't know. We are often not told what happens.
- R: Has it been published in English as a book or is it also on the net?
- G: We published it as a pamphlet. Do you not have a copy?
- R: No.
- G: I'll get you one. We have that and several other publications. Some commercial publishers have now issued it. I don't know how many printings there have been since we started printing it. You know, we didn't print it at all, except for the Bangkok edition – for five years, I think: I don't remember exactly.
- R: I was reading this book by Ackerman and Kruegler and in the acknowledgement section of the book, they say that anyone undertaking to write about nonviolent action necessarily stands on the shoulders of Gene Sharp. I think that after, I would say 60 years of nonviolent

struggle and thinking about nonviolent struggle, your shoulders should be really tired because many people are standing on them.

G: (Laughs)

R: When you look back at 60 years of your struggles and thinking, what's the outcome of these 60 years?

G: I don't go back and think that way. Quite early, in 1949, maybe ... I was really intrigued by this type of action. And since then I have been learning more about it. And every time I learn about it there is always much more to learn. It is much more important than I thought it was. And also what has occurred: what's the use of that? What's its potential? What would be the long-term consequences of adopting this in this type of conflict or that type of conflict, realizing that it can have major consequences? The kind of sanctions, the kind of punishments, that society relies on to further its purposes, because it needs a means of action, a means of struggle, has consequences. There are some major consequences on shaping that society, in terms of central controls or popular controls and democratic controls. It is a much more important topic than I had originally anticipated. And therefore, we have to learn more and more about it.

R: So are there any aspects that you think that you left out that you would like to cover?

G: Oh, I'm sure there are. I haven't focused on trying to figure out what I messed up or ignored. I tried to pull together as much as I could at the time. People are always eager to tell me to do something else, tell me what needs to be done, "Why don't you do this?" Well, why don't you do that? You don't have to put it on me.

R: If you had to live a second life, would you repeat exactly what you did?

G: Everything being as it was, I think I did pretty well. I could not have planned to live my professional life this way. I had opportunities opened up for me, invitations came. I didn't plan to go and work in London for a peace newspaper. I didn't plan I should be invited to Norway. I didn't plan in advance to go to Oxford. And every one of those and other major changes turned out to be really important. I had to learn so much more.

R: Are there any individuals today who could follow your line of thought and your research?

G: Perhaps so, I don't know. I don't pick someone.

R: But do you have students?

G: Students from many years ago.

R: And collaborators who continue your work?

G: Well, I hope this work continues, but it's not just my line of work ... But I couldn't control that, so I don't try.

R: Sure. Are you optimistic about the future of nonviolent action in the world?

G: Oh, without question. Just look at the last 30 to 40 years. I'm not sure whether we used to think heavily, "Oh Gandhi, it would take a Gandhi." I never said that, because there has been so much else that has happened – other people in other countries, other cultures, other political systems. All of Eastern Europe, or even the Soviet Union, it's gone. Not because of any war, but from the inside. That's totally compatible with this work. It relates to Karl Deutsch's work: he was both German and American.

R: Karl Deutsch?

G: The political scientist. He had a chapter on the "cracks in the monolith," about the weaknesses of totalitarian systems (Deutsch, 1963: 497–508). I never anticipated the so-called Arab Spring. It has been spreading, this type of struggle. I think this kind of thing spreads; they can happen. What was written for the Burmese is now in all these languages and more coming – three different languages in Spain alone.

R: Your book *From Dictatorship to Democracy*?

- G: Yes. It is in Castilian, Catalan and Galician. This is one example. And who would have ever tried to get it into two or three languages in Spain? I had never thought of it. There are so many of these so-called suppressed nationalities that seem to grab hold of this. Now what will be the logical consequences? You won't have that "need" for guerrilla struggles, or terrorism, or assassinations. The people could use this instead.
- R: That's exactly my question. For a long period of time, most attention that was given to your work was in dictatorships. I wonder if in the next 20 years we will have more attention coming from democratic societies on your work?
- G: I wouldn't be surprised. I get questions like that. We get a lot of questions.
- R: How do you answer to these questions?
- G: I say "It could be."
- R: Because there is a necessity even in democracies ...
- G: Yes, because people often feel powerless and helpless. There is a need to see how this can be applied ... constructively in the countries that have just ousted an authoritarian ruler, like Egypt. Certainly, the Egyptian military is not being very nice in some ways. And that takes me back, partly, to the fact that the opposition agreed to let ex-president Mubarak dictate who was to be in charge after he resigned. That was preventable, if they had enough solidarity and determination and perceptiveness to see the dangers of letting Mubarak do that.
- R: Most of the time, are you contacted by the newly democratic governments, the newly built democratic governments, or are you mostly contacted by the civil rights activists and non-violent activists?
- G: Usually not by governments.
- R: Never governments?
- G: I didn't say never.
- R: Are they not interested?
- G: You should ask Jamila this. She has a better memory for who's in contact with us. She sees all of that.
- R: I'm talking about the past 30 years, 40 years.
- G: There were the Baltic countries.
- R: Do you collaborate with different nonviolent groups in Canada or the US?
- G: Some of them invite me to speak. There is the University of Waterloo. I was there many years ago, but they are now planning a very big conference on Gandhi. The so-called pacifist organizations, like the War Resisters League, the Fellowship of Reconciliation ... they mostly ignore me. I get word from time to time that people in there are studying this, or using it ... they don't have to get permission or do anything special to use my writings. But my approach is different from their basic messages. They continue to resist and they are witnessing by personal disobedience and things like that.
- R: So you see your legacy mainly outside America, rather than inside?
- G: I never think about that.
- R: You are not interested to think about what comes after, who will continue ...
- G: It is hard to predict. You never know. I can't be bothered by that. I do what I can. That's all I could do anyhow.
- R: Do you still feel that you have energy to continue for another 10 years?
- G: I'm trying.
- R: That is wonderful. Is there a book you want to write?
- G: There are several. I want to bring out a new edition of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.
- R: Do you want to add to it?
- G: Yes. I also have another manuscript, *On Power*, that I hope to bring out.

- R: *The Politics* is a huge volume already.
- G: Well, that was published in 1973.
- R: Are you planning to revise it?
- G: Yes. Much of it can remain fundamentally as it is. There is a second *Power* chapter that was written with the first part and that I did not include in the volume. It was about institutions and civil society. That needs to be put in there. The second chapter in *Politics* – it is a basic survey of nonviolent struggle – is grossly out of date. It will take a major work to revise that, but it is necessary. Otherwise I will have to leave it out: it is so badly out of date. I had described the three mechanisms – conversion, accommodation, coercion. And later on, I added a fourth – disintegration. That can be so fundamental, so basic. If the regime were to fall apart, nobody would be even able to resign. That's very important, and there would be other things.
- R: What else?
- G: I have something very small, a manuscript about Einstein's thinking. And I have a basic manuscript documenting the changes in his thinking, and why. I want to make my own comments on his thinking and bring that out as a single, small booklet.
- R: His thinking on peace and nonviolence?
- G: It is from his thinking on peace and war. Basically, it is done, except for my own concerns.
- R: So you do think that Einstein is still a very relevant thinker?
- G: Yes, because he faced all these terrible issues, including the Nazi system and nuclear weapons, and ended up focusing on Gandhi. But there are other things, new things to be writing about.
- R: What will the Einstein Institution become after you?
- G: That remains to be seen. It could continue disseminating this kind of information because it's one place people contact and go to our website. Maybe that will all change and be different. Hopefully, it will be better.
- R: Would you like to write your autobiography?
- G: No. I don't think it's important.
- R: Your life is not important?
- G: Not really.
- R: You did what you had to do.
- G: Yes.

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