

# DESERT VOICES



The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience, Number 7, Winter, 1989-90

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## Our Kairos Moment is Now

By John Dear, S.J.

We live in devastating and hopeful times. Things are getting worse at the same time that new hopeful possibilities for peace and justice appear on the horizon. This is a special historical moment of opportunity.

Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke frequently of such a historical sense of time, "Zeitgeist," "spirit time." King felt the force of history moving, leading people to greater liberation.

The New Testament uses the Greek word, kairos, to speak of a special moment, a decisive moment, "dense with the possibilities of grace." Jesus began his public life by proclaiming "the kairos is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Around the world, oppressed peoples have been speaking about such a kairos moment. Hundreds of South African black Christians collaborated on their "Kairos Document," which declared apartheid a sin and a heresy, indeed, the anti-Christ. Theologians and concerned people in Central America have written a Kairos Document, calling for an end to U.S. military intervention in their lives.

Last year, a new document, "The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion," was released after years of preparation by activists and theologians from seven third world countries: South Africa, Philippines, South Korea, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Namibia. This prophetic work calls Christians of the first world to conversion, to stop persecuting God, as Saul had been doing, and to begin standing with and defending the oppressed.

Recently, Christian activists from around the United States met for several days of retreat in Pennsylvania for prayer and discerning of the "Kairos" questions. Bill Kellerman posed them this way: "Is this a confessing moment in the church in America? Is a historical crisis upon us? Has the faith of the church been confused and compromised

by an accumulation of silence, seduction and outright subversion?"

Karl Barth and others thought such a time had come in May, 1934, under the Nazi reign. They issued the "Bar-men Declaration," declaring a time for confessing our allegiance to Christ had come.

Kellerman spoke of four elements of our historical crisis that call for a special response to a Kairos Moment: First strike weaponry, the threat of ecological collapse, the structured injustice of the global economy (in which 40 million people die from hunger each year, due to the consumeristic, materialistic lifestyle of the first world), and the war on the poor (the "low intensity" conflict that leaves thousands dead in the streets).

Continuation of nuclear weapons testing is one of the signs of our faith crisis. While winds of liberating change sweep across Europe, our country continues its addiction to violence and death. With each test, with each new weapon, we bow before the altar of nuclearism.

We need to come to grips with the spiritual consequences of our nuclear testing. This symbol of our willingness to destroy our planet calls us to go deeper into the way of nonviolence as a response. These days, it is as if the very stones are crying out, "Now is the time. Turn from your violence."

The times we live in are our Kairos Moment, our chance to embrace the way of nonviolence offered to us by Jesus, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and others. Will we seize the moment, take our chance, risk nonviolence? Will we disarm, stop testing, give away our possessions to the poor and adopt nonviolence?

John Dear, S.J., of Berkeley, California, is the author of several books, including Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence.

## 'I Hear the Rocks Crying Out'

The following are excerpts from a letter from Art Casey, "founder" of the Peace Camp

In October, 1984, a group of us were sharing our experiences of witnessing for peace at the Nevada Test Site. My sharing was that I experienced compassion for the suffering desert rock. It is five years later now and I'm still in love with the tortured, shattered rock of the Nevada Test Site.

As you are reading this, the monstrous drill bits are grinding (ALWAYS grinding, seven days a week, twenty four hours a day) yet more vertical bores through ice-age sediments into the underlying rock. And during the day the "tunnel rats" (hard rock miners) have drilled and blasted yet more tunnels deep under the mesa.

I hear and try to respond to cries shouted out, again and again and again by radioactive explosions. Some of the Shoshone people hear and feel and share that pain. Who else?...Our Gospel Choir sings, "If I don't have faith enough, the rocks will cry out."

I hear the rocks crying out and I know the message is not enough faith. And not enough love.

# Soviets Tell Congress It's Time for a Comprehensive Test Ban

Excerpts from the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet Message to the U.S. Congress, August 1, 1989

"A comprehensive nuclear test ban has been on the agenda for more than 25 years. Our powers could demonstrate to the world community the seriousness of our intentions to do away with nuclear rivalry, to curb nuclear stockpiles not only quantitatively but also to rule out the emergence of even more sophisticated types of weapons using nuclear technology. These demands rang out loud and clear at the first Congress of People's Deputies of the U.S.S.R. The deputies' expressed concern about the situation and their deep conviction of the extreme importance of halting all nuclear tests, certainly under stringent control, to achieve a further turning point in international relations.

The U.S.S.R. is prepared to do everything necessary and possible in the interests of the earliest accomplishment of this task. We favor the immediate start of substantive consideration of a comprehensive nuclear test ban at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. We welcome the proposals for spreading the 1963 Partial Test Ban treaty to underground nuclear tests.

In appealing to the U.S. Congress, we state for one more time the U.S.S.R.'s preparedness to proclaim any day and hour, on the basis of reciprocity, a moratorium on all nuclear explosions, which could be a prologue to concluding a verified agreement on a comprehensive nuclear test ban, and propose to discuss this issue at a meeting of the Soviet and U.S. parliamentarian, which could be held in Moscow or Washington shortly."



## Join Friends of the Desert

As you prepare for the new year, and a new decade, we would like you to also consider undertaking a new responsibility, becoming a **Friend of the Desert**. People who decided to become **Friends of the Desert** have committed themselves to making regular contributions to NDE to assure our year-round presence as a faithful witness for peace at the Test Site.

A pledge as small as \$5 or \$10 or \$15 a month will help us continue to expand and strengthen our search for nonviolent responses to nuclear weapons testing. Greeting the new year as a **Friend of the Desert** is one more way to renew your commitment to end nuclear weapons testing as a significant step toward reduction of the arms race.

You can become a **Friend of the Desert** by sending your pledge to **Friends of the Desert**, c/o NDE, Box 4487, Las Vegas NV 89127-0487.

## Testing 1 -- 2 -- 3 Testing 1 -- 2 -- 3

Three announced nuclear weapons tests were conducted this Fall, bringing the U.S. total for 1989 to ten. Two of the last three nuclear bombs were less than 20 kilotons and were announced only after the blast occurred. One test, on October 31, was announced in advance, as required, because it was between 20 and 150 kilotons. This precaution is taken so no one will be in a precarious environment during the test, such as washing windows atop a casino.

The bombs are named. Disko Elm, on September 14, reportedly was exploded 860 feet beneath Rainer Mesa. The largest bomb, Hornitos, was weapons related. Muleshoe, detonated on November 15, was reported to have been buried 800 feet below Yucca Flat.

Not all nuclear weapons tests are reported, but the congressional Office of Technology Assessment has recently recommended that they be so, commenting that the present policy fosters mistrust.

## Push Politicians for Peace

The International Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (ICTB) will be addressed by the National Governors Association on Feb. 25-27, so urge your governor to vote for the ICTB resolution. In Congress, urge Senators Pell (RI) and Hatfield (OR) to submit a ICTB resolution. Urge the U.S. to support the 41 nations calling for the UN Conference to amend the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty to outlaw all forms of nuclear testing. The UN Amendment Conference will be in January 1991. (ICTB, Committee for National Security, 1601 Connecticut Ave, NW; DC, 20006)

Congress reconvenes in January to work on the budget and legislation introduced earlier this session. PEACE-related issues include:

PEACE TAX FUND to avoid paying taxes for war preparation. Write NCPTF, 2121 Decatur Pl, NW; Washington, DC 20008.

DEFENSE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT ACT (H.R. 101) for conversion of military bases and production sites; economic support for communities and workers. (Sane/Freeze, 711 G St, SE; DC 20003)

FEDERAL BUDGET: FY 1991 (beginning 10/1/90) will contain defense cuts. Are they enough? Are they real? Will we discontinue older nuclear weapons only to replace them with more sophisticated ones? (Sane/Freeze, above address.)

## News From New Zealand

"Many thanks for your information on the many activities of prayer, action and reflection which you have planned for Lent next year.

We in CND do all we can to further peace and disarmament and it is wonderful to hear what other people are doing. We are trying very hard to ensure that if a change of government occurs next year, we will still keep our nuclear free status. It is very important to us as we feel it gives hope to the rest of the world." - Committee and members of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Auckland, NZ.

## NDE News Of Note

### Wanted: NDE History

Mike Affleck, former NDE staff and board member, is gathering historical information on Nevada Test Site protests, especially regarding our relationship with "opponents." If you have any information, stories, news clippings, etc., to contribute, please contact Mike at the Center for Social Concerns, Box F, Notre Dame, IN, 46556.

### Arrest Updates

While arrest, citations and dropping of charges continues to be the policy in response to crossing the line, several persons have been or are being prosecuted in federal court for other kinds of actions:

**Jack Mente & Ted Thomas:** Arrested in Mercury in the former chapel (now housing Los Alamos National Laboratory) on Easter Sunday; convicted of trespass, given one year probation. Ted is presently doing 90 days in the Federal Correctional Center, Englewood, Colorado for probation violation.

**Diane Zappala:** Arrested in cafeteria in Mercury; convicted of trespass - sentenced to one year probation. Evan Lawrence, arrested with Diane, was not convicted. His trial resulted in a hung jury.

### 1990 Budget Up 9%

The NDE Board adopted a 1990 budget of \$86,400, a 9% increase over last year which will fund expanded action programs and new office space.

The growing Franciscan community needed more space in its complex. Nevada Desert Experience has rented a home across the street from the Bartlett House, and Peter and the office have moved in.

We are grateful for all the financial support you have given and ask for your continued partnership in this campaign. If you have sent a recent check, a big Thank You. If it has been a while, and you can help us now, likewise a big Thank You!

## Presidential Candidate Convicted Of Test Site Trespass

Erik Thompson, independent candidate for President in 1992, was convicted October 30 in Federal court for trespass at the Nevada Test Site. Thompson was found guilty of entering a former chapel to pray on the 44th anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan. The building is now a Los Alamos National Laboratory office. Thompson, Louie Vitale and Gary Sponholz, OFMs, were arrested about five minutes after entering the building on August 9. In a statement prepared that morning, the three noted Nagasaki's cathedral was at ground zero; the bomb thus wiped out Japan's largest concentration of Christians.

The trial judge prohibited the statement from being introduced in court, calling it irrelevant. Thompson was also prevented from using international law in his defense, such as the Nuremberg Principles relating war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. Thompson claimed the use of nuclear weapons would clearly constitute a crime under any one or all of these criteria. Furthermore, at Nuremberg, the "inchoate" acts of preparing to commit such crimes were declared to be crimes themselves. Thompson thus claimed the nuclear testing done in Nevada is a violation of international law. All this testimony was also excluded as "irrelevant."

Thompson hopes to find the resources to appeal his conviction. Thompson faces up to a year in prison and a \$5000 fine. He remains free until sentencing on February 9. Vitale and Sponholz face trial later this year.

## Lenten Desert Experience IX

February 28 - April 15, 1990

### WHEN STONES CRY OUT

The Lenten Desert Experience IX theme, "**When Stones Cry Out**," brings into focus the spiritual and ecological crisis of our time.

"If the people are silent, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40) was Jesus' response to the rulers of the established order who wanted Him to quiet crowds enthusiastic about His nonviolent power. His words have become prophetic for our time.

We have been too submissively silent in the face of violence.

We have been too submissively silent in the face of the violation of our enemies, ourselves, and our earth.

Now the stones are crying out.

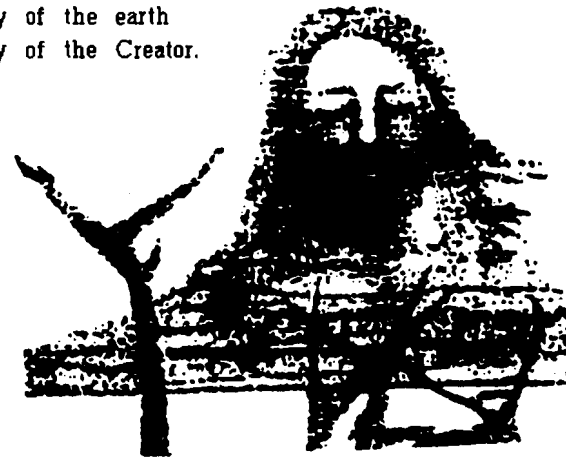
The air is crying out.

The water is crying out.

The earth is crying out.

The whole creation is crying out.

You are invited to come to the desert  
to hear the cry of the stones  
to hear the cry of the earth  
to hear the cry of the Creator.



# The People of the A God

Not so long ago and not so far away lived people who followed the A God. The A God, according to the myth, was the strongest of all the gods, which included a whole host of gods from the B-1 to the SDI.

The Sacred Scriptures of the A God were many, with new declarations coming from a mysterious five-sided source in a Scared (sic) City. Though few thought of these writings as infallible, they seemed to have a profound influence on the people of the A God.

The A God, a fire and brimstone deity, asked strange things of the people. They were required to go to the desert to dig huge holes, down to a mile deep. Then they placed the A God in a large canister in the hole. The A God would explode in fury to see how much damage he could do. Sometimes he was so strongly charged up to 150 kilotons that the earth shook with his rage, and the rocks melted, causing deep craters to form on the surface of the desert. While the people tried to contain the fierce anger of the A God by covering the holes with many layers of rock and cement, sometimes A God vented his wrath right through all the people's defenses. Those who were exposed to A God's wrath suffered from many kinds of sicknesses and death.

Many people served A God with their time, creativity, skill and energy. All the people were required to

worship A God with their money. A God loved money. A God kept asking for more and more money. And the people kept on giving. They sacrificed building of homes and schools so they could give more to A God. They sacrificed food and shelter and medical care for their families so they could feed the A God.

Thus, for a time, A God thrived. Then some of the people began to have doubts about A God. They searched scripts other than those provided by the A God cult. They rediscovered a living God. They came to understand that the A God was dead. They lost their fear of A God. The myth of the A God became exposed as a fraud.

-- Peter Ediger, Nevada Desert Experience

## 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.

Newsletter Staff: Mary Lehman, Peter Ediger, Leslie and Jon Klusmire

DESERT VOICES  
Nevada Desert Experience  
P.O. Box 4487  
Las Vegas NV 89127-0487

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