

# DESERT VOICES



The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience

Number 9, Spring, 1991

## Another Line in the Sand

**John 8:1-9 and January 15, 1991**

Now Iraq was caught in the act of invasion of Kuwait. The United States brought Iraq to the United Nations and said, This Nation was taken in invasion, in the very act. The New Order says that this nation should be bombed. What do you say? The United Nations stooped and with its fingers wrote on the desert sand, and said, The nation that has never invaded another nation, let that nation drop the first bomb. And when the nations heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, they left the desert one by one, from the largest to the smallest - Peter Ediger

## NDE Reps Meet With the World Over Comprehensive Test Ban

NDE was at the United Nations' conference concerning an end to nuclear weapons testing. The meeting (in New York, January 7 to 18) was called by over 100 nations at the initiative of Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia. Ironically, the meeting's dates coincided with the January 15 deadline for Iraq to pull out of Kuwait.

Mary Lehman (NDE staff), Pamela Meidell and John Quigley (NDE Board Members) attended the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) Conference meeting and participated in discussions, prayer vigils, and demonstrations connected with the Gulf Crisis. Mary Lehman addressed a meeting of delegates and described the effects of nuclear testing on Nevada. New and significant contacts were made between NDE and other international groups working for a CTB.

Logistically, discussion at the United Nations about nuclear testing and disarmament is the

responsibility of the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) which is composed of 40 nations and has been in existence for over ten years. It has done little work toward a CTB; specifically in the area of a ban on underground nuclear weapons testing it has made virtually no progress. China, France, Great Britain, the USSR and the USA continue to test their nuclear weapons underground.

In 1985, frustration with the CD's lack of progress toward a CTB prompted Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Yugoslavia to call for a special meeting to discuss a special amendment to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). The PTBT banned atmospheric nuclear weapons testing but allows underground testing. To convoke the Amendment Conference, the originators obtained the endorsement of two-thirds of the nations which signed the 1963 PTBT (continued on next page)

## Test Ban Conference

(cont'd) despite the resistance of Great Britain and the United States.

Media coverage of the CTB debate at the UN was eclipsed by the Gulf crisis and war. In spite of limitations, interminable protocol and bureaucracy, the Amendment Conference had measurable successes. It brought together various experts on nuclear testing and verification, more than 350 representatives from non-government organizations: Pax Christi, Friends of the Earth, Fellowship of Reconciliation, World Conference on Religion and Peace, Greenpeace, etc., and official delegations from 118 nations. There was heated debate as to whether the Amendment Conference, with its wider representation of nations and grass-roots organizations, should continue in the future or whether the discussion about the CTB should return to the CD and its smaller membership.

Although future discussion of the CTB will return to the CD, progress toward a comprehensive test ban will be monitored closely by nations and non-governmental organizations which are not part of the CD.



Tom Giddens

### 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

## News-Notes

### • NEW INTERNS ARRIVE

Daniel Olivieri and Peter Morgan are serving as NDE winter interns. For information on summer Internship, contact the NDE office.

### • APT CAMPS FOR PEACE

American Peace Test will hold its fourth annual Spring Peace Encampment at the Test Site, April 3-8, 1991. For info contact APT, Box 26725, Las Vegas, NV, 89126, (702) 386-9834.

### • READY FOR A RETREAT?

Corpus Christi Desert Experience, a Faith and Resistance Retreat for Women and Men Religious, open to all, June 17-21, 1991. Contact: Groundwork, 11224 Kercheval, Detroit, MI, 48214, (313) 822-2055

### • THE CORRECT HOJO CONNECTION

Correction: The correct telephone number for the Howard Johnson Hotel listed in the Lenten Desert Experience brochure is (702) 798-1111.

### • NDE BOARD MEMBERS

The following people serve on the Nevada Desert Experience Board:

- Michael Affleck, Faculty, Notre Dame U, So. Bend, IN.;
- Davida Coady, MD, Faculty, UCLA Medical School, Berkeley, CA;
- Bonnie Danowski, Staff, Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ;
- John Dear SJ, Theologian, Writer, Berkeley, CA;
- David Hartsough, Staff, American Friends Service Community, SF, CA;
- Rick Kidd, Family Therapist, Pasadena, CA;
- Leslie Klusmire, Community Development Director, Glenwood Springs, CO;
- Pamela Meldell, Faculty, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA;
- Sarah Mulholland, Editor, American Psychological Assn. VA;
- John Quigley OFM, Staff, International Franciscans, Rome, Italy;
- Martin Sheen, Actor, Malibu, CA;
- Anne Symens-Bucher, Staff, Franciscan Friars of CA, Oakland, CA;
- Louis Vitale OFM, Lecturer, Peacemaker, Pace E Bene Center, Las Vegas, NV.

## **Soviet Test Ban Leader Visits NDE and the Test Site**

Olzhas Soleimenov, poet and charismatic leader/founder of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement which effectively ended nuclear testing in Kazakhstan, Soviet Union, visited Las Vegas and the Nevada Test Site on Dec. 8-10, 1990. Mr. Soleimenov, now a member of the Supreme Soviet and the Soviet People's Congress, was on an 18-day, ten city tour of the United States. His purpose was to encourage U.S. support for a proposed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and meet with grassroots organizations interested in forming a World Anti-Nuclear Alliance.

On Sunday, Dec. 9, Mr. Soleimenov and his two traveling companions, Vladimir N. Iakimets, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and Carolyn Cottom, coordinator of the U.S. CTB Coalition, met with representatives of the Nevada Desert Experience, American Peace Test, Citizen Alert, and the Western Shoshone Nation regarding the proposed World Alliance. The proposed alliance would link citizens and legislators from all over the world in lifting a unified voice against nuclear weapons testing anywhere on the globe. Sunday evening, Mr. Soleimenov talked of "Testing Friendship" to a crowd of 150 at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and he, Mr. Iakimets, and local people were later able to act on that theme the next morning at the Nevada Test Site. They held a brisk early morning vigil as the Test Site workers arrived, and walked through the desert for a short ceremony with the Shadow Children and the Circle of Victims.

### **3,000 Urge Test Ban**

On Saturday, January 5, 3,000 world citizens gathered at the gate of the Nevada Test Site to demand underground nuclear testing be halted immediately.

The rally, organized mainly by American Peace Test and Greenpeace, was meant to get that message, and the message sent by 750 people arrested for crossing on to the Test Site, to the Bush administration, which intends to veto any sort of test ban agreement.

The rally and action were preceded by a conference on January 4 at the Sahara Hotel. Over 1,500 attended the conference, and 800 marched to the DOE building and joined hands to completely encircle it to protest continued testing.

Margaret Brenman-Gibson, a founder of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Daniel Ellsberg, exposé of the Pentagon Papers, addressed the gathering.

Among the international participants were people from the Soviet Union, Tahiti, Japan, and Europe.

### **Surprise! Nuke Blasts Can Damage the Earth**

Recent reports of contaminated ground water and underground structural damage have added to growing concern about environmental problems at the Nevada Test Site.

The DOE has acknowledged an unexpected movement of highly radioactive ground water from one detonation site to another. Scientists believe the particles were either carried in the ground water system, or "dynamically injected" into cracks in rock layers that widened as the blast occurred.

Structural damage in the Ranier Mesa area could increase the chances of dangerous accidents such as the 1970 Baneberry Test, which vented a radioactive mushroom cloud some 10,000 feet into the air.

The DOE assures there is no danger from its nuclear testing activities, but many area citizens have their doubts. A recent poll indicated that 58% of Southern Nevadans now favor closing the Test Site.

## LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE X

Final preparations are proceeding for the tenth Lenten Desert Experience, March 8-10, 1991. Noted religious peacemakers Daniel Berrigan, Mary Luke Tobin, Rosalie Bertell, Jim Wallis, Joanna Macy, Thomas Gumbleton and Ched Myers will be joined by people of faith from many communities in this tenth annual time of prayer and protest at the Nevada Test Site.

A decade ago a group of Franciscans came to the desert to "stand in the presence of God." In the face of nuclear weapons testing, they heard the gentle whisper of God calling them to prayer and protest. Since then, people from many different faith communities have come to the Nevada Test Site to hear that gentle whisper, and to pray and protest for an end to nuclear testing.

The "Decade in the Desert" program will open with a welcome from the Western Shoshone Nation and a keynote address, tentatively set, by Olzhas Suleimenov, Soviet poet and leader of the "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" movement resisting nuclear testing in the U.S.S.R.. Saturday's program will include presentations, workshops and preparation for Sunday's witness at the Test Site.

Saturday evening will feature an artistic celebration, "Notes From a Half Score," with music by Colleen Fullmer and Rufino Zaragoza, dance by Kathryn Scarano and the Kairos Dancers, and drama by Bob Mayberry and Company.

DESERT VOICES  
NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE  
P.O. BOX 4487  
LAS VEGAS NV 89127-0487

Non-Profit Org..  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 1009  
Las Vegas, NV

Franciscan House  
524 SE 69TH  
PORTLAND, OR 97215

