

DESERT VOICES

The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience, Number 8, Spring, 1990

A TELLING TALE OF TWO TESTING PROGRAMS

U.S.A.

(From an Associated Press story in the Las Vegas Review Journal, March 11, 1990.):

A powerful nuclear weapons test at the Nevada Test Site rocked the desert Saturday, just hours after sources reported the Russians would phase out testing on the Soviet Union mainland because of safety concerns.

The underground shot, code-named Metropolis, was the first nuclear test of 1990. The nuclear weapon was buried at the bottom of a 1,500 foot shaft at Yucca Flat, 85 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

The device was listed as having an explosive force of 20,000 to 150,000 tons of TNT, but was believed to be near the upper limits because of warnings issued in advance by the Energy Department.

The test registered 5.1 on the Richter scale at the National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado, according to spokesman John Minsch.

Seismic equipment atop Fitzgerald's Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas registered slight motion from the blast.

There's definitely ground motion, DOE spokesman Chris West said as he watched video from cameras trained on ground zero.

"It's a little like sitting in a rowboat in the water, there's a mild rocking motion," West said in a telephone report from a control point, 13 miles from ground zero, "I've never been in an earthquake, but it's probably similar to that. It's definitely detectable here."

West said 11 anti-nuclear protesters turned out at the gates to the site shortly before the 8 a.m. detonation.

GENERALLY SPEAKING:

"We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Ours is a world of Nuclear Giants and Ethical Infants."

GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY

"War has become a Frankenstein to destroy both sides...It contains...the germ of double suicide."

GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR

U.S.S.R.

The Supreme Soviet legislature in Moscow heard plans from a senior defense minister to close the Semipalatinsk Test Site in Kazakhstan after 27 more nuclear weapon tests. The "Nevada Movement," a nuclear testing resistance group, has held demonstrations for about a year demanding an end to testing. They have expressed fears that cancers in adults and children, dwarfism and genetic diseases have been caused by radiation venting from the Kazakhstan Test Site.

After 1993, a reduced atomic testing program will be moved to Novaya Zemlya, an island within the Arctic Circle. This may result in testing small weapons and an inability to expediently modernize the USSR's nuclear weapons.

Norwegians (370 miles to the southwest) and legislators from the Novaya Zemlya Island area in the Arctic Circle have expressed concerns about the move.

International Citizens CTB Congress

The Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) are convening an International Congress in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, USSR, May 24-26, 1990.

Co-sponsored by numerous groups including Nevada Desert Experience, the congress will feature presentations and working groups on Nuclear Testing and Weapons Proliferation, Moral and Ethical Issues of Nuclear Weapons Possession, Political Prospects for a Test Ban, Verification, Nuclear Waste and Medical and Environmental Effects of Nuclear Weapons Production. There will be a mass public demonstration calling for an end to nuclear testing on the closing day of the congress.

The Nevada Desert Experience board of directors will send NDE staff persons Mary Lehman and Peter Ediger to the congress if sufficient contributions are received. (For how to help, see financial story on next page.)

For more information on the Congress, contact IPPNW, Alma-Ata Congress, 126 Rogers St., Cambridge, MA 02142, or phone (617) 868-5050.

COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY PICKS UP STEAM

A Test Ban Treaty Conference to amend the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty into a comprehensive test ban (CTB) will be held January 8, 1991, in New York or Geneva, Switzerland. Participating will be 118 countries, including the nuclear threshold states of India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, Argentina, and Brazil. If a CTB is passed, all 118 countries will be bound to halt testing, thus significantly curbing worldwide nuclear proliferation. It is anticipated additional conference sessions will be needed, perhaps in the fall of 1991.

The US, UK and USSR must vote yes in order for the CTB amendment to pass. The USSR supports the amendment, the US and UK do not. The US intends to veto the amendment and the UK will follow.

Congress will likely be considering two pieces of legislation on testing this year. One is a Senate resolution supporting the Test Ban Treaty Conference and the other is a bill to cut funds for DOE's nuclear testing program.

President Bush is the ultimate decision maker on the US position, so the CTB Campaign is targeting local, state and national elected officials to move representatives and senators. For more information, contact CTBC, 1000 16th St. NW, Ste 810, Washington, D.C., 20036, (202) 862-4956.

Closer to home, a four-person international team is on a six-week tour of ten western states to educate people about nuclear weapons testing and advocate a Comprehensive Test Ban.

Tour members include Pauline Esteves of the Western Shoshone National Council, Kalrat Umarov, a member of the Nevada Movement resisting nuclear weapons testing in Kazakhstan, USSR, and David Soinit and Pax Galta of the Bay Area Peace Test.

Co-sponsored by the Nevada Desert Experience and the Bay Area Peace Test, the tour will travel through California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and conclude with the American Peace Test's action, March 30-April 2, and NDE's Palm Sunday program, April 8.

In addition to public presentations and media interviews, the team is speaking at high schools and colleges, churches, and various community groups.

This team is an expression of the growing international movement for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

Squatting on the sidewalk
In a compact ball
only a child can become,
armed with a 32-ounce
framing hammer
and delighted determination,
the tyke terrorized ants.

Boom Boom Boom

Every ant exploded
into a wet spot
by two pounds of steel
proved the powerfully
innocent allure
of instant death
by overkill,
be it measured
in hammer blows
and ant guts
or megatons
and burning flesh

Boom Boom Boom

Jon Klusmire

THE STONES' LAMENTATION

*"If the people are silent,
the stones will cry out"
Luke 19:40*

We groan
in silent
agony
as twelve foot diamond bits bore
our depth
devouring
our children.

We shriek
in silent
terror as 150 kilotons rip
our bowels.

We long to be
the foundation stones of your New Creation
Why do you
make of us
your hell?

Peter J. Edlger

LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE IX: INTEGRATING PRAYER AND ACTION

Ash Wednesday keynote speaker Mary Luke Tobin, SL, of the Thomas Merton Center in Denver, Colorado, reminded us that Lent is a special time to set free the poison of hatred, greed and power; a time to recognize that we can be the source of pain and suffering in our own, and others' lives. Also, though, each of us must remember we are the event of God's self-communication.

She spoke of Abraham Heschel who said his study of the Jewish prophets sent him to the streets in an integration of prayer and action. He said a prophet is one who has God and humans in one thought, at one time, at all times. When asked of the characteristics of a prophet, he responded that she/he, 1) is one with profound love, 2) has a powerful dissent; 3) who must issue a painful rebuke, and 4) who has unwavering hope. We are the prophets of our time. A silent blockade of the road resulted in 22 arrests.

✱

Hearing the Cry of Creation, a 22 hour retreat by Rosemary Lynch, OSF, and Alain Richard, OFM, the first weekend of Lent, sensitized us to the anguish of the earth due to our mistreatment. Multi-media presentations showed the beauty and the damage of the earth; scriptural study gave us hope. A walk around a dumping area in the city was followed by several hours of prayerful reflection at the Nevada Test Site.

✱

Catholic Peace Coalition's keynote speaker was Retired Lt. Col. Thomas Carew, a military advisor for the Center for Defense Information. A World War II and Korean War veteran, a participant in testing and later, a nuclear weapons effects expert, he had some important things to say:

- The arms race has brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy and made us far less secure than before we engaged in it.
- The Soviets have always followed us. There never was a "missile gap," or a "window of vulnerability." We have squandered our resources to make the world more vulnerable to annihilation.
- We could declare a halt to nuclear weapons testing now without risk to ourselves or the world.
- The ending of the Cold War has robbed us of the useful enemy we have needed for such a long period.
- The Military Industrial Complex is a high growth industry, the earnings on investment are twice as great as in other areas.

After Sunday's liturgy at the Test Site, 43 persons were arrested in nonviolent civil resistance.

✱

Holy Week. As we go to press, Friends, Brethren, and Mennonites will be followed by the Franciscans; the Methodists; and American Peace Test's action.

LDE IX will culminate during Holy Week with a Good Friday action at the Test Site. Helping lead the Holy Week program will be Ched Myers, of Pasadena, CA, whose latest book is *Blinding the Strong Man*, an analysis of the Gospel of Mark; and Kathryn Scarano, of the Kalros Sacred Dance Group of Riverside, CA.

Ched and Kathryn will present opportunities to take part in a truly integrated witness and retreat which will feature three-hour long walking vigils, dancing, scripture study, reflection and celebrating and expressing the combining of mind, body and soul.

Happy Easter!

Peacemaking, Community and God: Episcopalian Witness and Retreat

During the Great Thanksgiving, the helicopter began to circle the band of worshippers gathered in the desert just outside the fenced boundary of the Nevada Test Site where the government is currently testing the most awesome weapons known to humanity.

Snowflurries greeted the pilgrims as they joined in a circle to say the Lord's prayer. Communion was given and received with familiar words, smiles and hugs. After reconsecrating the ground with holy water, the group moved in near silence to the barbed wire fence that separates land secured by the Department of Energy from the rest of the earth. About half the group made a decision of conscience and crossed the fence. Chanting softly and praying, each person moved closer to the inevitable arrest that would be one more NO to the barriers that divide many today, and one more YES to God's creation and the healing of the human and ecological spirit.

Sunday's eucharistic action followed a day of preparatory presentations, dialogue and reflection, with varied theological and political views represented. At the heart of the experience, though, was a belief that we must look seriously at the policy for testing nuclear weapons and pursue a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The weekend, entitled "Peacemaking, Community and God," was planned by Critical Mass, a group from All Saint's Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California. Over one hundred people, about half from All Saint's parish, participated. This kind of weekend may well serve as a model for congregations to consider for a Parish Retreat.

Excerpted from an article by Gordon Yeaton.

NDE NEWS OF NOTE

August Desert Witness

The annual commemoration of Hiroshima Nagasaki will be held Friday evening, August 3, through Monday morning, August 6, 1990. Genle and Bill Durland of Cokedale, Colorado, will be resource persons for the weekend. The Durlands have been active in the religious peace movement as authors, teachers, theologians, lawyers and founders of several peace communities including the Center on Law and Pacifism and the Community for Creative Nonviolence.

Corpus Christi Desert Experience

The Eighth Day Center for Justice in Chicago is planning, with the Nevada Desert Experience, for a National Faith and Resistance Retreat in Nevada for Women and Men Religious, June 17-21, 1991. For more information, contact Eighth Day Center for Justice, 1020 S Wabash #680, Chicago IL 60605.

Your Financial Support Is Appreciated

For the ongoing work of Nevada Desert Experience.

The budget for 1990 is \$86,400.

This includes;

- seven weeks of Lenten Desert Experience programs
- August Desert Witness and other programs through the year
- two staff salaries and intern expenses
- printing, mailing and office expenses; staff and board travel

For NDE representation at the USSR Stop Testing Congress

The NDE Board is hoping to send both Mary Leyman and Peter Ediger to the Soviet Union if enough funds are contributed to cover their travel expenses. As of this printing, about \$1,500 more is needed. Please make your checks payable to 'Nevada Desert Experience,' or, for tax deductible contributions, to 'Franciscan Friars of California.'

Please indicate if your contribution is to be designated for travel to the USSR or if it is for general NDE support. A response envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Desert Voices

Desert Voices is the newsletter of the non-profit Nevada Desert Experience.

Your letters, articles, announcements of coming events, poetry or humorous pieces are welcome. Send them (and a stamped, self-addressed envelope) to Desert Voices, Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127-0487, phone (702) 646-4814.

Legal Update

Nye County is continuing its policy of giving citations and dropping charges for those crossing the line at the Test Site gate. However, persons arrested in Test Site buildings or "secure" areas are likely to be charged with federal trespass and face prosecution.

In addition to Thompson, Vitale and Sponholz (see related story, back page), four other persons have been federally charged: Ted Thomas, Evan Lawrence, Diane Zappula and John Parocelli. Thomas is serving a sentence of one year probation; Lawrence's trial ended in a hung jury; Zappula is serving a seven month jail term and faces a fine of \$3600 for incarceration costs; Parocelli was given a 45-day sentence and is currently free pending appeal.

Diane Zappula would welcome letters: #255-17-048, Hopi B32, Box 1785, Black Canyon Stage 1, Phoenix, AZ, 85027.

Agency Harassment

Federal and State agencies seem to be escalating harassment policies against protestors at the Nevada Test Site. Last June, the Bureau of Land Management evicted the Peace Camp which had been there for three years. When some reestablished themselves on Department of Transportation land near the Mercury entrance, they were also evicted.

In March of '90, when NDE had an RV on DOT land near the Mercury gate for solidarity with the International Fast for a Test Ban, NDE was informed that the RV and those in it could not be there overnight. NDE is in dialogue with State and Federal Officials and legislators seeking relief from such encroachment on civil rights.

NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE:

"War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today."

John F. Kennedy

Nuclear Testing and Earthquakes

Dr. Gary Whiteford, Professor of Geography at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B. Canada, has done a study on the relationship between earthquakes and nuclear testing. His findings suggest a significant correlation between testing and earthquakes. For copies of his paper, "Earthquakes and Nuclear Weapons Testing: Dangerous Patterns and Trends," write to Dr. Whiteford, University of New Brunswick; #45333, Fredericton, N.B. Canada E3B 8E3.

Wanted: NDE Summer Intern

NDE will need a Summer Intern from June 15 to August 15, 1990. Room, board and a small stipend are provided. Contact the NDE office for an application.

Begin planning now...

Lenten Desert Experience X

March 8-10, 1991

Celebrating a Decade in the Desert

a reunion of all who have shared in Lenten Desert Experience

LDE I

LDE II

LDE III

LDE IV

LDE V

LDE VI

LDE VII

LDE VIII

LDE IX

Franciscans

Pax Christi

Catholic Worker

Methodists

Friends, Brethren, Mennonites

Fellowship of Reconciliation

Episcopalians

Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Jewish Peace Fellowship

Bishops

Sojourners

Catholic Peace Coalition

and many people of faith from a variety of spiritual journeys

Plans are in process.....Send us your suggestions

Friday meetings of constituent groups
Friday evening-Saturday joint meetings
Sunday worship/action at the Test Site

clip and save

clip and save

clip and save

UTAH JURY DISHES OUT JUSTICE, AQUITS THREE WITNESSES

Salt Lake City, Utah, January 26, 1990: Three anti-nuclear activists were acquitted of criminal trespassing when a jury determined they were justified in walking onto Hercules property to disrupt production of Trident III missiles.

"The verdict empowers us for everything we have been doing. It is the first step in a very long journey," said Diana Hirschl, one of the three defendants/witnesses. Diana is also a frequent participant in Nevada Test Site actions.

Third Circuit Court Judge William A. Thorne's denial of the prosecutions *in limine* motion (which would have limited the defense to the facts of the trespass and disallowed the rationale for the action), opened the way for evidence from expert witnesses on nuclear weapons production and international law.

Jury Foreman Wayne Wetzel said the defendants were "making a statement to the community and citizens of the United States that we as a people have to be aware of what we are creating...We learned a lot. I hope it's not the end of this kind of thing."

In another legal development, the three men arrested in a former chapel in the test site town of Mercury, have been found guilty of federal trespassing charges.

Erk Thompson, independent candidate for President in the 1992 election, was sentenced in Federal Court in Las Vegas on February 9. Judge Lloyd George, a former Strategic Air Command flier, sentenced Thompson to 90 days in jail, the maximum \$5000 fine, and approximately \$3,600 for the costs of incarceration. Thompson declined to accept probation and will appeal the sentence.

Thompson, Franciscan Father Louis Vitale and Brother Gary Sponholz were arrested while performing a memorial service in the former chapel on the 44th anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki. The chapel is now an office for Los Alamos National Laboratory, a leading nuclear design facility. Thompson was convicted at a jury trial on October 30 in which he was barred from presenting defense involving international law. Vitale and Sponholz were convicted in January and will be sentenced on Good Friday, April 13.

In his statement at sentencing, Thompson said, "A few years ago, I came to the realization that my Christianity makes demands on me. It requires me to speak for the voiceless creation, the same creation that is assaulted at the Nevada Test Site and a score of other federal nuclear facilities." (Thompson is inviting supporters to join his action by sending \$1 to: Erk Thompson Fine Fund, % Prairie State Bank, Milan, MN. 56262.)

DESERT VOICES
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