

vealed; and it is necessary to know the enemy. But it is necessary, too, to know that one has a certain power to affect those who stand against us. It would be easy enough to know the worst about them—by acting in a way that allowed them to behave toward us in the worst way that they could. It is more practical, even if it is more difficult, to act in a way that prevents this. If it is important not to be naive about their capacity for doing us harm, it is just as important not to be blind to our own capacity for moderating their action. In histories of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, there are many accounts of generosity shown by the rebels toward enemy troops—resulting in widespread recruitment from among those troops. It proved very practical to act on the assumption that not all among them need be labeled permanently “enemy.” Those engaged in nonviolent battle simply act on this assumption in the boldest degree. They declare, in the words of the Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh—words that are startling and sound at first naive: “No men are our enemies.” By this we do not mean that we think no men will try to destroy us; or that we overlook the fact that men from certain sections of the society are above all likely to try it. We mean, first, of course, that we are committed to try not to destroy them; but we mean furthermore that there is a working chance—if we do refuse to threaten them personally as we struggle with them—that in certain instances at least some of them may be willing to accommodate themselves to the pressure we put on them to change, and so both they and we may be liberated from the state of enmity. We mean that we refuse to cut ourselves off from them in any ultimate human sense—counting it as both decent and practical to do so.

Kindness and Revolution

I have been reading William Hinton's *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, and I have been struck by how many times in the course of his story he reports a

decision taken by the revolutionary leaders that greater humanity shown this group or that group will advance the revolution. There is, for example, a decision at one point to be more lenient toward counterrevolutionary suspects among Catholic peasants. “They could never be won if they were isolated and discriminated against. They had to be drawn into full participation.” In one dramatic instance it is decided that the attack on middle peasants has been overdone—that the land of many of these families has been wrongly expropriated, and that they must be reclassified as friends rather than enemies of the revolution. “We must make clear to them that they have their . . . rights.” Because of this decision, too, things improved, the revolution gained momentum. The decisions which he reports are for the most part taken “to enlarge the united front of the people and to isolate as popular enemies only those diehard elements who could not possibly be mobilized to support a ‘land-to-the-tiller’ policy.” One of the leaders explains, “In proposing any basic social change . . . revolutionaries had to decide who should be brought together and who isolated, who should be called a friend and who an enemy.” Experience seemed always to be showing that the more people who were called friend, the better things went. I noted that as time went on leniency began to be advised even toward the gentry and the landlords; it was decided that here, too, the attacks had been at first overdone. “Families cannot be driven from house and home forever.” As one leader put it: “We have to show everyone a way out.”

This is of course just what nonviolence teaches—not to be naive about the fact that some men more than others will see it as in their interest to try to destroy us, and will often persist and persist in trying to; but to recognize that they never can see it in their interest finally to accommodate themselves to the changes we are forcing unless we give them the liberty to do so. And they will only believe that we offer this liberty, only be