

On the IEC South Asia Regional Conference and Developments in the Campaign in Nepal

Because of time constraints at the Conference, there wasn't a formal report presented on the campaign from Nepal, though there were three delegates present from that country. In this pamphlet, we are including excerpts of interviews done with some of the delegates from Nepal and Bangladesh to inform people about the IEC South Asian Regional Conference which was held in Katmandu, Nepal, and to give a sense of the important and well-known campaign which has been built in Nepal.

Q: What was the significance of the South Asian Conference of the IEC [held 14-15 February 1993 in Katmandu]?

Bangladesh delegate: This conference was the only conference in the world held at the regional level before the Founding Conference in Germany... On the question of the life of Abimael Guzman, the radicals, humanitarians, and democrats -- all of them are united.

Q: Who was at the Conference?

Bangladesh delegate: Mostly Maoists, but people from democratic and humanitarian groups also participated... It is a very broad mass organization under the leadership of Maoists. New groups have come forward, not just people already organized. This made it easy to mobilize all over the South Asian region to defend the life of Comrade Gonzalo. There were 70-72 delegates at the conference; delegates plus observers equalled 105, and there were more than 400 people at the public meeting [demonstration].

Q: Why have non-Maoists taken up the campaign?

Bangladesh delegate: Because of the way the Fujimori government took up the whole case, the way Gonzalo was presented in a cage, his rights were denied. Moreover the negative role of Amnesty International helps people to mobilize.

Nepalese delegate (from Committee to Defend the Life of Com. Gonzalo, Nepal): Because of the negation of United Nations law by Fujimori in the case of Gonzalo, many humanitarians came with us.

Bangladesh delegate: When people heard that Fujimori was going to impose the death penalty, it also helped people mobilize to protest against that. One more thing, for the South Asian countries, they think the U.S. [is intervening] in Peru. They hate U.S. intervention in Peru and they hate the U.S. for their own reasons. The masses in our countries, they hate the U.S.

Nepal delegate: Yes, in this region, anti-American sentiment is very strong. For example, the U.S. role in the Philippines -- like U.S. support of Marcos. There is also the attitude of the IMF and World Bank -- they want to impose their ideas, and everybody knows that America is behind it. All these countries have IMF stabilization programs... First, Soviet social-imperialism was dominating this region, because this region was under the domination of the Soviet Union. They helped to create anti-American sentiment. The governments themselves helped created anti-U.S. sentiment, but now these governments want to be close to the U.S.

Bangladesh delegate: People in these countries saw Gonzalo on TV in a cage. Very recently CNN has come to Bangladesh, so now we get CNN -- without CNN many people couldn't see that [the news with Gonzalo in a cage]. CNN is also in Nepal. CNN assisted in the battle in the Gulf War; CNN started then [in Nepal]. In Bangladesh, it started in mid-August, just before the arrest. In countries like Bangladesh and Nepal, people used to communicate through talking, so group discussions are a very important media through which news is widely disseminated to the people. So if someone says I have seen with my own eyes, it is very important. Very few have TVs, but in villages if one person has a TV, many people from the neighborhood come to watch. [This is true]

even in the cities. Now we have TVs on long distance buses. When a bus waits for a ferry, people gather in the ferry hut to watch the news. Even where there is no electricity we have TV- they use batteries.

INTERVIEW with delegate from Save Gonzalo Committee in Nepal:

Q: Tell us how the campaign has developed in Nepal.

A: Demonstrations and rallies of thousands have been held all over the country. Over 90 members of parliament signed a statement against the Fujimori regime and for Gonzalo. The bar association signed a statement as well... The Gonzalo interview has been published in Nepal in Nepalese. 5,000 copies of the interview have been sold. People support not only the person of Gonzalo, but all the he upholds...

Conditions in Nepal are similar to those in Peru. There is feudalism and semi-feudalism, and people see the similarity. They want to understand how the people's war was initiated in Peru and how it can be done in Nepal. They are especially interested in Gonzalo's analysis of bureaucrat capitalism...

Gonzalo's name is very well-known among students. And in small villages there are photos of Gonzalo on people's walls. "He's a good man, working for the poor and peasants, and he is leading the revolutionary people's war." Among peasants who can't read or write, over 2000 signed the IEC Call with their thumbprints. These were sent to Fujimori.