

6. Berliner Colloquium zur Zeitgeschichte

Nonviolent Resistance in History, Theory, and Practice

Convenor: Mischa Gabowitsch (Einstein Forum Potsdam)

Conference language: English

3 and 4 February 2012

Questionnaire

Session 1 Cases: Reports from the Ground

Introduction Véronique Dudouet

Chair Bernd Greiner

- * Why opt for nonviolence? In the cases you were involved in or have studied, was nonviolent action a conscious preference, or did it develop circumstantially?
- * Were there debates about violent vs. nonviolent action? If so, did the debates cover philosophical or theoretical premises, or did they focus on the situation at hand?
- * Which alternatives to nonviolence were discussed?
- * How efficient did nonviolent action turn out to be for its immediate purpose?

Session 2 Long-Term Effects

Introduction Andriy Portnov

Chair Howard Clark

- * Looking back on the examples of nonviolent action we discussed in session 1, which experiences can be said to remain valuable in the longer term?
- * In each of these cases, did nonviolent protest achieve something of lasting value? For example, did it contribute to the emergence of a durably democratic regime, did it end discrimination, did it create a more equitable society?

Session 3 Film screening

How to Start a Revolution (2011)

by Ruaridh Arrow

Introduction Mischa Gabowitsch

Session 4 Nonviolence in Historical Perspective

Introduction Christian Davenport

Chair Ramin Jahanbegloo

- * When has nonviolence been practiced historically? What preconditions needed to be in place for it? In particular, how has it been affected by religious traditions and philosophical ideas?
- * How has the idea of nonviolence evolved as it travelled across continents and intellectual frameworks?
- * Do known cases of nonviolence suggest a meaningful typology? Are there useful alternatives to Gene Sharp's theory of political power as based on consent?
- * How has the conflict between supporters and opponents of the idea of nonviolence evolved over time?
- * Does the practice of nonviolence have civilizing effects?

Session 5 Lessons Learned

Introduction David Rodin

Chair Susan Neiman

- * How do the cases discussed in sessions 1 through 3 affect our general understanding of nonviolence?
- * Is nonviolence an instrument or an objective? Is it one possible course of action among others—perhaps chosen on tactical grounds when faced with an overwhelming opponent or can it only work as a fundamental worldview? What is the relationship between nonviolence and pacifism?
- * Can nonviolence be exported?
- * Are there meaningful critiques or counterarguments to nonviolence?

Suggested Reading

Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945*. London: William Heinemann, 2005; 627-633

Mary Elizabeth King, *Palestinian Civil Resistance against Israeli Military Occupation*.

In: Maria J. Stephan (Ed.): *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; 131-155

Sudha Pai, *Janadesh 2007: The Land Question*. In: *Economic and Political Weekly*. 42(2007),45/46; 10-12

Tina Rosenberg, *Revolution U. What Egypt learned from the students who overthrew Milosevic*. In: *Foreign Policy*, 16 February 2011

Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy. A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*. Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010; 17-23, 67-86

Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine. Birth of a Modern Nation*. Oxford UP, 2007; 216-225