

## **Gandhi – Einstein – Schweitzer. Nonviolent Resistance Against Nuclear War (Dr. Christian Bartolf)**

On the occasion of this international conference on “Gandhi and Global Peace” I want to focus on Einstein and Schweitzer and Gandhi through the lens of Einstein and Schweitzer.

Einstein was invited by Gandhi in 1931. Both of them had been signatories of two anti-war manifestoes: 1.) the Anti-Conscription Manifesto, inspired by Hans Kohn from Palestine in the year 1925 and organized by the War Resisters’ International with Mr. Runham Brown (Enfield, England); 2.) the Manifesto against the Military Training of Youth, organized by the No More War – Movement and the Joint Peace Council in the year 1930. Earlier, Rabindranath Tagore had supported the 1919 Declaration of the Independence of the Spirit, inspired by the eminent writers Romain Rolland and Stefan Zweig, this was after the first of two world wars when an International of Intellectuals should be formed to prevent a second world war. Professor Einstein, the famous physicist, signed this Declaration, too. Gandhi had also been invited by the War Resisters’ International to their second international Triennial Conference at Sonntagsberg, Austria, organised by Olga Misar in August 1928. Instead of Gandhi, India was represented there by Rajendra Prasad who lectured about the economic causes of war. So both of them, Einstein and Gandhi, had been nonviolent pacifists during the twenties.

And after Rabindranath Tagore had visited Einstein in his summer house at Caputh near Potsdam near Berlin on July 14, 1930, Einstein wrote a letter to Gandhi with full respect:

“Respected Mr. Gandhi !

I use the presence of your friend in our home to send you these lines. You have shown through your works, that it is possible to succeed without violence even with those who have not discarded the method of violence. We may hope that your example will spread beyond the borders of your country, and will help to establish an international authority, respected by all, that will take decisions and replace war conflicts.

With sincere admiration,

Yours A. Einstein.

I hope that I will be able to meet you face to face some day.”

[German language original: “Verehrter Herr Gandhi!

Ich benutze die Anwesenheit Ihres Freundes in unserem Hause, um Ihnen diese Zeilen zu senden. Sie haben durch Ihr Wirken gezeigt, dass man ohne Gewalt Grosses selbst bei solchen durchsetzen kann, welche selbst auf die Methode der Gewalt keineswegs verzichtet haben. Wir dürfen hoffen, dass Ihr Beispiel über die Grenzen Ihres Landes hinaus wirken und dazu beitragen wird, dass an die Stelle kriegerischer Konflikte Entscheidungen einer internationalen Instanz treten, deren Durchführung von allen garantiert wird. Mit de[m] Ausdruck aufrichtiger Bewunderung

Ihr A[lbert] Einstein.

Ich hoffe, dass ich Sie noch einmal von Angesicht sehen werde.“]

Gandhi responded from London, October 18, 1931:

“DEAR FRIEND,

I was delighted to have your beautiful letter sent through Sundaram. It is a great consolation to me that the work I am doing finds favour in your sight. I do indeed wish that we could meet face to face and that too in India at my Ashram.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI”

Then we find these notes by Einstein on Gandhi on one sheet of paper with physics formulae:

“Mahatma Gandhi's life achievement stands unique in political history. He has invented a completely new and humane means for the liberation war of an oppressed country, and practised it with greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence he had on the consciously thinking human being of the entire civilized world will probably be much more lasting than it seems in our time with its overestimation of brutal violent forces. Because lasting will only be the work of such statesmen who wake up and strengthen the moral power of their people through their example and educational works.

We may all be happy and grateful that destiny gifted us with such an enlightened contemporary, a role model for the generations to come.”

[German language original:

“Mahatma Gandhi's Lebenswerk steht in der politischen Geschichte einzig da. Er hat ein ganz neues und humanes Mittel für den Befreiungskampf eines gedrückten Volkes ersonnen und mit grösster Energie und Hingabe durchgeführt. Der moralische Einfluss, den er auf die bewusst denkenden Menschen der ganzen zivilisierten Welt ausgeübt hat, dürfte ein weit nachhaltigerer sein, als es in unserer Zeit mit ihrer Überschätzung brutaler Gewaltmittel den Anschein haben mag. Denn dauernd wirkt nur das Werk solcher Staatsmänner, die durch ihr Beispiel und erzieherisches Wirken die moralischen Kräfte ihres Volkes wecken und festigen.

Wir dürfen alle glücklich und dankbar sein, dass uns das Schicksal einen erleuchteten Zeitgenossen geschenkt hat, ein Vorbild für die kommenden Generationen.“]

We all know Einstein's works from 1939 (Source: Albert Einstein: Out of my later years. Essays. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, p. 240):

“A leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority: a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior.

Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

In his 1931 letter to Gandhi, Einstein had already informed Gandhi about his project might “help to establish an international authority, respected by all, that will take decisions and replace war conflicts”, later on he combined this proposal with the notion of a replacement of national military by a federal world government authority, a new structure for the international system.

Einstein corresponded with one of the fellow signatories of the international Manifesto against the Military Training of Youth, Professor Sigmund Freud, the famous psychologist from Austria, a dialogue on the roots of war, the causes of war: “Why War ?” – this was in the frame of the League of Nations. Then Einstein suggested “the setting up, by international consent, of a legislative and judicial body to settle every conflict arising between nations. Each nation would undertake to abide by the orders issued by this legislative body, to invoke its decision in every dispute, to accept its judgments unreservedly and to carry out every measure the tribunal deems necessary for the execution of its decrees.” This was Einstein's concept of arbitrary courts for settling border disputes or territorial claims in international conflicts, and Freud's dictum in this letter: “Pacifists we are, since our organic nature wills us thus to be.” illustrated the common ground of these two humanists.

This correspondence of Einstein and Freud was the starting point of peace research, during the time of Gandhi's exchange of letters on war and peace with the Dutch pacifist Bart de Ligt (1928-1930), that was the beginning of the first theories of nonviolent resistance, written by Gandhi's collaborator Richard Gregg: "The Power of Nonviolence" (1935), by Bart de Ligt: "The Conquest of Violence" (1937), , Krishnalal Shridharani: "War without Violence. A Study Of Gandhi's Method And Its Accomplishment" (1939), later on by Joan Bondurant: "Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict" (1958) and by Gene Sharp: "Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power: Three Case Histories" (1960) with a Foreword by Professor Albert Einstein from Princeton, New Jersey, April 1953. Beginning of the thirties meant the crisis of the League of Nations and the shocks of Stalinism and Fascism and totalitarian regimes in Italy (Mussolini), Spain (Franco) and elsewhere.

Carl von Ossietzky, the political journalist who had paid homage to Gandhi in 1929, became the living example of nonviolent resistance against Hitlerism and Nazism in Germany. After a three-years-long international campaign he finally was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1936 for 1935) for his courage and determination to resist the Nazi tyranny and Einstein called him a "humble martyr" for the "abstention from the solution of human problems by brute force", this was during a Nobel Foundation dinner, December 10, 1946.

Let us turn now to the post Second World War period when Einstein again – after the defeat of the Nazi dictatorship – directed his attention to the nonviolent example of Gandhi and his Indian followers.

"On January 30, 1948, Gandhi, India's great leader for whom Einstein had long felt a deep affection, was assassinated. On February 11, 1948, Einstein issued the following statement for a memorial service in Washington:

"Everyone concerned with a better future for mankind must be deeply moved by the tragic death of Gandhi. He died a victim of his own principle, the principle of nonviolence. He died because, in a time of disorder and general unrest in his country, he refused any personal armed protection. It was his unshakable belief that the use of force is an evil in itself, to be shunned by those who strive for absolute justice.

To this faith he devoted his whole life, and with this faith in his heart and mind he led a great nation to its liberation. He demonstrated that the allegiance of men can be won, not merely by the cunning game of political fraud and trickery, but through the living example of a morally exalted way of life.

The veneration in which Gandhi has been held throughout the world rests on the recognition, for the most part unconscious, that in our age of moral decay he was the only statesman who represented that higher conception of human relations in the political sphere to which we must aspire with all our powers. We must learn the difficult lesson that the future of mankind will only be tolerable when our course, in world affairs as in all other matters, is based upon justice and law rather than the threat of naked power, as has been true so far."

(Einstein on Peace, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960 pp. 467f.)

This was the re-starting point of Einstein's repeated recommendations during his last eight years until 1955: to apply Gandhi's nonviolent resistance concept of politics in international relations. He frequently referred to Gandhi in the context of imminent nuclear war danger. The next quote from 1950 is explicitly referring to India:

"A Hindu correspondent urged Einstein to emulate Gandhi and practice *ahimsa*—embark on a hunger strike until production of the hydrogen bomb was stopped. Einstein replied on March 24, 1950:

"I can well appreciate that the course of action you suggest in your recent letter seems quite natural to you since you are living among people of Indian mentality. But knowing the mentality of the American people, I am quite convinced that the action which you suggest would not have the desired effect. It would, on the contrary, be considered an expression of unpardonable arrogance.

This does not mean that I do not have the greatest admiration for Gandhi and for the Indian tradition in general. I feel that the influence of India in international affairs is growing and will prove beneficent. I have studied the works of Gandhi and Nehru with real admiration. India's forceful policy of neutrality in regard to the American-Russian conflict could well lead to an unified attempt on the part of the neutral nations to find a supranational solution to the peace problem.””

(Einstein on Peace, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960 p. 525)

Again you find here Einstein's advice "to find a supranational solution to the peace problem" ! Einstein's Japanese interpreter, Morikatsu Inagaki, organiser of the internationally attended Asian Congress for World Federation, held in Hiroshima November 3-6, 1952, asked Einstein for a message, Einstein replied immediately, on September 20, 1952, and he referred to Gandhi:

"Gandhi, the greatest political genius of our time, indicated the path to be taken. He gave proof of what sacrifice man is capable once he has discovered the right path. His work on behalf of India's liberation is living testimony to the fact that man's will, sustained by an indomitable conviction, is more powerful than material forces that seem insurmountable."

(Einstein on Peace, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960 p. 584)

Then you have Einstein's moving correspondence with Gene Sharp, a twenty-five-year-old graduate of Ohio State University, resister to the Korean War. From jail, he asked Einstein to write a Foreword to his book "Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power", a first account of nonviolent conflict resolution. Later Gene Sharp developed his theory on nonviolent resistance and, together with Adam Roberts and Theodor Ebert, a new paradigm of alternative civilian-based social defence for those nations which were attacked by military aggression: to save their lives and liberate themselves from destruction.

On April 10, 1953, Einstein wrote to Sharp advising him that he had read his Gandhi book manuscript "with sincere admiration." He included an introduction which Sharp was to use in the later publication of the manuscript (published in 1960 by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India) when he realized that Gene Sharp followed "Gandhi's unique example: to overcome through an awakening of moral strength the danger of self-destruction which confronts mankind as a result of explosive technological developments. The collapse which threatens mankind is characterized in the volume by the words *depersonalization, regimentation, total war*, while its salvation is characterized by the words *personal responsibility, in conjunction with nonviolence and service to human beings in Gandhi's sense.*"

(Einstein on Peace, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960 p. 544)

And then Einstein refers to the Nuremberg Principles (1950: crimes against humanity, crimes against peace, war crimes. He could have referred also to the 1948/1951 "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide", a draft resolution of which had been presented by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin.

On June 18, 1950, just a week before the outbreak of the Korean War began, Einstein participated in a documentary broadcast, "Year of Decision," part of a series sponsored by the United Nations under the title "The Pursuit of Peace" – Einstein was asked:

"United Nations Radio is broadcasting to all the corners of the earth, in twenty-seven languages. Since this is a moment of great danger, what word would you have us broadcast to the peoples of the world?"

Einstein responded in the famous audio document which might serve as a quintessential summary of his significant remarks on Gandhi:

“On the whole, I believe that Gandhi held the most enlightened views of all the political men in our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause and to refrain from taking part in anything we believe is evil.”

(Einstein on Peace, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960 p. 529)

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who had been a doctor of theology and philosophy, wanted to practise Jesus’ principle of “caritas”, caring for the poor and the sick, by organizing a hospital in Gabon, Africa, which he called Lambaréné.

Between 1957 and 1965 he followed Einstein’s example and dedicated his activities to ban nuclear bomb tests and nuclear weapons to resist nuclear war. The 15 July 1955 Mainau Declaration, initially signed by eighteen scientists, among them Max Born, Otto Hahn and Werner Heisenberg, in its last sentence appealed to the nations: “All nations must come to the decision to renounce force as a final resort. If they are not prepared to do this, they will cease to exist.” On 23 April 1957, Dr Albert Schweitzer had his “A Declaration of Conscience” published via Radio Oslo. The call for nuclear disarmament was broadcasted by many international radio stations and printed one day later in the New York Times on 24 April 1957.

Since his student days Schweitzer, the European Gandhi so-to-say, absorbed the religious philosophy of India. Later he wrote a book about “Indian Thought and Its Development”, Boston 1935 (“Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker”, 1934). In retrospect, Schweitzer wrote to the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, India, from Lambaréné on 10 February 1965:

“... I studied Indian philosophy early on, when I was attending the University of Strasbourg, Alsace, even though no course was being given on that subject. But then, around 1900, Europe started getting acquainted with Indian thought. Rabindranath Tagore became known as the great living Indian thinker. When I grew conversant with his teachings, they made a deep impact on me. ...

By then I was teaching at the University of Strasbourg. Focusing as I did on the problem of ethics, I reached the conclusion that Indian ethics is correct in demanding kindness and mercy not only toward human beings but toward all living creatures. Now the world is gradually realizing that compassion for living creatures is part of true ethics. I regret that I have never found time to visit India. In 1913 I founded my hospital in Africa, so there was no question of my traveling to India. But through letters and through one of my British friends I became familiar with Indian thinkers, especially Gandhi, who was the same age as I. ...”

(Albert Schweitzer: Letters, 1905 - 1965; edited by Hans Walter Baehr. New York 1992, p. 351)

Written in the year 1926, these words by Dr. Albert Schweitzer from his hospital at Lambaréné point to the similarity of his ethics of reverence for life and the spiritual world of his Indian contemporaries:

“I send my deep respect and high esteem to Mahatma Gandhi. I have been deeply moved by all he is doing and by the thoughts which he conveys to others. I would so like to make his personal acquaintance. Will it ever be possible that I see him and the poet Rabindranath Tagore, too, whom I have wanted to meet for a long time ?”

On 29 November 1964, Schweitzer wrote from Lambaréné to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, New Delhi, India:

“Dear Mr. Prime Minister.

[...] Thank you for being interested in me because my ideas are known to India and are consistent with Indian ideas.

I did not know Gandhi personally, but I maintained contact with him through a mutual British acquaintance. Back then I was spending some time in Lausanne, Switzerland. When Nehru was released, he visited me in Lausanne for a while. ...

So those were my Indian friends. Little by little they were joined by others because I was seriously studying Indian thought, to which I felt drawn.

The main thing is that India and the rest of the world are getting closer and closer to a deep ethical civilization, bringing an era in which no more wars will be fought and no more nuclear arms will be built. An entirely different spirit must come into the world and illuminate human beings. It is the living spirit of reverence for life which imbued the great Indian thinkers.”

(Albert Schweitzer: Letters, 1905 - 1965; edited by Hans Walter Baehr. New York 1992, pp. 348 f.)