
Nonviolent Sanctions

News from the Albert Einstein Institution

Vol. VI, No. 1

Summer 1994

Burmese Exile Leaders Examine Political Defiance as Option in Pro-Democracy Struggle

Several prominent Burmese pro-democracy leaders met April 22–24 at the Einstein Institution to examine the nature of political defiance and its potential for restoring democracy to Burma.

"Political Defiance" is nonviolent struggle—protest, noncooperation, and intervention—applied defiantly and actively for political purposes.

The purpose of the consultation was to provide the participants with a solid foundation of understanding of political defiance as a major political option in the Burmese struggle for democracy.

Those attending the consultation were Dr. Sein Win (Prime Minister of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma), Bo Hla Tint (Minister of Energy and Mining and Minister in Charge of Foreign Affairs of the NCGUB), Win Khet (President of the National League for Democracy—Liberated Area, and former President of the Writers and Artists Guild), Dr. Thaung Htun (Secretariat Member of the NCGUB and Central Executive Committee Member (Foreign Affairs) of the All Burma Students Democratic Front), Louisa Benson Craig (respected Karen supporter and representative of the Karen National Union in the US), Harn Yawngnwe (son of Burma's first president and member of Associates to Develop Democratic Burma), Dr. Mya Maung (Professor of Finance, Boston College, and author of several books on Burma), Aye Aye Thant (daughter of former UN Secretary General U Thant and organizer of Burmese activities earlier in Bangkok and now in the US), Tyn Myint U (former United Nations official now affiliated with Harvard University's Center for International Affairs), and Sunda Khin (Assistant

to the Prime Minister at the Washington office of the NCGUB).

During the weekend consultation attention was given to the following points, among others:

- the basic nature of political defiance and its relevance for Burma; its theory of power, methods, and mechanisms of change;

- why people provide the obedience and cooperation that dictatorships require, and under what conditions do people instead disobey and noncooperate;

- what activities and factors contami-

nate the workings of political defiance, and need to be avoided or counteracted;

- the importance of sound strategic planning and examination of some of the technique's strategic principles;

- principles of effective political communication ("propaganda") and how to apply them; and

- the future of political defiance in Burma: What are the opportunities it opens? What are the obstacles to its uses and effective application? And what are the strategic options available to the

(Continued on p. 4)

Renewed Protest in Tibet

Several small pro-independence demonstrations in Tibet have been reported in recent months, according to the London-based Tibet Information Network.

On the morning of March 21, three nuns gathered in the Barkor square and began to chant slogans calling for "freedom for Tibet" and "long life of the Dalai Lama." Another report said they also called for "religious freedom" and for the Chinese "to go back to China." The three women were taken away by police and are reported to be detained in Gutsa detention center, east of Lhasa.

Another event took place in Lhasa March 27 when two monks staged a brief demonstration in the Barkor, the pilgrimage circuit that surrounds the main temple in Lhasa. The monks were carrying a Tibetan flag, forbidden in Tibet. They were arrested immediately.

Another protest is reported from Kyimshi, a group of villages 45 km south of Lhasa where there was major unrest in May and June 1993, which ended when several hundred troops were sent to the

area and surrounded the villages. Unrest re-emerged there in late February, according to reports from Lhasa, which said that a demonstration took place in the village, during which eight nuns were arrested by police.

In late May, there were at least four demonstrations and ten arrests, plus seven cases of demonstrators being badly beaten, in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa.

On May 24, the day after the 43rd anniversary of the Tibetan Government's surrender to invading Chinese forces, at least four monks were arrested after they began a pro-independence protest near the Jokhang Temple in the Barkor area. The monks were detained after shouting pro-independence slogans. There was another smaller protest action later in the day that led to one arrest.

On May 25, the anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, five nuns from the Garu convent near Lhasa were detained after a brief pro-independence protest.

Chinese police in Lhasa reportedly beat

(Continued on p. 4)

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.

Roger S. Powers
Editor

Kimberley A. Pyles
Assistant Editor

STAFF

Christopher Krueger
President

Gene Sharp
Senior Scholar-in-Residence

Bruce Jenkins
Special Assistant

Stephen Coady
Research Assistant

Douglas Bond
Program on Nonviolent Sanctions Director

Ronald M. McCarthy
Fellows Program Director

Barbara Harmel
South Africa Program Director

Jane Gharibian
Administrative Coordinator

Ray Pasciuto
Staff Assistant

William Voegelé
Special Assistant to the President

Roger S. Powers
Development & Publications Coordinator

Kimberley A. Pyles
Publications Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Ackerman
Elizabeth F. Defeis
Chester Haskell
Christopher Krueger
Joanne Leedom-Ackerman
Hazel M. McFerson
Richard Rockwell
Thomas C. Schelling
Gene Sharp

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Edward B. Atkeson
Philip Bogdonoff
James Farmer
Efraim Garza Fuentes
Everett Gendler
Gene R. La Rocque
Robin Remington
Adam Roberts
William Spencer
David Szanton
William L. Ury

THE ALBERT EINSTEIN INSTITUTION

50 Church Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: (617) 876-0311
Fax: (617) 876-0837
PeaceNet: 'einstein'

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Powers,

In the recent edition of *Nonviolent Sanctions*, you requested comments on an article by Gene Sharp, "A Structural Approach to Human Rights." This article epitomizes what I feel is the value of the AEI: you deal with root causes of an issue, rather than its symptoms. It is the same approach that I regard so highly in the American Friends Service Committee.

This goes against the grain of society, however, as the quick fix, the dramatic result, and the bottom-line mentality argue for the symptomatic approach. Most human rights organizations seem to go with the grain, unfortunately. I do not deny their accomplishments—which have been wonderful—but there is a critical need to balance their work with something more systemic in nature.

The systemic approach to human rights abuses is the long-term approach; it aims for education and consciousness raising. These are hard things to sell in America today. But addressing the roots of the problem is *the* way to bring about lasting

and widespread change. It was clear to me upon reading my first AEI document that your organization exemplified this approach.

Once again, my hat is off to Gene Sharp for the message he sends. The recognition of the trend of dictatorial regimes to be the most serious human rights violators, coupled with the ability to discern those situations wherein dictatorships were either prevented or disintegrated, clearly points the way: people power. He makes the critical observation that there are "weaknesses inherent in dictatorships of all types." This is the key. This is what Gandhi so clearly understood. It is an uphill battle, however, convincing people of its truth. A dictator's power pales when confronted by people power. How to promulgate that message—and have it believed? Keep trying. I wish I could support you more than I do.

—In peace,
Geoff Huggins
Winchester, VA

Strikes Around the World

International news about nonviolent direct action sometimes comes to our office from unexpected places. For example, Postal Link™, a newsletter for the international mailer, lists "incidents around the world affecting the delivery of your mail." In a recent issue, thirteen of the "international mail incidents" listed were strikes. They are reprinted below with permission from Postal Link™. The complimentary newsletter is published bimonthly by Johnson & Hayward, Inc., an international mail consolidator. To receive Postal Link™ free, call or write: Johnson & Hayward, Inc., 516-22 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011-2876, (800) 521-0080.

FRANCE, April 8 — All of metropolitan Paris was paralyzed by a strike by public transportation workers. An estimated 140 miles of highways were clogged with traffic as a result.

TURKEY, April 12 — Turkish pilots refused to fly in a protest concerning work

rules.

AUSTRALIA, April 14 — Customs workers staged a three-hour strike after a breakdown in contract talks.

VENEZUELA, April 14 — Air traffic controllers staged a three-hour strike in a protest for a 50% pay increase.

INDIA, April 15 — The Port of Calcutta was shut down because of a strike by dock laborers who wanted assurances that a new facility would not cut into the number of hours of work available.

INDONESIA, April 19 — Thousands of state workers picketed around the capital of Medan, protesting for the freedom to form independent unions.

BANGLADESH, April 27 — A general strike of the nation's workers brought commerce to a halt in many cities. The strike was called to protest alleged voter fraud in recent elections.

A Nonviolent Response to Hate Crime

The people of Billings, Montana banded together last winter to fight a wave of white supremacist hate crimes in their city and have proven that there is strength in numbers, according to Peggy Wehmeyer of *ABC World News Tonight* (February 3, 1994).

Among the city's 85,000 residents are several minority groups who received harassing phone calls and mail, but the main targets of vengeance were the 55 or so Jewish families in Billings.

Last Hanukkah, many of the city's Jews displayed holiday Menorahs in the windows of their homes. Some windows in which a Menorah was displayed were smashed. On December 2, a cinder block was thrown through the bedroom window of a five-year-old boy. Jews also received anonymous threatening phone calls.

This was not the first time in Billings that Jews had been the victims of such bitter crimes. Just before the Jewish high holy days last September, head stones in a Jewish grave yard were desecrated.

In an effort to prevent further destruction,

POLAND, April 28 — The Solidarity trade union called for a strike after talks with the government slowed. The union wants to scrap proposed wage controls.

UNITED STATES, April 29 — The Teamsters Union reached a tentative agreement on a new contract, ending a 24-day strike.

PARAGUAY, May 3 — This nation had its first labor strike since 1959, with workers walking off the job to protest poor economic conditions.

INDIA, May 3 — A two-week strike at the Port of Calcutta came to an end when management agreed to guarantee each worker 26 days of work each month.

NORWAY, May 11 — Workers at the Port of Oslo's Soreng pier refused to work and also blockaded the pier.

BULGARIA, May 18 — The nation's trade unions embarked on a series of sporadic strikes to protest worsening conditions. ■

local police advised Jews to take down the Menorahs from their windows and to put up instead bulletproof glass and metal bars. Before anyone could do so, however, churches and residents began hanging pictures of Menorahs in their windows to show their support for local Jewish families and their right to observe their religious holidays.

The *Billings Gazette* printed a full-page color picture of a Menorah, and Christian churches handed out copies of a picture for people to put in their windows. Before long, thousands of Billings residents were displaying Menorahs.

When white supremacists attacked again, not only did they break windows in Jewish homes, they broke windows in non-Jewish homes and in churches where Menorahs were displayed. They even shot bullets at

the local Catholic high school.

This did not discourage Billings residents from showing solidarity with their Jewish neighbors. On the contrary, the attacks only strengthened their resolve to stand up to hate violence. Thousands more visibly hung Menorahs.

As more and more townspeople participated, the impact of the vandalism began to diminish. "It became physically impossible for the hate groups to harass and intimidate thousands and thousands of Billings citizens," says Chief of Police Wayne Inman.

There has been no vandalism for several months. The people of Billings do not believe the problem of hate crimes is resolved, but they do seem to feel they have more control as a community working together. ■

The Albert Einstein Institution *Monograph Series*

Monograph No. 5

Nonviolent Action in the Liberation of Latvia

by Olgerts Eglitis

This monograph recounts how the people of Latvia used nonviolent action (1987–1991) to throw off Soviet domination and regain independence. It includes 24 pages of official documents outlining Latvian plans for popular resistance against Soviet attack in 1991. 72 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-06-8) Price: \$4.00

Monograph No. 6

Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany by Roland Bleiker

Roland Bleiker examines the role that "exit" and "voice" forms of protest played in the collapse of the communist regime in East Germany. He includes a chronology of the East German Revolution of 1989–90 and extensive notes. 53 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-07-6) Price: \$3.00

Monograph No. 7

Toward Research and Theory Building in the Study of Nonviolent Action

by Ronald McCarthy and Christopher Kruegler

The authors offer their thoughts about developing theory and conducting research in the emerging field of nonviolent action. 35 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-08-4) Price: \$3.00

Renewed Protest in Tibet

(Continued from p. 1)

demonstrators and arrested five Tibetans when Tibetan shopkeepers staged a protest against 20-percent tax increases May 27. All the traders in the Barkor, the main shopping street in the Tibetan quarter, closed their shops, in solidarity with the protest.

Police confiscated passports of three tourists who had witnessed protests. Watching "disturbances" is illegal for foreigners according to local laws issued in 1987. On the day of the tax protest, staff in a nearby hotel closed the curtains on all windows overlooking the main street. Tourists report they have been confined to Lhasa.

The Tibet Information Network notes that 11 of the 42 pro-independence protests reported in Tibet in 1993 took place outside Lhasa, leading some Tibetan activists in Lhasa to claim that unrest is growing in the countryside. ■

(Distributed by Peace Media Service)

Burmese Exile Leaders Examine Political Defiance as Option in Pro-Democracy Struggle

(Continued from p. 1)

democratic forces waging political defiance?

In addition to the Burmese participants, three non-Burmese with expertise on the nature, dynamics, and strategic principles of political defiance, made presentations.

They were: Robert Helvey, who has a long-standing involvement in Burma and who has developed courses on political defiance; AEI President Christopher Krueger; and AEI Senior-Scholar-in-Residence Gene Sharp.

The consultation was not a decision-making gathering, but there was general acceptance that political defiance is to become the main form of struggle for the democracy movement.

With political defiance it may be

possible to undermine and ultimately disintegrate the dictatorship without continued civil war, without dependency on unreliable foreign assistance, and without the massive casualties and social destruction of guerrilla struggle.

Currently, however, several international factors are favoring the SLORC dictatorship, such as Chinese military assistance, Thai government pressures against the Burmese democrats in Thailand, and ASEAN approaches to the SLORC dictatorship. One participant in the consultation later commented that these factors would force the democrats to rely primarily on political defiance resistance within Burma, and that this would speed the restoration of democracy. ■

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens, can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

The Albert Einstein Institution

50 Church Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA
Permit No. 56003



Printed on Recycled Paper