

Desert Voices

The Newsletter of Nevada Desert Experience Vol. 11 No. 3 December 1998

VATICAN U.N. REPRESENTATIVE ARCHBISHOP RENATO MARTINO:

Nuclear Weapons "Grave Danger to Humanity"

by David Buer, OFM

On October 19, 1998, Archbishop Renato Martino, Vatican Nuncio to the United Nations, spoke to the First Committee of the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly that is reviewing disarmament programs. He said "the world must move toward the abolition of nuclear weapons...the continued existence of 30,000 nuclear weapons almost a decade after the end of the Cold War, poses a grave danger to humanity".

It has been 15 years since the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued their famous peace pastoral that had a

"strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence". Since then, that acceptance has become narrower and narrower. In 1990,

Archbishop Martino at the United Nations called for "a review of the strategy of nuclear deterrence". Two
(continued on next page)

Appeal for your Financial Support

Dear friends;

We are aware that at this time you are flooded with appeals for funds. Also we know there are many expenses associated with the Christmas season that is descending upon us. Nevertheless we are once again asking for your support for Nevada Desert Experience.

As the articles in this newsletter relate, there is no lessening in the commitment of the United States to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. As the B-52 bombers took off for Iraq so recently they were able to present a new nuclear weapon not in their arsenal during the Iraq war. This new nuclear weapon was specifically designed to penetrate the earth to a deep enough level to hit Saddam Hussein's command headquarters and possibly eliminate Saddam himself. Evidence from the Iraq war presented us with vivid pictures of the slaughter of innocent women and children in such futile efforts. Now these attempts can be nuclear armed.

If we cross the nuclear threshold again there is no telling where it will stop. Such experts as General Lee Butler (former commander of all strategic forces) insist there may well be no stopping all out escalation once the first bomb is dropped.

Given the perilous state of continuing to live in a world with nuclear weapons as a growing threat, we at Nevada Desert Experience join General Butler and the growing world-wide movement insisting the only hope is to move for total abolition of all nuclear weapons. With this conviction we embark on Millennium 2000, which begins with the entry into the new millennium and makes a radical commitment to work towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons!

Ironically as the danger grows, the apathy is not disturbed. Thus, it is very difficult to find funds to mobilize for this campaign. We primarily depend on you who have seen for many years the desperateness of nuclear war and have kept us going this far. We are gearing up for this all out campaign. Quite frankly, we need your help if this campaign is to happen. Before beginning your Christmas shopping can you consider a generous gift to Nevada Desert Experience? It might also be seen as a gift to your family to ensure their safety in a fragile world.

Many thanks and may God bless you and gift us with a world of peace.

Louis Vitale, OFM, Chair,

Nevada Desert Experience, P O Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127

STUDY
WAR



NO MORE

(continued from front page)

years later, back at the U.N., he stated; "the dangerous strategy of nuclear deterrence is outmoded". Again at the U.N., in 1997, Archbishop Martino said; "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation".

Over the last several years, Nevada Desert Experience has worked harder to be in solidarity with our colleagues who protest with us, not only at the Nevada Test Site, but also those active at the nuclear laboratories in Livermore, CA and Los Alamos, NM. Both labs are very active in preparing for the "subcritical tests" that have taken place at the Nevada Test Site several times since last year. Also, at Livermore Labs preparations are going forward with the "Stockpile Stewardship Program", a program costing billions and billions of dollars that enables the U.S. to further develop and test nuclear weapons using super lasers and the most powerful new computers.

It is these developments that Archbishop Martino had in mind when he said on October 19th; "...what is deeply troubling is the prospect of a new nuclear arms race. The modernization programs of those who already have nuclear weapons, combined with the acquiring of nuclear weapons by other [countries], and research now going on in still others, plunge the world into more danger than existed during the Cold War. The longer this situation continues, the more a growing number of [countries] will falsely claim that nuclear weapons are legitimate".

Since 1982, Nevada Desert Experience has brought thousands of people of faith to the Nevada Test Site to get informed, pray, attend creative interfaith liturgies, sing, dance and protest nuclear weapons testing and production. As author Jonathan Schell has recently reminded us, we have a "Gift of Time" [Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co., 223 pages, \$25] available to

turn the world away from nuclear weapons. The majority of the world is calling the minority that possess nuclear weapons to truly ban them comprehensively. Certainly there are forces that want to continue to rely on nuclear weapons. They are our opponents.

Nevada Desert Experience is committed to continue the clarion call to our past and current supporters and to those new friends that are discovering us through the travels of our Education Director, Cindy Pile. In the coming year we will continue our events during Lent and August. Excitement is already building for the extraordinary gathering of Millennium 2000, December 29, 1999 - January 2, 2000 (see enclosed flyer). *Desert Voices* will regularly update you throughout the year. We will continue our networking with groups active here in Nevada and at the nuclear weapons laboratories. We will continue our vigil of the subcritical tests.

It is necessary to occasionally stop to see how far we have come. Earlier this year 80 U.S. Catholic Bishops associated with Pax Christi USA signed a statement condemning nuclear deterrence policy. General Lee Butler, who commanded U.S. nuclear forces earlier this decade, argues from a military perspective, that nuclear weapons are obsolete. The Franciscan leadership in Rome urged the leaders of the world to abolish nuclear weapons (write NDE for a copy of the 3 page statement). Nevada Desert Experience has steadily, consistently called for an end to nuclear weapon testing, called for the closing of the Nevada Test Site and supported the Western Shoshone as the legitimate stewards of the land it occupies.

Let us, together, echo the final words of

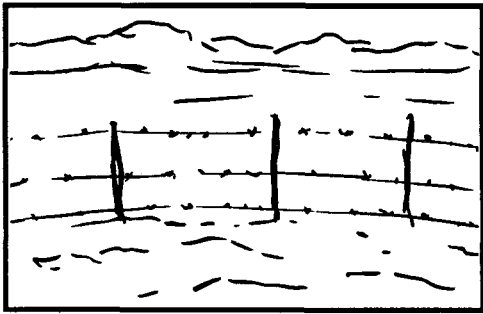
vision and hope of Archbishop Martino's October 19, 1998 statement to the United Nations, "The world has rid itself of the evils of legitimized slavery, legalized colonialism, and legalized apartheid. These were eliminated as the result of rising global awareness and political determination. So, also, the growing momentum to delegitimize and eliminate nuclear weapons must now be accompanied by political action by all [nations]. Humanity deserves no less from us".

Join Nevada Desert Experience at the Nevada Test Site and add your voice to Jesse Manibusan's song; "Now is the time, we are the ones, this is the place, walking the ways of peace". We urge your ongoing support of the Nevada Desert Experience.

U.S. TESTS NUCLEAR BOMB

After several months of delays, the Department of Energy conducted its subcritical nuclear weapons test, named "Bagpipe" on September 26, 1998 at the Nevada Test Site. Nevada Desert Experience joined with Shundahai Network and other local anti-nuclear activists for protests at the Nevada Test Site and at the Federal Building in Las Vegas. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Nevada Desert Experience joined in protests at the headquarters of Bechtel (the contractor who operates the Nevada Test Site) and at Livermore Labs. The next subcritical underground nuclear weapons test is scheduled for late November 1998.

TELLING THE NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE STORY
Ken Butigan, a former NDE Board Member, is writing a dissertation and book on NDE. He would like to hear from you! Please use the enclosed survey to reflect on your NDE experiences. Thank You!



DRAWING BY NANCY LYNCH

August Desert Witness 1998

On Thursday, August 6, to commemorate the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Alain Richard, OFM offered his last Eucharistic service at the Nevada Test Site, before he headed back to France. Alain has been participating in events at the Nevada Test Site since the first Lenten Desert Experience in 1982! We will miss him. The next day, participants gathered at St. James Church in Las Vegas for ADW 98: "In Their Memory: From Violence to Wholeness". Cindy Pile, Louie Vitale and Stevi Carroll led the workshops. Participants came from Catholic Worker Communities in Philadelphia, Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Four members of the board of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship came from Michigan, North Carolina, California and Pennsylvania. Local supporters Sr. Virginia Corley, OP and Peggy Devitt were among those who assisted generously with the logistics. The St. Barbara Youth Group in Santa Ana, CA sent the beautiful yellow banner.

On Sunday, August 9, the 53rd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, ADW 98 participants joined Corbin Harney for a traditional Western Shoshone morning sunrise service. Afterward, Cindy Pile led a morning prayer service. During the service, Erik Thompson and Cynthia of the Desert "exploded radiated dust" (flour) on our prayer circle. Those of us downwind from the flour were "dead". It was a dramatic liturgy. There were 28 arrests. Afterward, participants gathered at the Franciscan houses, resting and sharing stories.

RECENT NDE STAFF AND BOARD TRANSITIONS

The NDE board has three new members. **Nancy Lynch**, a Quaker from Santa Barbara, CA. Over the last ten years, Nancy has come regularly to the Nevada Test Site, participating in the last two Holy Week Walks. Her husband, who died of cancer over ten years ago, was one of the ground troops who participated in the above ground nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site in the 1950's. **Erik Thompson** has been coming to the Nevada Test Site since the 1980's. In 1989, Erik joined Louie Vitale, OFM and others to reclaim the chapel in the Nevada Test Site town of Mercury. **Mike Niece** and his wife Kathy live at the Magdaleine Catholic Worker House in Oakland, CA. Mike is a nurse and has

attended NDE events several times in the last two years. He has been an active supporter to Plowshares activists Steve Kelley, SJ and Susan Crane.

In April, **Julia Occhiogrosso** and **Gary Cavalier** completed 2 1/2 years as NDE co-directors. They continue their work at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker and Julia works part-time at Pace e Bene with their *From Violence to Wholeness* program. **David Buer, OFM** is NDE's interim director. NDE board members **Earl Johnson** and **June Stark Casey** completed their three year terms. We are grateful for their dedication to the vision and projects of NDE since 1995.

New Nevada Desert Experience Mission Statement

(Approved at October 1998 Board Meeting)

As people of faith, we believe that the production and testing of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction are physically, emotionally and spiritually devastating to all creation.

The mission of the Nevada Desert Experience (NDE) is to proclaim the immorality of weapons of mass destruction and to stop nuclear weapons testing through a campaign of prayer, dialogue and non-violent direct action. NDE is mobilizing people of faith to work toward nuclear abolition, including our immediate goals of ending subcritical nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site and curtailing the Stockpile Stewardship Program.



Hundreds of saucer shaped nuclear bomb craters create a "moonscape" terrain at Yucca Flat. 925 nuclear weapons tests have been detonated at the Nevada Test Site.

