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**International Accompaniment
for the Protection of Human Rights:
Scenarios, Objectives, and Strategies**

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Foreword

The processes of nonviolent conflict management, resolution, and transformation work best where state systems are democratic and/or have high levels of political, economic, and social legitimacy. Where regimes are controlled by military and paramilitary groups, they tend to believe that it is more efficient to rule by terror rather than persuasion. In these circumstances the opportunities for “normal” adversarial politics, played according to widely accepted rules of the game, are minimal. State-sponsored terror and political repression force individuals, interest groups, and political parties to either withdraw from the political system or to engage in violent or nonviolent resistance. As General Iberico Saint-Jean stated during the first Argentinean military junta:

First we will kill all the subversives, then we will kill their collaborators, then...their sympathizers, then...those who remain indifferent, and finally we will kill the timid.

In fact, the politics of terror works normally not by mass killing (although it has a sobering effect on political expression!) but through a process of killing and torturing a few, raising the political stakes to unacceptably high levels and thereby intimidating the majority. The problem facing those seeking alternatives to the politics of terror is how to generate safe political action spaces while minimizing the risk of arbitrary arrest, torture, disappearance, or death. The construction of such action spaces is a prerequisite to nonviolent problem solving. A number of problems are associated with generating creative resistance to terror:

- How to turn victims into protagonists
- How to overcome individual and collective fear
- How to develop deterrents to political and military threats
- How to promote a political system that enhances the positive consequences of political activity while minimizing the negative

This working paper is a careful empirical and theoretical explanation of nonviolent “protective accompaniment” as a technique for generating safe political action spaces under tyrannical and arbitrary rule. The authors bring considerable theoretical and practical knowledge of the power of nonviolence to their analysis. The result is an important account of how protective accompaniment expands the border of acceptable and lower risk political action and reduces the potential for implementing unacceptable, high-risk, and life-threatening politics.

Although this kind of concern has not figured prominently within the conflict resolution community as a whole (and describes theoretical and practical work of a sort that has *not* been done at ICAR), we think it is of sufficient importance to warrant publication. The

techniques employed by the groups practicing protective accompaniment are very consistent with a problem-solving orientation to politics. Some methods, touted as creating preconditions for conflict resolution – for example, “bombing to the table” – may actually make problem solving more difficult, so the profession has a particular interest in methods that are consistent with more nonviolent problem-solving and reconciliation efforts.

The conclusions of this study, therefore, demonstrate how groups of people acting together can nonviolently resist violence. In addition, the study demonstrates clearly what personal and structural conditions are likely to facilitate “constructive confrontation” and transformation of the political system, and what conditions will result in a perpetuation of an unjust and repressive status quo. All these processes are aimed at developing opportunities for all parts of the political spectrum to articulate their differences and commonalities, a process critical to the evolution of shared decision making and collaborative problem solving, and the promotion of human rights.

The international human rights community (both nongovernmental and intergovernmental) has rapidly embraced variants of protective accompaniment in the 1990s as a major tactic in generating more responsive and participatory polities. The United Nations has begun to include protective accompaniment in some of the work of its human rights missions.

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness and impact of protective accompaniment. It also raises extremely interesting questions about the encouragement and protection required to ensure that the fearful confront and overcome their fear, the powerless assert their individual and collective will, and all political actors work to enlarge the sphere of the politically possible. It is an important contribution to the debate about some of the ways in which citizens can begin to protect themselves against arbitrary and oppressive state rule.

Only after these safe action spaces have been created can intractable conflicts be made more tractable and civil politics be secured. The arguments in this paper will be of interest to all theorists and practitioners interested in the protection of civil rights, democratization, and conflict resolution.

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Introduction

Breaking New Ground

When the Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared sprang from the ashes of genocidal violence in Guatemala in 1984 and demanded respect for human rights, observers first called them “suicidal.” But they *did* survive, with Peace Brigades International (PBI) observers constantly at their side. When acclaimed Sri Lankan journalist Richard De Zoysa was kidnapped and killed by police, his mother took the unprecedented risk of prosecuting the police, asking for Peace Brigades’ accompaniment for both herself and her lawyer. Before winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchú risked returning to Guatemala from exile in 1988, protected by unarmed international volunteers. Amilcar Mendez, 1990 winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation Human Rights Award, states simply, “Without accompaniment I would not be alive today.”

Building on these experiences, 40,000 Guatemalan refugees negotiated their return home to jungles controlled by the same army that had massacred their families and burned their villages. Before crossing the border in 1993, they insisted that the Guatemalan government formally recognize their right to the protection of international nongovernmental volunteers. Within a year the army was witnessing dozens, sometimes hundreds, of foreign volunteers living and traveling in the jungle that had previously been its private war zone.

Accompaniment volunteers act essentially as unarmed bodyguards, spending 24 hours a day with human rights workers, union leaders, peasant groups, and other popular organizations that have received death threats for their attempts at nonviolent democratic organizing. Always ready with a camera, the accompaniment volunteer is literally the embodiment of international human rights concern, a constant reminder to those who choose to use violence that it will not go unnoticed. There will be an international response to whatever the volunteer witnesses. By simply being there, the volunteer is simultaneously encouraging these activists to continue their work, and protecting them from violent attack.

They might be compared with the United Nations’ peacekeeping forces, only without the United Nations and without the guns. They are applying Amnesty International’s concept that human rights are the responsibility of all citizens directly to situations in the field, right where the abuses are occurring. The early successes of accompaniment have led to myriad requests from threatened activists around the world and to the creation of dozens of organizations dedicated to meeting their need. In international forums, citizen accompaniment is being considered seriously for large-scale implementation by intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations or the European Community.

The victims of human rights abuse are frequently those who attempt to organize social change movements that threaten or question the powerful elites of their society. The presence of international volunteers provides active encouragement to those threatened

activists and helps them carry on those organizing activities. These volunteers are a source of hope to the activists. International presence assures them they are not alone, that their work is important, and that their suffering will not go unnoticed by the outside world.

Yet, we must ask, what real protection do these unarmed volunteers offer? Each volunteer represents a compellingly visible potential of a rapid response from the international community to anything he or she witnesses. Behind every action of organized human rights groups lies the threat of diplomatic and economic pressure. But is this threat sufficient to stay a trigger-finger? Gambling on the chance that it is, international volunteers are accompanying daily activists who have been targeted by death squads.

There is no guarantee that being a foreigner is safe. The Sri Lankan army deliberately attacked an ambulance of the Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), and the Salvadoran government carried out a campaign of harassment against foreigners. Peace Brigades' volunteers in Guatemala suffered expulsions, knifings, and bombings. Do such incidents question the concept of protective accompaniment, or are they merely exceptions?

Does international accompaniment actually deter violence? Does it really encourage civilian activists to organize and take risks they might not otherwise have taken? If so, to what extent has international accompaniment contributed to the protection and growth of non-violent social movements? When does it succeed or fail? The politics of accompaniment are complex and vary from region to region and conflict to conflict. Sufficient and trustworthy information is difficult to obtain, because of the politically delicate nature of the situations. Our research has attempted to overcome these difficulties and answer some of these questions, examining in detail the work of PBI, an organization that pioneered the practice of international accompaniment in the mid-1980s. This working paper aims to distill some of our findings and clarify the key questions and issues that have arisen during 10 years of accompaniment experience.

Our field research has examined a variety of conflicts. Guatemala, for instance, was a notorious military dictatorship in 1983 when PBI first arrived. The country had lived through the most violent five years in modern Latin American history. Repression continued at high levels during the subsequent decade of "democratization." Nevertheless, a strong nonviolent popular movement developed, accompanied by international volunteers each step of the way. El Salvador during this same period was in the throes of a civil war. With rebel military strength approaching that of the government's army, a stalemate developed and a great deal of international and domestic pressure called for negotiations.

The Sri Lankan government faced two simultaneous armed rebellions in the late 1980s: the Tamil Tigers in the North and East, fighting for an independent Tamil homeland, and the guerrilla rebellion of the Sinhalese JVP (People's Revolutionary Front) in the South. All three armies attacked civilians and political activists, closing the space for legitimate dissent from both Tamil and Sinhalese.

We also have examined to a lesser extent accompaniment experiences in three other distinct conflicts. The ostensibly democratic Colombian government faces strong criticism for the human rights abuses and disappearances orchestrated by its armed forces, in the mid-

of a complex regionalized war with several different armed groups. The “Cry for Justice” and Christian Peacemaker Teams provided unarmed accompaniment in Haiti even while military putsch leaders were withstanding intense, and nearly unanimous, pressure from the international community to step down. In a situation of multinational and multiethnic war and discrimination, the Balkans Peace Teams provided nonpartisan accompaniment in various regions for Croats, Muslims, and Serbs.

International presence as protection is not a new concept. In early colonial history, one can find stories of European Catholic missionaries standing up against conquistadors for the rights and lives of indigenous communities. Gandhi made sure to have foreign journalists in the right places at the right times, to dramatize the reality of the British occupation to the outside world. The “Freedom Riders” of the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s were a clear example of direct nonviolent accompaniment, bringing clean-cut young white people to the South to offer protective accompaniment to southern black integrationists and take part in their initiatives.

The modern notion of a nongovernmental, international presence can be traced at least back to 1863 to the formation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which posited that an international civilian organization could wield enough moral and diplomatic power to protect civilians and noncombatants from the excesses of war. The bulk of international human rights and humanitarian law developed in this century rests squarely on the presumption of a deterrent effect of international “moral pressure.”

The formation and growth of Amnesty International in the 1960s and 1970s took this concept a giant step forward by involving everyday citizens in direct pressure campaigns. By building a vast, worldwide network of letter writers, Amnesty proved to the world that even the unknown prisoners in unheard-of parts of the world could be protected by international opinion. Accompaniment is a more drastic step. Where Amnesty uses the symbolic power of a thousand letters to protect a political prisoner, accompaniment uses the symbolic power of live volunteers risking their lives to protect nonviolent human rights activists — *before* they’re arrested, imprisoned, or attacked.

Accompaniment and Sovereignty

Human rights law and humanitarian law are today widely accepted among the world’s nations. A state that does not protect the rights of its citizens is violating international law.¹ If a state rejects openly this wide consensus, it will have to pay some political costs for it. And, in this context, the respect and protection of a citizen’s human rights is not only the responsibility of the state, but also the responsibility of other states and, therefore, of other citizens.

Most experts tend toward the conclusion that sovereignty has gradually become a less acceptable justification for resisting international pressure on human rights issues. This is especially so when the international pressure is exerted by nonstate actors. Kathryn Sikkink argues that transnational, nonstate, human rights actors have contributed fundamentally to an irreversible transformation of the concept of sovereignty in the modern world. Human

rights policies are moving us toward “a future model in which understandings of sovereignty are modified in relation to specific issues that are deemed of sufficient importance to the international community to limit the scope of sovereign authority.”²

The United Nations and other government organizations, nevertheless, run up against problems of sovereignty when confronting how to intervene to prevent violence in other countries. Nongovernmental citizens organizations have more flexibility to operate in contexts in which governments resist interference. For instance, the United Nations’ large human rights observer forces in El Salvador (ONUSAL) and Guatemala (MINUGUA) could not be installed until peace negotiations reached a stage where the governments withdrew their resistance. During these years, PBI was able to maintain a protective, small-scale presence in both countries. In Haiti in 1993, when the United Nations’ civilian human rights mission made an abrupt exit for political and security reasons, accompaniment volunteers of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) coalition “Cry for Justice” continued to maintain a protective presence in six different parts of the country, earning the respect and trust of many Haitians for their perseverance.

The United Nations, as a club of governments, also faces credibility problems with respect to the democratic activists who are looking for protection. If the aggressor is a government, a U.N. presence has difficulty earning the trust of indigenous democratic movements. Not only is the United Nations perceived as an ally of the government, but also it is often seen as an outsider proposing inappropriate solutions, thus undercutting the self-determination of these movements. PBI maintains a commitment of noninterference in the internal workings of the indigenous democratic movements and refrains from proposing solutions from the outside. It is also free of the political and bureaucratic baggage of a large intergovernmental organization like the United Nations and can more easily earn trust in the field.

The apparent contradiction between international protection of human rights and national sovereignty is far from resolved, above all from the point of view of states and governments. Accompaniment can be seen as a particularly meddlesome intrusion on sovereignty, because it involves the physical presence of foreigners. Even when accompaniment organizations have strict policies of nonviolence and nonpartisanship, they are nonetheless often perceived by the state as aiding and abetting the armed opposition. Accompaniment volunteers have thus been repeatedly accused, harassed, threatened, and expelled in several of the conflicts studied.

The Accompaniment Organizations and Volunteers

Protection and encouragement are two aspects of accompaniment that focus on the impact on the threatened parties. The profound impact of the experience of accompaniment on the volunteers themselves also has political ramifications. In many cases it has been a life-changing experience for the volunteers, inspiring them to a long-term commitment to international solidarity and human rights and to working against violence in their own communities. Accompaniment volunteers in the field have suffered arrests, interrogations, beatings, expulsions, and even bombings and knifings. What sort of people choose such a

risky endeavor? How did the work change them? How do their experiences affect their home communities, and their countries' policies?

To consider the possibilities of such an intervention model, it is essential to understand the characteristics and motivations of the volunteers. These volunteers have brought their experiences home to build and strengthen international solidarity networks and human rights movements worldwide. By thus contributing to international pressure for respect for human rights, they further supplement the protective value of the international presence, bringing the experience full circle.

A thorough recounting of the accompaniment history covered by our field research is beyond the scope of this paper. A brief summary, however, will help put subsequent considerations in context.

PBI is one of the most experienced organizations doing protective accompaniment and is the focus of this study, but it is certainly not the only one. The U.S. organization, Witness for Peace, pioneered the meshing of community-level accompaniment in Nicaragua with public education and lobbying in Washington during the 1980s.³ Learning from PBI and Witness for Peace, several other accompaniment projects sprang out of the Central America international solidarity movements in the 1980s and 1990s, especially around the massive repatriations of refugees into El Salvador and Guatemala. We have also examined the role of other international NGOs whose presence plays a similar role, albeit implicitly, while carrying out other primary tasks. Thus, for instance, in Sri Lanka the presence of the ICRC, the Medecins Sans Frontieres, and the Quaker Peace Service have all fulfilled a role of accompaniment, directly or implicitly, at different moments.

PBI entered Guatemala in 1983, during a time of intense state terror, massive killings and disappearances, and near-total paralysis of civilian democratic activity. In 1984 the PBI team helped catalyze and encourage the founding of the first human rights organization to survive Guatemalan terror: the Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared, known in Guatemala as GAM. GAM operated from the PBI house during its first three years. After one year, two of GAM's leaders were assassinated, and PBI began "escorting" the surviving leadership. This accompaniment continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.

In 1988, PBI offered support and accompaniment to Amilcar Mendez as he founded the Council of Ethnic Communities in the rural highlands. This second Guatemalan human rights group organized resistance to forced service in civilian militias, thus weakening a cornerstone of the army's counterinsurgency program. Mendez learned quickly how to use both PBI and other international human rights support for the greatest protective effect. During these same years, PBI also accompanied numerous labor struggles.

In the early 1990s, Mayan organizations moved to the forefront of the civilian movement. All these new groups used protective accompaniment. The growth of this rural Mayan movement reached its peak in 1992, when Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel Peace Prize (while accompanied in Guatemala), and 40,000 refugees in Mexico signed an agreement with the Guatemalan government for an organized return. This return prompted the

formation of several new accompaniment organizations in various countries, each of which sent volunteers to be with the refugees. Finally, in 1993 and 1994, the Communities of Population in Resistance, or CPRs, a collection of communities that had been the hardest hit by the army for more than a decade and had been forced into a constant state of flight, asked for international volunteers to live with them as they demanded respect as a civilian population.

PBI initiated a second project in 1987 in neighboring El Salvador, at the request of the Lutheran Church and other Salvadoran NGOs. Shortly before, the Marin Interfaith Task Force established another accompaniment project that sent volunteers to work with the Salvadoran nongovernmental Human Rights Commission. Between 1987 and 1992, PBI accompanied dozens of threatened union and church leaders, as well as indigenous activists and repatriated refugee communities. During this period, more than a dozen PBI volunteers were arrested, interrogated, and expelled from the country.

In 1989, the Sri Lankan Bar Association asked PBI for volunteers to accompany those lawyers who dared to submit writs of habeas corpus for detained persons during the state of siege. This work soon expanded to other threatened activists, including union organizers, community groups, religious leaders, and others. The ICRC also initiated a presence in Sri Lanka in 1989, focusing primarily on visits to detention centers to prevent disappearances, and on the transport of humanitarian relief to the blockaded northern peninsula. In addition, both PBI and the Quaker Peace Service accompanied threatened communities in the eastern region of Batticaloa during the heightened hostilities of 1991–1992, and then again in 1995.

In 1993, PBI cooperated with several other North American organizations and formed a coalition known as the “Cry for Justice” to send about 75 volunteers to Haiti during a particularly tense period after the 1991 coup d’etat. One of the member groups, the Christian Peacemaker Teams, maintained an ongoing accompaniment presence in the rural town of Jeremie throughout 1994 as well. In 1994, PBI sent a team to Colombia, which began accompanying the Association of Families of the Disappeared (ASFADDES) in Bogota, and the Regional Human Rights Commission in the Magdalena Media area (CREDHOS). In another coalition effort, PBI and other European organizations organized the Balkans Peace Teams International in 1993–1994. PBI maintains one additional project, confronting racism against indigenous people in North America, which did not fall into the scope of this research project.

The authors interviewed more than 100 accompaniment volunteers and accompanied activists, as well as military and government officials involved in each of these conflicts. In a book being prepared for publication, we will explore this history in detail, with critical analysis based on a series of case studies. For this document, we would like to explore some of the key concepts and questions that our research has helped to clarify.

Terror as Policy

Guatemala, El Salvador, and Sri Lanka were each implementing planned policies of state terror in the 1980s and early 1990s. Activists were not asking for accompaniment merely to confront a personal fear or an immediate threat. They were confronting systemic policies of violence that had frightened the majority of the population into political passivity. How and why were such policies implemented? What was their psychological impact? How could an accompaniment volunteer help the activists face such a staggering fear?

Policies of terrorism are developed to efficiently manipulate varied individual responses to danger and fear with a goal of collective social control. This is true for both state and non-state policies of terror. The U.S. State Department definition of terrorism is as follows:

*The use or threatened use of violence for political purposes to create a state of fear that will aid in extorting, coercing, intimidating, or otherwise causing individuals or groups to alter their behavior.*⁴

Conscious political use of terror is as old as war itself. In this century, however, the revolutionary technological advances in the sciences of weaponry, information control, mass media, and psychology have enabled the exercise of mass-scale terror with a previously inconceivable efficiency. State terror is a policy that gathers all the resources at the disposal of the state to instill fear in an entire segment of the population. The goal of the fear is to eliminate any threat from the population to the state or its program.

In the decades following World War II, because of major political and economic upheavals or historic inequities and injustices, popular movements dedicated to changing the structure of the state and the economy have arisen. In capitalist and postcolonial nations, these movements frequently proposed a redistribution of societal resources. In communist nations, movements sprung up resisting infringements of individual liberties or expressing a basic frustration with the limited available options for advancement. In other cases, ethnic rivalries of ancient or recent origin led to the formation of opposition movements against a ruling state seen as chauvinist or unrepresentative.

Regardless of whether the root conflict is class based or ethnic, even the hint of such changes is viewed as threatening by those in power. State terror is a strategy chosen to prevent these movements from gaining enough strength to force changes. It is essentially a defensive strategy to confront a perceived threat. In cases in which the state faces an armed insurgency, a policy of violent terror is defended as "protecting" the population and the country. This defense is frequently accepted by the international community, despite the fact that the victims of the policy are seldom the armed insurgents.

However, state terror is not reserved for fighting armed insurgencies. Democratic movements that push for structural or economic changes have met terror as a state response even when there was no armed rebellion. Certainly, the vast terror networks that were main-

tained in the Soviet Union and China were not defended on the basis of self-defense against armed rebellion. In the 1970s in Chile, Salvador Allende was popularly elected president and then overthrown by the military, which then began an intense period of state terror. Argentine state terror also followed a military coup in 1976, continuing long after a relatively minor armed threat was quashed. Guatemalan state terror predates the rise of an armed insurgency by nearly a decade – some would say a century. State terror in El Salvador predates the formation of the FMLN. The existence of a military threat is not a precondition for a policy choice of state terror.

Some sort of “enemy” is needed to excuse or explain massive violence against civilians. That enemy may be ideological rather than military. The perceived “threat” may be projected from the past or from events outside the nation’s border. Thus, Stalinist terror was justified on the basis of both the siege mentality – the overwhelming capitalist enemy outside the borders, and the need to uproot “historic” bourgeois tendencies, that is, a fear of internal subversion of the system. The military or oligarchic leaders of other Latin American nations perceived the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions as palpable threats – not external military threats, but rather, internal threats by example. In Argentina and Chile, the military saw a threat in the past – in what it perceived as vast communist (i.e., labor) control of Peronist governments or the Allende presidency. As in the Soviet Stalinist case, it, too, was using terror to “uproot” the past.

How does state terror function to control movements for change? Pion-Berlin and Lopez write about Argentina in the mid-1970s:

As the military grip on civilian institutions became increasingly formalized, a new repressive terror descended on the Argentine landscape. The generals’ capacity for method in terror should impress all social scientists. As General Iberico Saint-Jean, governor of Buenos Aires during the first junta regime, put it, “First we will kill all the subversives, then we will kill their collaborators, then...their sympathizers, then...those who remain indifferent; and finally we will kill the timid” (Simpson and Bennett 1985:66). What ensued was an unpredictable deployment of terror by security forces and those working for them. Anyone thought to be sympathizing with the left, or in any way dissenting with the regime became a possible target for kidnapping, torture, and disappearance (Rock 1985:363). The discharge of terror was unpredictable but not decentralized. Indeed, there is now widespread evidence that the campaign of terror was carefully planned from the top downward, with a most eerie sense of organization and purpose (Duhalde 1983; Paoletti 1987; Vasquez 1985).⁵

The general was probably exaggerating, but his statement shows how conscious the policies were and how overarching their goals. Usually, however, terror is more efficient: you don’t need to kill everyone, if you can succeed in paralyzing the majority with fear while killing only a minority.

As in the case with insurgent terrorism, the audience to the State terror act may be more important than the immediate victim. A government’s actions have

*purposes wider than the simple destruction or harm that the brute force of violence creates. The goal includes carrying a message of intimidation and the creation of fear in an audience whose behavior the perpetrator seeks to alter. The Chinese understood this well in the proverb "Kill one, frighten ten thousand." Thus the immediate victim of "torture, short of death" is clearly an audience target...the victim serves as a persuasive advertisement of the power of the state, and the message reaches more people than the government might elect to coerce through direct physical acts.*⁶

Guatemalan military analyst Gabriel Aguilera Peralta argues that the goal of state terror is to keep people isolated from each other. In this context, any organizations are a threat to overcoming that isolation; that is, any organizing is empowering and, as such, confronts and questions the terror system.⁷ In the Guatemalan case in the early 1980s, the worst years of terror followed a time when the state felt extremely vulnerable to a popular uprising, having just witnessed a successful revolt in neighboring Nicaragua. The violence subsequently unleashed in Guatemala confirms Aguilera Peralta's view, as all kinds of nonpolitical social organizations were attacked.

The policy of terror has been used on relatively nonresistant populations, such as the Germans under the Nazis or Argentineans in the Proceso of the 1970s, as well as against extremely organized resistance movements such as in Nicaragua or El Salvador. It has been carried out with the finesse of high-technology and psychiatry in the Soviet Union, and the bluntness of machetes and rape in Haiti. In every case, the common strand is the conscious strategy to manipulate fear to control the population.

Extreme examples, such as Idi Amin, Adolph Hitler, or Joseph Stalin, often lead people to dismiss terror as a policy of psychopaths or otherwise deranged minds. The extreme insurgent terror of the Shining Path in Peru or the suicide squads of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka often prompts the same reaction. That may, however, be a deliberate goal of the policy itself, or at the very least a useful side effect: people are even more frightened of confronting the unpredictable and irrational randomness of the psychopath than when their tormentor seems to be someone who can be reasoned with. An aura of invincibility accompanies the epithet "crazy."

Considerable scholarship has emerged in the last decade documenting that state terror is a conscious and rational choice made by thoughtful strategic thinkers.⁸ Terror is seen as an efficient means to an end, no more crazy or immoral than any other strategic choice in a war against an enemy. And, as with other military or strategic policies, states study the successes and failures of other states, and consciously perfect the tool.

The implementation of state terror generally has two stages. The first, which usually accompanies a coup d'état or other power transition, is characterized by a mighty show of force, total control of all information, massive killing, disappearance, and detention, and propaganda of an "emergency." The deliberate psychological intent is to create a generalized impression of an omnipotent and omnipresent authority, from whom escape or hiding is impossible. Opposition organizations may be crushed.

When this fear has been instilled in the population, the repression becomes more selective. In the second stage, the state denies detentions. Non-uniformed squads assassinate and whisk away people in the dead of night. Exultant propaganda speaks of a return to “normalcy” and a permanent vigilance against “the enemy within.” Opposition organizing continues to be repressed. The government may maintain this stage for many years.

This combination of tactics follows from a recognition and decision that there are real societal roots to the opposition and that the demands of the opposition are non-negotiable – otherwise such massive campaigns would not be needed. The state decides unilaterally that the demands of the opposition are unacceptable, and will not attempt any sort of democratic persuasion or compromise. The opposition simply must be destroyed.

The principal objective of the repression by contemporary Latin American dictatorships is to produce the greatest possible change in the dominated population. In Chile, this objective was explicit in the document “Declaration of Principles of the Government of Chile,” published by the junta in 1974:

*The military and security forces place no fixed term on their management of the government, because the task of moral, institutional and material reconstruction of the country will require profound and prolonged effort. It is imperative to change the mentality of the Chileans.*¹⁰

If the “psychopath” depiction of state terror is too simplistic, so is the other extreme: the all-knowing, all-powerful state, which can watch everyone and kill anyone at any time it pleases. The state’s omnipotence is never so complete, but it is in the state’s interest for people to think so. It can’t kill everyone, and surveillance is expensive and labor intensive. Watching or listening takes time and money, but processing and interpreting all the data is even more demanding. It makes no sense to tap more phones than the state can listen to and analyze, or to take more photos than it can catalog. Technological advances are rapidly enhancing those surveillance and analysis possibilities, but those same advances are causing exponential growths in the quantity of information flow – by phone, fax, e-mail, and other means. In the end, the number of potential targets of surveillance and amount of data to process confounds the accuracy of analysis.

This is a classic information-processing trap: limited analytical resources are constantly diverted toward the collection of more data, as opposed to careful analysis of existing data. The quality of analysis is also affected by ideological factors. The same biases that bolster the policy of state terror can serve as filters for information processing – filters that do not necessarily lead to accurate judgments. The tendency is to pay attention to data that seem to confirm pre-existing ideas, and ignore data that might contradict them. Decision makers overwhelmed by the quantity of information and decisions to make, tend toward oversimplifications and heuristic reasoning. Studies of high-level decision making in Israel before the Yom Kippur War or in the United States during the Vietnam War suggest that these problems are common even in the most advanced intelligence-gathering systems in the world.

Beyond errors of information processing, deep ideological biases can lead to extreme views of reality that affect policy in ways that do not benefit the state. Pion-Berlin suggests

that a rationale for state terror cannot be found in an analysis of potential power threats during the Argentine Proceso.¹² There was very minimal armed resistance, and the Argentine population faced the terror with relative docility. The fury and vigor with which the generals carried out their terror campaign were entirely unnecessary. They could have attained their goal of total control with a vastly lower level of repression.

So why did they do it? Pion-Berlin argues that the roots of terror were ideological, based on an extremely internalized acceptance of the National Security Doctrine prevalent at the time, combined with a staunch and almost radical ideological commitment to free-market economics. The National Security Doctrine served to convince the military of its mandate and “right to rule,” while it dehumanized all the victims as “communists,” thus removing any internal inhibitions against violence and terror. The military’s commitment to free-market economics, combined with some “anti-Peronism,” helped to guide the selection of victims, who were heavily concentrated in the labor movement. The strength of ideological conviction buttressed a level of terror beyond that which a practical political analysis would have judged necessary.

A policy of terror, once begun, may develop into a habit even after its usefulness has passed.

*We must not lose sight of the important possibility that systems of terror become so institutionalized and permeate so many dimensions of government life that no identifiable pattern between the government goal, target and message exists. [This is] substantiated by Dallin and Breslauer’s analysis of the highly-planned campaigns of terror in post-revolutionary Russia and China. The policy of terror took on a dynamic of its own, sometimes in direct opposition to stated priorities of the government.*¹³

So the psychopathic state terrorist may actually be a pleasant and intelligent politician or bureaucrat. The all-powerful and all-knowing state, for reasons of ideological bias and problems of information processing, may not know so much after all. Regardless, the violence is carried out and people are frightened into submission, even if they don’t know why.

From Victims to Protagonists

Fear

“Aqui no se puede.”

“Here that can’t happen” – that was the frequent response of Guatemalans in the early 1980s, upon hearing of the resistance campaigns “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina, or the CoMadres in El Salvador. “It’s impossible. They will just kill us.” Some of the women who expressed this fear went on to do the impossible, forming the first human rights organization to survive under Guatemalan state terror. They confronted their fear, using international accompaniment as a tool.

When facing state terror policies, nonviolent, organized action can only be attempted if there is some way to confront fear. We are dealing with people who have faced attempts on their lives, received threats over the telephone, or seen their families or friends killed or abducted. In some cases we are dealing with whole communities that have been terrorized by aerial bombing, or deliberately traumatized by witnessing barbaric, almost ritualistic murders. The Guatemalan, Sri Lankan, and Salvadoran military all used abduction and aerial bombing campaigns. In Sri Lanka, both sides' death squads would hang up tortured bodies or just body parts, in town squares as "lessons." The litany of barbarisms that any human rights organization monitoring state terror can recite defies the imagination. These are not the normal daily fears with which most readers have experience. They are traumas of epic proportions, for which the psyche has very little preparation.

The psychological and psychiatric professions are also ill-prepared to address these concerns, because the victims of these traumas are usually too poor to seek treatment and live in societies where psychiatry is still considered anathema or is simply unavailable. Political dynamics combined with this lack of clinical experience create a dearth of academic research on the psychological effects of traumas caused by state terror, despite the vast quantity and frequencies of these traumas globally.¹⁴ However, a body of casework and academic writing is growing. Frequently, this work has focused on refugees or exiles who have fled to countries where such services are available, and where the act of providing counseling to terror victims is not, in itself, considered dangerous. More recently, considerable research has come out of Chile or Argentina, countries that to some extent have moved beyond state terror to a point where treatment and study can be carried out *in situ*. Beyond this, some conclusions can be inferred from studies of fear and trauma on individual and collective levels from other types of situations, such as studies of post-traumatic stress syndrome for war veterans and others.

The nature of state terror, and the goal behind it, is to create a pathology that is both individual and collective. The entire society becomes traumatized by fear, reinforcing the fear in the individual and allowing no "safe" social setting for a return to psychological health. The very quantity of abuse has societal impact on relationships among families and communities. The associated mass propaganda simultaneously denies the abuse while characterizing the victims as a dangerous enemy. Torture, even if not spoken of publicly, is known to occur. Finally, the quantity and arbitrariness of assassination represents a tangible threat to the life of every individual, and this possibility of death has a powerful psychological impact.

These phenomena combine, creating a massive inhibition and suppression of the truth into the unconscious mind of the majority of the population. Meanwhile, the families who are most affected, and subsequently labeled "dangerous" or "tainted," are socially segregated. Collective negation of reality becomes a social defense against panic and the unconscious certainty of danger.¹⁵ On the basis of psychological research in Chile, Elizabeth Lira Cornfeld concluded,

*Repressive violence aims not only at the annihilation of the most active opponents, but also at the progressive submission of the population in its entirety by means of the internalization of mortal threats, in such a way as to produce a learned self-regulation of socially desirable conduct. Inhibition and indifference are the characteristic adaptive traits.*¹⁶

Lira Cornfeld argues that sustained terror introduces psychosocial mechanisms that fragment reality, making it difficult for people to relate their present existence to the past or the future, or to others around them.

*The efficiency of fear is sustained by psycho-social mechanisms which impede the verification of reality through concrete experience, by introducing the future and past as a type of fantasy space. These mechanisms forcibly fragment the formulation of daily tasks....In this manner, fragmentation, isolation and dispersion operate as mechanisms with subjective effects which serve to maintain the cultural and social effects of the repression. The repression then appears as a subjective phenomenon, internalized individually, which can be observed in collective behavior, as it affects every sphere of social life.*¹⁷

Thus, family members of people who were abducted in Guatemala were still suffering these overwhelming effects even as they proceeded to organize the Mutual Support Group.

*We couldn't even think at the time about such things as whether to have our own office—we didn't know then where the organization was going. All we could think about was that primary goal: to find the person, because this was something completely new for all of us. There were many things I didn't understand. I just tried to stick to my work and watch out for my children. I had no idea where it would take me. The loss of my son changed my life completely, on both a personal and family level. The forced disappearance of a person, it not only changes your own life intimately, but also the life of your family, your friends, your work companions, your whole society.*¹⁸

While vast numbers of people are affected by loss and fear, the dominant society of which they are a part offers them no relief. Many cannot even admit to fear or loss and are further frightened by those who do. The recovery process for the individual and the whole society are inextricably dependent on each other.

Recovery

Recovery from psychological trauma requires that the victim confront the reality, learn the truth, and accept it. This might mean finding out who is threatening the victim and why, or whether one's daughter who disappeared is alive or dead. Therapists are realizing,

*If we really wish to facilitate recovery, we must broaden the narrow field in which we generally view this transition. To break the dynamic of fear internalized by repression, we have to put an end to the so-called "strategy of silence" and defend the ethic of conflict.*¹⁹

The process of recovery also requires a community of support. This might involve finding others who have gone through the same trauma, and sharing the experience. They might be other families of people who have disappeared, other union organizers, or activist peasants. Terror destroys the social fabric around the affected individuals, either by literally destroying their families, friends, or community, or by systematically isolating them. They must build a new social fabric to reach a normal psychological equilibrium, which is fundamentally social in nature. This community, defined broadly, serves to assure the persons they are not alone and to support them emotionally in the recovery process. It might also offer economic support, because one of the frequent side effects of traumatic events is loss of livelihood (for instance, a person has lost his or her job, or a family has lost its breadwinner, for political reasons).

Another important aspect of this community is moral or ideological support. Frequently, the trauma victims have been attacked, threatened, or perhaps tortured for political beliefs they hold dear, creating a crisis of existential proportions: to continue on the path that gave their lives meaning is now life threatening. Abandoning that path can have massive consequences of guilt and doubts of self-worth. Because of the collective nature of the terror, continuing on the life-threatening path can carry the same problems of guilt and doubt, because it may also put the lives of family and friends in peril. The role of supportive and encouraging family and community is critical in this process.²⁰

Yet another self-evident hurdle is that the trauma must not recur. A mother who has lost a child will have more difficulty confronting that loss while the threat of losing another looms over her. It's hard to constructively recover from last year's life-threatening attack if one got another death threat last week.

The very process of regaining psychological health runs counter to the goals of the terror policy. It is not in the state's interest for people to confront reality or to know and speak the truth. It is threatening to the state for such victims to organize communities of mutual support, which may then become vehicles of political pressure. Thus, as long as the state is committed to terror as a policy, it will oppose or target those victims who are most active in trying to regain some semblance of psychological health.

That places the victims in an agonizing Catch-22. They are traumatized by fear because of past events. If they take steps toward psychological health by confronting the reality of their trauma and looking for support from others, they may increase their own risk, drawing upon themselves and their families additional traumatic attacks.

Confronting Fear with Accompaniment

All those differing psychological dynamics have to be kept in mind when we examine the role of international accompaniment. When activists ask international volunteers to go by their side, they are usually confronting a real danger. They are simultaneously confronting all the consequences of this danger and the psychological trauma it carries, which is usually compounded by past traumas. As the above discussion suggests, the key ingredient for the successful confrontation of fear, and thus the requisite for democratic confrontation

of the terror state, is a community of support — that is, organizations through which individuals can support each other and join forces to seek the truth and end the terror.²¹ Because the very act of forming such a community of support may be dangerous, activists must confront some level of fear on their own, if such support does not exist. In some cases, the presence of international accompaniment aided in forming these organizations. The presence of PBI in Guatemala, for example, undoubtedly helped get the Mutual Support Group and the Council of Ethnic Communities off the ground.

Once organizations exist that offer support and seek the truth, they are inevitably delegitimized and demonized by the state, labeled “subversive” or “terrorist.”

*The labels of “subversion” and “state of war” function to introduce “death” into the national political life. Death now appears as a possibility directly related to all political action — thus resulting in a diminishment of political participation.*²²

When someone is looking for such a community of support, he or she has to overcome all the additional risks and fears that come with these labels. If such an organization is known to be accompanied by international human rights workers, the thresholds of fear may be somewhat lowered. Membership may be perceived as less risky, thus promoting the growth of the group and increasing its capacity to reach its goals.

Thus, accompaniment enables people to overcome the early hurdles of democratic political activity. Accompaniment, however, is also frequently requested by democratic activists who have long since crossed such thresholds. They might be 20-year veterans of the labor movement or human rights activists who have been in and out of detention or torture repeatedly.

The fact that people have made a commitment to face such threats as a daily moral imperative does not mean the threats cease to have a psychologically traumatizing effect. They may instead have developed coping mechanisms that resemble alternating or overlapping states of fear and recovery. They also face high and prolonged levels of stress, from both the danger and the perceived sense of responsibility, and their ability to manage this stress contributes to their effectiveness as activists. They frequently have families about whom they worry, and who worry about them. The presence of accompaniment, in addition to providing a measure of real protection, may be serving many other purposes, from helping to confront fear, to calming one’s family, to relieving stress — all of which contribute to the activists’ ability to carry out their mission.

The threatened activists know that accompaniment is not foolproof. They ask for it because they think that it will incrementally open up new opportunities for them. They believe they will be able to carry out certain actions that they couldn’t carry out before, and that the probability of attack is reduced. In cases of extreme threat, when the activists perceive imminent risk of death, they often seriously consider going into exile or clandestinity. Accompaniment is an option that enables them to keep on working openly: it helps them face the risk.

Finally, just as individual recovery in a dysfunctional family is aided by supportive encouragement and solidarity from friends who are “outside” the problem, the activist facing state terror is in what might be called an extremely dysfunctional society, and international accompaniment may serve a similar role. The volunteers are an embodiment of international solidarity, a supportive reminder that the activist is not alone in his or her search for truth and collective sanity.

It is in this last respect that the process displays a greater level of mutuality between the accompanied activist and the international volunteer. The volunteer is also part of a different society that is dysfunctional in other ways. Reacting to the inhibitions and collective negation of his or her own society, which may seek to ignore injustices around the world, the volunteer is also seeking truth and collective sanity and is often finding it in the sense of solidarity and courage of these committed activists. With few exceptions, volunteers return home feeling they were given far more than they ever could have offered.

Accompaniment as Deterrence

A rational argument that accompaniment deters violence is quite straightforward: If a government or military establishment of a small nation-state is responsible for human rights violations against its citizens, and that government is simultaneously trying to foster its political and economic relationships with other more powerful nations, then it is assumed that this government will want to minimize the political cost or public relations damage of its human rights practices. Actions against foreigners or those witnessed by foreigners are more likely to cause publicity scandals or diplomatic problems. Such problems can eventually lead to both economic and political pressure wielded against this government by other nations. The affected government, then, will attempt to avoid such consequences by limiting human rights attacks to those likely to cause the least international scandal. Those who are accompanied by foreigners are, therefore, less likely to be attacked by government for human rights violations. If a nonstate aggressor has any interest in a positive international image or is dependent on international support, the argument is similar.

But it's a simple task to undermine this argument. One cannot necessarily treat a government-military complex as a rational decision maker. There are situations in which complexity and uncertainty are the prevailing forces. Decisions at any given moment may be based on numerous subjective factors, such as ideology, personal biases and prejudices, or past errors. Bureaucratic factors, such as internal power struggles, internal inefficiency, and poor communication also affect decisions. Nor can one presume that decision makers are well-trained in politics and actually understand the potential international ramifications of their actions. Training, information processing, cognition, perceptions, and misperceptions are all critical factors in the decision-making processes of the potential victims of repression, the potential aggressors, and the international observers who purport to

one from the other. The process is conditioned by the beliefs, heuristics, attitudes, and stereotypes held by each party.

Consider General Mejía Victores, for example, who was dictator of Guatemala in the early 1980s. Watching the rise of the Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared and the accompanying role of PBI through a lens of virulent anticommunism and a military socialization, he saw both organizations as consorting with the subversive enemy, whom it was his duty to defeat. Why would accompaniment alter his decisions?

Even if decisions are made rationally, the argument rests on the assumption that the threatened consequences are real. If the international witness is a famous person, a religious leader, or a foreign politician, then surely one can expect a reaction. But is there a risk of a scandal if the international witness represents a small and relatively unknown NGO? Is it always the case that a human rights scandal can lead to economic pressure? Is the risk of this pressure sufficient to overcome the internal domestic analysis that originally led to a policy of human rights violation?

The root of the word “deterrence” is the Latin *ter*, or fear. In a human rights context it means threatening sufficient negative consequences to frighten the aggressor into not committing the human rights violation. As the previous analysis suggests, deterrence, per se, is only one of the potential functions of accompaniment. A more inclusive concept would be dissuasion, defined by nonviolence analyst Gene Sharp as “the result of acts or processes which induce an opponent not to carry out a contemplated hostile action. Rational argument, moral appeal, increased cooperation, improved human understanding, distraction, adoption of nonoffensive policy and deterrence may all be used to achieve dissuasion.”²³ Each of these other tactics is used at different times by the accompaniment organization or by the international human rights community whom the volunteer indirectly represents.

Deterrence is, nevertheless, one of the most prominent arguments or justifications for accompaniment. The concept and strategy of deterrence have been painstakingly analyzed because of its historical importance in military history and international relations. One of the first problems we confront in trying to apply these theories of deterrence to human rights protection is the multiplicity of variables and actors. Accompaniment, for instance, is only one of the several tactics an activist uses for protection. The concept of “international pressure” comprises a dizzying number of different nongovernmental and governmental institutions, each making independent decisions. The aggressor may also comprise a complex array of loosely knit governmental and paramilitary factions, each with some relative level of independence in its decisions and strategies.

Hence, an accompaniment organization cannot directly “threaten” very much. Its presence is more of a hint – a suggestion that a series of consequences may occur, depending on decisions by other players. Meanwhile, an accused government will frequently claim that it has no control over the specific aggressor – a claim that can be difficult to disprove. All this frequently leaves the analyst to draw conclusions from circumstantial and coincidental information. The links between cause and effect are very fuzzy.

Deterrence analysts distinguish between “general deterrence” and “immediate deterrence.”²⁴ In the case of human rights protection, general deterrence consists of the combined effect over time of all the different international and local efforts at protecting human rights: all the moral condemnation and protests; all the historic examples of other violators who have been punished in any way; all the diplomatic hints; all the potential lobbying against aid; everything that is done by the international community to create a generalized understanding that human rights violations will result in negative consequences. Immediate deterrence, on the other hand, as represented by accompaniment, sends a specific message at a given time to a specific aggressor to forestall attacks against a specific target.

Clearly, if the general deterrence attempt of the entire international community was effective in ensuring human rights, there would be no need for accompaniment. Immediate deterrence is necessary when general deterrence fails or is seen as insufficient. Accompaniment is the next line of defense when an aggressor underestimates or ignores the international community’s concerns about human rights and decides to harass an activist anyway. The international volunteer’s presence will raise the cost of the attack much higher and change the calculation.

Accompaniment does not replace the general deterrence attempts of the international community: the two complement each other. The stronger the international concerns are about the human rights situation of a particular region, country, organization, or individual, the more effective accompaniment, as an additional threat, will be. The aggressor will know that there is already a network out there that the accompaniment organization can mobilize quickly.

International accompaniment, in turn, enhances the general deterrence of the international community in several ways. It provides the general deterrence commitment with credibility, because accompaniment is literally the embodiment of the international concern about a specific situation, a sort of physical measure of this concern. Such observers have the additional power of potentially providing eyewitness testimony to harassment or attacks, testimony with added moral weight due to the observers’ status as potential targets themselves. Finally, the accompaniment adds clarity to the deterrence commitment, because the physical presence beside a person or in a specific place leaves no doubt as to the object of concern.

For an accompaniment presence to truly meet the test of “deterrence,” a series of conditions must be satisfied.²⁵ First of all, the accompaniment and activist have to clearly specify and communicate to the aggressor what types of actions are unacceptable. This may seem obvious – especially if the message is as simple as “Don’t kill me.” If, however, the message is more complex, such as “Honor the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law,” one must assume the aggressor understands the content of these documents (or else must teach it to the aggressor, the characteristic tactic of the ICRC). If the goal is to prevent more subtle forms of repression, such as discriminating economic policies or defamation

character through propaganda, that must be articulated. Deterrence cannot work if the aggressor does not know which actions will provoke a response.

Guatemalan general García Samayoa once told a visiting human rights delegation: "If someone trips and sprains their ankle on the planet Mars, you can be sure the human rights groups will blame the Guatemalan Army." He was being sarcastic and rhetorical, but his comment points to a potential problem. If the aggressor feels that every move will be criticized, no matter what it is, he or she has no way to discriminate between the political costs of different moves. Thus, he or she must also know what actions *won't* provoke a punitive response.

The second condition is that the accompaniment organization has to articulate and make sure the aggressor is aware of its commitment and resolution to deter the aggression, and that it has a strategy to accomplish it. At a most basic level, the aggressor must know in advance that the activist is accompanied. Again, that is not so obvious as it seems. The death squad that carries out the order may well see that there is accompaniment, but whether the author of the attack knew it in advance is another matter, especially if the targeted victim is relatively unknown. The deterrence represented by accompaniment is actually a complex chain of events, primarily consisting of informing the outside world what has happened. This information, however, is fed into a network of lobbying and governmental forums. The result is potentially quite threatening, but, in practice, very uncertain and unpredictable.

That brings us to the third condition: the accompaniment organization must be capable of carrying out its resolution, and the aggressor must know this. If the threat of an international reaction is not credible, there is no reason to expect it to have a protective effect. For example, General Gramajo in Guatemala used the litmus test, "Can this organization, or this activist, mobilize the Organization of American States (OAS), the United Nations, or other governments?" If not, Gramajo felt he had little to fear. The trail of pressure from the physical presence of a volunteer all the way to the mobilization of the OAS is too complicated, though, for Gramajo to ever have been certain.

The fourth condition is that the aggressor must have seriously considered an attack but decided not to carry it out because its perceived costs (due to the accompaniment) were higher than its benefits. In the kinds of situations accompaniment organizations are dealing with, it can be nearly impossible to ascertain this. If no attack takes place, the aggressors will seldom admit that they ever had any intention of doing any harm. More often, accompaniment organizations are limited to circumstantial evidence. An activist may have already suffered attempts on his or her life. An organization may have been bombed or have had some members killed. The aggressor actually may have made public threatening statements. None of these facts actually proves an intention to attack in the future, but they are useful signals.

A fifth condition must be added to this list: the accompaniment organization must know who the aggressor is! Death threats are often anonymous. Death squads usually work in the dark of the night, and no one claims responsibility. In many situations, an activist and his or

her accompaniment must deduce who the attacker is from very little palpable evidence. It often comes down to an analysis of motive: who might benefit from stopping this activist's work? A union activist may assume that the threatening phone calls are coming from the factory owner's thugs. More frequently, in situations in which state repression has been commonplace, "the state" is assumed to be the culprit by default when there is no evidence to the contrary. This lack of evidence can severely constrain the deterrence attempt. First of all, the threat of international reaction may be mistargeted. Second, even if the assumption of "the state" is correct, more specific information about *which* factions within the state apparatus are behind the threat can greatly increase the effectiveness of an international reaction.

Accompaniment cannot deter an aggressor who is unaffected by the threatened international pressure. This may be the case when the government can be punished by the international community, but the government in turn cannot punish the actual human rights violator (for example, it may be the case of private armies that are outside its reach and don't have shared interests with government). In some cases the aggressor may politically oppose the ruling government and may even perceive a benefit from attacking human rights activists or international observers, because these attacks put the government in a difficult position and damage its international image.

Consider the case of the civilian militias in Guatemala, known as Civil Patrols. These paramilitary organizations were established by the army, publicly, as an important element of its counterinsurgency strategy and comprised up to 900,000 members during the 1980s. In many rural villages, the Civil Patrols became the supreme rulers, with control over life and death and complete license to extort, steal, rape, or kill. Nevertheless, the local thugs who led the patrols came from the same rural poverty as their neighbors. They had no shared economic interests with the government or the ruling elite. And they certainly had no political education such that they could be expected to understand the international consequences of attacking someone in the presence of foreigners.

Still, they were under the authority of the army, so one could expect that international pressure applied to the government could be transmitted to the Civil Patrols through the army. This transmission might take time or be delayed, though. In the village of Chuintz, for example, a Civil Patrol leader murdered a human rights activist. As a result, the government was pressured by the international community. The same Civil Patrol leader proceeded to murder two of the witnesses to the first attack, and publicly threatened others. He did not, however, kill the surviving witness who had international accompaniment. After years of international legal pressure, he was finally brought to justice.

Suppose a local landowner is facing a farmworkers' strike and uses his influence with the local army officials to get Civil Patrols to crush the strike. In this situation, the immediate interest of the landowner is to end the strike at all costs, and he may care very little about the consequent international pressure, because it will be directed at the government and not at him. The landowner may even oppose the current government.

The accompaniers will never know in advance if their "deterrence commitment" is strong enough to dissuade a potential attack. The aggressor may expect benefits that the accompaniers are not aware of. Assessing the situation as carefully as possible is a permanent challenge for an international team on the spot. Even so, accurate assessment may be impossible, due to lack of access to critical information; therefore the accompaniment team must develop extremely flexible fallback plans and an ability to respond rapidly to the unexpected.

Accompaniment succeeds as a deterrent when the aggressor doesn't attack because of the costs posed by the deterrence commitment. Deterrence fails when the aggressor does attack, because (1) the aggressor doubts or has a misperception about the accompaniment organization's willingness to react; (2) the aggressor doubts or has a misperception about the accompaniment organization's ability to fulfill its commitment; or (3) the aggressor believes that not acting will have more costs than attacking (or the benefits of attacking will be higher than the costs, because there is the possibility of achieving important goals).

Failures (1) and (2) fall into the category of "political blunder," which we'll discuss in a later section on political space. Because the accompaniment organization also wishes such blunders to be avoided, it is clearly in its interest to communicate as clearly as possible with the aggressor, in a language that the aggressor will understand, so that misperceptions damaging to both can be avoided. A failure to communicate actually increases the probability of deterrence failure. Thus, when two leaders of the Mutual Support Group were assassinated in Guatemala, PBI volunteer Alain Richard made the rounds of his embassy contacts, urging them to use their diplomatic access to make sure that the army knew that there were PBI volunteers accompanying the surviving leaders, and that there would be a vehement international response if anyone else was killed.

In the case of a failure of type (3), however, the accompaniment can do very little to affect how the aggressor calculates the benefits of the attack, or measures them against the costs. The threat of an international reaction is simply not enough to deter in these cases. All that is left, then, is to apply the threatened consequences as firmly as possible after the attack, in the hope of changing the calculation the next time around.

For example, in May 1988, Rigoberta Menchú made her first visit back to Guatemala after fleeing into exile. The army and the right wing accused her of guerrilla connections and her life was severely threatened. She had a high-profile delegation of international political and religious representatives on the plane with her, and dozens of international volunteers arrived at the airport to meet her. Despite this considerable weight of accompaniment, the police arrested her as she disembarked. All the accompaniment organizations alerted their international networks quickly, and the government was forced to release her within several hours. The likely explanation for this apparent blunder is that the minister of the interior, Rodil Peralta, a moderate whose position was also threatened by the extreme right, needed to prove to the army that he was "tough." The immediate importance of sending this message to the army outweighed any consideration of the international impact.

Sometimes the aggressor can be convinced of a blunder before committing it. When the Guatemalan refugees were negotiating their return home and demanding that the government allow them as much international accompaniment as they wished, the initial reaction of the government was negative. It did not wish to subject itself to the scrutiny and criticism of a large accompaniment presence. Members of the diplomatic corps involved in the negotiating process convinced the government that it would receive far more international criticism for denying the refugees accompaniment than it would receive from the accompaniment itself. The government relented.

The deterrence commitment might also be unconvincing in a rapidly changing political context. For example, in El Salvador during the guerrilla offensive against San Salvador in November 1989, the government and the army felt so threatened that they no longer seemed to take the political costs of their actions into account. The assassination of six reputable foreign Jesuit priests and their housekeeper and the massive expulsions of international workers turned the tide of international opinion completely against them. As a result of a broad military attack from the guerrillas, the military saw its maneuverability drastically reduced that the political costs that had previously been an effective deterrent were no longer sufficient to hold back the excesses. This is not to say that accompaniment is necessarily ineffective under such circumstances, but rather that such a drastic change of context calls for a rapid reconsideration of the objectives and strategies of accompaniment.

Encouragement and Protection: A Political Space Model

The concept of *political space* is helpful in understanding how the concepts of incremental protection and encouragement interact with each other in complex conflict situations. Each actor in the situation has a certain political space, which comprises all the political actions

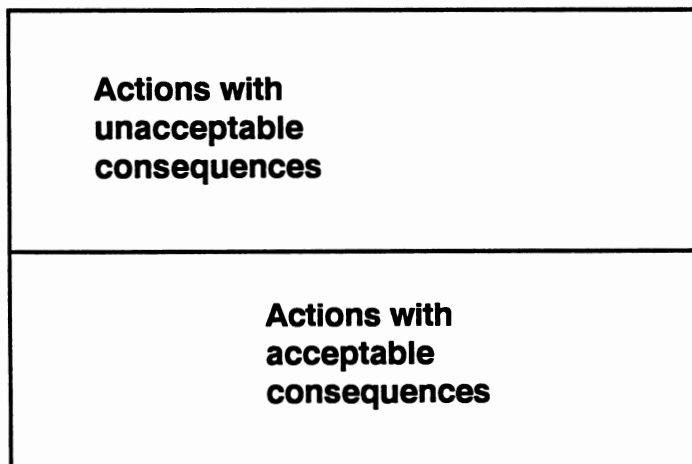


Figure 1. Each actor's potential for political space

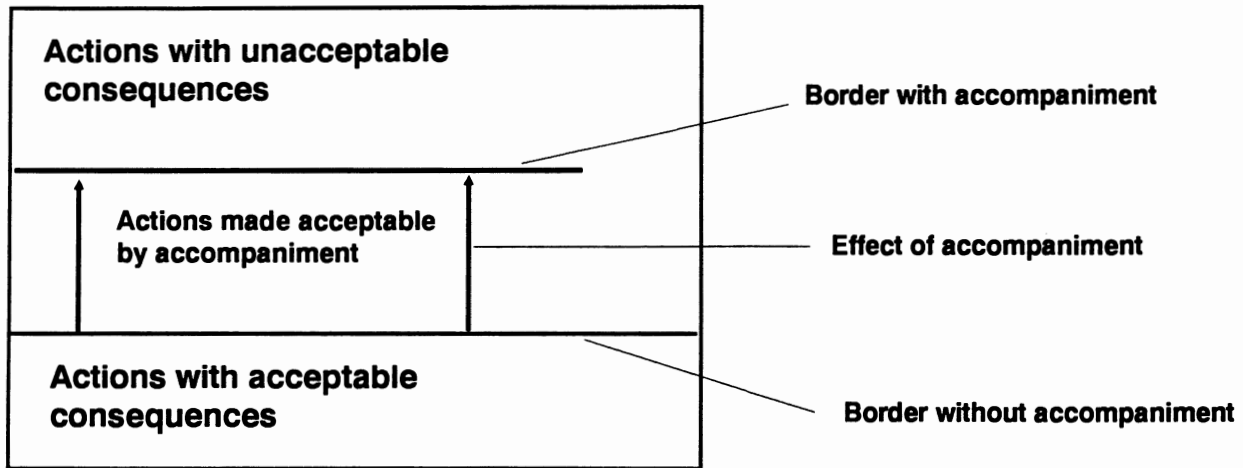


Figure 2. Accompanied actor's political space

tions available to him or her, and the consequences of those actions. The actor perceives these consequences as either acceptable or unacceptable, and avoids actions whose consequences are unacceptable (see figure 1).

This type of mapping of political space for a threatened human rights activist, with and without an accompaniment presence, is shown in figure 2. Accompaniment tends to shift the borderline of acceptable action upward, expanding the space of political action available to the activist. The middle ground is made up of actions that will no longer be attacked in an unbearable fashion. There are still actions that will provoke unacceptable consequences, even with accompaniment.

The notion of "acceptable" consequences can be fluid over time, and will vary greatly among individuals or organizations. For some, torture or death of a family member might

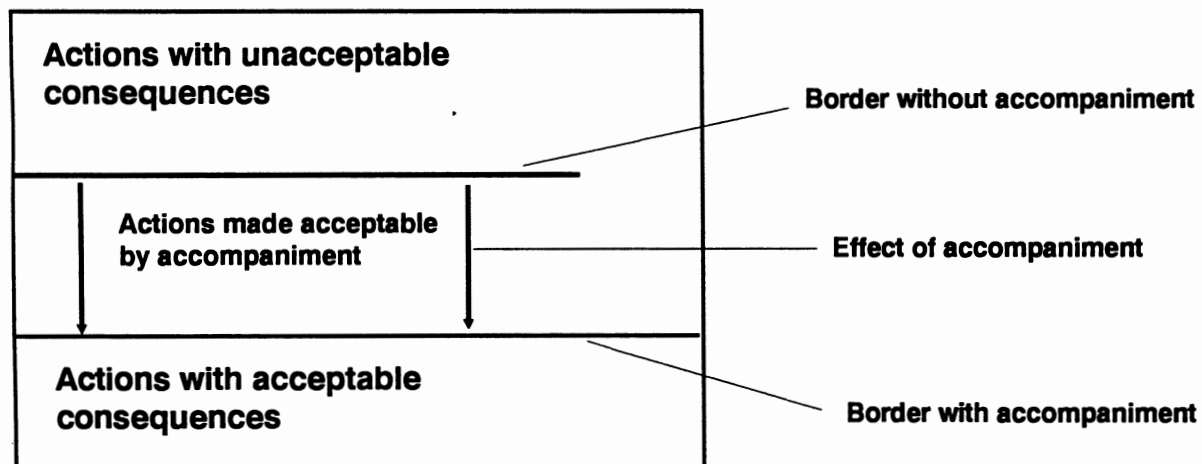


Figure 3. The aggressor's political space. Potential politically repressive action

be the most unbearable consequence. For someone else the line might be crossed at the first threats. An organization might be able to bear the death of a member, but not the annihilation of the whole group.

The political space of the aggressor is also affected. In this case, the accompaniment tends to limit or shrink the available space for violent or repressive action, shifting the borderline down (see figure 3). Again, there will still be actions whose consequences are acceptable. As with the activist, the concept of "acceptable" is fluid and variable. One government official might be extremely savvy and sensitive to international criticism, while an independent death squad leader might be relatively impervious.

Accompaniment is effective, in both figures 2 and 3, in the middle spaces. If the aggressor's ability to attack has been significantly limited, the presence is a real protection. If the activist is enabled to carry out significant political activities due to the accompaniment, then that accompaniment will be making a real contribution to the strength and growth of nonviolent civil society.

But no one knows where the borders are! That is the critical complication, which requires an expansion of the above analysis. Everyone is guessing about the possible repercussions of his or her actions, and everyone is making "mistakes." Thus, for instance, right-wing forces in Guatemala might not have bombed and knifed Peace Brigades volunteers had they been able to predict that these actions would attract greater diplomatic support to the organization and increase its international credibility. The Sri Lankan police might not have killed journalist Richard De Zoysa in 1990 had they known that there would be an international uproar and eventually a prosecution.

Perception, and rationality itself, can be distorted by the intensity of the conflict. General Orlando Zepeda spent years talking about human rights with international delegations and diplomats in El Salvador. Like Mejía in Guatemala, he thought they were all communists, but he also understood that there were international consequences to how he treated them.²⁶ He knew that his army was thoroughly dependent on external military aid. Nevertheless, when faced with a heavy guerrilla offensive in November 1989, he and his colleagues decided to massacre the internationally influential Spanish Jesuit priests. It was a blunder of colossal proportions that most experts agree forced a negotiated end to the war and left the army weakened and discredited. Zepeda had to retire in disrepute.

The activists are also making mistakes. A young factory worker might think it would be dangerous to be an outspoken union leader in Guatemala. But she figures the odds are more in her favor if she's just a quiet rank-and-file member. Then she's dead. At the factory next door, everyone is too scared to even talk about unionizing. Yet maybe there would be no repercussions at all. They don't know. Nobody knows. Everything is learned by trial and error, and the errors are costly.

Both sides are not only unsure of what the consequences of their actions will be, but are also not entirely certain about the acceptability of different consequences. A young activist might think in advance that getting death threats on the telephone would be an unbearable psychological torture. A year later she may find she's gotten used to getting such calls even

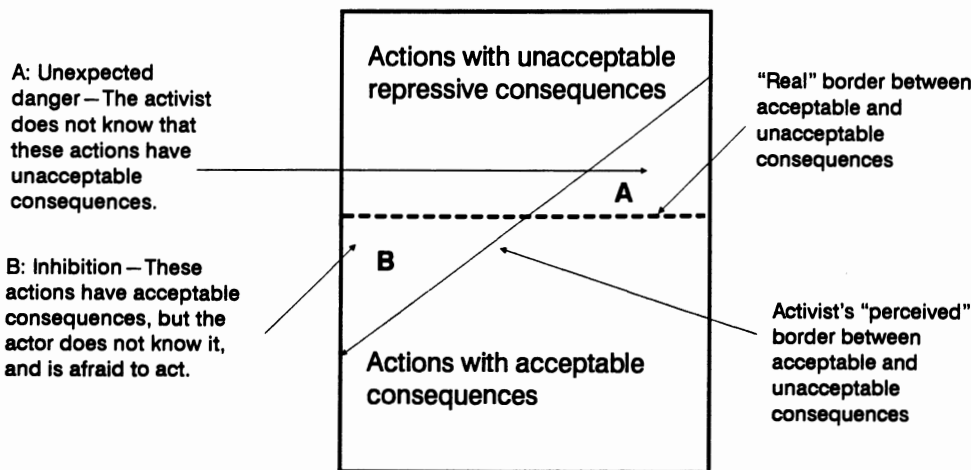


Figure 4. The threatened activist's potential political space

week. One union may disband when its leadership is killed, while another may assume this potential cost, and actually have two or three tiers of trained leaders ready to take over when one is wiped out. A dictator may look with chagrin at the risk of international rebuke from a massacre of peasants, but later find that the rebuke was acceptable if it didn't last too long.

Actors' choices are determined on the basis of this guesswork. They do not know the real consequences. They have only their own perceptions and projections of what those consequences might be. These projections might be based on substantial historical or political analysis. Alternatively, they might be based on simple prejudices, an emotional reaction to a past trauma, or any number of other psychological factors. Graphically, this uncertainty is shown in figures 4 and 6.

In space A (figure 4), the activist nonchalantly walks into danger, unaware that it exists, and suffers the consequences. In space B, fear has been instilled so effectively that the activist is inhibited from even taking actions that are relatively safe. In situations of state terrorism, this space can be huge: nearly all political or social action is feared; only passivity appears to have acceptable consequences. The shaded gray area, then, is really the only political space that is truly "available" to the activist. Space A is too dangerous, and space B has been eliminated in the activist's own mind.

The function of accompaniment is to expand this available space, by pushing both the "real" and "perceived" borders upwards (see figure 5).

The actions in the dark gray shaded area are available to the activists, but for a variety of reasons. Actions in B2, for instance, were not dangerous in the first place: the activist has simply overcome internalized inhibitions. Accompaniment in this case fulfills purely a function of encouragement, and not protection. Actions in A3 are now safer, but because the activists never saw them as unacceptably dangerous, the accompaniment here is serving as pure protection, and not encouragement. In area F both encouragement and protection are

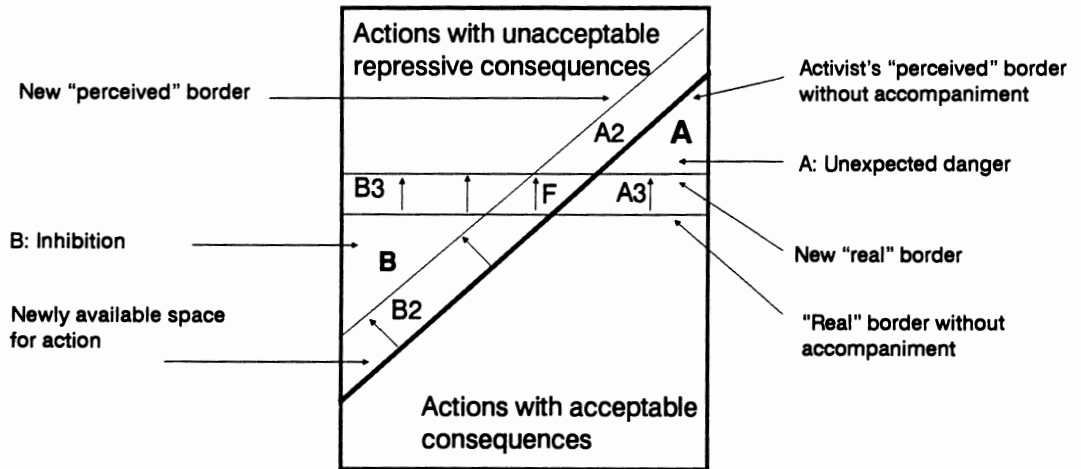


Figure 5. The activist's political space: effect of accompaniment

acting together: the activist is encouraged to take new action that was previously too dangerous, and is now protected.

There is still fear: area B still exists with accompaniment. In fact, area B3 consists of additional actions that are now relatively safe, but the activist does not believe in this safety. Finally, area A2 represents the accompaniment volunteer's nightmare: the activist believes these actions to be safer now, but in fact they're not. The activist may walk blindly right into danger because of the encouraging international presence.

Let's look at it now from the standpoint of the aggressor (see figures 6 and 7).

The aggressor may face many different types of consequences for repressive action. Some are local, such as increased unrest if the aggressor is a state, or increased group loyalty or solidarity among the victims. The cost of possible international pressure is just one factor. There also will be perceived benefits to repressive action, which may be seen to outweigh the negative costs. Getting rid of a troublesome activist might seem worth a

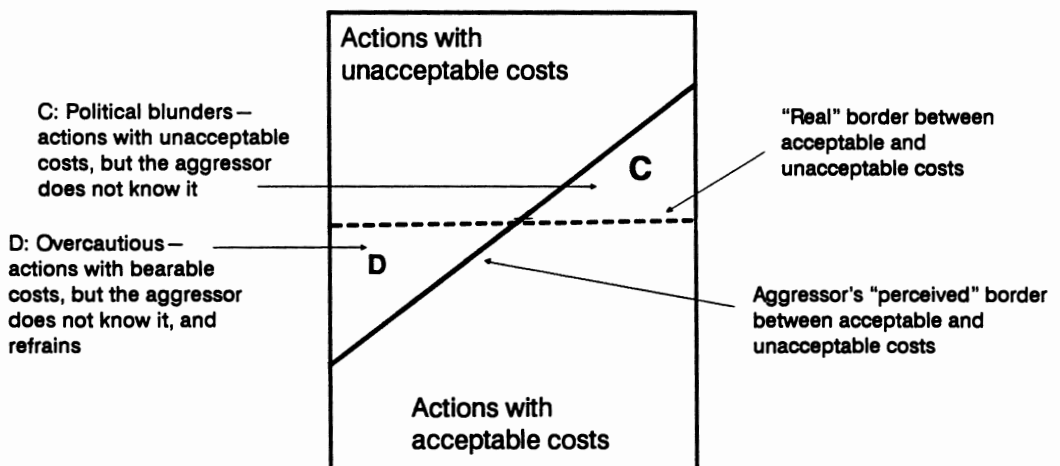


Figure 6. The aggressor's potential repressive political space

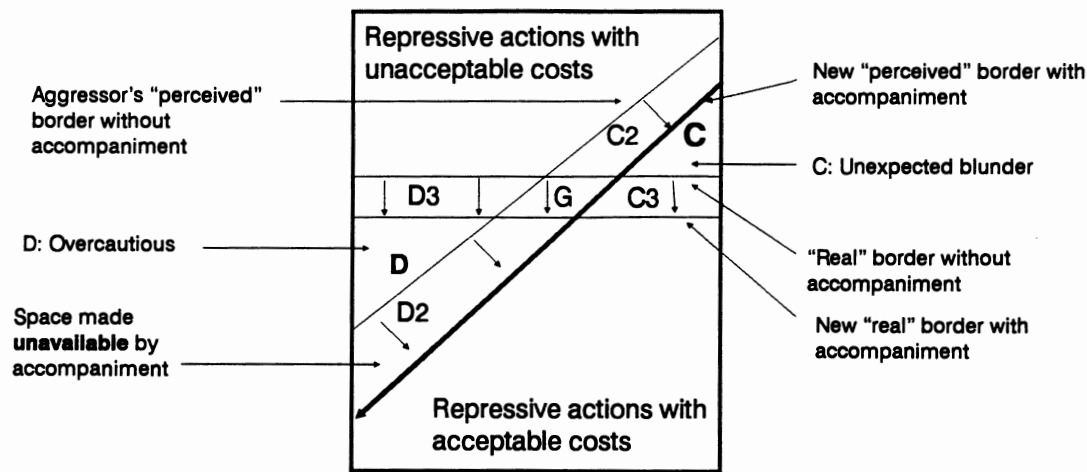


Figure 7. The aggressor's potential repressive space: effect of accompaniment

short-term embarrassment. Thus, when we speak of “unacceptable costs,” we’re referring to the net effect of all these factors. Again, only the actions in the gray area are truly “available space.” Protective accompaniment purports to deter violence and shrink this space (see figure 7).

These are the sorts of questions that a man like General Hector Gramajo, former Guatemalan defense minister, would ask himself every time he found a pile of human rights telegrams on his desk. A strategist of the “new generation” of political soldiers, and one of the intellectual architects of the army’s streamlined repressive apparatus in the 1980s, he studied the international human rights community carefully. He had a mental map of where each organization fit into the international scheme of pressure and power. Scanning those telegrams he would think, “Which ones really matter to me? Do I need to worry about this today, or will it pass over quickly?” In other words: were the costs acceptable, or was some additional damage control needed?²⁷

The presence of accompaniment shrinks the space for repression by moving both lines downward, eliminating the light gray zone from the available space for repressive action. In the case of the activists, we distinguished between protection and encouragement; here we speak of discouragement and deterrence. The aggressor is discouraged from acting in area D2, even though the real costs are acceptable. He or she overestimates the power of accompaniment and becomes even more cautious. In area G we come the closest to real deterrence: the presence of accompaniment has raised the costs of repression; the aggressor recognizes this and holds back.

Sometimes, the accompaniment actually helps the aggressor avoid mistakes. Thus, actions in area C2 are blunders but the aggressor did not recognize them as such until the accompaniment was present. While discouraging the aggressor’s “mistake,” the accompaniment is protecting the intended target. From the standpoint of the activist, repression by mistake is not less damaging.

Buddhist monk Baddegama Samitha Thero was known in his village for standing up for young men who were being hunted down by the Sri Lankan police or military. One day in early 1990, an unidentified gunman came looking for him at his monastery in southern Sri Lanka. Samitha was in Sweden at the time, and his friends warned him not to come back. He did anyway. A little later President Premadasa of Sri Lanka told his special assistant for international affairs, Bradman Weerakoon, "I'm getting pressured by the Swedish Embassy about a monk in the South who's been threatened. Look into it for me." Samitha came to visit Weerakoon with a PBI volunteer at his side. Weerakoon later recalled the visit and his consequent chore, confirming that international pressure helped them avoid an error: "I had to go knocking on the doors of all the different security agencies of the army and police just to find out who was threatening this fellow, and tell them to stop it. It took quite a while. I think that Peace Brigades definitely saved that monk's life."²⁸

International pressure is usually only directly perceived by the government leaders who receive and interpret it. It is only effective to the extent that it is transmitted, or "trickled down," to the direct instigators of violence against the threatened. As Weerakoon suggested above, this process might require some considerable effort. On the other hand, the physical presence of an international volunteer is perceived on all levels simultaneously. It is visible to those who are directly watching the intended victim and institutionally communicated to those at the top. The question, why does this person have international accompaniment? can provoke a "trickle-up" investigation, which can add to the protective value of the presence, especially for the relatively unknown victim, whom decision makers would not expect to have international clout.

Taking it a step further, let us assume that the upper-level policy makers understand the political consequences of a human rights violation in the presence of internationals and wish to avoid them. Is this analysis always transmitted effectively down to the street-level perpetrator? If not, then when a local death squad thug comes to the door to get someone, and finds an unexpected foreigner, can we assume he makes such a political analysis?

Perhaps not; yet, the accompaniment may be effective anyway. The local soldier, police officer, or thug might not be capable of a sophisticated international analysis. He might be much more concerned about what his immediate superior thinks of his actions. Like many people in third-world societies, he may perceive of himself as relatively powerless, but share a general perception that "outsiders," and especially foreigners from wealthier countries, are more powerful than he. He is also an individual moral being and, as such, may have some qualms about carrying out immoral actions in front of judging witnesses. For a variety of reasons, the international presence may discourage violence.

In the final analysis, what determines decisions is not objective truth, but rather what the decision makers themselves perceive or believe to be true and how they analyze "truth." In other words, regardless of whether a small NGO will actually succeed in bringing punitive pressure to bear for the actions it witnesses, what matters is whether the potential aggressors think it might be able to. Deterrence is all about perception.

Finally (see figure 7), the aggressor might commit a repressive act in area C3, and suffer unacceptable consequences from it because of the accompaniment. In the immediate event, the accompaniment has failed to deter, but over the course of time, such events should change the aggressor's perception of the available space. If the aggressor learns from his or her mistakes, the "perceived" line should move closer to the real line. Thus the accompaniment will have a discouraging effect on future aggressions. The severity of the felt costs increase the credibility of the accompaniment.

Strategic Choices

Nonpartisanship, Independence, and Nonviolence

Minear and Weiss in their "Providence Principles" for humanitarian action (1993) define nonpartisanship as follows: "Humanitarian action responds to human suffering because people are in need, not to advance political, sectarian, or other extraneous agendas. It should not take sides in conflicts."²⁹ Applying this principle to the work of accompaniment is extremely difficult. PBI, for instance, maintains a strict commitment to nonpartisanship, refraining from any advocacy role, direct assistance, or material aid to the organizations that it accompanies. In addition, it makes every effort to make its accompaniment available to groups and individuals from varying political factions, the only condition being that the accompanied group be committed to unarmed struggle. However, in situations of state terror, it is invariably the activists with strong political agendas opposed to the state who come under threat. In Central America, for instance, activists with PBI volunteers at their side are always denouncing the government. Convincing the government of the organization's commitment to nonpartisanship requires constant diplomatic effort.

When a military institution has decided *a priori* that all civilian activists who oppose their rule must be guerrilla members, they tend to put internationals in the same category. In the extreme case of 1980s El Salvador, many in the military were convinced that every foreigner in the country was working for the guerrilla movement. Faced with such ideological stereotyping, some organizations dispensed with nonpartisanship altogether. Many foreigners came to El Salvador to work with popular organizations opposed to the government, and made no effort to conceal their partisan beliefs. Their presence, nonetheless, served as protection. International solidarity organizations, even those overtly aligned with the FMLN insurgency, had built up considerable political influence. Volunteers from those groups therefore represented a strong deterrence commitment despite their partisanship.

The concept of *independence* in international humanitarian work generally means avoiding being controlled by local actors. Most accompaniment organizations desire such independence, but like other small international NGOs, they are susceptible to the whims of the host government, which can expel them at any moment. Because the work of the accompanied activists often confronts the government, expelling the international volunteers who protect the activists is a frequent tactic used to weaken the opposition. In November

1985, General Mejía Victores threatened to expel PBI if it did not persuade the Guatemalan Mutual Support Group to refrain from disruptive activity during the elections. PBI refused and several volunteers were expelled.

Five years later, in March 1991, Guatemalan president Jorge Serrano had three volunteers expelled after some of them witnessed a police shooting during a rural land eviction. The threat of expelling the entire organization was also used by the government to deter PBI from denouncing the killing. This time the organization acquiesced, and for a few days the threat effectively delayed PBI from denouncing the abuse it had witnessed. Although PBI subsequently went public after the witnesses had left the country, those few days of silence may have been all the government hoped to buy, because they coincided with hearings in the U.S. Congress at which the Guatemalan human rights situation was being discussed.

Once an organization starts measuring its actions against the threat of expulsion, its independence from government manipulation is profoundly questionable. Yet if it ignores such diplomatic concerns, expulsion is much more likely, resulting in an end to the protective service altogether.

PBI was particularly susceptible to pressure in the aforementioned incident because it faced an accusation of illegal action: trespassing on private property (despite having asked permission to be on the land). To maintain a tolerable relationship with the government, PBI subsequently became more outspoken and careful about its commitment to keep its activities strictly within the law. Such "legality" is a generally accepted constraint on behavior for any foreigner doing international work. PBI, in fact, had a standing policy of acting legally, but, before this crisis, had been somewhat more flexible in the gray areas. One must remember, though, that in state terror systems the legal framework itself has been designed to constrain civilian organizing and protest. The limitation of "legality" in and of itself can compromise independence. Thus, in Guatemala and El Salvador, where land tenure was the most fundamental political question confronting the status quo, civil disobedience campaigns of land occupation became major forces in the civilian movements. These occupations were risky and needed accompaniment, but had to depend on those international organizations or individuals who were willing to risk expulsion by breaking the law.

Some organizations, PBI among them, profess independence from the groups they accompany as well. International organizations must accept the reality that all local actors attempt a certain amount of manipulation over them. While that can never be completely avoided, PBI attempts to control the parameters and limits of this manipulation, so as to maintain its image of nonpartisanship and independence. PBI strictly mandates what it will and will not do and resists pressure to amplify this mandate and offer more active or material support to the activists.

Such a stance is by no means uniform among other accompaniment groups. Many individual volunteers and smaller organizations attach themselves to a particular civilian organization as multipurpose helpers, offering any type of assistance within their means and ceding decision making and independence to the local group. Nonpartisanship and

dependence in such cases are deemed to be neither necessary nor even desirable. This strategy can be defended firmly on the grounds of supporting the self-determination and empowerment of indigenous organizations and avoiding the risk that the foreigner is the one doing the manipulation. In many such cases, the accompaniment organizations actually came into existence at the request of the local group, through their network of international solidarity contacts.

Another principle common to many accompaniment organizations is a commitment to nonviolence. This seemingly straightforward commitment can be quite controversial. PBI volunteers, for instance, found themselves accompanying a Sri Lankan labor struggle where the workers they were ostensibly protecting initiated a violent action against the police. PBI withdrew its services, despite the fact that the police might have retaliated with even greater violence against the workers. Salvadoran student demonstrations frequently involved the destruction of property and verbal harassment and provocation of police. Accompaniment organizations constantly debated over what constituted violence, and whether foreigners have the right to pass judgment on the behavior of oppressed people.

On the other hand, in the context of popular insurgency, some argue that a commitment to nonviolence is neither necessary nor desirable, and that solidarity with an oppressed people should not try to dictate that people's tactics. The Salvadoran FMLN guerrilla movement built a vast array of international contacts and alliances, including mass-based U.S. organizations such as CISPES (the Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador). Through such organizations the movement encouraged many foreigners to support the "people's struggle." A commitment to nonviolence was considered by some a liability. Given the indiscriminate animosity of the Salvadoran military toward foreigners, it would be difficult to prove any appreciable difference between the protective value of volunteers committed to nonviolence and nonpartisanship and those who were not.

The commitment to nonviolence can extend to a more proactive stance: PBI is constantly faced with more accompaniment demands than it can handle. A frequent criterion for selection among competing requests thus becomes, which activists are contributing the most to the development of a nonviolent civilian movement? In other words, recognizing that accompaniment of every potential victim of state terror is not a possibility, PBI used a filtering mechanism that tried to take into account the long-term impact on the nonviolent struggle to dismantle that same terror. At certain times in El Salvador, PBI accompanied the religious leaders of the movement that was pressing for a negotiated resolution of the war. In Sri Lanka, PBI accompanied the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, which was similarly working toward negotiation of the war with the Tamil Tigers.

Such a filtering process implies a political ideology and strategy that undoubtedly conflicts with a pure commitment to nonpartisanship. Unlike massive humanitarian efforts, in which international groups attempt to serve all victims fairly and equally, accompaniment is a much finer tool, which has generally been implemented only by very small NGOs. PBI's analysis was that protection of all victims and an end to state violence could be brought

about only by a mass civilian movement led by indigenous organizations. Accompaniment was a tool to be used in the early stages of the process of building such a movement.

Levels of Confrontation: Two Camera Incidents

Accompaniment demands a constant contextual reevaluation of the efficacy of different tactics. One of the standard tools of the trade is a camera, a tool with both real and symbolic power. Photographs taken of a witnessed abuse can serve as solid proof. At the same time, the mere presence of a camera can augment the deterring effect of the volunteer.

In 1987–1988 PBI volunteers maintained a 24-hour-a-day, 13-month presence on the sidewalk outside a Guatemalan factory occupied by striking workers. The workers feared retaliation for their strike, because they knew that the owner had killed union activists at other factories. Instead, the owner used more subtle techniques to weaken their morale. He threatened to close the factory permanently and arranged for a caravan of trucks to arrive with a police escort to remove the raw materials from the factory buildings, ostensibly to be auctioned elsewhere. After one such incident, the strikers built a concrete barrier a few feet high in the entranceway to prevent trucks from entering again.

That night, while union activists and a PBI volunteer slept on the sidewalk, 30 armed men in civilian clothes arrived on the scene, accompanied by attack dogs. After threatening everyone present, they proceeded to destroy the barricade with picks and shovels. During the course of all this activity, the PBI volunteer got out her camera to record the event. It was dark, so picture-taking would require a flash. The other union members quietly motioned to her not to take a photo: they were afraid that the flash would be too provocative and might upset the men with guns. Thus the logical – almost textbook – response for a human rights observer, to take photos to document a threatening event, was deemed inappropriate. The photo was clearly not going to stop the men who had come so prepared to carry out their task. The potential benefit of documentary evidence was not worth the risk of shocking them with a flash of a camera.

In early 1993 in Sri Lanka, PBI was asked to observe a labor demonstration at the entrance to the Free Trade Zone north of Colombo. The police demanded that the demonstrators disperse. In response, the demonstrators sat down peacefully, at which point the police began dragging them away by force. One of the PBI volunteers attempted to photograph a plain-clothed police officer wielding a long wooden switch at a woman in the crowd. The police then approached and the volunteer was detained in the police station for some minutes before being allowed to return to the scene of the demonstration. His camera film was seen removed and exposed to sunlight. A second PBI observer also had her camera taken and film destroyed. When asked why the police had felt it necessary to take the film, the officer-in-charge replied that he found PBI's action provocative and that he did not want his men to be portrayed in an unsavory light.

This time the union activists urged PBI to take legal action against the police for taking the cameras and destroying the film. They argued that if PBI let the police take cameras and didn't denounce them, the police would think they could get away with it again, or per-

haps take further advantage. According to the activists, such acquiescence would weaken the strength of the accompaniment. PBI chose to let the matter drop rather than initiate an additional confrontation.

Taking the whole progression as a single event, one might argue that the deterrence commitment represented by the camera was weak. The threat of taking a picture is not much of a threat if one simply acquiesces when the aggressors take the camera. The police might assume from such weakness that the organization could not follow through on its commitments. Because the aggressor's belief in the ability to follow through on a commitment is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of deterrence, such a perception weakens the future protective value of the camera and perhaps even of the volunteers' presence. Applying this reasoning backwards: If the organization was unwilling to stand up for the camera, one might ask whether its volunteer should have taken the pictures in the first place.

However, one can also look at the incident as an unfolding series of events, calling for a series of strategic decisions as the context changed. As the event unfolded, the volunteers had their cameras visible, as always. When the policeman began beating the woman, the act of taking photos was a necessary follow-through on the commitment implied by the cameras. What would be the point, after all, of having a camera there and then refraining from using it at exactly the moment of violence that you had hoped to deter? At the same time, the very use of the camera might be an effective intervention to calm the violence, serving either to prompt the police to reconsider the political consequences of the attack, or at the very least, to distract them into the more benign pastime of detaining the volunteers and their cameras. In this view, the photo-taking may have served its deterrent purpose. The photos themselves might not be as important as the interruption caused by the act of taking them. So, when later faced with the expropriation of the cameras by police officers who may have needed a face-saving conclusion to the episode, PBI felt that acquiescence served to lessen the tension and polarization of the situation. The benefits of ending the conflict outweighed the cost of losing the cameras.

These contradictory analyses exist side by side. We do not know whether those police officers, in the end, felt that PBI made a reasonable compromise or simply displayed its weakness. It was not the first time that a popular movement organization felt that PBI's nonconfrontational stand was poor strategy. In a 1985 incident mentioned previously, Guatemalan dictator Mejía Victores expelled the majority of the PBI team in an attempt to quell the protests of the Mutual Support Group. The expulsion occurred fewer than two months before Mejía turned over the government to elected civilian leadership. Despite diplomatic support, PBI offered no resistance and made no public fuss about the expulsion, reasoning that there was nothing to be gained by picking a fight with a lame-duck president. It wanted to start out with the new president on a noncontroversial footing. Instead, the organization flew in a new team of volunteers, nearly overnight, to replace those who had been expelled, and continued the accompaniment uninterrupted. The Mutual Support Group vehemently disagreed with this acquiescence. It felt that yielding without even a public denunciation only invited future expulsions.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the NGOs: Two Examples

The ICRC watched the Guatemalan and Sri Lankan tragedies from afar through most of the 1980s. Neither country would invite the organization in, despite repeated approaches. Both countries, however, altered this strategy and decided in the late 1980s that the presence of the ICRC would be politically beneficial. The ICRC came into Guatemala with just a few staff in 1988, in spite of considerable military resistance. It entered Sri Lanka in the fall of 1989, about the same time as PBI.

According to Bradman Weerakoon, presidential special assistant for international affairs, the Sri Lankan government deliberately set an initial quota of 17 ICRC workers to get a maximum political benefit while minimizing the organization's practical capacity to actually get in the way of military operations. However, over the next few years, the ICRC presence expanded to more than 70 staff. The ICRC developed an exhaustive program of visiting detention centers and registering the names of all the prisoners, and then keeping track of each individual's status. This monitoring program effectively curbed disappearances, which had been occurring in massive numbers before the ICRC's arrival.

When war with the Tamil Tigers broke out again in the North and East in 1990, the ICRC began escorting humanitarian aid caravans and boats from the government-controlled South up to the guerrilla-controlled northern peninsula. This escorting was essentially protective accompaniment, because the aid itself came from the Sri Lankan government that wanted to maintain an image of providing for the population behind enemy lines. The ICRC also maintained a presence in the North, especially protecting the Jaffna hospital.

The protective impact of these ICRC programs was impressive, even though they were essentially helping the government implement policy in both cases. Weerakoon described the ICRC role as aiding the civilian government in disciplining its own people, helping it cure the military of the embarrassing "bad habit" of carrying out extrajudicial disappearances. The military saw the ICRC aid caravans as tacitly supporting the Tamil Tiger rebellion. But it was, nonetheless, government policy. The ICRC protection also opened the door for other large NGOs to provide aid to the blockaded North as well.

On the other hand, in the eastern province, when local communities were under attack from both security forces and the Tigers, the communities approached the ICRC and asked specifically for accompaniment for certain high-risk, yet necessary, travel. The ICRC refused, stating that such travel did not fit into its mandate. In other words, ICRC could do protective accompaniment when it was a collateral effect of one of its more standard operations (such as humanitarian relief), but it could not do so for its own sake. The local activists turned to the smaller and more flexible Quaker Peace Service for protection.

In Guatemala, the ICRC experience was completely different. The government and military denied the existence of political prisoners or prisoners of war and so ruled out visits to detention centers. At one point President Serrano stated that because the constitution did not allow for the existence of political prisoners, giving permission to the ICRC to visit pr

ons would be unconstitutional! Meanwhile, the army kept tight control over all access to the civilian populations in the war zones.

The Communities of Population in Resistance, or CPRs, were a collection of small communities in the northern El Quiche province that had spent years fleeing the army, watching their crops burn, and digging shelters to hide from aerial bombardment. In 1991 the CPRs approached the ICRC, hoping for some humanitarian relief as well as protection. ICRC saw them as a civilian population affected by the conflict and cautiously suggested a modest program in child vaccination. The army at first agreed, but when it came time for implementation, it insisted that the ICRC use Guatemalan military doctors. The CPRs unequivocally refused this option – their fear of the army far exceeded their desire for vaccinations. The ICRC, unable to negotiate a compromise acceptable to both, dropped the project.

A few years later, the CPRs arranged for the Medecins Sans Frontieres NGO to come in to vaccinate the children. At the same time, they invited accompaniment volunteers from several small NGOs around the world to live in their villages. These NGOs could respond to the CPR request without requesting military permission. The ICRC, bound by its policy of requiring formal agreement from the authorities, has been unable to provide either relief or protection to any threatened populations in Guatemala.

Conclusion

Confronting Impunity

Years after the massacres of the 1980s, forensic experts began digging up thousands of unmarked graves in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Sri Lanka. Human rights groups began demanding prosecutions, asking for accompaniment at the same time. The idea here, as before, was that the costs incurred for committing a human rights abuse would help prevent future abuses by diminishing the impunity of the culprits. Human rights literature and law clearly document that impunity is a major facilitating factor in the commission of human rights violations.

Impunity can be achieved at three different levels. At the first level, the actual violations are unknown or hidden from the national and/or international community. At the second level, the existence of human rights violations is known, but the authors' identities are unknown. At the third level, both the act and its authors may be known, but there is still no mechanism or possibility of punishment. Impunity is most powerful when all three levels function simultaneously. Frequently in these situations, when legal activists have the temerity to investigate or attempt judicial processes against human rights violators, the witnesses, lawyers, and even judges are threatened or killed to maintain the state of impunity.

Diego Perebal, a Mayan farmer in the Guatemalan highlands, saw a local militia leader kill a friend and fellow human rights activist. He risked being a witness for the prosecution, and as a result he, his father, and his brother were gunned down by the same thugs. Diego survived the shooting, paralyzed, and with PBI accompaniment continued to prosecute what was now a triple murder. The judge was threatened and fled the country. More than two years later, after repeated intervention by international lawyers and the Inter-American Court, the two killers were convicted. The impunity of the militia leaders throughout rural Guatemala was called into question.

In 1990, Dr. Manorani Saravanamuttu saw her son Richard De Zoysa taken from their home. She later recognized the chief of police on TV as one of the men who took him. With PBI accompaniment, she became the first person to publicly prosecute police officers for their human rights abuses in that period. The case was never resolved in court, but Dr. Saravanamuttu traveled internationally to publicize it. In subsequent years, hundreds of Sri Lankans began taking police officers to court.

In a state where the judicial system supports or ignores human rights abuse, human rights activists turn to international forums to combat it. The idea of international presence and the political costs associated with it deny impunity, saying in effect, "You may have impunity within your borders, but we can punish your actions on the international level." The potential punishment from the international arena may be limited or even informal – such as political embarrassment or the denial of travel visas. While the probability of punishment

may be quite limited, what is important is that it exists at all, and that it names names. That is an important first step toward combating impunity. Human rights groups that access international pressure and maintain close international ties are simultaneously denying impunity for past transgressions (those that they are denouncing), as well as signaling through their international ties that there will not be impunity if they themselves are attacked for their efforts.

Asking the Right Questions

Protective accompaniment may be applied in a wide variety of conflict situations in which civilian actors are threatened. However, as these discussions suggest, there are many questions to be addressed in the process of decision and implementation. A first set of questions concerns the scenario in which the tool is being considered:

- Who are the actors in the conflict? Especially, who are the potential aggressors and what is their relationship to each other, to external sources of support? Who is asking for accompaniment and why? What exactly is the threat they perceive and what are they expecting from the accompaniment?
- Is there available and trustworthy information on the nature of the conflict? Are there trustworthy and objective sources of analysis and interpretation of that information?
- Is there reason to believe that the aggressor party would be susceptible to international pressure and, thus, sensitive to the accompaniment presence? What are the lines of communication for this pressure? If the aggressor party is a state, what is its international strategy and relationship to external actors, such as other states, NGOs, and foreigners in general?
- What is the ideological context? What are the biases and stereotypes of both the aggressor and the party requesting accompaniment that might affect their attitudes toward the accompaniment organization?
- Who are potential allies on the scene? What other international NGOs are operative and what has been their experience?

Answers to questions like these provide the basis for developing an accompaniment strategy. This process of strategic development must address additional questions:

- Which types of human rights abuses are going to constitute the focus of attention and protection? Which types of conduct by the aggressor will be defined as unacceptable?
- What is the deterrence commitment? That is, what will the accompaniment organization do to “punish” the aggressor in the event of unacceptable human rights abuse? What international bodies can be counted on to apply pressure? How frequently can such pressure be applied? Is there sufficient credibility in the force of this pressure?

- How will the accompaniment organization inform the aggressor of its deterrence commitment? Is the aggressor open to direct communication? Are there alternative avenues of access?

Similarly, there are strategic questions regarding the relationship with the accompanied party:

- How is the activist determining the degree of danger?
- What other tactics of protection are being employed in addition to accompaniment?
- What experiences have other threatened activists had in this context?
- What types of communication does the activist have with the aggressor? Does this relationship in any way constrain or aid the potential communication between the accompaniment organization and the aggressor?
- Does the activist expect anything more than accompaniment from the volunteer?
- Is there any risk of building a dependency relationship?
- How can the process of accompaniment be arranged so that it is as unobtrusive as possible in the work and personal life of the accompanied activist?

Finally, these answers, in turn, lead to a series of questions regarding the accompaniment volunteers and the organization itself:

- What is the organization's position with respect to the principles of nonpartisanship, independence, and nonviolence? How will these positions influence the implementation of the accompaniment?
- What are the prerequisite characteristics for volunteers in this accompaniment situation? What are the linguistic demands? The physical demands?
- Will the volunteers be placed in positions where they will need to use delicate political judgment?
- How much understanding of the culture and political situation is required to carry out the task responsibly?
- Does the accompaniment volunteer have the character, the patience, the humility, and the diplomacy to carry out the task?
- Can the organization find enough qualified volunteers to meet the demands and to maintain a consistent and continuous presence, if that is what is called for?
- Is there an existing global network of organizations, individuals, and politicians who are interested in the particular conflict? Does the organization have access to this network?

We are not suggesting that it will ever be possible to find satisfactory answers to all these and other questions before embarking on an accompaniment mission. Sometimes there is not enough information, too much ambiguity, or not enough time, due to the urgency of the situation. But the organization must be aware of the questions and sensitive to

the risks involved in proceeding without answers. At the very least, a clear understanding of where the ambiguities lie can help in developing fallback plans in case of surprises.

Accompaniment is still a young field: 10 years of experience in a limited number of countries, often undocumented and largely unstudied. However, there are many new international organizations attempting to use this tool, and it is essential to learn from the past and document the present to work more effectively in the future.

In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of documentation and synthesis on the experiences of international NGOs in large-scale humanitarian relief operations in conflict. Some of the guidelines and conclusions in books like Minear and Weiss' *Humanitarian Action in Times of War* (1993), for instance, can be applied directly to the work of accompaniment.

Human rights protection, however, has some distinct characteristics from humanitarian relief work, deserving its own analysis. Before accompaniment, the projection of the human rights movement into the field of conflict was largely limited to brief fact-finding missions or lone representatives carefully collecting data. The field is expanding, with more and more human rights workers placing themselves squarely in the line of fire. It is our hope that this paper will serve them in their task, as well as provoke further discussion and study of this important new dynamic.

Endnotes

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17. Ibid.
18. Ester Herrarte and Blanca de Hernandez, author interview, July 1994.
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21. Julia Hernandez, Tutela Legal, San Salvador, author interview, 1994.
22. Lira Cornfeld, "Psicologia del miedo y conducta colectiva en Chile," (1990), 187.
23. Gene Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable*. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1985.
24. According to Richard Neb Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "General deterrence is based on the existing relationship and attempts to prevent an adversary from seriously considering any kind of challenge because of its expected adverse consequences. Immediate deterrence is specific: it is designed to forestall an anticipated challenge to a well-defined and publicized commitment....analyses of immediate deterrence that ignore its relationship to general deterrence offer a biased assessment of its success rate and an incomplete picture of the conditions and processes that account for its outcome....almost every immediate deterrence encounter is the result of a general deterrence failure. In Lebow and Gross Stein, *When Does Deterrence Succeed and How Do We Know?* (Occasional Paper 8). Ottawa: Canadian Inst. for Peace and Intl. Security, 1990.
25. Lebow and Gross Stein, 1990.
26. General Orlando Zepeda, author interview, August 1994.
27. General Hector Gramajo, author interview, July 1994.
28. Bradman Weerakoon, special presidential assistant for international affairs, author interview, April 1994.
29. Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in Times of War*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993.

Appendix 1 Completed Field Interviews

Guatemala

Activists who have turned to international accompaniment for protection (16 interviews)

- Nineth Montenegro – President, Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared (GAM); recipient of the International Human Rights Lawyers and Carter-Menil Awards in 1986
- Amilcar Mendez – President, Council of Ethnic Communities (CERJ); recipient of the R.F. Kennedy Human Rights Award (1990)
- Diego Perebal (CERJ) – Activist who witnessed the murder of his friend, brother, and father, and took the human rights case to the Inter-American Court/OAS
- Rosalina Tuyuc – President, National Council of Guatemalan Widows (CON-AVIGUA)
- Lic. Alfonso Bauer Paiz – Lawyer for refugees returning to Guatemala from Mexico
- Miguel Angel Albizuere – Labor activist, columnist
- Francisco Raymundo Hernandez – Representative of the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR)
- Nery Barrios – Union leader, Unidad de Accion Sindical y Popular (UASP)
- Frank LaRue – Labor and human rights lawyer
- Byron Morales – Union leader, National Union of Guatemalan Workers (UN-SITRAGUA)
- Sergio Guzman – Union leader, UNSITRAGUA
- Ester de Herrarte and Blanca de Hernandez – Human rights activists, Families of the Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA)
- Oswaldo Enriquez and Anantonia Reyes – Human rights activists, Guatemala Human Rights Commission (CDHG)
- Factor Mendez – Human rights activist, Center for Investigation and Education for Human Rights (CIEPRODH)
- Lunafil Thread Factory Union
- Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC)

Military and government (6 interviews)

- General Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales – Minister of defense, 1986–89

- General Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores – De facto president and minister of defense, 1983–86
- Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo–President of Guatemala, 1986–90
- Lic. Rodriguez Weaver – Governmental Special Committee for the Attention of Refugees and Displaced (CEAR)
- Dr. De La Torre – Political science professor and advisor to the military academy
- Lic. Arnoldo Ortiz Moscoso – Former minister of the interior (1993)

International NGOs and diplomatic organizations (6 interviews)

- John Contier – Norwegian Popular Aid
- Beate Thorensen – International Council of Voluntary Agencies
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees
- Benjamin Garcia – Human rights attache, U.S. Embassy
- Manuel Piñero – Spanish ambassador
- International Committee of the Red Cross

El Salvador

Activists and organizations that have turned to international accompaniment for protection (9 interviews)

- Celia Medrano – Nongovernmental Human Rights Commission (CDHNG)
- Mirna de Anaya – Widow of Herbert Anaya, assassinated leader of the CDHNG
- Jorge Villatoro – Representative of the repatriated community of Ciudad Romero. This community returned from refuge in Panama in 1990 with international accompaniment.
- Carlos Bonilla – Representative of the repatriated community of Santa Marta. Returned from refugee camps in Honduras in 1987
- Father Luis Serrano – Episcopal Church priest, arrested and imprisoned in 1989
- Edgar Palacios – Baptist minister and leader of the Permanent Commission for the National Debate, an amalgamation of organizations that played a central role in organizing the civilian population to promote and support a peaceful negotiation of the war
- CoMadres – Families of the disappeared and killed
- Humberto Centeno – Union leader, Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS)
- Christian Committee for the Displaced (CRIPDES)

Military and government (4 interviews)

- General Juan Orlando Zepeda – Top military officer before 1992 accords. Named by Salvadoran truth commission for participation in various human rights abuses, including the massacre of the Jesuits in 1989. Received amnesty. Currently retired
- General Vargas – Currently working for the Salvadoran Foreign Affairs Ministry
- Dr. Jorge Martinez – Former vice-minister of the interior. Active politician
- Dr. Kirio Waldo Salgado – Conservative ideological leader. Head of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy. Accused of intellectual responsibility for death squad activities

Others (3 interviews)

- Felix Ulloa – Founder of the Salvadoran Institute for Juridical Studies (IEJES) and lawyer for UNTS
- Julia Hernandez – Tutela Legal, Catholic Church legal support office
- Reed Brody – International Human Rights Law Group/U.N. Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL)

Sri Lanka

Activists and organizations that have turned to international accompaniment for protection (9 interviews)

- Negombo United Peoples Organization – Community organizers
- Dr. Manorani Saravanamuttu – Mother of acclaimed Sri Lankan journalist Richard De Zoysa, who after her son's death prosecuted the police whom she saw kidnap her son
- Batty Weerakoon – Lawyer for Dr. Saravanamuttu who prosecuted the case
- Britto Fernando – Labor union organizer
- Sunanda Deshapriya – Journalist. Activist with the Free Media Movement
- Rev. Baddegama Samitha Thero – Buddhist monk who received death threats in 1990 for trying to help victims of government violence
- Kumadini Samuels – Human rights activist with *INFORM*, a weekly human rights publication
- Neelan Kandasamy – Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE)
- Kalyananda Thiranyagama – Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD)

Others (8 interviews)

- Bradman Weerakoon – Special Presidential Assistant for International Affairs (1989–94)
- Judge Soza – Governmental Human Rights Task Force

- Swedish Embassy attaché
- U.S. Embassy attaché
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees
- International Committee of the Red Cross
- Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)
- Phil Esmonde – Quaker Peace Service

International Accompaniment Volunteers

Guatemala – 43 interviews

- Anne Aleshire (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1992–93
- Meredith Larson (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1989
- Martin Kulldorff (Sweden) – PBI Guatemala team 1989
- Karen Brandow (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1986–87
- Pablo Stanfield (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1983–84
- Winnie Romeril (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1990–91
- Christina Banzato (Italy) – PBI Guatemala team 1989, 1990–91
- Rosa Maria Garcia Gutierrez (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1992–93
- Edith Cole (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1983–84
- Paul Weaver (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1986
- Francoise Denis (Belgium) – PBI Guatemala team 1991, 1994, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Clemen Pulet (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1994–95
- Ann Marie Richards (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1994–95
- Futoshi Sato (Japan) – PBI Guatemala team 1994–95
- Heike Kammer (Germany) – PBI Guatemala team 1991, 1993–94, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Georgina Areneda (Chile) – PBI Guatemala team 1994–95
- Rusa Jeremic (Canada) – PBI Guatemala team 1989–90, 1994
- Carmen Diez (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1990, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Javier Zabala (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1990–91, PBI Colombia team 1995–96
- Liam Mahony (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1987–88, 1991–92, PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993
- Father Alain Richard (France) – PBI Guatemala team 1983, 1985–86, PBI Sri Lanka team 1990

- Edward Kinane (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1988, PBI El Salvador team 1989, PBI Sri Lanka team 1990
- Barbara MacQuarrie (Canada) – PBI Guatemala team 1985–86, PBI El Salvador team 1987–89
- Hazel Tulecke (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1983–84, PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993
- Janey Skinner (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1989–90, PBI Colombia team 1994–95
- John Lindsay (Poland) – PBI Guatemala team 1986, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Jeff Smith (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1988–89
- Barbara Scott (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1988, 1989
- Virginia Flagg (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1986
- Chris Corry (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1986
- Aaron Perry (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1986
- Eric Robinson (Canada) – PBI Guatemala team 1987
- Sara Wohlleb (USA) – Witness for Peace Guatemala team 1993–95
- Tomoko (Japan) – Independent accompaniment of National Widows Organization (CONAVIGUA)
- Curt Wands (USA) – Coordinator, National Coordinating Office for Refugees and Displaced (NCOORD)
- Gerd Büntzly (Germany) – Volunteer with German accompaniment organization (CAREA)
- Susana van der Meij – Coordinator, Dutch Accompaniment Project
- Terry Vandiver (USA) – Seva Foundation
- Raynor Ramirez (USA) – Seva Foundation
- Carminia Albertos (Spain) – Seva Foundation
- Ryan Golten (USA) – Seva Foundation
- Fermin Rodrigo (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1992, independent accompaniment volunteer with CPRs 1994
- Maria Gabriela Serra (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1989–90

El Salvador – 17 interviews

- Luis Perez (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1989–90
- Ester Domenech (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1989–90
- Luis Miranda (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1990–91

- Francoise Denis (Belgium) – PBI Guatemala team 1991, 1994, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Heike Kammer (Germany) – PBI Guatemala team 1991, 1993–94, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Ramon Ballester (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1989
- Sharon Bernstein (USA) – PBI El Salvador team 1990–91
- Carolyn Mow (USA) – PBI El Salvador team 1989
- Phil Pardi – PBI El Salvador team 1990–91
- Luis Enrique Eguren (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1988, PBI Sri Lanka team 1989
- Barbara MacQuarrie (Canada) – PBI Guatemala team 1985–86, PBI El Salvador team 1987–89
- Edward Kinane (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1990, PBI El Salvador team 1989, PBI Guatemala team 1988
- Carmen Diez (Spain) – PBI Guatemala team 1990, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- John Lindsay (Poland) – PBI Guatemala team 1986, PBI El Salvador team 1988
- Jose Luis Blanco (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1990–92
- Bill Hutchinson (USA) – Marin County Interfaith Task Force
- Suzanne Bristol (USA) – Marin County Interfaith Task Force

Sri Lanka – 17 interviews

- Gabriela Schonbrun (Switzerland) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1994
- Brent Horner (England) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1994
- Almut Wadle (Germany) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1993–94
- Andrew Kendle (Canada) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1994
- Edward Kinane (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1990, PBI El Salvador team 1989, PBI Guatemala team 1988
- Father Alain Richard (France) – PBI Guatemala team 1983, 1985–86, PBI Sri Lanka team 1990
- George Lakey (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1989
- Yeshua Moser (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1990
- Marilyn Krysl (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1992
- Patrick Coy (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1993
- Toby Armour (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1993
- Christine Clarke (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1993
- Bue Alfred (England) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1989

- Luis Enrique Eguren (Spain) – PBI El Salvador team 1988, PBI Sri Lanka team 1989
- Peter Gordon (England) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1991–92
- Fernando Nicosio (Spain) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1995
- Michael Valliant (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1994–95

Haiti – 4 interviews

- Diane Harder (USA) – PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993
- Liam Mahony (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1987–88, 1991–92, PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993
- Edward Kinane (USA) – PBI Sri Lanka team 1990, PBI El Salvador team 1989, PBI Guatemala team 1988, PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993
- Hazel Tulecke (USA) – PBI Guatemala team 1983–84, PBI Haiti team (Cry for Justice) 1993

Other interviews with individuals who requested anonymity: 3

Total number of interviews conducted: 142

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About the Authors

Liam Mahony and Luis Enrique Eguren bring to this study 16 years of combined experience working as direct participants with international nongovernmental organizations doing accompaniment work – in Guatemala, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Haiti, and the Balkans. Both have been training volunteers for overseas service in conflict zones since 1988. Their long experience with Peace Brigades International (PBI) – the nongovernmental organization that first developed the tool of accompaniment in Guatemala and El Salvador – uniquely qualifies them for this analysis. It is that experience that gave them access to most of the raw material for this paper.

Luis Enrique Eguren is a medical doctor in Spain, and has worked in health education projects in El Salvador. He served as an accompaniment volunteer in El Salvador in 1988, and founded the PBI project in Sri Lanka in 1989. In 1993 and 1994, Dr. Eguren carried out initial investigations for accompaniment projects in Colombia (through PBI) and the Balkans (through the Balkans Peace Team).

Liam Mahony started his career as an engineering systems manager, before returning to Cornell University to study classical piano. He has worked as a political organizer for community groups, national coalitions, and congressional campaigns. He began working with PBI in Guatemala in 1987, and has returned there to do accompaniment work three times. Mr. Mahony has led numerous volunteer training sessions for the Seva Foundation, the Chicago-based Guatemala Accompaniment Project, and the Cry for Justice Coalition (Haiti, 1993), as well as PBI.