Taiwanese student sit-in for human rights (The Wild Strawberry Movement), 2008

November 6, 2008
to: January 4, 2008
Country: Taiwan
Location Description: Primarily in Liberty Square in front of Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall in TaiPei

Goals:
1. To amend the Assembly and Parade Law by revoking the requirement for a permit in order to lawfully protest, abolishing restricted protest areas, and clarifying what police are allowed to do in order to enforce the law during protests.

2. To punish police personnel who engaged in inappropriate behavior. Additionally, to get the directors of the police and national security agencies who are ultimately responsible to step down.

3. Receive an apology from President Ma for the police brutality used in the DPP protests.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 034. Vigils
- 035. Humorous skits and pranks
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 162. Sit-in
- Other... > self-immolation

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 034. Vigils
- 035. Humorous skits and pranks
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 037. Singing
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 162. Sit-in

Methods in 3rd segment:

• 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 034. Vigils
• 035. Humorous skits and pranks
• 036. Performances of plays and music
• 037. Singing
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 162. Sit-in

Methods in 4th segment:

• 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 025. Displays of portraits
• 034. Vigils
• 035. Humorous skits and pranks
• 036. Performances of plays and music
• 037. Singing
• 038. Marches
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
• 162. Sit-in

Methods in 5th segment:

• 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 034. Vigils
• 035. Humorous skits and pranks
• 036. Performances of plays and music
• 037. Singing
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 162. Sit-in

Methods in 6th segment:

• 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• 034. Vigils
• 035. Humorous skits and pranks
• 036. Performances of plays and music
• 037. Singing
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
162. Sit-in

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 001. Public speeches
- 025. Displays of portraits
- 039. Parades
- 043. Political mourning
- 044. Mock funerals
- 050. Teach-ins

Notes on Methods:
The classification of self-immolation as nonviolent is debatable.

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Democracy
Human Rights

Group characterization:

- NGO members.
- Social activists
- Tibetan refugees
- Tibetan representatives in Taiwan
- artists
- cultural workers
- local Taiwanese
- students
- university professors

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
The Wild Strawberries. Originally this included solely students and professors from universities in TaiPei, but it came to include students in Tainan, Central Taiwan, Hsinchu and Kaohsiung.

Partners:
Not known

External allies:
Local Taiwanese, Tibetan refugees from Nepal and India, veterans of the Deep Green Coalition, social activist groups, artists, students in Hong Kong, Tibetan representatives in Taiwan, NGOs.

Involvement of social elites:
Scholar Ronald Dworkin, DPP Chairwoman Tsai Ying-wen, and American activist Lynn Miles.
Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

• Social activist groups
• Students in Central Taiwan
• Students in Hong Kong
• Students in Hsinchu and Kaohsiung
• Students in Tainan
• Tibetan representatives in Taiwan
• artists

Groups in 2nd Segment:

• DPP Chairwoman Tsai Ying-wen
• Lynn Miles
• NGOs

Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
The joining order of local Taiwanese, Tibetan refugees, and veterans of the Deep Green Coalition is not known.

Segment Length: Approximately 10 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
President Ma Ying-jiao, the police.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known

Campaigner violence:
There are no known instances of campaigner violence in this campaign. Yet, in the DPP protests that led to this campaign, there were definite clashes with the police, instances where protesters threw Molotov cocktails, and reports of 149 injured police.

Repressive Violence:
Most of the repressive violence related to this case occurred before the campaign actually began. The police clashed violently with DPP protestors during Chen Yunlin’s visit to Taiwan. The police’s repressive violence during those protests caused the Wild Strawberry campaign to occur. On December 11, protesters claim that armed police beat students. Furthermore, the police employed 24-hour surveillance toward the campaign’s end.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
3 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
On November 3, 2008, Chen Yunlin arrived from China on a visit to Taiwan to meet with President Ma Ying Jiao. His visit was met with protests led by the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party), which resulted in violent clashes with the police. In reaction to the protests, police closed major highways, forbade citizens from publicly waving the national flag or saying “Taiwan does not belong to China,” hindered citizens filming around the hotel where Chen was staying, shut down a nearby music store, and executed a number of other repressive actions.

In response to the police repression, a group of university students and their professors began a sit-in on November 6 at 11 AM outside of the Executive Yuan government building. They called themselves the Wild Strawberries, in reference both to the derogatory connotation of Taiwanese youth as strawberries (pretty on the outside but quick to rot) and to another protest in 1990 by the Wild Lily student movement. The Wild Strawberries had three demands. First, they demanded that the Assembly and Parade Law must be amended. This demand specifically meant revoking the Law’s requirement of attaining a permit before lawful protests, abolishing currently restricted protest areas, and clarifying the actions that police were allowed to take in order to enforce the law. Second, the Wild Strawberries demanded punishment of all the police who had acted inappropriately during the DPP protests and the resignation of the police directors. Third, they demanded that President Ma apologize for the police repression and transgressions of human rights.

The sit-in was broken up at 4 PM on November 7 by the police, but the students and professors regrouped at Liberty Square outside of Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall and began another sit-in.

By November 10, student sit-ins had begun across the country in solidarity with the Wild Strawberries, occurring in Tainan, Central Taiwan, Hsinchu, and Kaohsiung. Over the course of the next month, social activist groups, artists, twenty students in Hong Kong, Tibetan representatives in Taiwan, and local Taiwanese citizens demonstrated their support for the Wild Strawberries in a variety of ways. In Liberty Square, the protesters held seminars and a lecture on nonviolent resistance, and every night 16 social activist groups held a silent procession. Daily, they performed political skits, held concerts, and distributed leaflets. Several NGO’s participated in a mock funeral service for human rights. Furthermore, the students were joined in Liberty Square by Tibetan refugees from India and Nepal, whom the students aided by sharing their food and shelter.

The sit-in involved colorful banners with slogans promoting democracy, freedom, and human rights. Three large metal cages were set up side-by-side in which students sat, each with a sign within. The three signs read “Freedom”, “Human Rights”, and “23 Million Taiwanese Decide the Future of Taiwan”. In open-faced cabins, there were displays ranging from a student painting of Che Guevara to a mock shrine for human rights.

Yet on November 10, Premier Liu Shao Chiuan remarked nonchalantly of the protests, “this sort of thing will blow over in two days.”

The next day an 80-year-old Taiwanese man named Liu Po-Yan set himself on fire in protest against the police action from Chen Yunlin’s visit. He was rushed to the hospital, where he recovered. The Wild Strawberries expressed their sympathy.

Several people of importance made appearances at Liberty Square. Scholar Ronald Dworkin visited Liberty Square to learn more about the sit-in. DPP Chairwoman Tsai Ying-wen participated in the human rights funeral service and publicly apologized on behalf of the DPP for not amending the Assembly and Parade Law while they were the ruling party. Finally, American activist Lynn Miles also visited Liberty Square and offered his support.

Nonetheless, on November 25, all the police chiefs responsible for the police actions while Chen Yunlin was in Taiwan were
given promotions by the National Police Administration.

The Wild Strawberries organized a march to the Presidential Palace with 5,000 participants that took place on December 7. The march was illegal because the students did not obtain a permit. It included a funeral procession for human rights and a disdainful effigy of President Ma.

On December 11, the day after Human Rights Day and within 24 hours of a speech by President Ma on the high degree of human rights in Taiwan, police arrived at Liberty Square and forced the sit-in to a close. Though the students and refugees were willing to leave voluntarily, the police forced the refugees and students into buses and dispersed them around the outskirts of TaiPei. During the process, armed police beat student protesters. The next day, students and refugees returned and the sit-in resumed under 24-hour police surveillance.

The Taiwan government amended the Assembly and Parades Law on December 24, abolishing the need to obtain a permit before protesting, and rendering previously prohibited areas open for protests so long as protesters maintained a “safe distance”. Yet, police were granted new powers for handling protests.

The Wild Strawberries decided to end the sit-in campaign on January 4, 2009 and move to a new headquarters called the WildBerry House. The WildBerry House opened on January 11.

**Research Notes**

**Influences:**

The Wild Strawberry students were influenced by the Wild Lily student movement who also held a sit-in in front of Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall in 1990. (1)

**Sources:**


**Additional Notes:**

There are also numerous youtube videos from the protests themselves. Not viewed.

**Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:**

Lindsay Carpenter, 27/7/2011

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.