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Michael: Greetings everyone. This is Michael Nagler with the Nonviolence Report. We're a segment of Nonviolence Radio. And I'd like to bring you some of the latest news in the world of nonviolence.

Rage Against War

Yesterday was important in the sense that there was a fairly large protest against the war in Ukraine and funding for it, and the military industrial complex in general.

It was not a huge rally, as it turned out. It was called [Rage Against War](#). And from what I'm reading, there were, quote, hundreds of participants, so it wasn't huge. But the organization of it and the composition of it represented a radical departure from what we've been seeing for the last 40 years in peace movements. The effort was led by a broad coalition of forces from left to right – just imagine 'left' in quotes and 'right' in quotes.

So, you had the [People's Party](#), which is a new progressive party that grew out of the dissatisfaction of the failures of Bernie Sanders campaigns. And then the [Libertarian Party](#), which is rather, you know, considerably more conservative.

And I think this is a very positive sign because, after all, peace benefits everyone. Peace should not be a political item. It should be a human item. And the fact that we have political opposites demonstrating against the war is a useful step in that direction.

You know, there's a sobering fact here – there's a project called, "[The Military Intervention Project](#)." And they maintain a database of how many interventions the United States has engaged in since the founding of the country. It's almost 400. That's almost 400 times that we intervened in the affairs of some foreign country for our own perceived interests.

This is since the founding of the country, as I mentioned, but half of them are taking place in the past 70 years. So, maybe not too surprisingly, this trend is increasing, or at least observation of it is increasing, which could be helpful.

Positive Peace

Now, in the course of the article from the project, I came across a very useful definition of positive peace. You may recall that positive peace and negative peace was a set of concepts established by [Johan Galtung](#), who is probably the greatest living peace researcher. Where he said that negative peace is where you simply refrain from attacking, physically. But positive peace is where you engage on the human level or at least on the societal level and try to correct the injustices or the perceived injustices that are leading to a conflict.

So, here's the definition. Positive peace is a state of sustained harmony within and among nations. It does not mean that no one ever disagrees, only that the parties involved deal with the clash of goals nonviolently. And since so many violent clashes arise from underlying social conditions, employing empathy and creativity to heal wounds is essential to the process.

I think that's a very good thing for us to bear in mind because it gets down deeper into the infrastructure, into the subsoil, if you will, of what really creates a meaningful peace regime.

[International Holocaust Remembrance Association] Now, there's an interesting issue that has come up of late, and it's a very complex one. And that is, can one criticize the Israeli state without being antisemitic? Obviously, that's somewhat easier to do that if you're Jewish, like myself. But it's an important principle to establish that you can criticize the behavior out of compassion, out of a desire to improve, to help.

Because if you thought that Israel was a failed experiment to begin with, that it shouldn't exist – and some people, of course, do think that way – then there would be no sense in offering it constructive criticism.

But because of the tragic history and especially the recent [noise] – more recent holocaust, the Israelis can tend to be a little bit jumpy and a little bit paranoid about any kinds of criticism. So, the [International Holocaust Remembrance Association](#) is dealing with this issue. And to me, what it means is that whenever there's a war, the destructive effects of that war go on and on in ways that we can't always see. We would not have been able to predict the conflicts and the competitions and the sensitivity and the pain that's going on now from the preceding events of the war.

Compassionomics

Now, on the brighter side, there have been a lot of studies – over 200 studies, in fact, that show that acts of kindness positively contribute to our well-being, which should not be very surprising to listeners of this program.

But in other words, when you act kindly towards someone, it's not just that person who benefits, but you yourself benefit. And this is on what they call in science “a meta analysis” looking over many, many studies – over 200 of them on the link between pro-sociality and well-being. Pro-sociality, being the opposite of anti-sociality, otherwise known as kindness, being nice, being human. And there's now a big fat book on this called, “[Compassionomics](#),” written by two MDs.

Le Chambon

Moving abroad a little bit – I don't know how many of you will remember the village of Le Chambon in southern France, in the [Du va-don-ya] region, it is called. That was brought to the attention of most of us by a book by [Philip Hallie](#) called “[Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed](#).” Hallie was studying some of the horrors of the holocaust, and he stumbled upon the story of this town.

Le Chambon had at the time a protestant minister – and by the way, this is a Huguenot or protestant region. His name was [André Trocmé](#). He and his brother and his wife saved, literally, thousands of people – mostly children. Right under the noses of the Germans, the Vichy regime, of course, had established an occupation in the whole region.

And one interesting little fact – I think this may be one of the most important things to come out of this that happened. When they interviewed the German commandant, Major Schmebling and asked him how he could have not known that thousands of children, and others, were being squirreled away and rescued from – they were mostly coming from Eastern Europe, and being rescued there.

And he said, “You know, I knew all about it.” But he made an interesting comment, “I’m a good Catholic, you know, and we understand these things. We understand that this was nonviolence, and violence can have no power against it.” I think the way he put it was, nonviolence would have nothing to do with it.

So, now recently, an anthropologist by the name of [Maggie Paxson](#) has kind of gone through the same process that Philip Hallie did. She went to Le Chambon now to see, you know, what would be the results of what took place in the past. And she found something quite interesting. I’m going to quote here now. “It was humbling, amazing, and life affirming to get to see people in these very simple ways take in a stranger.”

And this is what I think is special. “When they would see a stranger, they wouldn’t see an identity. They wouldn’t see a religion, a race, or a country. They see a person. And I came to see that as a kind of alchemy, the ability to go from seeing someone as a stranger to seeing that stranger as a friend. “How do you do that?” she said. “I don’t think there are any two ways about it. They live the belief in the essential oneness of humanity.” They live the belief in the essential oneness of humanity.

So, here’s this region which saved so many refugees from Eastern Europe during the war, and they’re doing exactly the same thing now with refugees who are coming, streaming into Western Europe from many parts of the world. And they’ve set up what they call, “[French].” Which means, “Welcoming Centers for Asylum Seekers.” And I apologize for my French. I am a bit rusty.

She said, “If you feel” – this is Paxson again, “If you feel that you’re in a church that says, ‘[French] love one another,’ as the church in Le Chambon says, that’s the best church to be in.” So, no matter what your religion, go to that one.” I like that very much.

Indigenous Communities Gaining Titles to Territories

So, there are some successes that we have seen recently, particularly in the area of environment. I don’t know that I have run across quite as much in the area of conflict and peace. But anyway, there’s been a very painful deforestation going on in the Brazilian rainforest. But what’s happening now is that Indigenous communities have been able to gain title to their territories. And this has happened elsewhere in Central America.

Most people know that the Brazilian rainforests are disappearing, which is very harmful to global climate change, and to the communities who live under the canopy of those trees and live on the trees. But there’s a published study from a scientific journal, [PNAS Nexus](#). I’m sorry, I’m not familiar with it. But they suggest that after the Indigenous communities obtain legal title to their territories, the rate of deforestation significantly declines. No surprise there.

Chipko to EQAT

We saw the same thing in northern India, on the lower slopes of the Himalayas with the famous Chipko movement, where particularly women would go out and actually hug trees – *chipko* is Hindi for hug – and

prevent foresters from cutting them down. It was an astounding, very successful movement and really turned things around and raised consciousness for the Indian government, which, I hope, is still up there.

Now since I mentioned the Himalayas, there's now a locally driven push to restore a Himalayan paradise. This is involving an economy, a community, and an ecosystem altogether. And it reminded me of the [mountaintop removal](#) project that took place in the Appalachian mountains, where there was a highly destructive and just agonizing project of blowing off the tops of mountains in order to get at the ore.

And a Quaker group called [Earth Quaker Action Teams](#), EQAT. They, again, were able to put a stop to the mountaintop removal in a very clever way, having failed to argue with the companies that were doing the removal. They went to the banks that were funding them and protested and sat in the lobbies and made things difficult for them from a publicity point-of-view, and brought a stop to that project.

Composting in San Francisco

Also on the environment, San Francisco has managed to, as they put it, [crack the urban composting code](#). California has begun statewide composting. They pioneered this in the '90s and showed how dramatically it can benefit a city in so many ways – health, economy, and so forth.

And so, now they have managed to involve composting in this to a very significant degree. And once again, happy to say, a little bit patriotically, California has taken the lead in something – something useful.

Peru and the Paradox of Repression

Now, going abroad again, one of the really difficult issues that is happening today, a kind of conflict that's involving a lot of violence, is in Peru. Recently, the police repressed protesters, you know, with violence and left over 20 people injured in the city called Juliaca. And then earlier this month, Thursday, February 9th, tens of thousands of Peruvians [took to the streets](#) across the country in a second national strike. What are they demanding? The resignation of the de facto president, Dina Boluarte, they're calling for the closure of the right-wing dominated congress and new general elections.

Now, my comment on this is what should they do next? With the right messaging, they could turn the recent violence of the repression to their advantage. There's this well-known phenomenon in nonviolence, which of course wasn't well-known years ago and is probably not well-known in Peru today, but it's called, 'The paradox of repression.'

If you have a strong, vigorous movement, the regime against which that movement is directed is faced with a paradox. They cannot stop you by using modest means. They have to be pretty brutal. And when they do, it backfires. So, they are in a lose/lose situation. Either they let it happen, or they make themselves look very bad in terms of public opinion by having to be brutal in their repression.

So, what they should do, of course, is engage with the protesters, ask them what they want, make reasonable accommodations, as we have seen recently in some parts of the world like Somalia.

Constructive Programs

I'm happy to report that [Extinction Rebellion](#), XR, is still quite active in the UK. They have issued a comment and part of it really interested me. Quote, "People know what we're against. It's time to tell them what we're for." Unquote.

You know, this has been an issue throughout peace movement history. That we're often being reactive rather than proactive. So, this is why we at Metta like to emphasize Gandhi's invention called constructive program. Build what you want.

Now eventually, when you build the institutions that you do want, they will be blocked. They will come into conflict with the regime. But you're in a much better position to do your resistance and your protesting then, rather than letting them take the lead.

So, let me give you one example – a good example of constructive program. In Cape Town, the activists used a water crisis to not just get the crisis resolved, but to secure environmental victories. They focused attention on how water and natural resources, more generally, are being used in the context of climate change.

And during this time, an activist campaign was able to join forces with its criticism of industrial agricultural with their need to save water. So, they hosted public education events on water systems, aiming to educate the broader public and highlight the importance of agro-ecological agriculture.

You've been listening to the Nonviolence Report, a segment of Nonviolence Radio. I'm Michael Nagler. And until the next time everyone, take care of one another, and watch for the development of nonviolence in our world.