

Desert Voices

NDE Newsletter
#6 summer 1989

THE TYRANNY OF THE BOMB

Richard Barnett

Nuclear weapons serve many purposes. After forty-five years, most of us--perhaps all of us at some level of our being--treat them as idols. Upon witnessing the first explosion at Alamogordo, it struck Robert Oppenheimer that the Bomb was an awesome expression of God-like power--in the words of the Bhagavad-Gita, "the destroyer of worlds." Ever since, most Americans have believed in the magic of the Bomb. Here was a weapon as terrible as the Evil against which it was directed, a weapon that would never have to be used because our very willingness to use it would protect us. As President Bush proclaims the imminent end of the Cold War, he calls for the renewal of faith in the Bomb.

The magic of the Bomb is seductive. The oft-repeated assertion that the Bomb has "kept the peace for 45 years" has the ring of truth to it. But in one sense it is clearly untrue. Twenty wars or more rage across the globe at this very moment. In the era of the Bomb more than twenty million men, women, and children have been killed in war. But Europe, the incubator of two World Wars, has been relatively peaceful. Thanks to the Bomb? No one can answer that question. There is no historical evidence that the Soviet Union ever contemplated the invasion of West Europe which the Bomb is primarily intended to deter. To credit the Bomb with producing peace in Europe is to ignore the experience of two so-called "conventional" wars which destroyed victors and vanquished alike. Even before the invention of nuclear weapons there was widespread understanding among national leaders that war on such a scale could serve no political purpose.

The extraordinary political moment should teach us how profound is the grip of nuclear weapons on official thought. The disagreement between the US and West Germany over short-range missiles is really an argument about

whether it would ever be possible or desirable to be rid of nuclear weapons. A large percentage of the German people, aware that war plans call for the use of battlefield nuclear weapons within days of the outbreak of war, and knowing that the primary victims will be Germans on both sides of the line, cherish the hope of a nuclear-free continent, if not a nuclear-free world. For a brief moment, this was also the stated objective of President Reagan.

But in the face of extraordinary changes in Soviet military and foreign policy and mounting anti-nuclear feeling round the world, the President reaffirms the nuclear credo. There appears to be no conditions, not even the disappearance of the USSR, under which it would be safe to give up our dependence on the Bomb. It used to be said that it was the "closed society" in the Soviet Union that made it necessary to clutch the Bomb. Or it was the nature of the Soviet system. The fact that society, ideology, and policy in nations long proclaimed as enemies are rapidly changing appears to have no perceptible effect on nuclear policy, except to encourage the search for new enemies. Now it is suggested that "instability" and "revolution" in the Third World make appropriate targets for the "discriminate" use of nuclear weapons. Having taught India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa and others that no nation can be truly safe without the Bomb, the nuclear powers are beginning to use nuclear proliferation as the prime argument against disarmament.

It is evident that there are profound changes across the planet which open new opportunities for freeing humanity from the shadow of the Bomb. New understandings of what security is and new ideas for achieving security are bubbling up all over the world. But leaders educated in "Nuclearthink" do not seem to be able to escape the foolish, deadly logic of the Bomb. Yet tens of millions of people have a different faith based on an instinct for survival and on commitment to a future, to civilization, and to living things.

Plutonium in Space

This fall, NASA plans to launch fifty pounds of plutonium 238 from Kennedy Space Center. The space shuttle Atlantis will launch Project Galileo, the first space probe carrying plutonium-fueled nuclear reactors. According to a Defense Dept. study, it is Star Wars that needs new "power technology" and that's the reason for nuclear reactors on-board.

The greatest danger is in launch failure. The cannisters holding the plutonium are designed to withstand pressure of 2000 psi; the Challenger explosion created pressures ten times greater. Plutonium is the most toxic substance in the universe. Ingested, it concentrates in the bone marrow causing leukemia. Inhaled, it leads to cancer of the lung. Less than one-millionth of a gram is a carcinogenic dose. If the plutonium from Project Galileo "gets dispersed over Florida--kiss Florida goodbye," says John Gofman, professor emeritus of medical physics at U.C. Berkeley.

Write Congress demanding hearings!

For more information, contact Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice, Box 2486, Orlando, FL 32802, (407) 422-3479.

Welcome back!

Cindy Pile has returned to NDE for her second summer internship. She has been studying at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. This Lent, Cindy was instrumental in planning the weekend for the seminarians.

Contact NDE if you're interested in interning during Lenten Desert Experience IX, February 15-April 18, 1990.

DESERT VOICES welcomes letters, announcements, articles, poetry, visual art and humorous pieces. Send to:

Desert Voices, Box 4487,
Las Vegas, NV 89127.

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Nightbreaker,

a film starring Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez, will be shown in Las Vegas in conjunction with August Desert Witness. Plans are underway for an expert panel to follow the film, which centers on above-ground testing in the 1950s at the Nevada Test Site. For more information, see the flyer in this issue.

American Peace Test held their Body of the Whole meeting at Alma de Mujer near Austin, Texas, June 2-4. Nearly 40 activists worked on the year's focus, direction, structure, financial plans and actions. Four members of the seven member decision-making body were selected: Nancy Heskett, PA; Larry Levy, OR; Bill Rosse, Western Shoshone Nation; September Jerrett, CA. For more information, contact APT, 2945 S. Industrial Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89109, (702) 731-9644.

a small voice in the desert

--Bob Mayberry



Mostly it was what we expected: the destruction, the rubble, and the absence of bodies.

One thing surprised us some.

The shadows.

Throughout the city, on the sidewalks and the walls of the buildings, were silhouettes of human forms baked into the cement and brick. It was almost as if a giant photograph had been taken.

A flash so bright that in an instant it transformed every person on the street into a negative.

The mask of Hiroshima.



Nuclear Resistance in the USSR Pamela Osqood

On May 21st peace activists in the San Francisco Bay area had the honor of meeting with Murat Auzov^w from Kazakhstan, USSR. Murat is on the Steering Committee of a newly formed grassroots group in Kazakhstan which is organizing to stop nuclear testing in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev has met with this group which, inspired by resistance to testing in the US, has named itself the "Nevada Movement."

Gorbachev invited one of the leaders of the movement, Russian poet O. Suleymenov, to go to England with him to discuss nuclear testing with Margaret Thatcher. The British press publicized the event, which is how we in the US learned of Nevada Movement. At least temporarily Gorbachev has stopped testing, which many believe to be a result of their protest.

An Open Declaration to the USSR Supreme Soviet

Production and testing of nuclear weapons has been going on for decades in Kazakhstan. The extent of radioactive waste is accumulating day by day. From ecological and economic points of view, the further development of this branch of industry is MADNESS.

The USSR shares the 28th place on living standards among developed countries. One of the main reasons for our poverty is the burden of expense in nuclear armaments. In most developed countries life expectancy has been increasing; in our republic it has decreased by almost four years in the last decade. One of the primary reasons for this decrease is the increase of radiation in the ground, water, and in our food.

We, the inhabitants of Kazakhstan, have the right to announce our alarm and to demand the cessation of the production and testing of nuclear weapons. For the sake of the health of present and future generations, for the sake of life on Earth, we demand the closing of the atomic testing in the territory of the republic! No defense rationale can justify a silent nuclear war of the government against its own people.

The Nevada Movement Covenant

To all public, creative, and religious organizations:

To the supporters of the movement for the prohibition of nuclear tests in the State of Nevada:

Brothers and Sisters,

We cannot be silent. The atom has been exploded on our earth for more than forty years. Every explosion on the Semipalatinsk test site may become a catastrophe more dreadful than that in Chernobyl. We cannot wait for doomsday without speaking! We're accustomed to fighting for peace in the world. Now we understand that we must fight for peace on our own land. We have organized a "Nevada" movement.

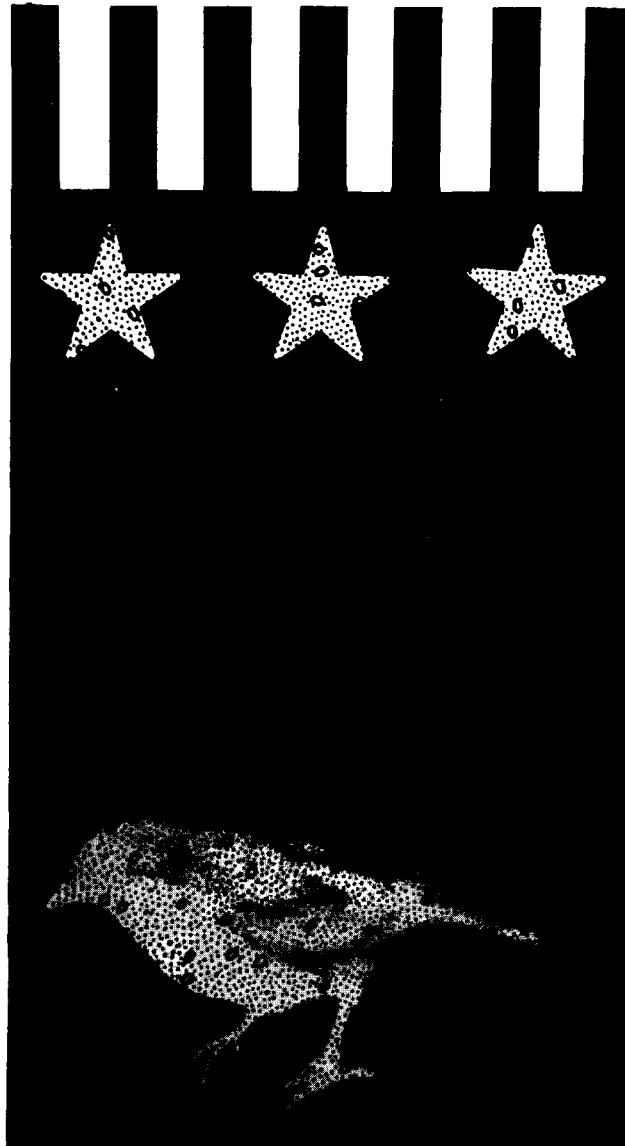
Our demands:

1. Close the test site in Kazakhstan.
2. Curtail the enterprises in the republic producing nuclear materials for military purposes and redirect their funding and power to repair the damage done to nature and to the people.
3. Establish control by society of atomic industry waste burial sites.

We call our movement "Nevada" in hopes of uniting our efforts with those who share our ideas and resist atomic testing in the US. Let them entitle their movement "Kazakhstan." There are many sister-cities. Let these two much suffering regions, Kazakhstan and Nevada, unite. Everything happening on this earth applies to all of us. The political weather of superstates is susceptible to change. Our task is to change the whole political climate to make it more favorable for humankind.

The international peace movement in the US, USSR, France, Britain, and China will help those governments, members of the atomic club, to sign an agreement to prohibit nuclear tests in all spheres. This is our aim. The fatal 20th century is at its ebb! Let the age of humankind not come to an end! The explosion of people's indignation, consciousness and hope is against the nuclear explosions!

The Bomb: Political and Moral Fallout



August Desert Witness V
Friday August 4 - Wednesday August 9, 1989

The Bomb: Political and Moral Fallout

August Desert Witness V

Friday August 4 - Wednesday August 9, 1989

Christ the King Community Center
4925 S. Torrey Pines, Las Vegas, NV

Hiroshima Memorial Weekend

Friday August 4

- 7 pm Registration
7:30 "The Tyranny of the Bomb"
Richard Barnet

Saturday August 5

- 9 am Registration
9:30 "The Tyranny of the Bomb II"
Richard Barnet
11:00 Group Discussions
Lunch
1:30 Nonviolence Preparation
Scenario Planning
Dinner
7:30 Memorial March from DOE to
Las Vegas Strip

Sunday August 6

- 8 am Memorial Service and Action at Test Site
Afternoon Tentative video showing of
Nightbreaker starring Martin Sheen and
Emilio Estevez

Richard Barnet is a Senior Fellow with the Institute
for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.

Barry Stenger, OFM teaches at the Franciscan School
of Theology, Berkeley, CA

Nagasaki Nonviolence Conference

Co-sponsored with PACE E BENE

1420 W. Bartlett, Las Vegas, NV 89106 (702) 648-2798

Monday August 7

- 9 am Registration
9:30 Prayer & Song
10:00 "Nuclear Realities Challenge Our Moral
Thinking" Barry Stenger, OFM
Panel response to presentation
Lunch
1:30 Small groups followed by
plenary session
Dinner
7:00 "What is Nonviolence?"
Pace E Bene Center

Tuesday August 8

- 6:30 am Test Site Vigil
Lunch
3:30 "Nuclear Realities..." Barry Stenger
Dinner
7:00 Nonviolence Preparation

Wednesday August 9

- 6:30 am Test Site Vigil
8:00 Memorial Service and Action

Memorial Weekend	\$25
Nonviolence Conference	\$35
Both	\$50

For registration form & information about accommodations contact:

Nevada Desert Experience
PO Box 4487
Las Vegas, NV 89127
(702) 646-4814

RESPONSES TO 'NONVIOLENCE AS MACHO BEHAVIOR'

Thank you for the provocative piece by Mary Hunt on Nonviolence as Macho Behavior. It helped me articulate what I have been feeling for some time.

--Judy Schekel, Burnsville, SC

Please understand, nonviolence is self-defense! It demands an end to violence, never submission! It also asserts that it does no good for the oppressed to pick up the weapons of the oppressor. To do so would buy into the false dichotomy of Dominance/Submission. We have alternatives, choices, other than victimization or violent reaction.

--Moss O. Stone, Tucson, AZ

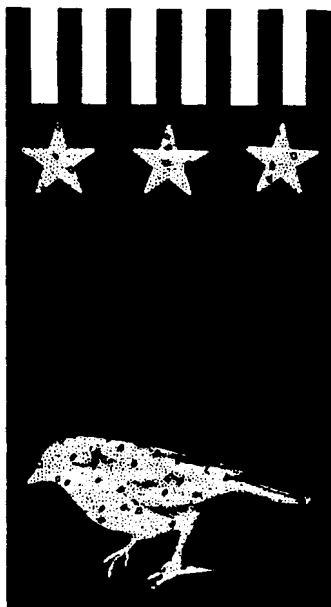
Macho behavior is uncaring, selfish, and aggressive. Nonviolent behavior is just the opposite: caring, unselfish, and nonaggressive. Battered women (or any human being) should indeed be told to be nonviolent, and yes, "suffer the anger of the opponent" and "refuse to return the assaults"; then, seek the Truth and find out why one is being battered and resist, resist, resist--but do so in a caring, unselfish, and nonaggressive manner.

As for self-defense, no, it is not the "exceptional case in nonviolence." If one is truly to be nonviolent and in faith with satyagraha, then even in self-defense one's behavior must be caring, unselfish, and nonaggressive. There is no machismo in nonviolence--there can't be.

--Peter R. Curia, Phoenix, AZ

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