

SUPPORT WHERE IT MATTERS

Campaigners for human rights are bringing politics into the global clothing business - to dramatic effect. **Kate Ginn and Kirsty McLuckie report**



boycott triumph!

Boycott threat: Triumph is the latest group using Third World labour

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BARBED COMMENT



'People are loyal to a certain brand but not at any cost. Global brands live or die by their reputation'

suppo not

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SHOCKING

Bra firm hit by Burmese factory row

Symbol of defiance: Aung San Suu Kyi.

global clothing business

Campaigners for human rights



Ermine Saner and Adam Nathan have also stopped buying any products made in Burma as a result of the campaign. Underwear made by Triumph has been publicised by Kelly Brook, the former Big Brother presenter, and Kirsty McLuckie, the model. It now faces a series of protests in the new year, including the following: At part of the campaign, protesters have urged women everywhere to "support breasts not dictators." The campaign has been backed up by a dramatic image of a woman wearing a bra made of barbed wire. Triumph received...

Triumph Defeated

The Burma Campaign UK forced lingerie maker, Triumph International, to stop doing business in Burma. **Yvette Mahon reveals the facts behind one of BCUK's most successful campaigns.**

It was a triumphant victory for the Burma Campaign UK. Lingerie giant Triumph International announced in January that it would close down its Burma-based manufacturing site. The announcement came only two months after BCUK launched its 'Support Breasts Not Dictators' campaign against Triumph. Using striking images of models in barbed wire bras (see Metta winter 2001), we protested at the company's support for Burma's ruling military dictatorship.

Triumph's Burmese factory was owned by Burma's military authorities and located on a military industrial estate north of Rangoon; an estate upgraded by the authorities in July 1996 using child labour. In addition to rental payments to the authorities and commercial taxes paid on local sales, the company was also paying a 5% tax directly to the military authorities on all production for export.

On announcement of its withdrawal Triumph admitted that the company's image and credibility had been damaged by BCUK's campaign - which attracted unprecedented media coverage - and has since acknowledged that it had indeed been paying rent for its factory "indirectly" to the regime.

The decision according to a company statement was "prompted by a public debate in Europe about the political situation in Burma", a debate which "led to planning uncertainties which Triumph (could) no longer accept". A company spokesperson added that prospects for democratic change in Burma were still poor and that this was a key factor in Triumph's decision to withdraw.

So far three quarters of Triumph's Burmese workforce have found alternative employment and the majority have been paid severance of six month's on full salary. BCUK had been lobbying for a full year's salary for all employees upon closure of the factory.

In the wake of the successful campaign against Triumph, and following brief communication between the company and BCUK, Italian retailer Diesel also announced in February that it will no longer source clothing from Burma.

This brings to seven the number of clothing companies targeted by BCUK and to seven the number that have quickly opted to withdraw from Burma. These include British Home Stores, Burton/Arcadia, River Island, C&A, Dunnes (Ireland), Triumph and Diesel. As a direct result of the high profile nature of BCUK's campaigning, other retailers including H&M, Next, Nike, Grattan plc and the Fenwick Group, have all voluntarily adopted procurement policies that specifically exclude Burma.

BCUK will be publishing a Clean vs. Dirty ('out' vs. 'in' Burma) list of clothing companies in the coming year. The naming and shaming of companies still active in Burma is a key element of BCUK's goal to ensure no British retailer is importing goods made in Burma by the end of 2003.

support breasts not dictators

Boycott threat: Triumph is the latest group using Third World labour to be targeted by anti-globalisation protest...