
DESERT VOICES

The Newsletter of the Nevada Desert Experience,

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U.N. CONFERENCE WILL FORCE VOTE ON COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN

The world's attention will be focussed on the growing movement to ban all nuclear weapons tests when the United Nations brings the world's nuclear and non-nuclear nations together on January 8, 1991, for a conference which could lead to a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The international effort to turn the current partial test ban into a comprehensive test ban started on August 5, 1988, the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). On that date, six non-nuclear nations began an amendment process to the PTBT by formally requesting a United Nations conference to vote on a CTBT. By April, 1989, 34 more countries had joined the movement, which were more than enough signatories to force the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain to call the conference.

For a CTBT to result from this process, a majority of the parties, including the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain, must vote in favor of amending the treaty. The Soviet Union has declared its intention to vote in favor of the amendment; Great Britain will follow the

lead of the United States, which has vowed to veto the amendment.

The United States, and its ally Great Britain, stand alone in the face of overwhelming international pressure to end nuclear weapons testing. The United States is not only thwarting world-wide desire to end testing, but that of its own citizens. Polls have consistently showed the majority of Americans favor negotiating a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Nevada Desert Experience, in coordination with the US-CTB Coalition, is committed to work with religious communities to bring about a "yes" vote by the US for the amendment to change the Partial Test Ban Treaty into a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

This campaign includes prayer and action petitions, signature ads, open letters, delegations visiting officials and public demonstrations. Religious congregations, peace and justice groups and environmental organizations can all take part, according to their conscience. If we can help, contact us, so we can share our information and resources.

On January 6, it is possible a religious gathering in New York will draw attention to the Test Ban Treaty Conference opening the following day. Also, there may be a conference in Las Vegas and an action at the Nevada Test Site in January prior to the Test Ban Treaty Conference. For information on these events, contact us, and we will do our best to update you, so you can plan to participate.



A TIME TO CHOOSE, A TIME TO ACT

by Phyllis Kovacich

Hostage was the word I used to describe how I felt the first time I came to the desert. The realization of the evil that takes place here took hold of my heart and would not let me go. I came face to face with the same demon that Jesus faced in another desert long ago. However, I was unprepared emotionally and spiritually to handle the situation. I was paralyzed by my fears and the values my parents had instilled in me. Civil Disobedience was totally foreign to my thinking. I knew I would have to return to this desert sometime. I would have to come face to face with my fears, and come to terms with values of my own choosing.

Today, six months later, I sit and contemplate this desert on the 45th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. I am sitting inside the chain link holding pen inside the Nevada Test Site. I have committed an act of civil disobedience and been arrested. I hardly believe these words even as I write them. What could make this change in me in such a short time? As I came face to face with the demon of Nuclear Testing, I came face to face with God as well. After much prayer, I concluded that I was faced with the task of forming my own values. Only then did the inner personal values behind words like peace, freedom, justice, liberation, radical, pacifist and resist oppression find their way into my thinking. I began to look at the world in a

**When single efforts
join together,
then there is hope.**

new way. I saw people differently, as brothers and sisters in a global sense.

As I turned to God in prayer, I was very aware that no longer could I just profess my love for God without doing something to show that love. I could no longer put God into some neat cubby hole that contained Church on Sunday, a few moral values, and maybe a cause or two. I began to see God in every aspect of my life -- in how I vote, the groceries I buy or boycott, and how my tax dollars are being used to aid governments which look the other way while Church Women and Jesuits and their co-workers are murdered. I cannot live any longer as if those things are not happening.

There is no other way for me now. The only way is to pray and let God lead me where God would have me go. It is in this love that I could cross the line and risk arrest. As soon as I made that decision I was at peace within. I have never felt more free, more liberated.

(These reflections from Phyllis arrived after she participated in NDE's August Hiroshima-Nagasaki memorial activities and follow her sharing in the previous "Desert Voices".)



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

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INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS CALLS FOR HALT TO NUCLEAR TESTING

"We believe we reflect the aspirations of people everywhere to end the nuclear arms race...We will spare no efforts in the coming months to galvanize the support of people everywhere to bring an end to nuclear weapons testing and the arms race it propels."

This resolution ended the four day International Citizens Congress for a Nuclear Test Ban in Alm-Ata, Kazakhstan. The 600 delegates then put their convictions on display by proceeding to Semipalatinsk, the Soviet Test Site, for a rally attended by some 5,000 people.

The Congress, sponsored by the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement in the USSR and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, brought together scientists, physicians, activists, lawyers and others from all walks of life in a rising crescendo of voices calling for an end to nuclear testing.

Delegates heard both well-documented data from scientists about the effects of nuclear weapons testing and passionate pleas from "Downwinders," speaking from personal experience. Kazakh Poet and Leader of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement, Olzhas Suleimenov, spoke for many in a war-weary world when he said, "too long we have followed the principle, 'if you want peace, prepare for war'; we must follow another principle, 'if you want peace, prepare for peace'."

The delegates were warmly received by the Kazakh people. In the spirit of "perestroika" and "glasnost," there was much sharing of personal as well as political concerns. Cultural events with traditional Kazakh music and dance added a celebrative note to the gathering.

Nevada Desert Experience Staff Mary Lehman and Peter Ediger participated in the Congress and also made visits to European Peace

communities enroute. "The eyes of the world are on Nevada," noted Mary. "Internationally, many people respond to nuclear weapons tests with vigils, letters and visits to embassies."

The International Congress agreed to form a World Alliance to Stop Nuclear Testing. NDE anticipates more international representation at future Nevada Test Site events.



DESERT, DEMONS AND DAILY LIFE

News of the deployment of troops, tanks and fighter planes to the Persian Gulf formed a sobering backdrop for NDE's sixth annual memorial of Hiroshima-Nagasaki, August 3-6. The theme, "Desert, Demons and Daily Life" seemed ironically appropriate in light of the emerging crisis in a desert half a world away, and the continuing crisis of nuclear weapons testing in the desert of Nevada.

Presentations by Genie and Bill Durland generated probing discussions...of the demonic tendencies of the principalities and powers of our culture - of the meaning of the desert - of recognizing the spiritual significance of our daily life.

Following Memorial Services at the Test Site on Sunday, Monday and Thursday, many of those attending crossed the Test Site fence and walked prayerfully into the desert. Sixty-five persons were arrested, given citations, and released.

DEAR READER,

At the test site today, Genie and Bill Durland spoke of the flash of light at Hiroshima. The intensity of that blinding light silently seared flesh and evaporated human beings. Blinding light is an unfriendly sight. An evil. The unleashing of the atom created light beyond our comprehension and this light was not a gift. It was not of God.

Why is it that our imagery of light is always goodness, of dark always evil?

Black and white. Light and dark. Goodness and evil. In the story of creation, God created darkness and light and saw that it was good. God did not see the darkness as evil and the light as good. It was in the inclusive wholeness that goodness was seen. Dark and light became separate, but not that they should polarize; rather, that they be valued for what they are.

In the Litany of Destruction read at the service today, darkness was once again used as an image to convey evil, blindness, departure from the holy. When our images continually make this statement, how do we reconcile our racism? Racism is born in images. It is born of words. If racism were born only of experience, most of the world would never have been exposed to this disease.

When we liberals, we radicals, we people of peace do not change our images, it is less likely we will change the world. I call upon those of you who receive Desert Voices to consider how we each use the imagery of darkness and light. It makes a difference in how we think and how we act, in who we are and who our God is. Perhaps we do not even need to be "enlightened" to make this change; perhaps we need to do what mystics have done for centuries, embrace the darkness and find that our peace and our God dwell there.

In Hope,

Denise Stephenson



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