The Struggle for Change in South Africa

A Look at the Past and Prospects for the Future

by Barbara Harmel

In this issue of Nonviolent Sanctions, we’ve asked Barbara Harmel, Director of the Einstein Institution’s new South Africa Program, to give her perspective on the current situation in South Africa.

In May, Dr. Harmel traveled to South Africa for a three-week visit, the first the South African government has allowed her to make in over twenty-five years. The trip had several objectives: (1) to provide her with an up-to-date, firsthand view of current events in South Africa; (2) to assess possible areas for future research; and (3) to establish contacts among political decision makers, activists, and academics for the new South Africa Program being established at the Einstein Institution.

During her stay, Dr. Harmel visited Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, and Port Elizabeth, where she met with a wide variety of individuals from a broad spectrum of political perspectives, including: Members of Parliament from the Conservative, National (the ruling party), and Democratic Parties; senior leaders of the African National Congress, including Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, as well as the younger leaders of that organization; leaders of the United Democratic Front; leaders of the largest confederation of trade unions, COSATU (currently by far the biggest and best-organized of the anti-apartheid organizations), including its President, Jay Naidoo, and Vice President, Sydney Mufamadi; leaders of community and youth organizations; top executives in the business community; and scholars from both English- and Afrikaans-speaking universities. Her report follows.

South Africa’s long history of struggle for a liberated and democratic society has suddenly and very rapidly appeared to be moving toward some form of resolution. Since February of this year previously unlawful organizations have been unbanned, a stream of apartheid laws and regulations have been scraped, and Nelson Mandela has been released. These events, together with the subsequent rounds of talks between the African National Congress (ANC), the major liberation movement, and the de Klerk government all augur substantial moves toward change in South Africa.

A Long History of Struggle

It is a process that has been a long time in coming. The black majority population was dispossessed of its land and excluded from the polity in 1910, in the very establishment of South Africa. Two years later the African National Congress was founded, the first national liberation movement to be created on the African continent. Its objective: to reverse the disempowerment of black South Africans. For half a century the ANC dedicated itself exclusively to nonviolent action, reaching a high-water mark during the 1950s in a series of mass campaigns that included the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the Congress of the People (1955), which adopted the ANC’s Freedom Charter.

The movement’s commitment to purely nonviolent methods ended in 1960, after the shootings of unarmed demonstrators at Sharpeville, and after a number of anti-apartheid organizations, including the ANC, were outlawed by the government. In a radical reassessment of its overall (Continued on p. 3)

1990-91 Einstein Fellowships Awarded

Einstein Institution fellowships were awarded this year to three scholars conducting promising research on nonviolent forms of struggle. The three were chosen as Einstein Institution Fellows from among twenty-seven applicants, based on their research proposals and recommendations.

Edy Kaufman is executive director of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute at Hebrew University. His project is entitled “Limited Violence and the Intifadah: An Assessment of the Impact of ‘Limited Violence’ on Israeli Attitudes Toward Compromise with the Palestinians.” Kaufman will study limited violence as a component of Palestinian strategy in the intifadah and examine its effects on Israeli views, through interviews with elites, the analysis of selected newspapers, and a public opinion poll. He intends to survey the practice of limited violence, to evaluate the impact of limited violence, and to establish to what extent simultaneous limited violence and nonviolent sanctions are viewed as “predominantly nonviolent.”

Nils R. Muiznieks is a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley. He is doing dissertation research on “The Baltic Awakening: Democratization, Nationalism, and the Emergence of a New European Order.” Baltic political movements have adopted nonviolent sanctions as the most effective means of displacing (Continued on p. 2)
2 Nonviolent Sanctions

Board Adopts Mission Statement

The Board of Directors of the Albert Einstein Institution, meeting in May, adopted the following mission statement to guide the activities of the Institution over the next five years:

The mission of the Albert Einstein Institution is to expand the understanding and use of nonviolent sanctions to advance group interests in conflicts worldwide. Nonviolent sanctions are nonviolent forms of struggle that aim to undermine the opponents’ social, economic, political and military power by withholding or withdrawing the opponents’ sources of support.

Over the next five years this mission will be pursued in three ways: first, by encouraging scholarship on nonviolent sanctions, information collection, and analysis by qualified researchers; second, by disseminating the results of this research in books, monographs, articles, and other public media and forums; and third, by interacting with protagonists of existing conflicts in order to share with them practical insights about the applicability of nonviolent sanctions to their specific situations. Such consultation could include both sides in a conflict, or only the side considered more likely to prevent violence and support freedom, justice, and peace.

While other organizations focus on conflict resolution or peace studies, the Institution is at the forefront of the strategic study of nonviolent sanctions as a tool of conflict. This approach is free from religious, ideological, and ethical imperatives. That is what makes the Institution unique and necessary in today’s world. The remarkable political and economic gains achieved by nonviolent means in recent years have created a singular opportunity for the Institution to increase further the frequency and scope of nonviolent sanctions in future conflicts.

In furtherance of its mission, the Institution plans to become the center of an international network of researchers, leaders, policy analysts, and citizens interested in alternatives to violence. It intends to fund and conduct definitive scholarship on how nonviolent resistance movements succeed and on how more effective forms might provide realistic policy options in place of violence and war. The Institution will also strive to educate the world about this technique, in order that it may be more effectively deployed in the most difficult conflict situations.

— May 1990

“People Power” Aired on PBS

“People Power,” the first documentary film to examine nonviolent struggle as an effective means of achieving political change, was broadcast on PBS stations in September as part of the network’s P.O.V. series. The film was produced and directed by Ilan Ziv and features an interview with Gene Sharp, president of the Albert Einstein Institution.

Ziv organizes the film around four steps that he sees as crucial to achieving people power: Crossing the Barriers of Fear; Unity and Empowerment; Demilitarizing the Military; and After Victory, Searching for a Strategy. Each of these ideas is played out against three of the major people-government conflicts of our era: the 1988 plebiscite on the continued rule of Chilean dictator General Pinochet; the intifadah, or the uprising of Palestinian civilians against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank; and the 1986 revolution against Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.

For rental or sale information contact: FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS, 153 Waverly Place, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 727-1711.

Board Awards 1990–91 Einstein Fellowships

(Continued from p. 1) the Communist Party, reducing ethnic tension, and generating support for independence. Muiznieks proposes to relate his study of nonviolent sanctions to studies of democratization, nationalism in Soviet politics, literature on secession movements and nationalism as a political factor.

Thomas Rojas is a doctoral student at The Fletcher School, Tufts University. He is studying “The Use of Nonviolent Sanctions by the ‘Frente Democratico Nacional’ to Protest Alleged Fraud During the Mexican Presidential Elections of 1988.” Rojas proposes to examine the use of nonviolent sanctions by the Frente Democratico Nacional (FDN) against electoral abuses committed by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in 1988. As a breakaway, more insurgent party, the FDN will be contrasted with the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), the older opposition party which has for several years used nonviolent protests and civil disobedience in addition to standard electoral politics in Mexico. Rojas will document the current uses of nonviolent action by the FDN in particular and, by extension, will show the potential of nonviolent sanctions to help transform an authoritarian system which rules by arbitrary decree into one which is bound by law.

Through the Fellows Program, the Einstein Institution supports research, writing, and systematic analysis and thought on nonviolent sanctions. Its primary goal is the advancement of knowledge about the strategic uses of nonviolent sanctions in relation to problems of political violence. The Einstein Institution Fellows Program offers support to scholars conducting research on the history, characteristics, and potential applications of nonviolent sanctions.

Applicants to the Fellows Program must be in one of the following three categories:

• candidates for doctoral degrees undertaking dissertation research or writing dissertations,

• advanced scholars undertaking specific research projects, and

• practitioners in past and present nonviolent struggles preparing documentation, description, and analysis of conflicts.

The deadline for proposals is Jan. 1. Proposals should be addressed to Dr. Ronald McCarthy, Research Coordinator.
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strategy, the ANC adopted a policy of combining nonviolent struggle with guerrilla warfare. In December 1961, through its newly-created military wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe, the ANC launched its sabotage campaign. The state responded by unleashing a reign of terror through indiscriminate and violent repression. This government reaction strengthened the opposition’s conviction that liberation would be won only through armed struggle. An escalating cycle of violence continued for thirty years.

Nevertheless, an important tradition of nonviolent action had been laid down during the ANC’s earlier period of struggle. That tradition was first revived in the building of a new powerful black trade union movement in the late 1970s. Through a painstaking process of creating democratic structures, with rights and obligations of decision making established at each level, the largest and best-organized anti-apartheid institution in the country was constituted: the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The democratic practices and nonviolent methods of the trade union movement were later adopted in the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the broad, mass-based movement of the 1980s. Strikes, stay-aways, consumer and rent boycotts climaxed in the “defiance campaigns” of 1989. These campaigns, waged by hundreds of UDF-affiliated groups, echoed the historic Campaign of 1952 in their challenges to apartheid structures and institutions. Ultimately the combined pressures of continuing, organized unrest within South Africa and international economic, political, and cultural sanctions finally forced the National Party government into its current movement toward change.

South Africa's Future: Three Scenarios

However, despite the significance of recent government actions, the true nature and ultimate direction of these moves remain unclear. Both the pace at which political changes are taking place and the form in which they are doing so pose serious questions about where South Africa is heading. To date, the only bodies that have been party to the talks are the National Party government and the ANC. No mandate has yet been sought by or given to either party for a framework in which to fashion a political restructuring. Neither party has spelled out its long-term agenda. From debate among observers, very much focused on what sort of future lies beyond a negotiated accord, three possible scenarios emerge.

The most positive, expounded by both National Party and ANC officials, was of a nonracial democracy working toward integration through political and economic empowerment of the majority population. In support of this view, National Party officials cited their recognition that apartheid was no longer tenable, the full-time efforts they were making toward creating a new constitution in which inevitable compromises would need to be made by both sides, and the funds that government was providing to improve basic conditions for blacks. ANC officials referred to the victory they had won over the government, forcing it to the negotiating table; their recognition of and desire to allay white fears of a black majority government; and the work they were beginning to undertake in rebuilding their movement. Acknowledgements were made of the economic problems that lay ahead, but as with criticisms made by officials on both sides directed at the other, these were countered by expressions of belief in the goodwill of most South Africans, and a confidence that a new

(Continued on p. 6)
Practitioners of nonviolent struggle have an entire arsenal of “nonviolent weapons” at their disposal. Listed below are 198 of them, classified into three broad categories: nonviolent protest and persuasion, noncooperation (social, economic, and political), and nonviolent intervention. A description and historical examples of each can be found in volume two of The Politics of Nonviolent Action, by Gene Sharp.

THE METHODS OF NONVIOLENT PROTEST AND PERSUASION

Formal Statements
1. Public Speeches
2. Letters of opposition or support
3. Declarations by organizations and institutions
4. Signed public statements
5. Declarations of indictment and intention
6. Group or mass petitions

Communications with a Wider Audience
7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
9. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
10. Newspapers and journals
11. Records, radio, and television
12. Skywriting and earthwriting

Group Representations
13. Deputations
14. Mock awards
15. Group lobbying
16. Picketing
17. Mock elections

Symbolic Public Acts
18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
19. Wearing of symbols
20. Prayer and worship
21. Delivering symbolic objects
22. Protest disrobings
23. Destruction of own property
24. Symbolic lights
25. Displays of portraits
26. Paint as protest
27. New signs and names
28. Symbolic sounds
29. Symbolic rejections
30. Rude gestures

Pressures on Individuals
31. “Haunting” officials
32. Taunting officials
33. Fraternization
34. Vigils

Drama and Music
35. Humorous skits and pranks
36. Performances of plays and music
37. Singing

Processions
38. Marches
39. Parades
40. Religious processions
41. Pilgrimages
42. Motorades

Honoring the Dead
43. Political mourning

44. Mock funerals
45. Demonstrative funerals
46. Homage at burial places

Public Assemblies
47. Assemblies of protest or support
48. Protest meetings
49. Camouflaged meetings of protest
50. Teach-ins

Withdrawal and Renunciation
51. Walk-outs
52. Silence
53. Renouncing honors
54. Turning one’s back

THE METHODS OF SOCIAL NONCOOPERATION

Ostracism of Persons
55. Social boycott
56. Selective social boycott
57. Lysistratic nonaction
58. Excommunication
59. Interdict

Noncooperation with Social Events, Customs, and Institutions
60. Suspension of social and sports activities
61. Boycott of social affairs
62. Student strike
63. Social disobedience
64. Withdrawal from social institutions

Withdrawal from the Social System
65. Stay-at-home
66. Total personal noncooperation
67. “Flight” of workers
68. Sanctuary
69. Collective disappearance
70. Protest emigration (hijrat)

THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS

Actions by Consumers
71. Consumers’ boycott
72. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods
73. Policy of austerity
74. Rent withholding
75. Refusal to rent
76. National consumers’ boycott
77. International consumers’ boycott

Action by Workers and Producers
78. Workmen’s boycott
79. Producers’ boycott

Action by Middlemen
80. Suppliers’ and handlers’ boycott

Action by Owners and Management
81. Traders’ boycott
82. Refusal to let or sell property
83. Lockout
84. Refusal of industrial assistance
85. Merchants’ “general strike”

Action by Holders of Financial Resources
86. Withdrawal of bank deposits
87. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
88. Refusal to pay debts or interest
89. Severance of funds and credit
90. Revenue refusal
91. Refusal of a government’s money

Action by Governments
92. Domestic embargo
93. Blacklisting of traders
94. International sellers’ embargo
95. International buyers’ embargo
96. International trade embargo

THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: THE STRIKE

Symbolic Strikes
97. Protest strike
98. Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

Agricultural Strikes
99. Peasant strike
100. Farm Workers’ strike

 Strikes by Special Groups
101. Refusal of impressed labor
102. Prisoners’ strike
103. Craft strike
104. Professional strike

Ordinary Industrial Strikes
105. Establishment strike
106. Industry strike
107. Sympathetic strike

Restricted Strikes
108. Detailed strike
109. Bumper strike
110. Slowdown strike
111. Working-to-rule strike
112. Reporting “sick” (sick-in)
113. Strike by resignation
114. Limited strike
115. Selective strike

Multi-Industry Strikes
116. Generalized strike
117. General strike

Combination of Strikes and Economic Closures
118. Hartal
119. Economic shutdown

THE METHODS OF POLITICAL NONCOOPERATION

Rejection of Authority
120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
121. Refusal of public support
122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

Citizens’ Noncooperation with Government
123. Boycott of legislative bodies
124. Boycott of elections
125. Boycott of government employment and positions
126. Boycott of government depts., agencies, and other bodies
127. Withdrawal from government educational institutions
128. Boycott of government-supported organizations
129. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents
130. Removal of own signs and placemarks
131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
132. Refusal to dissolve existing institutions

Citizens’ Alternatives to Obedience
133. Reluctant and slow compliance
134. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision
135. Popular nonobedience
136. Disguised disobedience
137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
138. Sitdown
139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
141. Civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws

Action by Government Personnel
142. Selective refusal of assistance by government aides
143. Blocking of lines of command and information
144. Stalling and obstruction
145. General administrative noncooperation
146. Judicial noncooperation
147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
148. Mutiny

Domestic Governmental Action
149. Quasi-legal evasions and delays
150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

International Governmental Action
151. Changes in diplomatic and other representations
152. Delay and cancellation of diplomatic events
153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition
154. Severance of diplomatic relations
155. Withdrawal from international organizations
156. Refusal of membership in international bodies
157. Expulsion from international organizations

THE METHODS OF NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION

Psychological Intervention
158. Self-exposure to the elements
159. The fast
a) Fast of moral pressure
b) Hunger strike
c) Satyagrahic fast
160. Reverse trial
161. Nonviolent harassment

Physical Intervention
162. Sit-in
163. Stand-in
164. Ride-in
165. Wade-in
166. Mill-in
167. Pray-in
168. Nonviolent raids
169. Nonviolent air raids
170. Nonviolent invasion
171. Nonviolent interjection
172. Nonviolent obstruction
173. Nonviolent occupation

Social Intervention
174. Establishing new social patterns
175. Overloading of facilities
176. Stall-in
177. Speak-in
178. Guerrilla theater
179. Alternative social institutions
180. Alternative communication system

Economic Intervention
181. Reverse strike
182. Stay-in strike
183. Nonviolent land seizure
184. Defiance of blockades
185. Politically motivated counterfeiting
186. Preclusive purchasing
187. Seizure of assets
188. Dumping
189. Selective patronage
190. Alternative markets
191. Alternative transportation systems
192. Alternative economic institutions

Political Intervention
193. Overloading of administrative systems
194. Disclosing identities of secret agents
195. Seeking imprisonment
196. Civil disobedience of “neutral” laws
197. Work-on without collaboration
198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

society was in the process of being created.

An undoubtedly more realistic assessment, one that issued from individuals who were less directly involved in the negotiating process, points to a difficult—both politically and economically—and probably protracted period that lies ahead. The perspective here includes the continuation and intensification of the threat from the right wing of the white community, the enormity of South Africa’s economic problems, which will continue to have a negative impact predominantly on the black majority, and the ensuing political conflict these and other problems are likely to engender. All of these spell considerable and probably long-term instability.

Economically disadvantaged whites view the government’s engagement in talks with black leaders as an ominous signalling of the end of white privilege and protection. Thousands have declared their willingness to take up arms in what they perceive as self-defense. Businessmen articulated their concerns about the unlikelihood of new investments from abroad, badly needed for an upturn in the economy’s growth, exacerbated in their view by the ANC’s continuing commitment to nationalizing key industries. Black community leaders pointed to the severity of unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, lack of skills, inadequate education and health facilities among the black population, and of their sense that no short-term solutions were available. Widespread anxiety about future political as well as economic allocations may well prompt rising unrest. The outbreaks of violence spreading from Natal to the Transvaal already suggest this. Due recognition was given to the problems faced by the ANC in re-establishing itself within the country after three decades of illegality. Nevertheless, doubts were expressed about the movement’s capacity to create an efficient organization that would meet constituent needs.

The most pessimistic scenario . . . envisages an elitist coalition formed by the leadership of the National Party and the ANC that will, in effect, rule by executive command and severely curtail democratic practices. In essence, this view, intimated by a number of scholars and others, predicts tight government control over both an inevitable slow-growth economy and a potentially turbulent political arena. What is foreseen here is increasing belt-tightening and rising unemployment primarily among blacks, which will give rise to intensifying confrontation between a National Party/ANC government on the one hand and black trade unions and a variety of community groups on the other, and therefore, possibly, to a new period of severe political repression.

Advocates of this scenario invoke what they see in the current situation as early symptoms of a trend away from democracy toward rule by elitist executive fiat. The absence of participants from other political parties and groups in the ongoing talks between the government and the ANC is underscored. One Afrikaner academic with ties to the National Party spoke of a plan devised by the latter to create a joint National Party/ANC ruling body that would postpone elections indefinitely. While providing no evidence of the plan, he argued its logic from the premise that the present government was hardly likely to negotiate itself completely out of power. Instead, the National Party would undoubtedly play on the threat of right-wing destabilization, as well as on ANC concerns both to assure white fears and to establish its movement as the major representative of the black majority, in order to retain for itself a considerable measure of control in a future government.

In reviewing the conduct of the ANC, some analysts pointed to the leadership’s
Resources Available from the Einstein Institution

*Insurrectionary Civic Strikes in Latin America: 1931–1961*, by Patricia Parkman. The first in a series of monographs to be published by the Einstein Institution. “From 1931 to 1961 eleven Latin American presidents left office in the wake of civic strikes,” writes Parkman. “In addition, at least four . . . faced unsuccessful attempts to force them out by the same means.” The monograph compares and contrasts these fifteen cases and includes a chronological summary of each case as well as extensive notes. (55 pp.) $3.

*Thinking About Nonviolent Struggle: Trends, Research, and Analysis*. Proceedings from a conference held in Rockport, Massachusetts, in October 1987. An edited and abridged transcript of the Rockport Conference, at which twenty-three scholars and practitioners of nonviolent struggle from Chile, Italy, Mexico, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States discussed the current state of knowledge and practice of nonviolent action and suggested future directions for research and education in the field. (48 pp.) $5

*A Journalist’s Brief Glossary of Nonviolent Struggle*. Includes 33 terms. (Pamphlet) 75¢

*Nonviolent Action*. Two half hour radio programs broadcast in July 1990 on Common Ground. Includes interviews with Gene Sharp, Li Lu, and Mubarak Awad. (Cassette) $7


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New Book on Civilian-Based Defense Published by Princeton University Press

“Two things are certain about the future of politics and international relations,” writes Gene Sharp. “Conflict is inevitable, and effective defense will be required against internal usurpers and international aggressors.” The crucial issue then is how to deter and defend against such attacks. Sharp has been called the “Clausewitz of nonviolent warfare” and has been a leading pioneer in the development of civilian-based defense. This book applies the results of his studies on nonviolent struggle to the problems of deterrence and defense. For the general public and policymakers, it explains how massive and selective noncooperation and defiance by a country's population and institutions can deny attackers their objectives—without the dangers of modern war.

Sharp discusses several prototypical cases of improvised nonviolent noncooperation and defiance against occupations and coups—as in Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. He explores the strategies of prepared civilian-based defense and the ways “transarmament”—or the changeover from military defense systems—could be conducted. He also surveys the efforts of a few European countries to integrate small nonviolent resistance components into their predominantly military defense policies. Rather than treating nonviolent ethical systems, the author focuses on the practicalities of the further development of a “nonviolent weapons system” which can provide defense without war.


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