Nonviolent Sanctions

News from the Albert Einstein Institution

Vol. VI, No. 2 Fall 1994

Cuban Migration

by Holly Ackerman

Between August 19, 1994, and September 21, 1994, 31,923 Cubans were picked off rafts in the Florida Straits by the U.S. Coast Guard and taken to camps at Guantanamo Bay. To stop this mass exodus, the U.S. and Cuban governments negotiated an agreement that assures a minimum of 20,000 Cubans will be legally allowed to emigrate to the U.S. annually. In exchange, the Cuban government has agreed to crack down on illegal emigration.

The recent wave of Cuban migration resulted from the interplay of two forces: discontent among average Cuban citizens and Castro's need for a safety valve to reduce discontent and take some of the pressure for change off his regime. This article explores how these two factors contributed to the recent Cuban exodus.

In early January 1994, I sat with a newly arrived *balsero* (rafter) at the Refugee Center on Stock Island, Florida and asked him, "Was there a time things changed for you in Cuba?" The question was deliberately vague, leaving room for him to decide whether his was a consistent life experience and, if not, to define for himself what change is and how it occurred. His life changed abruptly in 1978.

Most U.S. political histories of Cuba also tell us this year was significant. It was, both for my respondent and for U.S. historians, the year of "el diálogo" (the dialogue), when Cuban exiles from Miami returned to the island for the first time to meet with Fidel Castro. Those meetings paved the way for charter flights from Miami and the beginning of visits by

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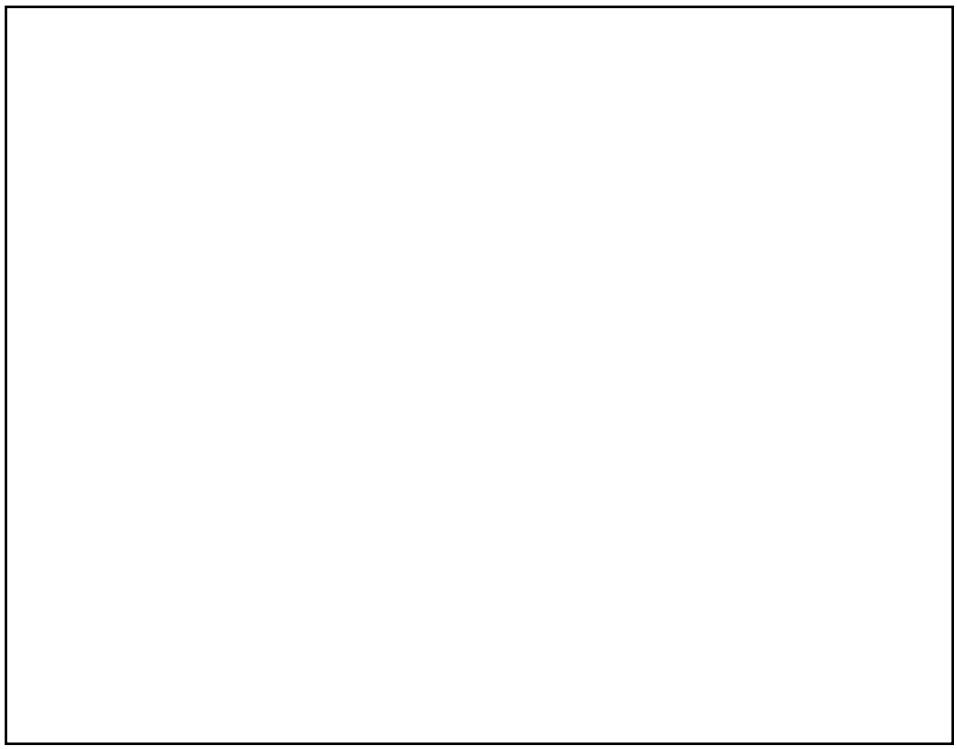
Holly Ackerman is an Einstein Institution Fellow and a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate School of International Studies, University of Miami.



Cuban rafters adrift in the Florida Straits. (Photo: Miami Herald)

Former Lithuanian Defense Minister Joins AEI as Visiting Scholar

Former Lithuanian Defense Minister Audrius Butkevicius joins the Albert Einstein Institution this fall as a visiting scholar. He will be in residence for three months to study civilian-based defense (CBD) and to work with Einstein Institution personnel on two CBD-related projects for the Baltic states.

[Civilian-based defense is an alternative defense policy in which a nation's population and institutions are prepared to defend against internal and external threats through mass nonviolent resistance and noncooperation.]

Mr. Butkevicius is helping to draft a Baltic Civilian-Based Defense Mutual Assistance Treaty that will state concrete ways in which international support would be supplied by signatory nations to any attacked member using civilian-based defense measures. He is also helping to write a CBD handbook for Lithuanian households, which may be adapted for use in Latvia and Estonia as well.

Mr. Butkevicius' presence with us is proving to be invaluable as we work on the treaty and handbook and consider political strategies for getting them adopted by governments in the Baltic region. He has been asked by the president of Lithuania to work on developing alternative security approaches in the Baltic region. He is also the most likely candidate for the task of shepherding the treaty through the political process that

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Nonviolent Sanctions (ISSN 1052-0384) is a quarterly publication of the Albert Einstein Institution, a nonprofit organization advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action in conflicts throughout the world. Independent and nonsectarian, it does not endorse political candidates and is not an advocate of any political organization.

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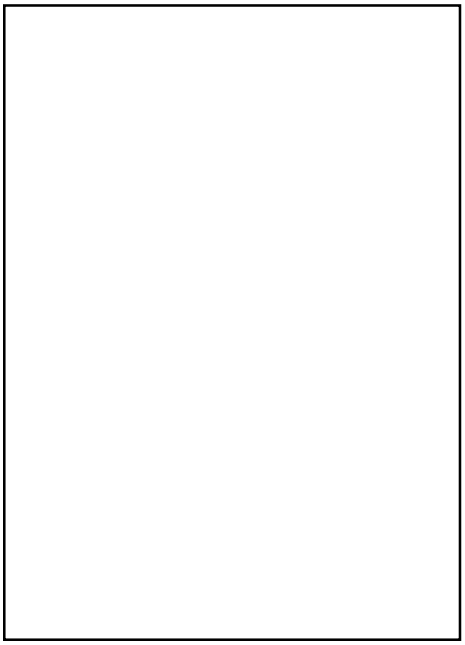
AEI Board Elects New Chair

At the Albert Einstein Institution's annual meeting in July, the board of directors elected Elizabeth F. Defeis as its new chair. She succeeds Thomas C. Schelling, who served as the board's chair for five years.

Professor Defeis is the former Dean of Seton Hall University School of Law and is currently teaching International Law, International Human Rights, and United States Constitutional Law at Seton Hall. She has provided technical assistance to the governments of Armenia, Sierra Leone, and Tajikistan on constitution drafting and, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, is producing a television course in conjunction with the U.N. Decade on International Law. She served as the first chair of the Urban Development Corporation of New Jersey and is an NGO delegate to the United Nations Coalition Against Traffic in Women. Professor Defeis is a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on Gender Equality in the Courts. Her recent publications include "International Covenants: An Alternative to ERA?" and "Freedom of Speech and International Norms: A Response to Hate Speech."

The board also re-elected Christopher Kruegler as president, and elected Hazel M. McFerson as secretary-treasurer.

At its fall meeting, the board of directors will welcome a new member, Stephen Marks. Dr. Marks is a Visiting Fellow at the Center of International Studies of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University. He is also an adjunct professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Dr. Marks' career in the field of human rights includes ten years with UNESCO in France and five years with the Ford Foundation in New York. In 1992-93 he was responsible for the human rights education, training, and information unit of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).



New AEI Chair Elizabeth F. Defeis

In addition, the Einstein Institution recently welcomed four new members to its Advisors Council: I. Roberto Eisenmann, Jr., President of *La Prensa* (Panama City); Donald L. Horowitz, James B. Duke Professor of Law and Political Science, Duke University; Hisham Sharabi, Professor of History, Georgetown University; and Peter Szanton, Szanton Associates. ■

The Albert Einstein Institution
celebrates the 125th anniversary
of the birth of
Mohandas K. Gandhi
October 2, 1869 - January 30, 1948

Nonviolent Struggle Against Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of East Germany

by Roland Bleiker

The vast economic, social, and political problems which have dominated Eastern Europe in the post-Cold War period have largely overshadowed our collective memory of the events that led to the collapse of authoritarian Communism. The few who go back to study the revolutions of 1989 present them generally as the result of an inevitable evolution. Communism is seen as an inherently flawed social system that was bound to disintegrate soon or later. The role of people in forging the course of history is often ignored or downplayed.

The case of East Germany illustrates well that people indeed played a crucial role in precipitating the fall of the existing authoritarian regime. This form of people power manifested itself in various forms of nonviolent protests. Large-scale street demonstrations and massive emigration waves increased in frequency and intensity until, in the winter of 1989, the Communist system crumbled under the pressure from below. Remembering the impact of these nonviolent forms of protest is important because it illustrates that 1) an authoritarian regime cannot generate and maintain its own power base through coercive means alone and that 2) the population can, through *active* and *nonviolent* withdrawal of cooperation, undermine the sustenance of an existing repressive system.

This is, however, not to deny that the emergence of widespread opposition was facilitated by radical changes in the external environment, particularly the crumbling of the Soviet-led alliance system. In May of 1989 the reform-oriented government in Budapest decided to dismantle barbed-wire and other installations along the Austro-Hungarian border. The resulting "hole" in the "iron" curtain did not remain undetected for long. At the occasion of the "Pan-European Picnic" in August, 661 East Germans spectacularly fled across the border. Other East Germans who wanted to leave sought

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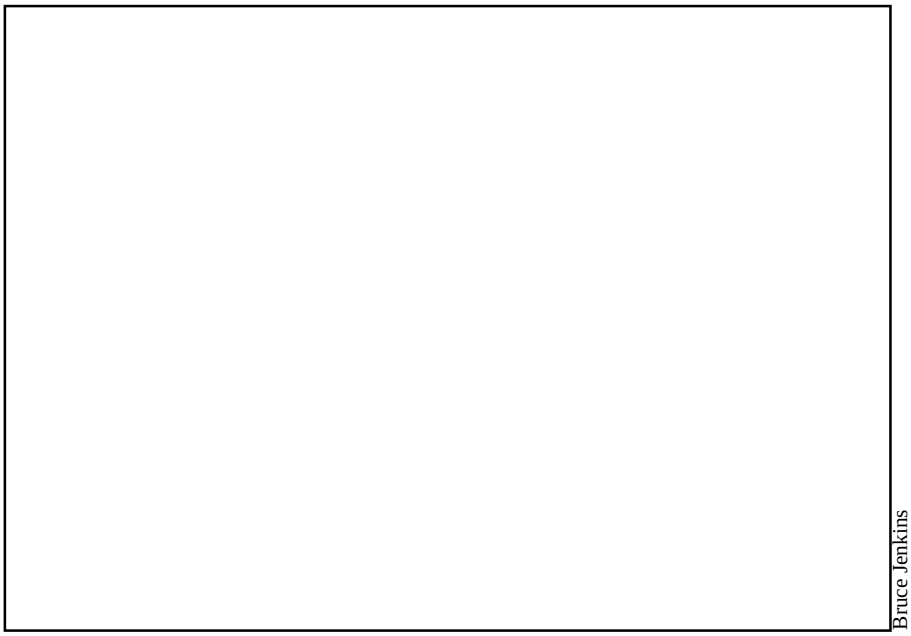
Roland Bleiker is a Ph.D. candidate at the Australian National University. In 1991-92, he was a pre-doctoral fellow at the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. His monograph, Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany, *is available from the Albert Einstein Institution for $3.00 plus $1.00 postage.*



Bruce Jenkins

Gene Sharp, Senior Scholar-in-Residence of the Albert Einstein Institution, and Audrius Butkevicius, former Minister of National Defense of Lithuania.

Former Lithuanian Defense Minister Joins AEI as Visiting Scholar

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would lead to its adoption.

The Institution's relationship with the Baltics started in mid-1990 when Mr. Butkevicius, then Director-General of the Department of National Defense of Lithuania, received a copy of Gene Sharp's *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System* and had it translated into Lithuanian for use by government officials. A year and a half later, in December 1991, Defense Minister Butkevicius credited Dr. Sharp's book as having provided the basis for much of his planning of nonviolent resistance against Soviet troops, first in January 1991 and later in August 1991.

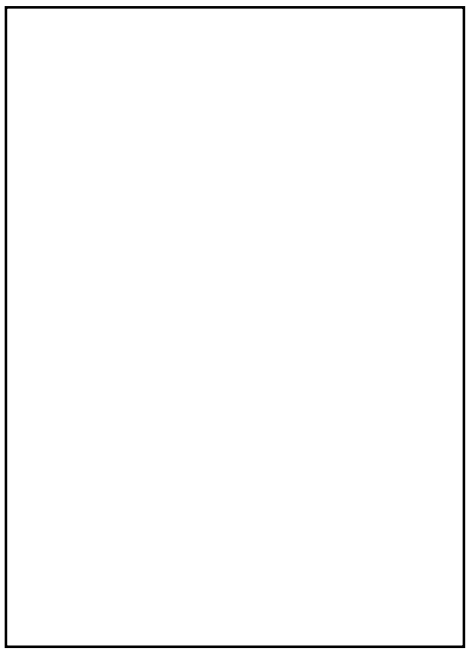
Subsequently, in June 1992, the Albert Einstein Institution and the Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania co-sponsored a three-day conference in Vilnius on "The Relevance of Civilian-Based Defense for the Baltic States." It was the first time that defense ministry representatives from four different countries—Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Sweden—came together to consider the potential of civilian-based defense for their countries. In all, some fifty political leaders, defense specialists, and scholars of nonviolent action from nine countries participated. Other conference participants came from Australia, England, Poland, Russia, and the United States. ■

Cuban Migration

(Continued from p. 1)

Cuban-Americans. The material well-being of the exiles, our histories tell us, stunned the Cuban people and turned the tide on Castro's propaganda, creating a demand for exit to the good life that culminated in the 1980 Mariel boatlift. My badly sunburned informant thinks otherwise.

He doesn't recall the clothes and vitamin pills and VCRs the exiles brought with them. He only remembers seeing television coverage of Fidel Castro walking into the Havana Libre Hotel—a place reserved, at that time, for tourists and dignitaries, where average Cuban citizens could not enter—to pat the backs of *gusanos* (worms—the revolutionary term used to characterize those who go to Miami or otherwise turn their backs on the revolution.) In this man's eyes, Castro was consorting with the enemy. First, the future rafter cried, then he raged inside, then he started to think about leaving. He wasn't pulled to Miami by dreams of golden exile, and he has no family here. He was pushed by the betrayal of a way of life he had sacrificed for and values he had held for twenty years. Speaking of the 1980 boatlift, he comments: "I couldn't leave then because I was doing my military service and I couldn't get out." He talks of denying his labor to the government by leaving and of easing the constant resentment he felt but could not voice without risking ostracism, at least, and jail at worst. So he arrived in 1994 instead of 1980, with fourteen years of smoldering discontent inside and mixed emotions about joining the North American culture he despised for so long. This is one type of new Cuban exile—not the devout, middle-class, anti-communist of the '60s and '70s but the disenchanted socialist who tried to live within the revolution and found he could not. He is more likely than pre-1980 exiles to be unskilled, unmarried, black, and without U.S. connections. The demography of the population going into exile now more closely resembles the population on the island.



Cubans stress their need for help near the Straits of Florida. (Photo: Miami Herald)

Castro sent an image to the world press of rafters freely setting off from beautiful white sand beaches. One might have imagined they were going tubing for the afternoon and not that three out of every four would perish at sea.

While the new Cuban exiles may see themselves as protesting the Cuban regime by leaving it, Castro sees it differently. By allowing discontented Cubans to leave *en masse*, he weakens domestic opposition, deflects attention away from internal problems, and refocuses it on the external issue of U.S. immigration policy. He learned this from the 1980 exodus.

In 1979, following *el diálogo*, there were dramatic signs of increased discontent, including Embassy break-ins in Havana as people sought amnesty in foreign embassies. Numbers rose from 25 in 1978 to 440 in 1979. It was the position of the Cuban government that these individuals were "lumpen" (shiftless, anti-social) elements, and therefore, common criminals under Cuban law and consequently not eligible for amnesty under international law.

When several of the people entered the Peruvian Embassy in the spring of 1980, the ambassador, Edgardo de Habich, agreed with the Cuban definition and turned the would-be asylees out. Castro then called a meeting of all Latin American ambassadors and pointed to the Peruvian example, asking for Latin American solidarity on this point. When word of de Habich's actions reached Lima, he was recalled and the asylees were personally brought back to the Embassy by the new Peruvian ambassador, Eduardo Torres. On April 1, 1980, a group of six entered the Embassy in a mini-bus by crashing through the gates. Cuban guards fired on the bus, killing in the crossfire a Cuban employed at the Embassy. When the Peruvians refused to turn over the asylees, the Cubans removed the guards and announced the removal on radio. Within 36 hours, 10,865 people entered the grounds of the Embassy seeking asylum.

As asylees were subsequently airlifted to Costa Rica and Peru, the image of discontented, young Cubans, raised under the Revolution, was broadcast worldwide and Castro acted strategically to shift the political focus. He invited Miami exiles to come to Mariel harbor to pick up their malcontent relatives and said all counter-revolutionary elements were free to leave. Those in the Embassy were promised priority on the boats and offered safe-conduct passes to their homes to await departure. All but about 400 in the Embassy accepted the passes. Boats flooded south from Florida and the history of the Peruvian Embassy quickly became the history of Mariel. To confirm the negative image of those who wished to leave, Castro mixed criminals and mental patients in the outbound boats—they totaled about 19% of the 125,000 who left through Mariel. Many of this group had been incarcerated for "crimes" that would not be considered actionable in the U.S.—

homosexual association, for example—and only about 2-3% were hardened criminals. Nonetheless, popular support for the "Marielitos" in the U.S. was compromised by the media image of a criminal group and the real rash of violent crime that washed over South Florida in the wake of the 2-3%.

Castro's jiu-jitsu worked. Those who remained for 59 days in the Embassy, protesting conditions in Cuba, were ignored by the press and, eventually, were quietly flown to Peru. The incident became a question of migration policy. U.S. officials became painfully aware that domestic Cuban protest could be a nonviolent weapon wielded by Castro to discredit his opponents and to reduce domestic discontent through exit. Policy post-mortem in the U.S. decreed that the next round of conflict would require immediate shutdown of private boats traveling south from Florida, refusal to accept masses of refugees, and avoidance of the drama of a test of wills between the U.S. President and Castro. This is exactly the strategy employed by the U.S. in the recent crest of rafters. It seems to have resulted in a draw.

Unlike the Embassy entry, the 1994 wave was no surprise to the Cubans and was undoubtedly assisted by the government. The pitiful craft used by *balseros* (only one in four rafters survives the trip—Castro recently confirmed this estimated ratio in an interview with *U.S. News and World Repor*t when he stated that 51,076 Cubans have set out in the last 4.5 years and only 13,275 have made it. The four to one ratio was also formulated by Dr. Juan Clark of Miami Dade Community College based on his continuing work on this subject since 1969.) are constructed of materials that are unobtainable in Cuba without government authorization. Vehicles and fuel used to transport rafts to beaches are rigidly controlled and scarce. Surveillance by the ubiquitous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and their more militant cousins, the Rapid Response Brigades, had actively impeded exit prior to August. Finally, Cuban border patrols had previously stopped rafters and many were imprisoned. It is no coincidence that U.S. Coast Guard rescues surged from 1,010 in July to 21,300 in August immediately following the first sizable and uncontrolled anti-government protest rally in Havana. Also, not surprisingly, the totals of rafters in January had been only 248. As the Cuban people sent Castro a message of increasing willingness to take strategic action, he sent a reminder to the U.S. regarding his ability to swamp us with refugees.

He also sent an image to the world press of rafters freely setting off from beautiful white sand beaches. One might have imagined they were going tubing for the afternoon and not that three out of every four would perish at sea. Thus, the weapon of migration was once again in play both from below and above. The governments, however, were taking corrective strategic action—after a brief initial statement, Clinton laid low letting Janet Reno handle the press with monotonous repetition of what amounted to a doctrine of "no pasarán" (they shall not pass); immediately prior to the Presidential announcement, the Coast Guard put South Florida on notice that private crafts going to Cuba would be seized and owners prosecuted—appropriate examples of confiscations were publicized locally; South Florida's Cuban political leaders were consulted and their support enlisted before action was taken and, finally, rafters were taken anywhere but Miami.

Where does this standoff from above leave those Cubans—on both sides of the Straits of Florida—who are discontent and want to struggle for an immediate democratic opening? Tactics must shift from below and a wedge must be entered in the international stalemate from above. U.S. policy to isolate and ostracize Cuba will continue to be driven by two domestic priorities: first, by the desire of Presidential candidates to receive the electoral support (or at least not incur the political wrath) of the organized Cuban community of South Florida and New Jersey; and second, by the current, national compassion-fatigue toward immigration. No organized, national interest group cares sufficiently about the Cuban situation to intervene with the weight and persistence required to offset Cuban groups in Miami. And, Cubans in Miami are unshakably committed to taking Castro down before all else.

The likeliest scenario for elite intervention lies with other Latin American nations. Figures such as Oscar Arias, Lula da Silva, or sub-regional groups of nations could broker an end to the stalemate, allowing the U.S. Administration to save face and providing a political counterweight to the Miami groups. Indeed, the Rio Group has recently announced that democratization/reintegration of Cuba will be one of its priorities for the December

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Cuban rafters enter the water on the shore of Cojimar. (Photo: Miami Herald)

Nonviolent Struggle Against Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of East Germany

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refuge in the West German representations of East Berlin, Budapest, Warsaw, and Prague. On September 11, Hungary unilaterally terminated an agreement with the East German government and opened its borders to Austria. Within three days, 15,000 East Germans arrived in the West.

At the same time opposition activities within East Germany became more organized. Between July and September 1989 various (illegal) grassroots opposition movements emerged. Nonviolent popular demonstrations became a common feature. Each Monday, after the traditional Protestant service at Leipzig's Church of Saint Nicolas, people gathered outside to demand reforms. Their number continuously increased week after week. On October 2, 25,000 of them were violently dispersed by the police.

The celebrations at the fortieth anniversary of East Germany (October 7) constituted the last attempt by Erich Honecker (the country's infamous long-time autocrat) to redress the balance. But his categorical refusal to acknowledge the need for change only increased the pressure from below. Thousands of East Germans kept leaving the country every day and nonviolent street protests became a "normal" feature of every city in the country. The Monday demonstration in Leipzig was by now an institutionalized event of nonviolent mass protest; 70,000 people attended on October 9, and 120,000 attended a week later on October 16.

The continuously increasing pressure triggered a power struggle between revisionist and hardline factions in the politburo. On October 18, Erich Honecker and two of his closest and oldest allies, Gunter Mittag and Joachim Hermann, were forced to resign from all of their positions. Yet, the new government, headed by another long-time Honecker confidant, Egon Krenz, could not calm the situation with the announced reforms. Too little, too late was the general consensus in the population.

Demonstrations became again more frequent and dramatically increased in size. Calls for more democracy, free elections, "new thinking," and mobility rights could be heard all over East Germany. *"We the people"* echoed day after day, hundreds of thousands of times, through the streets of Leipzig, Dresden, East Berlin, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Potsdam, and many other cities. Leipzig alone witnessed several nonviolent demonstrations that were attended by more than 200,000 people. On November 4, over half a million people took to the streets in East Berlin.

Meanwhile, the lack of man (and woman)-power that resulted from the exodus, which continued at a rate of about 10,000 East Germans a day, seriously interrupted the functioning of the country. Many spheres, such as industry, the service sector, public transportation, and hospitals either totally collapsed or functioned with great difficulty. Subsequently published personal accounts of high-ranking officials leave no doubt about the power that this nonviolent form of protest exerted. For example, Egon Krenz and Gunter Schabowski admit that mass migration had a tremendous impact on them and other leading figures involved in the decision-making process.

Within half a year, one of the most repressive regimes of Central and Eastern Europe had crumbled like a house of cards under the pressure from below.

Soon, the mounting popular pressures claimed their next "victims." More old guards and key figures of the politburo were forced to "retire," including Margot Honecker, Harry Tisch, Kurt Hager, and Erich Mielke. On November 7, the entire government under Willi Stoph resigned. The day after, the politburo followed suit. Then, on November 9, 1989, came the beginning of the end, the final blow to the Communist regime: Gunter Schabowski, spokesperson for the government, declared that with immediate effect, all East German citizens were free to travel abroad without prior permission from the state authorities. The same night, sensational pictures were seen all over the world: thousands of people climbing over and dismantling the anachronistic Berlin wall in front of puzzled and helpless East German guards. In the days to come, hundreds of thousands of East Germans took a glimpse at the West, a possibility that had been inconceivable to them for decades.

From then on, it took little time for what remained of the old regime to vanish into the annals of European history. Emigration increased even more and demonstrations did not cease until all remnants of the old system were gone. Placing Hans Modrow, a reform communist, at the head of the government did not postpone the fall. In December, Egon Krenz resigned from all his functions. Under his successor, Gregor Gysi, the Communist Party virtually disintegrated. On March 16, 1990, the first free parliamentary elections took place in East Germany. The Christian Democratic Union, a sister organization of the West German conservative ruling party, achieved 40.9% of the votes—a spectacular success.

Every single demand that the people had taken to the streets in the fall of 1989 was thus met by the spring of 1990. Within half a year, one of the most repressive regimes of Central and Eastern Europe had crumbled like a house of cards under the pressure from below.

Much of the people power that manifested itself in 1989 has disappeared since. Power returned to the long and intertwined hallways of bureaucratic politics. The unification process that resulted from the events of 1989 is indeed much better characterized by the word *Anschluss* (annexation) because it was entirely dominated by short-term monetary concerns, party politics, and elite engineering from within West Germany. Various intellectuals sharply criticized the legal and political framework as well as the hasty implementation of unification. They argued that what could have been a chance to build a more just and democratic Germany (and Europe) ended in a complete subordination to capricious market-oriented incentives. By now, a socioeconomic division has replaced the former

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New Book Focuses on Palestinian Struggle

Souad Dajani, a long-time friend of the Einstein Institution and former Scholar-in-Residence, has just published, with Temple University Press, *Eyes Without Country: Searching for a Palestinian Strategy of Liberation*. Her work provides for the Palestinian struggle what is missing from so many long-standing conflicts as they inch their way toward resolution: a comprehensive strategic perspective.

Dajani finds a place in that perspective for the role of civilian resistance through nonviolent action, but she is careful throughout to maintain a critical posture toward such action. In doing so, she illuminates a strategy and a set of methods that will continue to be vitally important, not just in the achievement, but ultimately in the maintenance and defense, of true Palestinian independence.

Her prescriptions are anything but wishful. They are grounded in history, pragmatism, and a mature grasp of all the forces bearing on the arena of conflict. Dajani has taken great care to bring her work up to the current conjuncture in Palestinian affairs, so that it is as timely as it is well written. *Eyes Without Country* may be the most cogent statement of the strategic challenge facing Palestinians since the Intifada began in 1987. It is a must for all who are concerned with the future of Palestinian politics.

—Christopher Kruegler

Book Review

Eyes Without Country *by Souad R. Dajani is available from Temple University Press by calling 800-447-1656 or via fax, number 215-204-4719. List prices are $22.95/paperback and $49.95/cloth. However, a 20% discount can be obtained by identifying yourself as a subscriber to the Albert Einstein Institution newsletter,* Nonviolent Sanctions. *Dr. Dajani currently teaches sociology at Antioch College.* ■

The Albert Einstein Institution Monograph Series

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Please add $1.00 each for postage and handling.

Nonviolent Struggle Against Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of East Germany

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political-ideological one. The tremendous tensions created by the differences in income, wealth, and standard of living between east and west Germany had, of course, a spill-over effect on social stability. Among the many signs that testify to a rising level of instability in "post-wall" east Germany are dramatic increases in the number and intensity of strikes, fraud, real estate and currency speculation, bank robberies, neo-fascist youth gangs, prostitution, drug consumption, suicides and road accidents.

Yet, the fact that the revolution of 1989 turned sour is not an argument against the power of nonviolent action. If anything, it is an argument for its continuous application. Forms of domination manifest themselves in various subtle ways and hardly any social system can escape them. Nonviolent protest is one way of defending the autonomy of the people. Greater awareness of the potential of nonviolent action is thus of utmost importance for any grassroots fight that attempts to resist impositions from above.

[Reprinted with permission from *Nonviolence Today* No. 38 (May/June 1994).] ■

Cuban Migration

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Hemispheric Summit in Miami.

The average Cuban who has contemplated setting out on a raft, and his/her sympathetic but unorganized counterpart in Miami, might consider alternative tactics such as forming silent human chains along the waterfront in both Miami and Havana as the Summit opens—one facing north, the other south. The media value of drama and need for pressure on all key political players would be recognized; risk to human life would be low; and alternative perspectives in both locations could begin to be organized and expressed. ■

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