

The Witness

Volume 82 • Number 10 • October 1999

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Nuclearism today

The politics and power of pilgrimage

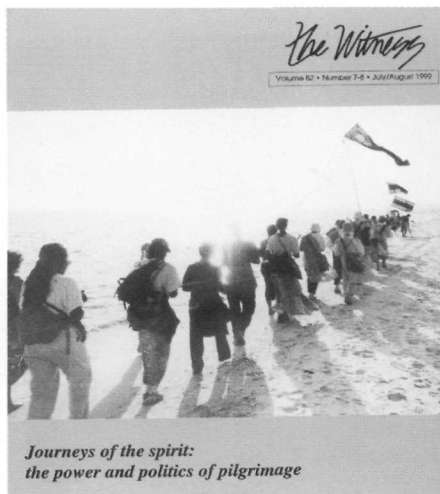
BILL WYLIE-KELLERMANN HAS DONE it again. He has masterfully made an often depicted remote, irrelevant Jesus of the 1st century into a vibrant essential Jesus of the 20th century (7-8/99).

He has clearly shown that the politically sanitized cultural worship of God that Jesus' whole life railed against then is often the same worship of Baal we encounter masquerading as authentic religion in our culture today.

His "Jesus is not here" take of sacred Holy Land sites is an apt naming of the commercialization and Caesar-blessed pilgrimages that seem so ubiquitous.

**Ron Dale
Warren, MI**

Letters



IN AN ARTICLE WHOSE TONE was one of respect, you should have spelled his name correctly. It's El Vez — check out <<http://www.oms.com/bigpop/elvez.htm#ElVez>>. Or to quote this site, "El Vez may not be the King, but he's undoubtedly El Rey of Mex-Americana.

"For the last eight years, he has wowed crowds worldwide with revues that combine

the histories of American music and Chicano culture, putting the tequila in musical shots, the salsa in grits, and the Memphis in the Mariachis."

Mary E. Donlon
<MaryDonlon@compuserve.com>

A politics of place

I'M COMPELLED TO WRITE about the subject matter of the June *Witness*. By way of introduction, I have been a member of St. David's parish in Topeka for nearly 30 years, I'm an ecologist, currently employed at the Kansas Division of Environment (Bureau of Water), I organized the "Caring for Creation" conference in Kansas City for the church in 1994 and am editor of a book published just this year.

GOOD FOR YOU!! I am absolutely at my wit's end with organized religion and very organized government either ignoring or covering for corporate malfeasance in the environment.

I believe that the magnificent ecosystems we live within were divinely, each very specifically created, to help all life thrive — not just humans. I take Garrett Hardin's "com-

Classifieds

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 4372, Portland, ME 04101 or <OrdJonDan1@aol.com>.

R & R Martha's Vineyard Island

"Granny's House" guest suite. Private entrance, kitchenette, full bath/laundry, master bedroom, small enclosed sun porch and wraparound deck overlook outdoor labyrinth. Shaker furnishings feature queen four-poster bed, wing chair, writing table. TV/VCR, telephone and linens are provided. Sleeps two; no smoking, no pets, please. \$75/night, \$500/week Oct.-May. "We make you kindly

welcome." (508) 627-6075 for brochure or reservations.

EPF volunteer editor

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship seeks an editor of the quarterly EPF newsletter, hopefully someone who has been involved in peace/justice work and in the Episcopal Church. Interested people can contact Verna Fausey at <vfausey@aol.com>.

M.Div. Internship program

The Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago offers a six-month M.Div. internship program beginning January 11 which integrates a ministry experience with a full semester of course work. Classes include: "Urban Principalities and the Spirit of the City," "Christology and Culture," "Church-based Community Development," "Dimensions and Dynamics of Urban Ministry" and "Spirit and Rhythms of Urban Preaching."

Faculty include: Yvonne Delk, Calvin Morris, Ched Myers, Kaziputalimba Joshua and Jim Perkinson. Contact: Bill Wylie-Kellermann at SCUPE, 200 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 (312-726-1200).

National Conference on Iraq

A National Organizing Conference on Iraq will take place Oct. 15-17 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. The Conference will bring together grassroots groups around the country to share experiences and strategies for creating a national agenda to end the sanctions. Contact Deana Rabiah, 313-842-7010 or 734-677-0959; <<http://www.umich.edu/~drabiah/iraq>>.

Witness classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is two months prior to publication.

mons" (as in *Tragedy of the Commons*) to encompass not only land, but air, water, and non-toxic food — those elements vital to life which are now polluted even in areas of the earth that have hardly seen a human. Example: last year Yosemite, this year the Rockies — I couldn't take clear pictures of the mountains due to the "haze" (like "harvesting" is used for wildlife slaughter, "haze" is used instead of air pollution). Air pollution is everywhere, it's just that not everywhere are there mountains as backdrops so that it is visual. Rather than seeing it, it is known by the 40 percent increase in asthma the last few years.

My book, *The Piracy of America*, is an anthology about corporate manipulation of elected officials who manipulate government bureaucrats in order to protect corporate profits, thus resulting in an increasingly degraded environment. And it implicates a church whose bank rollers are part of the corporate oligarchy in such a way that the church is afraid to speak out in defense of that which the Creator so magnificently designed to sustain life. And that's why my thesis is that we are no longer a democracy or a "Christian" nation.

I appreciate your taking on this subject and reminding us once again that we have more to learn than we can ever imagine. As Thomas Berry said (he wrote the foreword to the book, by the way), "Unless the feminine is taken into the counsels of decision making, the human species will not survive." We need heavy doses of right-brain thinking.

I appreciate your attention to an incredibly vital foundation of life.

Judith Scherff
 <chaw@cjnetworks.com>

Shalom Center website

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the recent establishment of The Shalom Center's website: <www.shalomctr.org>. Please visit our website and look at the work we are doing. We would like to set up reciprocal web links with other organizations and individuals whose work we support and admire. Please drop us a line at <Shalomctr2@aol.com> if you are interested.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Rachel Gurevitz
 The Shalom Center



Witness praise

IT IS WONDERFUL to have a spiritually exploratory and fulfilling publication that isn't afraid to question! Finally, a magazine with which I can connect. I can't wait to share *The Witness*!

Betsy Hutcheson
 Salem, VA

THE WITNESS EXPRESSES OUTREACH to marginalized persons, spirituality as lived by Jesus and a much needed shaking up of the traditions of the Episcopal Church (I say this as a faithful Episcopalian!). Keep up your good work.

Anne C. Cook
 Suffield, CT

THANKS FOR THE MONTHLY BRAIN and soul food!

Debbie Wollard-Kidd
 St. Clair Shores, MI

THE WITNESS REMINDS ME of what is important. Please, continue to keep me honest!

Mary Robb Mansfield
 Montpelier, VT

IN THIS AGE OF STOCK MARKET frenzy it is refreshing to read about the

issues that really matter. That is where the real wealth is found.

Gary Mongillo
 Southington, CT

I LEFT ORGANIZED CHRISTIANITY several years ago but this magazine gives me hope that we earthlings are not all bigots!

Anne Shaw
 Warrenton, VA

I HAVE GREATLY ENJOYED, relished and devoured each morsel of *The Witness*. It has nourished my heart and soul to "keep on keeping on" in the social justice arena. Recent interviews with such personal heroes/heroines as Barbara Harris and Steve Charleston and others continue to revive my spirits. Thanks for letting me have the honor of subscribing!

Margo McMahon
 Amherst, MA

I LOVE *THE WITNESS* very much. It is everything you said it was and some more. You are doing much more than two promises. The issues are for real, some you would never read any place else but *The Witness*.

Pearl Hicks
 West Chester, PA

The Witness

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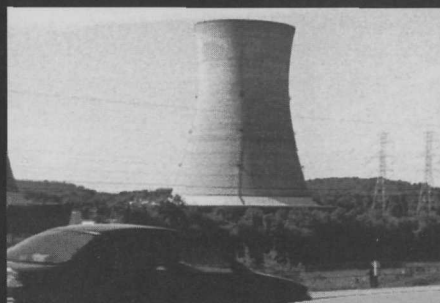
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8 Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell

With the political dynamics of the Cold War gone, author Jonathan Schell says the time is right for eliminating global nuclear arsenals. But do the nuclear powers have the needed political resolve?

14 Nuclear weapons today by Camille Colatosti

Nuclear weapons still claim a sizeable chunk of the U.S. defense budget, with new weapons continuing to be developed. Still, the vast majority of people around the world support the abolition of nuclear weapons.



20 Selling peacetime nuke power by Leah Samuel

The nuclear power industry is working hard to convince the public that nuclear energy's peacetime role is not full of toxic danger. It's an increasingly hard sell.

Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

Cover: Boundary fence at the Nevada Test Site near the Mercury, Nev. gate, May 1999, by Julie A. Wortman.

Back cover: Maine Yankee VI by Yvonne Jacquette, 1983 (oil on canvas, 79 x 70 in.), Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, NYC.

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Grounds for arrest

by Julie A. Wortman

In recent years I've had a flat-line reaction when I hear news that a handful of veteran activists have managed, yet again, to gain access to a nuclear submarine or to a nuclear missile silo on which they have hammered out their outrage or spilled sorrowful blood. Such dogged, often sacrificial, devotion to keeping the threat of nuclear war — and the expense of nuclear deterrence — before the public's eyes has value, I know. But although I spent a lot of time in the 1980s vigiling and protesting outside nuclear weapons manufacturers, at the Pentagon and on the steps of a variety of federal government buildings, I have lately had no wish to praise or follow. The shrill drama has seemed disconnected from real life, somehow, although I'll admit that I've had difficulty explaining why.

So, when I journeyed to Las Vegas to participate in the Healing Global Wounds' "Honor Your Mother Gathering" at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) last spring, I wasn't much tempted by the organizers' promise that there would be a chance to participate in one or more acts of civil disobedience. But I was to experience a change of heart.

The shift began with a forum on nuclear issues hosted by the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, where I was startled to discover that although the audience seemed uniformly in favor of nuclear abolition, at least half the group thought non-military applications of nuclear technology were probably acceptable. As one presenter expressed it, "If the world is going to have an industrial-based society, nuclear energy is the best way to go."

That session offered a useful reminder of a prevailing mind-set: Continuing to develop and deploy weapons of mass de-

struction seems obviously undesirable and probably immoral. But maybe, just maybe, now that we have the means to profitably utilize the power of the atom, it would be imprudent to repudiate peacetime applications altogether.

How is it, I found myself wondering, that mass destruction delivered by nuclear missiles seems to so many a clearer evil than mass destruction delivered by a corporation or a utility company or a government corps of engineers?

For the next two days I had plenty of chance to chew on that conundrum at the

*The land doesn't distinguish
between the peaceful or
aggressive intentions that
lead to its poisoning.*

Healing Global Wounds campsite near the Mercury, Nev., gate into the NTS. Here the desert vistas are vast, the ground rocky and the vegetation sparse. For centuries this has been Western Shoshone land, as recognized by the U.S. government in the Treaty of Ruby Valley in 1863. It was in 1948 that the U.S. forcibly removed over 100 Shoshone families from the Rhode Island-size area it wanted for the NTS, marked now by the barbed wire fence we could see across the highway.

"Be aware that the desert around you is extremely fragile," gathering organizers cautioned. "While we may be camped in an area that looks free of wildlife, it's not. Many animals and plants make this their home. Don't move rocks or rip out bushes. Whole ecosystems live under them."

Avoiding washes or "very dusty looking low areas" was also recommended, since "the dangerous fallout from above-ground testing


tends to accumulate in these areas."

Just visible on the horizon was Yucca Mountain, a site within the NTS of sacred importance to a variety of tribal groups in the region. Its future as a storage facility for spent reactor fuel is being hotly contested and the forces in favor are formidable. A Healing Global Wounds information sheet noted that the NTS is already the dumping ground for nuclear waste from clean-up efforts at other nuclear weapons facilities, though the clean-up budget here is small. A nuclear dump down the road near Beatty, Nev., reportedly is leaking into the groundwater after only 20 years.

The land, it takes little imagination to see, doesn't distinguish between the peaceful or aggressive intentions that lead to its poisoning. Its distress only spreads and deepens as we stockpile against possible attack, as generators hum.

Both the U.S. federal government and the Western Shoshone people claim sovereignty over this territory. One considers it expendable, useful largely as a huge toxic dumping ground. The other cherishes its wildness and seeks its healing.

The thought, very simply, pushed me over the edge. I knew I wouldn't be able to leave this place without making some clear witness on behalf of the forces of life, some embodied response to the land's fierce but fragile beauty and the indifference with which it has been violated.

And so, on Mother's Day, clutching a yellow permit issued by the Western Shoshone authorizing my passage onto their land, I joined with 197 others in entering the NTS. I didn't feel righteous or courageous. I did, however, feel in deep solidarity with real life. I could feel it under my feet. 



Julie A. Wortman is publisher and co-editor of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.

Set Leonard Peltier free

by Steven Charleston

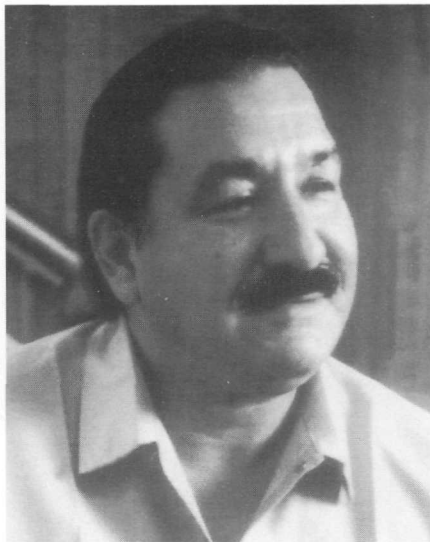
I would hope that the campaign to have him freed will succeed. I certainly support it very passionately and am willing to do whatever it is that might be necessary to help. Because it is a blot on the judicial system of this country that ought to be corrected as quickly as possible.

—Desmond Tutu, April 19, 1999

Desmond Tutu, the former Archbishop of Capetown, South Africa, was speaking of Leonard Peltier. Tutu had come to Lawrence, Kan., to give an address at the university there but took time to phone Leonard Peltier, who for the past 23 years has been an inmate at Leavenworth Penitentiary. Like so many thousands of others around the world, Tutu has come to regard Leonard Peltier as a true political prisoner, a person held captive for no reason other than the fact that he embarrasses the government and embodies the hope of an oppressed minority.

To understand Peltier's case it is necessary to step back into a moment of history that our judicial system has sought to erase. The time was June 26, 1975. The place was the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Over 150 FBI agents, state troopers, SWAT team members, and U.S. Marshals descended on a small section of the reservation known as the Jumping Bull ranch. They were there to eradicate the presence of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from the reservation. Like the Black Panthers, AIM was targeted as a "radical" organization. Its membership was harassed.

Steven Charleston, former Bishop of Alaska, is President and Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. For more information please contact: Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence, Kansas 66044; <lpdc@idir.net>.



Leonard Peltier

Its phones tapped. Its mail opened and read. Its leaders hunted.

Leonard Peltier was one of those leaders. Along with national figures such as Dennis Banks and Russell Means, Peltier was an outspoken proponent of Native American rights. On that June day he was gathered with other AIM members, including women and children, trying to survive the onslaught of a military presence which included helicopters and armored personnel carriers. As might have been predicted (or even planned) an exchange of gunfire occurred as two FBI agents chased a mysterious red pick-up truck onto the Jumping Bull property. When the dust settled, the two agents were dead and the pick-up had vanished.

Later trials attempted to fix the blame on AIM members, but failed in court. The government's case was outrageous in its doctoring of evidence and dependence on phony affidavits. Finally Leonard Peltier was the last defendant, the last hope of the FBI for revenge in the murder of two of its own. The details of the trial are far too

complex to recite here (a full account is given in Peter Matthiessen's powerful book *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*) but the end result was Leonard Peltier's conviction in 1977 and his sentencing to two consecutive life terms. The evidence against him was so obviously manufactured that in April of 1999 Amnesty International once again called for his "immediate and unconditional release." At the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris, Leonard Peltier was recognized as a human rights defender and the assembly called for his release.

The time has come to free Leonard Peltier. In fact, the time is 23 years overdue. As of this writing, Peltier's health raises serious concern for his family and friends. If we are going to act with any sense of justice for this innocent man, then we must act quickly.

This November, thousands of Native American people and their supporters will be in Washington, D.C. for a month-long effort to galvanize attention and action on Peltier's behalf. They will be asking President Clinton to end this national shame and release Leonard Peltier through an act of executive clemency. I am asking all persons of good conscience to please help in this effort. Please get in touch with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee right away to learn more, to offer financial support, and to plan for ways to be involved. At the very least, I ask you to join me in writing to President Clinton and your other national representatives, urging them to free Leonard Peltier this November.

My appeal, like that of Desmond Tutu and Amnesty International, is a cry for justice. Simple human justice. Therefore, I speak directly to every bishop in our church: Please, do not sit down this November to a table overflowing with the bounty of our nation without remembering Leonard Peltier. We cannot be thankful for our privilege while ignoring his sacrifice.

TW

I'm Going to Plant a Heart on the Earth

by Rosario Murillo

*I grow like a plant
without remorse and without stupidity
toward the hours loosened from the day
pure and secure as a plant
without crucifixion
toward the hours loosened from the night
— A. Césaire*

I'm going to plant a heart in the earth
water it with love from a vein
I'm going to praise it with the push of muscle
and care for it in the sound of all dimensions.
I'm going to leave a heart in the earth
so it may grow and flower
a heart that throbs with longing
that adores everything green
that will be strength and nourishment for birds
that will be the sap of plants and mountains.
I'm going to spit a heart into the earth
with all miseries and rebellions
a heart that procures galaxies
that belches drums of all tongues
a garden of botanical lights
like a mirror turning toward the sun.
I'm going to feel a heart in the earth
above the black white and yellow earth
above flesh of all colors.
I'm going to cast a heart over the earth
a conversation of anguish and hope
above all a heart without ties or timetables
without cufflinks or valises or numbers

a heart that will not learn
equations or deviations
atomic theory or relativity
that knows nothing of nuts and bolts,
that is not acquainted with watches
a heart that uses no credentials
that hangs no diplomas
that attends no cocktail parties or banquets
an open heart that will never have doors
I'm going to write a heart that knows no arithmetic
that won't leave some to one side
and others on the floor in fractions
that suffers only childbirth and feigned illness
I'm going to fly a heart like a comet
one of blood and cosmic dust
a mixing of earth with stars
a heart that has no country
that knows no borders
a heart that will never be fired
that has never signed a single check
that has never had a strongbox
a heart, unnerving, unnameable,
something simple and sweet,
a heart that has loved.

*Translated by Barbara Paschke.
Reprinted from Hauling Up Morning: The
1990 Peace Calendar of the War
Resisters League.*

Poetry

Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell

by Peter Werbe

When Jonathan Schell published his bestseller, The Fate of the Earth, in 1981, it was hailed as the definitive warning of nuclear peril during the Cold War. Now, several books later, Schell is back with a call to end that risk once and for all. The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now (Owl Books, 1998), confronts the danger of globalization of these weapons of mass destruction in our era.

Schell reports on conversations with more than two dozen leading figures of the Cold War, the very generals and politicians who devised and executed the nuclear policies of the Cold War, all of whom agree that the time for abolition has arrived.

Jonathan Schell is also author of The Time of Illusion, and Writing in Time. He was a writer for The New Yorker magazine for 20 years, a columnist for Newsday from 1990-96, and he now teaches at Wesleyan University and The New School.

Peter Werbe: We see the word “time” repeatedly appearing in the titles of your books; I take it that’s not an accident.

Jonathan Schell: It’s not an accident and in the case of the title of my most recent book, it has two meanings. One of them is that I think with the end of the Cold War we’ve been given the time, a period of time, a gift of time, if you like, in which

it is actually possible, if we can muster the political will, to abolish nuclear weapons — get rid of them once and for all. The second meaning of the gift of time is time in the largest sense, that is, the future of our species and its continuation.

P.W.: Most of us thought with the collapse of the Soviet Union we were out of the woods in terms of nuclear problems. Why are we still at risk?

What we face now is the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations such as India and Pakistan, and soon, conceivably, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria — various countries that would like to get them and show every sign of being able to do so one day or another.

J.S.: The nuclear danger did, indeed, dissolve in the form in which it existed during the Cold War. I don’t think tomorrow we’re going to wake up in the middle of a new Cuban missile crisis with Russia as once we did with the Soviet Union. I think people feel a justified relief, almost a sense of miraculous deliverance from a terrible danger that hung over us for 50 years. The mistake, though, would be to imagine that was the only form nuclear danger can take. In fact, what we face now is a profounder form which really

has more to do with the very essence of the danger. What we face now is the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations such as India and Pakistan, and soon, conceivably, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria — various countries that would like to get them and show every sign of being able to do so one day or another.

It’s not only that, but also the spread to terrorist groups, sub-national groups, and so on. This peril stems from knowledge; it’s information and we live in the Information Age and it’s in the nature of that knowledge that it can spread. Although the apocalyptic danger that existed during the Cold War has abated somewhat (although the arsenals are still there), the peril is taking a new form. All the ingredients are out there for nuclear disaster — all the equipment, the knowledge and the groups.

P.W.: There was such great public anxiety during the Cold War about the possibility of a major nuclear exchange. Now, it seems like a distant memory, something akin to the Red Scare of the 1950s. We know it existed, but it seems like ancient history.

J.S.: That’s exactly true. We’ve entered into a crazy situation because the danger has abated, but it’s a cold fact that Russia has 7,000 nuclear weapons pointed at the U.S. right at this minute and they’re under very poor control. The U.S. government has been over there recently trying to help them out with their Y2K problems and if some wires get crossed over there on New Year’s Day, it’s going to be a very different Millennium then the one

Peter Werbe is the public affairs director for WRIF and WCSX radio in Detroit, >jocks@wrif.com>. Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.



Participants in a march and rally for nuclear disarmament in New York City, June 12, 1982.

Jim West

we're hoping for.

P.W.: I thought the Russian nuclear weapons had been detargeted and that cities like New York were no longer under the gun?

J.S.: No, that's not true. There is a detargeting agreement, but it's purely cosmetic. They can retarget them by pushing two digits on a computer. The two arsenals are facing one another exactly as they did during the Cold War.

P.W.: Why is this still the case if the Cold War is over?

J.S.: Why, indeed? Out of sheer thoughtlessness or sheer momentum a situation exists where the weaponry of the Cold War is still around even after the Cold

War itself has ended.

P.W.: How much actual danger were we in during the years from 1949 through 1989?

J.S.: We were in extreme danger. From a technical point of view we remain in extreme danger because the nuclear posture of that period and today is launch on warning. That means, if the U.S. detects or thinks it detects that Russia has launched its nuclear arsenal, there's about half an hour in which to decide whether to retaliate or not. When you make the necessary offsets for the amount of time it takes to notice that and to take note of it at the command centers, and also the time it would take for the command to our

forces to strike back at Russia, it leaves the president no more than five minutes in which to decide whether or not to launch an annihilating strike against Russia. That's true for them on the other side. We have been and remain in a situation of most extreme peril. During the Cold War, you had overlaid upon that all the tensions of the deep and systemic hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and we don't have that now. Today, there's more of a danger of accident or something strange happening over there like a coup or a governments coming to power that's unfriendly to us. They've fired about four government in a year and it's an extremely unstable situation.

P.W.: People mention the phrase, Weimar Russia, alluding to the period that prefigured the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, and you have right-wing politicians in Russia during the NATO war against Yugoslavia in the wings calling for retargeting American cities.

J.S.: I wish the Russians well and I hope they're going to be able to put together some reasonable politics, but they haven't so far. You honestly have to say the political situation over there is filled with the greatest unpredictability and so those arsenals that are sitting there pointing at us right at this very minute and can arrive in half an hour are not something that we can afford to neglect.

P.W.: Couldn't you be charged with being a Chicken Little? We went through 40 years of the Cold War with a Cuban Missile Crisis and fake warnings from our radar and nothing happening. The argument would be that the viability of the nuclear system to be self-controlled has been shown by five decades of restraint.

J.S.: I say, thank God, we got through that entire emergency. To say what you said, however, is a little like saying, well, we put a bullet in the chamber of a gun and played Russian Roulette; we spun the cylinder a few times, put it to our head and we didn't blow our brains out. Now, it's as if we were to take that gun and pass it along to our children and say, this is a very wonderful and safe game to play. I'm not a Chicken Little; I don't predict doom; I don't predict anything because I don't know what's going to happen in this world and I don't think anyone does. I do know there's a bullet in the gun that can put an end to the human species forever. The time to take note is before we blow our brains out; there's not going to be any conversation about it afterwards.

P.W.: In your book, you interview more than two dozen leading figures of the

Cold War such as Vietnam-era defense secretary Robert McNamara, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and even the last commander of the Strategic Air Command, General George Lee Butler. What gave you the idea these men would be as critical of our nuclear weapons policy as they turned out to be?

J.S.: This constituted a wonderful opportunity. A couple of them began to speak out and I figured if a few were speaking out there probably were more. I made an investigation, and found that, indeed, there were a couple of dozen who, having been through that horrifying experience of the

The Cold War gave us a context in which we could consider the entire nuclear question. When it dissolved, we didn't really know how to think about it any more and, for a while, we had the illusion it had gone away.

Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, had come to the conclusion that it simply was intolerable to go on with these terrible weapons now that the Cold War was over.

P.W.: Many of these men were the leading architects of the dangerous policies they've become critical of after the fact and after the period during which their criticism would have been more helpful.

J.S.: It would have been best if they had spoken up at the time, but I give them credit for looking back and reflecting and for telling us now where things went wrong. After all, the crimes in this world are heaped to the skies in all lands, and the willingness to look back and say, we made mistakes, or I made mistakes, is very, very rare. What's important is what

these people are saying. The historical moment of the end of the Cold War has given us a fantastic opportunity to do something wonderful and remarkable, which is to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. What inspires them, and what inspires me, more than anything else, and more even than the sense of new danger, great as that is, is the hope that we can solve the problem if only we can develop the political will to do so. What I am chiefly interested in now is to bring this issue back to public consciousness, back into the political arena, not so we can weep and wail about it, but so we can finally do something about it.

P.W.: What other names familiar to the public did you interview for your book?

J.S.: One very notable person is General Charles Horner, who was commander of the air forces in the Gulf War and a supporter of Ronald Reagan, who, by the way, was the most abolitionist-minded of all the presidents. Horner says that if he would have had nuclear weapons available during the Gulf War, he wouldn't have known what to do with them. He says they're simply useless from a military point of view. That's something I also heard in Russia where I interviewed several generals. These weapons lack military utility. There is a very strong school of thought among the military that these weapons should be abolished not only on moral grounds, but also from a strictly strategic and military point of view since they're unusable and, hence, useless.

P.W.: These men were once the military and political leaders of their respective countries. Are they still influential enough to affect the current policies of their governments?

J.S.: A lot of them are retired and retired people are not running the show. Once you have people who are running the show talking the way these fellows do,

you've won. Then, they'll change the policy and get rid of the weapons. Still, they are highly respected people who are listened to by the people now in government since they were their predecessors and mentors. It's a very important signal that there is such an important body of opinion among people who were in government that getting rid of nuclear weapons is not pie in the sky, it's not a utopian ideal; it's something that makes practical sense and can be done now if only we decide to do it.

P.W.: It's not as though nuclear weapons in the U.S. are like a malfunctioning air conditioner that you can put out at the curb on trash day. Institutionally, militarily and to some extent emotionally, our respective nuclear systems form the basis of each side's power and prestige.

J.S.: The way McNamara puts it, nuclear weapons have no utility in a situation in which you are not faced with a nuclear threat. That is to say, any threat that's out there of a conventional kind, can and should be dealt with by conventional means. That's something the U.S. has in abundance since we spend about five times as much on the military as the next highest spender, which is Russia. On the one hand, you don't need them in those conventional situations. That leaves a situation in which you face a nuclear threat and they're used for deterrence purposes. Of course, when you talk about abolishing nuclear weapons, you're not talking about abolishing just U.S. ones; you're talking about abolishing them globally. Therefore, that threat is removed. At that point, there is no need to have them.

A second consideration, if you stop to think about it from a military point of view, is what can conceivably threaten the U.S.? There's no conventional force that can do that. The only serious threat of a military character that the U.S. faces is

from weapons of mass destruction. So, the curious fact is that the U.S. more than any other country probably has the most to gain from the global abolition of nuclear weapons along with other weapons of mass destruction.

P.W.: Abolition sounds reasonable on every conceivable basis; why isn't it being done?

J.S.: That's something rather mysterious to me. I don't have a good answer to it except that when the Cold War ended everybody lost the thread of concern for the nuclear question. I think it happened within the government and outside it in



the public. In a way, you can understand it because the end of the Cold War was such a revolutionary change. The Cold War gave us a context in which we could consider the entire nuclear question. When it dissolved, we didn't really know how to think about it any more and, for a while, we had the illusion it had gone away. I think the tests earlier this year in India and Pakistan, and the danger of their spread in the Middle East, may bring people's attention back to it, and they'll see that it's there, albeit in a new form. One, I'm afraid, that makes the possibility of use more likely than was the case during the Cold War. Maybe not as many of them will be used as the Cold War threatened — an all-out exchange, but there is a much greater likelihood of use because you've got more actors in-

involved; you have more decision makers.

P.W.: Is there institutional and bureaucratic resistance to abolition within the government and military?

J.S.: Tremendous, of course. If you have a weapons system on which you're spending \$40 billion a year, that translates into tremendous bureaucratic and political clout. The nuclear laboratories have terrific influence in Washington. They don't want to go out of business. They have gigantic new programs of research and development going on, and a new so-called stewardship program. In the absence of public concern and attention in the political sphere, those influences are going to dominate the way they always do. On the other hand, if you do develop political pressure, political and public awareness, things can be changed, and this has happened in the past.

P.W.: I know you care about the planet, but is there also a deep personal fear you share about the dangers you describe?

J.S.: I have a particular reason for a level of personal fear on this one. I happen to live 10 blocks from the World Trade Center, which is everyone's favorite target for a terrorist attack. I have a very lively concern that the next time one of these violent incidents happens like the Oklahoma City federal building or the Trade Center bombing, it's going to be with a nuclear weapon or some crude nuclear device.

P.W.: During the Cold War you had happiness and a life and were productive, but was there always a cold chill in back of it all?

J.S.: Yes, although I'm not so much living with daily anxiety that the Russians are going to shoot their missiles at us because I don't think that's in the cards politically. What I really do fear on a daily basis is that we'll wake up — although some of us won't wake up be-

cause it'll be all over — and learn that some terrorist group or some state has used a nuclear weapon where they're having a hot war. India and Pakistan, for example, have very bad intelligence about each other. That's a situation that's full of danger. In addition, I feel we're lucky to wake up in the morning and discover that some city hasn't gone off. The moment that happens, think of the waves of terror that would spread around the world. Let's suppose it's Washington—that's a likely one. We have no defense against that right now. The old joke is, how do you get a nuclear device into the U.S.? And the answer is, hide it in a bale of marijuana. I interviewed a U.S. physicist who was in Russia talking to one of his counterparts who said they have 20,000 plutonium pits in one storage area in Tonsk. Just think of what that means. The infrastructure there is rotting away. They can't pay their scientists. How long before some rogue scientist sells that stuff to Saddam Hussein who is just itching to get it? Or to the Aum, the folks in Japan who put nerve gas in the subway. They were looking for nuclear material. The low levels of control and maintenance means the spread of this technology is not something that can be prevented. In other words, this is old technology. It's like a television set. It's not a mystery anymore.

P.W.: I have a book at home called *Base-ment Nukes* which tells how to build an atomic bomb.

J.S.: Well, there it is. You could do it yourself. So, this is not abstract and this does create a feeling of personal anxiety and horror. What really possesses me now is the feeling of opportunity. We've lived for 50 years with these damned things. The end of the human species is threatened and yet we were told, you can't do anything about it because we were facing the Soviet Union. Big totalitarian power. We can't get rid of our nuclear weapons. We can't be sure that

they have done it, too. They won't honor agreements, we can't verify, we can't inspect, etc. Then that monster just evaporates one day. And it's gone. Suddenly, the door is open. Suddenly, we can do what we could not before. We can take advantage of this amazing opportunity to go to the lair of these things and kill them off. We've had about 10 years now and we've completely overlooked the chance. Ten years from now there is no saying who will have their hands on them. Will it be 10 countries, as it's eight now? Will

I'm not in this to make people scared or wallow in gloom. The whole point is to do something — now, while we have the chance.

it be 20, 30, what will it be? Then, it may be too late. Right now we can still do it. We have eight countries. I think it is manageable. But with 20 or 30, I don't know. So, really it is the feeling of opportunity. I'm not in this to make people scared or wallow in gloom. The whole point is to do something — now, while we have the chance. That's what really moves me more than personal fear.

P.W.: You talk about the need to bring this on to the public agenda, but it doesn't seem to be. Are there many people involved in this effort?

J.S.: There have been some very promising developments which I hope are going to bear fruit soon. There's a new group called Project Abolition which has former senator Alan Cranston as its chairperson. Also, the president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and other groups which brought about the Freeze movement are setting up an office and beginning to do something. In another promising development, General Lee Butler has

established the Second Chance Foundation, and he's devoting his efforts on a policy level to removing the nuclear danger. In New England, there were over 30 town meetings which voted in favor of abolition, but it wasn't well reported. That was how the Freeze movement got started in the 1980s. There are lots of little things bubbling around the country and signs they'll be coming together soon.

P.W.: You mention several group efforts; is there much an individual can do?

J.S.: There's a lot an individual can do. I doubt if someone got out in the streets very many people would be following along. Likewise, I think it makes little sense to go to the presidential candidates because they're going to say, where's the public on this one? I think the place to go is wherever people get together to do anything of a civic nature. For instance, a teachers' group or the PTA or the bar association — in other words, civic society, in general. Go to those organizations and say, how would your organization like to consider the proposition that the policy of the U.S., together with other nations, should be to abolish nuclear weapons? I think that the common sense of it is overwhelming and an individual will have terrific success with it. The American Medical Association already supports that goal. Also, a number of city councils, such as Hartford and Philadelphia, have voted in favor of this, but these aren't covered in the media.

It wouldn't be marching in the streets, but quiet and enduring organizational support from a lot of professional, labor, women and environmental organizations of all kinds. Then, you would go into the political sphere and tell the senators and the representatives and the presidential candidates, look, we have all these organizations in your community who favor this goal and what are you going to do about it?

TW

New Abolitionist Covenant

[The following is excerpted from the New Abolitionist Covenant, revised in Nov., 1998 at the New Abolitionist Covenant Retreat at Kirkridge Retreat Center. The original New Abolitionist Covenant was developed and distributed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the New Call to Peacemaking, Pax Christi USA, Sojourners and World Peace Makers.]

IN THE FALL OF 1981, a group of Christians gathered to discern an appropriate response to the nuclear arms race. The result was a "New Abolitionist Covenant" that made clear that the only appropriate response by people of faith was an unequivocal rejection of the nuclear arms race and the dangerous and blasphemous assumptions on which it relied. The Covenant noted that:

"Some historical issues stand out as particularly urgent among the Church's fundamental concerns. These overarching moral questions intrude upon the routine of the church's life and plead for the compassion and courage of God's people everywhere."

Slavery was such a question for Christians in the 19th century. The existence of nuclear weapons poses such a question today. Today the global context is significantly different than it was in 1981. The Soviet Union no longer exists, brought down not by weapons of mass destruction, but by the unstoppable aspirations of its own people and the people of Eastern Europe to be free. The nonviolent revolutions of 1988-89 released the creative forces of millions of people to determine their own futures and brought down the Berlin Wall through "people power" rather than

nuclear confrontation.

Now, a decade after the end of the Cold War, we find ourselves faced with another moment of truth. But this moment is now more an historic moment of opportunity and hope, rather than a reaction to crisis based upon fear of looming nuclear war. The geopolitical rivalry between two superpowers is over. Yet, many of the weapons amassed throughout that struggle have survived the struggle itself and are today in search of new justifications and new missions to fulfill. Moreover, the weapons themselves remain on Cold War levels of alert. Thousands of the most destructive weapons ever created remain ready to be launched within minutes. Whether they are used intentionally or by accident, all of God's creation, and indeed, humanity's future itself, remains under constant threat of annihilation.

A century ago, thousands of Christians from diverse traditions came to see that slavery was an evil that challenged the very integrity of their faith. They believed that for any person to claim ownership of one human being by another mocked the fact that each person is loved by God and made in God's image. These Christians began to preach that to follow Christ meant to turn away from the institution of slavery, to refuse to cooperate with it, and to work for its abolition. Though this seemed like an absurd, unattainable goal, they insisted that God required nothing less. They came to be called abolitionists.

The continued reliance on nuclear weapons today has brought us to a similar crisis of faith. The existence and spread of nuclear weapons is not just a political issue any more than slavery was, it is a question that challenges our worship of

God and our commitment to Jesus Christ. In other words, nuclear catastrophe, either by accident or design, presents us with more than a test of survival: It confronts us with a test of faith. We are Christians who now see that the continued possession and development of nuclear arms is more than an issue of public policy. We believe that the wholesale destruction threatened by these weapons makes their possession and use an offense against God and humanity, no matter what the provocation or political justification.

...

[The] continued development, testing and reliance on nuclear weapons is an evil we do not accept. At stake is whether we trust in God or the bomb. ... The maintenance and development of nuclear arsenals is a sin against God, God's creatures and God's Creation. There is no theology or doctrine in the traditions of the Church that could ever justify the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Whether one begins with nonviolence or with the just war doctrine, nuclear weapons are morally unacceptable. ... Through the grace of God we have survived the most dangerous moment in history. We have been given a precious gift, a "gift of time." We are compelled to respond to this gift.

That response begins with repentance for more than half a century of accepting nuclear weapons. Repentance in a nuclear age means non-cooperation with the continued reliance on nuclear weapons and the turning of our lives toward a culture of peace and nonviolence. ... No longer trusting in nuclear weapons, we refuse to cooperate with preparations for their use or threatened use. Trusting anew in God, we will begin cooperating with one another in preparations for peace.

Nuclear weapons today

by Camille Colatosti

There is a serious misconception that the end of the Cold War meant the end of nuclear weapons,” says Frida Berrigan, a research associate at the Arms Trade Research Center of the World Policy Institute, a think tank at the New School for Social Research in New York City. “The U.S. is spending more money this year on nuclear weapons than we spent during the height of the Cold War. We’re acting as though there is still a threat. We’re even funding nuclear weapons research and development at very high levels.”

Approximately 36,000 nuclear weapons remain in the global arsenal. Together, they have the combined explosive power of 650,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs. (On August 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, killing an estimated 100,000 people instantly. Tens of thousands more slowly died from radiation poison and the city was destroyed.) According to Physicians for Social Responsibility, a group of doctors and medical professionals working for 30 years to prevent nuclear war, 6,838,000 people in the U.S. would die immediately from an accidental launch of nuclear weapons from a single Russian submarine. Millions more would die from radioactive fallout.

There are five large nuclear weapons states — the U.S., Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China. The U.S. has approximately 12,070 nuclear weapons; Russia has 22,500. The other nuclear weapons states have far fewer weapons:

Britain has 380; France has 500 and China has 450. Eight additional countries — including India, Pakistan, Israel, Japan and Korea — have declared or undeclared nuclear weapons capabilities.

According to Stephen Schwartz of the Brookings Institute, the U.S. spends approximately \$35 billion a year, or 14 percent of its defense budget, on nuclear weapons. That is \$96 million a day. In 1998, for instance, the U.S. spent \$24.7 billion on operating and maintaining the nuclear arsenal. This includes new weap-

The U.S. government, under pressure from the nuclear industry, has put in place a new “Stockpile Stewardship Management Program.”

Through this program, the U.S. develops nuclear weapons using sophisticated laboratory experiments, called “subcritical tests,” and computer simulations.

ons development. The U.S. put about \$5.8 billion towards “the legacies of the cold war” — environmental restoration, waste management and clean-up. Another \$4.3 billion went towards the development of a ballistic missile defense program. In fact, nearly \$67.6 billion has gone towards Reagan’s much-maligned “Star Wars” program since 1983.

Berrigan explains that the influence of the nuclear lobby on Congress has a lot to

do with the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament. “The end of the Cold War could put those people out of work,” she says.

Stockpile Stewardship program

The U.S. government, under pressure from the nuclear industry, has put in place a new “Stockpile Stewardship Management Program.” Through this program, the U.S. develops nuclear weapons using sophisticated laboratory experiments, called “subcritical tests,” and computer simulations. This is the nuclear arms race in the information age; the U.S. Department of Energy will devote \$60 billion over the next decade to high speed supercomputers, underground nuclear weapons experiments, high energy lasers and diagnostic facilities, all designed to simulate the very nuclear bomb tests that activists have struggled for decades to ban.

The Department of Energy, which oversees Stockpile Stewardship, defends the development of new weapons as a response to “emerging threats.” The new B61-11 earth-penetrating nuclear bomb, for example, enables the U.S. to hit deeply buried targets, like those military leaders believe exist in Libya.

According to Gregory Mello, an engineer and environmental scientist who now serves as the executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a non-profit, research-oriented nuclear disarmament organization based in Santa Fe, N.M., “The B61-11 gravity bomb is the first new nuclear capability added to the U.S. arsenal since 1989. It was developed and deployed secretly, without public or congressional debate, and in apparent contradiction to domestic and international assurances that no new nuclear weapons were being developed in the U.S.”

He continues, “The excessive scale, aggressive course, and concrete results of the Stockpile program, such as the introduction of the B61-11 earth-penetrating

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weapon, is proof that the U.S. is insincere about its long-term commitment to arms control and non-proliferation.”

Expansion of NATO, chilled relations with Russia

Recent NATO actions fuel suspicions that the U.S. lacks sincerity about nuclear disarmament. The war in Kosovo chilled the relationship between the U.S. and Russia. Nuclear weapons negotiations came to a halt as the war advanced and NATO exerted its dominance.

Jim Bridgeman is the research and resource coordinator of the Peace Action Education Fund. Peace Action, formerly SANE/FREEZE, was founded in 1957 and is the nation’s largest grassroots peace and justice organization. “Before NATO began bombing Serbia,” says Bridgeman, “there was an agreement between the U.S. and Russia to set up a mechanism to safeguard each other’s nuclear arsenals and to share experts. This cooperation ended when NATO began bombing.

“The U.S. is now making new nuclear warheads, proceeding with Star Wars, expanding NATO, antagonizing Russia and bombing left and right,” says Bridgeman. “We’re behaving like an imperial power and not like a world leader working towards peace and freedom.”

For Bridgeman, the expansion of



Visitors inspect the restoration progress of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on April 6, 1945. A controversial exhibit at the Smithsonian’s Air and Space Museum to mark the 50th anniversary of the event, “The Final Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II,” was drastically scaled down after congressional critics and others complained that the exhibit as proposed portrayed U.S. actions in the bombing in a negative manner.

Bil Burke/Impact Visuals

NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — is problematic. NATO, he argues, is a “relic of the cold war and it should be dismantled.” It came into being after WWII in order to “protect” Western Europe from the “Communist menace.” The recent expansion of NATO to include former Soviet states, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, is a sure way, says Bridgeman, to “put the U.S. and Western Europe in a hostile relationship with Russia. A more suitable organization for security in Europe, and one that includes Russia, is the European Union.”

General George Lee Butler, retired, a former commander of the Strategic Air Command and a nuclear weapons expert,

also questions the role of NATO. As reported by Jonathan Schell in *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now*, Butler wonders, “Why is it that, showing a singular failure of vision and willingness to begin afresh, we are hell-bent to expand NATO? We could easily have proposed working for a few years, on a collegial basis, with our former adversaries, to rewrite the rulebook regarding how the world proceeds at this point. This shouldn’t be just a dialogue between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. It should be 1945 afresh — starting again, with a whole new construct.”

Yet, starting “afresh” seems to be exactly what the U.S. government — and, perhaps, the Russian government as well

— cannot do. A December 1997 Presidential Decision Directive revising the nation's plans for fighting a nuclear war was no revision at all. The first directive issued since Reagan's presidency in 1981, this "new" plan still targeted the former Soviet states. In the directive, Clinton concluded that nuclear weapons were to remain the cornerstone of U.S. security for "the indefinite future."

The Directive mandated that 8,000 strategic warheads be deployed, the maximum number allowed under existing U.S./Russian treaties. The Directive also expanded targets in China and added new countries to the target list, those with "prospective access" to nuclear weapons.

Douglas Roche, a former member of the Canadian parliament and author of *The Latest Evil: The Moral Case Against Nuclear Weapons* (1997), fears that the end of the Cold War, rather than leading to nuclear disarmament, has instead changed the face of the arms race. He explains, "A new technology race in the quest for more innovative and lethal weapons has broken out. ... The U.S. government intends to ... significantly enhance its scientific and technical capabilities by undertaking the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons." New projects include the earth-penetrating B61-11 bomb, as well as a replacement for Trident submarine-launched warheads, a new Trident missile, a new submarine, and research into a high-powered radio-frequency warhead to be used to take out a nation's electronic systems.

Roche notes that Clinton's Presidential Directive also broadens the potential use of nuclear weapons, including against non-nuclear states, in retaliation for chemical and biological attacks.

Treaties

Daryl Kimball, the executive director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, an alliance of 17 non-proliferation

organizations, fears that, "On the whole, the tremendous historic opportunity to move towards a nuclear-free world brought on by the end of the Cold War has been missed. It has not been seized on by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, and the actions of other countries, like India, Pakistan and Iraq have not helped the situation." (In May 1998, India revealed that it had conducted five underground nuclear tests. Within weeks, neighboring Pakistan revealed that it had conducted six.) Despite this pessimistic view, there are some important treaties in place.

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Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The most recent is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. When President Clinton signed it in 1996, he called it "the longest sought, hardest fought prize in the history of arms control." While that may be debatable, the CTBT has been long in the making. Proposed by Dwight Eisenhower in 1958, the treaty bans all above- and underground testing of nuclear weapons. Since 1945, more than 2,000 nuclear devices have been exploded. The inability to test will make it harder for countries with advanced nuclear weapons to produce new and more threatening types. It also helps stop the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations.

Signed by 149 nations, including all five nuclear powers, the treaty will not enter into force until ratified by all 44

nations with seismic monitoring stations on their territory. This includes both India and Pakistan, who have, thus far, refused to sign.

Though the U.S. has signed the treaty, the Senate has not yet ratified it. In order for ratification to proceed, the treaty needs to first be viewed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Chair of that committee, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), has blocked its consideration.

For Jim Bridgeman, "The fact that the U.S. has not ratified the CTBT means we're begging for a more dangerous world by not putting in place the mechanism to curb nuclear weapons. Without the CTBT in place, it makes it easier for others to make and test weapons and join the nuclear club. India's and Pakistan's testing last year pointed to this. They wanted to join the nuclear club and show power."

As important as ratification is, however, the treaty does have some weaknesses. The treaty does not inhibit computer simulations and laboratory testing, so research and development, like the U.S. development of the B61-11, can continue. Likewise, it does not include language about the wider goals of nuclear disarmament.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty entered into force October 3, 1972, was amended in 1974, and was finally signed in September 1997. It focuses on missile defense systems and specifically applies to the U.S. and Russia. It is weak enough to allow the U.S. to continue its research and development of missile defense systems like Star Wars, systems that, experts conclude, simply do not work. Despite its weakness, however, some conservatives in the U.S. Senate hope to abrogate the treaty completely to allow further defense system development.

START I, II and III

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, between the U.S. and Russia, are de-

signed to reduce gradually the number of nuclear weapons that each country can deploy.

START I, in force since 1991, limits the U.S. and Russia to 6,000 warheads and 4,900 ballistic missiles per side, not much of a reduction, but something.

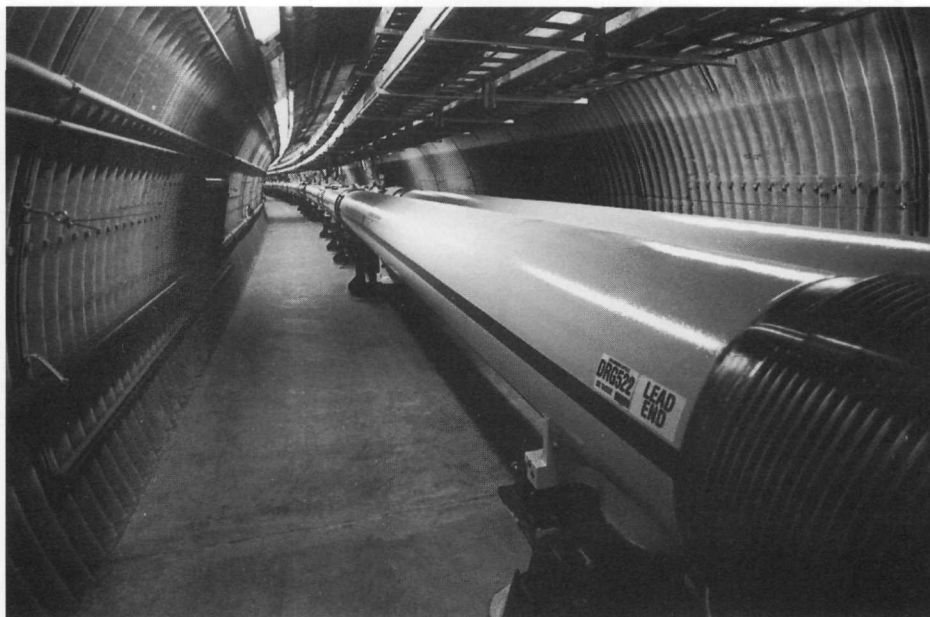
Negotiations on START II were completed in 1997. This reduces U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces to between 3,000 and 3,500 delivery vehicles each by 2003. The U.S. has ratified this treaty, but the Russian Duma has not. In fact, once NATO began bombing Kosovo, the Duma put this ratification on indefinite hold.

The lack of ratification means that formal negotiations have not yet begun on START III, which would reduce the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals to between 2,000 and 2,500 delivery vehicles. START III would also, according to a framework agreed to by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, require the destruction of nuclear warheads. START I and II require only that warheads be taken off delivery systems, but they can be stored for possible reassembly at a later date.

Peace Action's Bridgeman believes that Russia cannot afford to maintain its warheads at START I levels. "The entire Russian federal budget," he says, "is now \$25 billion — one-tenth of the previous military budget alone." Even without ratifying START II, Russia cannot go above the treaty's mandated levels. But, says Bridgeman, "The U.S. has a law that says

we're not going to go below START I unless Russia ratifies START II. So, consequently, with this artificial number, we are going to start producing nuclear warheads in Los Alamos."

Beginning in 2000, the Department of Energy plans to produce up to 80 newly designed warheads for the U.S. Trident nuclear submarine fleet. At 475 kilotons, these nuclear weapons are 20 to 25 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that wiped out Nagasaki, Japan.



Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) (a.k.a. atom smasher) at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, N.Y.

Kirk Condyles/Impact Visuals

The Non-proliferation Treaty

The Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was reviewed and indefinitely extended in 1995. This treaty, which covers the five nuclear weapons states — US, Russia, Britain, France and China — acts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons capability. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in Santa Barbara, Calif., explains that this treaty provides "indefinite extension of the *status quo*, giving special nuclear status to the five declared nuclear states." The treaty forbids the spread of nuclear weapons but

does not require disarmament.

Still, one promising part of the NPT can be found in Article VI. This commits the signatories to "good-faith negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament." While good-faith negotiations have not yet begun, activists are hopeful that, as a result of public pressure, a NPT review conference scheduled for April 2000 will produce meaningful results.

Abolition 2000

An ambitious campaign, known as Abolition 2000, is taking Article VI of the NPT seriously. The goal of Abolition 2000 is to negotiate a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons by the end of 2000.

Krieger, of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, clarifies, "We're not asking that weapons be gone by the year 2000, but we are asking that a treaty be negotiated. This can happen rapidly if there is the political will."

Abolition 2000 began during the April/May 1995 conference to discuss the extension of the Non-proliferation Treaty. Over a dozen non-governmental organizations from around the world joined together in an "abolition caucus" at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The caucus put forward a statement urging the goal of a nuclear abolition treaty by the year 2000. "Unfortunately," says Robert Moore, the executive director of the Coalition for Peace Action in Princeton, N.J., "this commitment was not included in the final agree-

ment extending the NPT. Therefore, the Abolition Treaty 2000 campaign was launched as a citizens' initiative in August 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

The Abolition 2000 network has now grown to over 971 citizen action groups in 79 countries, including 343 in the U.S.

According to public opinion polls conducted by the Oxford Research Group, an independent research organization, and the Mellman Group, the vast majority of people around the world support the abolition of nuclear weapons: 66 percent in the U.S., 70 percent in Great Britain, 89 percent in Australia, 78 percent in Japan, 61 percent in Russia, 98 percent in Norway, 87 percent in Germany and 71 percent in Canada.

'A lot of loose nukes'

Kimball, of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, finds that "the public is supportive of nuclear disarmament, but they are not all that concerned. Nuclear disarmament does not seem like a salient issue to most people. It is not an issue that ranks higher than the future of social security or education or crime in the streets in opinion polls. The public doesn't understand how these abstract nuclear issues affect them in a personal manner."

Jim Bridgeman, of Peace Action, agrees. "In the 1980s, when 750,000 people gathered in Central Park to protest nuclear weapons, when the public was motivated by movies like *The Day After*, people felt like the Cold War was heating up and disaster was possible. Now, with the Cold War over, the public assumes that everything is okay, but it isn't. There are a lot of loose nukes. Accidents can happen at any time."

Kimball elaborates. "Because the U.S. and Russia can fire within a matter of minutes 5,000 long-range nuclear weapons, there is a potential for an accident or inadvertent launch. These weapons are

on hair-trigger alert status. If the U.S. or Russia detect something on early warning radar, their strategy calls for an immediate and overwhelming response. If there is a mistake, a blip of the radar screen that is really a flock of Canada geese or a civilian satellite, this could lead to an overwhelming and devastating nuclear response. Russia, especially, cannot afford to maintain early warning systems so their security is worse than ever, and U.S. security depends on the health of the Russian system."

Bruce Blair, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who served as an

The August 1999 Peace Action conference — Beyond the Bomb — attracted over 300 people, double the 1998 total. The group rallied at Los Alamos National Laboratory, slated to begin production of nuclear bombs in 2000. Over 400 people protested at the lab and 70 activists, including the actor Martin Sheen, were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

Air Force launch control officer for Minuteman nuclear missiles in Montana, has written of his concern about strategic command and control of nuclear weapons, arguing as early as 1985 that the extreme vulnerability of U.S. command and control means that, in practice, the U.S. does not have the ability to wage a protracted nuclear war. Command and control in Russia, he says, is even more vulnerable. His latest book, *Global Zero*

Alert for Nuclear Forces, argues that safety should be at the center of arms control. In other words, treaties should not just limit numbers of weapons — a strategy sometimes referred to as "vertical" disarmament — but should also slow down reaction time, so that no launch is automatic. This focus on command and control is sometimes known as "horizontal" disarmament.

Kimball adds, "Threats also come from the potential for nuclear war between other nations, those hot spots right now in South Asia, like India and Pakistan. Leaders of both nations have made dozens of statements that they might have to use nuclear weapons. This should concern everyone, since one-sixth of the world's population is in South Asia. The consequences of this war are on a scale that no one can contemplate."

"Until the Test Ban Treaty is signed, the proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries without them — or to terrorists — is a greater danger today than it was during the Cold War since nuclear weapons, especially Russian nuclear weapons, are less secure today than they were under the Soviet Union," says Kimball.

Anti-nuclear activism

While anti-nuclear activism is not at the height it was during the Nuclear Freeze movement of the 1980s, it is, says Krieger, more focused now than ever before. "In the 1980s, we mobilized a lot of people but we asked for too little and achieved too little. It wasn't enough simply to freeze the numbers where they were. The numbers were too high. Most people did view the freeze as only the first step toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. But we didn't know how to take the next steps."

Today, activists are moving beyond a call for a nuclear freeze to the demand for nuclear elimination. While the overall number of anti-nuclear activists has decreased since the 1980s, core activist

leaders have grown stronger, becoming better informed about the issues and more aware of what needs to be done. The August 1999 Peace Action conference — Beyond the Bomb — attracted over 300 people, double the 1998 total. The group rallied at Los Alamos National Laboratory, slated to begin production of nuclear bombs in 2000. Over 400 people protested at the lab and 70 activists, including the actor Martin Sheen, were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

"It's not the overwhelming numbers that we had in the 1980s, but it does show a steady growth of recognition that the time to act is now," says Krieger. "Everyone can get involved. You don't need to travel to New Mexico or get arrested. Simply join a group. Write your repre-

sentatives and demand that they take a strong position. Speak to other people and let them know how important it is to act now. Take resolutions to local city councils."

Krieger, working with Abolition 2000, is concentrating on two major strategies. First up are "abolition days," from March 1-8, 2000. These will be days of education and action around the world, days of teach-ins at universities and lobbying of representatives.

The second strategy involves preparing for the Non-proliferation Treaty review conference, which begins in April 2000.

"Abolition 2000 sees that review meeting as a critical point in the effort for abolition," says Krieger. "Many non-nuclear nations are getting anxious about nuclear states not dealing with Article VI,

which requires good-faith efforts towards elimination. Non-governmental organizations and activists think that the nuclear states have been acting in bad faith and that this needs to stop."

A New Agenda Coalition, composed of non-aligned, non-nuclear states — Mexico, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand and South Africa — put forward a resolution in June 1998 calling for more action on nuclear disarmament. Specifically, the resolution demanded the "full implementation of the decisions adopted by the NPT parties in 1995." It also provoked a fierce debate about NATO's continuing dependence on the potential first use of nuclear weapons.

Importantly, among the United Nations, the resolution garnered 114 votes. Only the nuclear states — U.S., Britain, France, China, Russia and states from the former Soviet bloc, as well as India, Pakistan, Israel and Turkey — voted against it.

Giving ammunition to activists and the New Agenda is a 1996 World Court opinion that concluded that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal unless the existence of the state is threatened.

"The issue really isn't complicated," says Krieger, "Our national security should not be based on killing hundreds of millions of people and threatening to destroy the human species."

Fortunately, many world leaders agree. They are realizing what General Butler, the former U.S. Strategic Commander, understands, "Nuclear weapons are irrational devices. They were rationalized and accepted as a desperate measure in the face of circumstances that were unimaginable. Now as the world evolves rapidly, I think that the vast majority of people on the face of this earth will endorse the proposition that such weapons have no place among us. There is no security to be found in nuclear weapons. It's a fool's game."

TW

Organizations and resources

Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers
110 Maryland Ave, NE, Suite 5050
Washington, DC 20002
202/546-0795
www.crnd.org

Council for a Livable World
110 Maryland Ave, NE, Suite 409
Washington, DC 20002
202/543-4100
www.clw.org/pub/clw/welcome.html

Federation of American Scientists
307 Mass Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002
202/546-3300
www.fas.org/

Los Alamos Study Group
212 E. Marcy Street, Suite 7
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505/982-7747
www.lasg.org/

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Global contact for Abolition 2000
PMB 121
1187 Coast Village Road, Suite 1
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
805/965-3443
www.wagingpeace.org

Peace Action
1819 H. Street, NW, Suite 420
Washington, DC 20006
202/862-9740
www.webcom.peaceact/abolition2000.html

Physicians for Social Responsibility
1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
202/898-0150
www.psr.org

Selling peacetime nuke power

by Leah Samuel

As of the end of 1998, there were 429 nuclear reactors operating around the world. They produce about 20 percent of the world's electricity. Meanwhile, the industry and its regulators are looking for ways to store and even reuse the mounting waste that comes from that production.

They've got a problem, though. Many citizens, nourished on Cold War-era information, continue to believe that nuclear energy and its by-products are dangerous to their health. That means that the nuclear industry — in order to continue making money — must overcome such resistance so that the public will welcome nuclear energy and its by-products into its communities on an expanding scale.

Citizens' concerns about nuclear energy and waste are not unfounded. While there's a much longer, more scientific way to describe the danger, the short version of it this: Nuclear material decays, like many things. As it decays, it throws off alpha particles, which are tiny, invisible bits of radioactivity. Once inside a human or animal, these particles enter and damage cells, causing the abnormal cell changes that become cancer. Nuclear material remains active for anywhere from 100 to 250,000 years, potentially affecting multiple generations of species.

Weapons and peacetime use linked

The biggest concern used to be that nuclear destruction would be delivered by nuclear weapons. While this threat

continues, much of the thinking on nuclear energy in the last decade has been refocused on nuclear energy's peacetime production and use. But nuclear-industry experts point out that it is difficult to separate the issue of peacetime nuclear power use from the issue of weapons.

"Power plants can easily be converted to produce weapons-grade plu-

The world would need about 50,000 power plants in order to make nuclear power its sole source of energy.

Putting power plants in so many places means giving more countries the ability to create nuclear weapons.

onium," says Mike Moore, editor of the bimonthly *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.

"Even though the Cold War is over, things are more dangerous than at the height of the Cold War. In order to have nuclear power provide most of the world's electricity, you're going to need so many plants so widely dispersed, that it becomes dangerous again."

Moore estimates that the world would need about 50,000 power plants in order to make nuclear power its sole source of energy. Putting power plants in so many places means giving more countries the ability to create nuclear weapons.

"If we had thousands of nuclear

power plants around the world, it would be hard to oversee that," says Moore.

And many nuclear reactors operating power plants, says Moore, are not safe because they are based on reactors used during wartime.

"The [nuclear reactors] we built in the 1950s and 1960s are built up from submarine reactors and are not designed for major power-production use," says Moore.

"There are newer designs that would have been better, but those are not being followed. They didn't want to slow down and build better reactors."

Pushing nuclear power

The industry pushes nuclear power nonetheless. Part of that push requires convincing us that nuclear power is necessary.

"The industry has convinced people that they will freeze in the dark if they don't use nuclear energy," says Faye Brown, campaign director with Honor the Earth.

Keeping the public in the dark is another industry strategy.

"At the regulatory level, there's a tendency toward deregulation," says David Kraft, director of the Nuclear Energy Information Service. "Government agencies are given a pass or even allowed to regulate themselves, so that it becomes more difficult or less meaningful for the public to participate."

The other part of the industry's push consists of telling the public that nuclear power and all its wastes and by-products pose little or no danger, or that they would be safe if handled correctly.

This is the stance of publications like the *Bulletin*. Despite Moore's acknowledgement of the dangers of peacetime use, the *Bulletin* still advocates for it.

"I don't want to say that nuclear energy is not dangerous," he says, "but its danger is often over-dramatized."

Freelancer **Leah Samuel** works for the Detroit-based *Labor Notes*. Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.



Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant, Middletown, Pa., 1997.

J.K. Condyles/Impact Visuals

The Nuclear Energy Institute puts out this seemingly contradictory message as well. With a membership that includes 41 U.S. utilities that own and operate nuclear power plants, it advertises a mission “to promote peacetime use of nuclear energy.” Even so, the NEI points out that in comparison with a nuclear bomb, “in a nuclear power plant accident, you have a smaller explosion, with steam blowing open its container, but the extent of death from radiation is likely to be the same.”

Especially since, adds Kraft, nuclear power plants do not always operate safely.

“There’s a trend to do questionable

practices on maintenance and save money,” he says. “They’re starting to do repairs and refueling while reactors are operating. Efficiency goes up but safety goes down.”

Subtle influences

Sometimes the industry seeks to influence public opinion in very subtle ways. For example, publishing company McGraw-Hill produces seven newsletters for, about and supporting the nuclear industry and nuclear power. McGraw-Hill, however, is also a leading publisher of science textbooks for elementary, middle school, high school and college students. Arguments against the use of nuclear energy often

get short shrift in these materials. While the publisher argues that its textbooks “allow students to decide for themselves” about nuclear energy and nuclear waste, its proximity to the industry would be at least unsettling for many.

The industry has even co-opted part of the environmental message. Paul Loeb is an activist and author of *Nuclear Culture: Living and Working in the World’s Largest Atomic Complex*.

“Thirty years ago, even [some activists] were saying that we should be environmentally responsible and use nuclear energy,” he says. “People like that had bought into the consensus.”

Brown says of the industry, "They'll say, 'We don't emit greenhouse gases,' but they don't tell us that they produce tons of radiation."

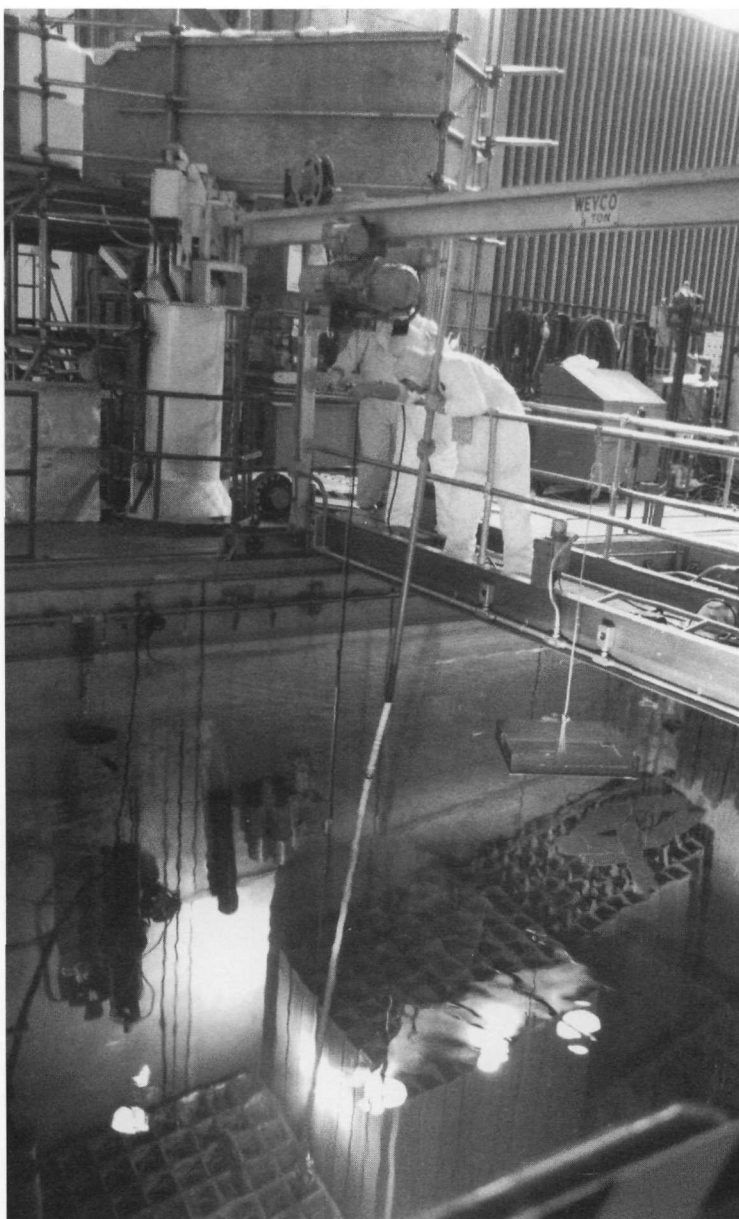
And the nuclear industry is also hard at work to defeat proposals for alternative, non-polluting forms of energy production, like solar and wind power.

"The money in solar and wind energy would not be concentrated in so few hands," says Michael Keegan, an organizer with the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes. "It would be an economy more based in equity. It's labor-intensive power, so you have to hire a lot of people. But you can't hoard the wind and sell it to people, so the power industry doesn't want it."

"Nuclear culture reaches into the democracy and the economy," added Keegan, citing high costs to consumers, and high contributions the industry makes to lawmakers. "It's a feudal economic order. People work a job to come home and pay utility bills. We're producing energy in the most pathological, expensive way possible, with the worst possible outcome."

Pervasive nuclear culture

The nuclear industry, along with all of its supporters in the corporate, scientific and political communities, has had over 50 years to weave itself into the fabric of U.S. culture. Nuclear culture



Workers check on spent fuel rods stored in a pool of water next to the nuclear reactor at the Big Rock Point Nuclear Power Station in Charlevoix, Mich. The plant is being decommissioned.

Jim West

— which includes that still-prevalent ideal of the "nuclear family" and all the values that go with it — says that citizens must, quite simply, accept what large entities like corporations or governments do or say. Nuclear culture also says that corporations and govern-

ments are simply smarter than citizens, and have only their best interests at heart. It says that they are too powerful to be defeated. Therefore, the culture implies that to oppose the "authorities" is not only wrong, but more importantly, it is fruitless.

The result is that the public often will not ask questions.

Moore, a former newspaper reporter, believes that the public simply is not interested in understanding nuclear energy.

"We are getting into areas that are so specialized and arcane that ordinary readers aren't going to be interested in those details," he says.

But the Nuclear Energy Information Service's Kraft says the industry uses that assertion to avoid putting out information.

"Once people understand that you don't have to be a nuclear physicist to get it, they want more information," he says. "There are a lot of things the public doesn't get, but they still have to make decisions about these things."

"Nuclear issues are the same way," he says. "We want to take the technical

gobbledygook out of it, to take it out of the realm of mystery that the industry keeps it in."

Nuclear fatalism

Other times, those who are aware lack confidence in their ability to fight back.

"When you are constantly told that

what you do doesn't matter, you believe it," says Kraft. "And it's not just true about nuclear energy."

Loeb connects the strong influence of nuclear culture to the existence of nuclear weapons.

"The willingness to live with potential annihilation has made us more willing to live with things like environmental problems," says Loeb. "It makes us fatalistic about other things as well."

What seems to work, when fighting against nuclear power plants and their wastes, is to fight against nuclear culture using cultural phenomenon which would support opposition to it.

In this culture, physical or psychological proximity to people's personal lives make an issue more meaningful. Quite simply, with the issue of nuclear energy, the picture becomes clearer when people are closer to it.

Bringing nuclear danger close: Yucca Mountain

One environmental fight which may bring the threat posed by peacetime uses of nuclear power more clearly to public consciousness is the struggle to keep nuclear wastes out of Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Yucca Mountain is a place of worship for the Western Shoshone and Paiute tribes of native peoples. But the Department of Energy is also evaluating the area for permanent nuclear waste storage. This process has involved environmental impact and feasibility studies, and the DOE is currently conduct-



Sample fallout shelter, Levittown, Pa., early 1960s

Jack Rosen/Impact Visuals

Nuclear culture — which includes that still-prevalent ideal of the "nuclear family" and all the values that go with it — says that citizens must, quite simply, accept what large entities like corporations or governments do or say.

ing public hearings on the issue.

It is not by chance that every industry proposal for nuclear waste sites being considered targets an area occupied by people of color or the poor, argues Honor the Earth's Brown.

"There's something we call nuclear colonialism," she explains. "The reason that the industry targeted Native people is that they have the least economic and political power. [Nuclear power plant officials] are looking for a political solution — some way that they'll get the least resistance."

While Yucca Mountain is holy ground to native peoples, this is not just a fight over the sanctity of the mountain. There are serious safety and health considerations as well. There have been 621 earth-

quakes in the vicinity, with Richter-scale measurements of 2.5 or higher, in the past 20 years. There are 33 faults and seven small volcanoes in the area as well. One study found that an earthquake could push groundwater into the proposed storage area, forcing plutonium into the atmosphere.

At the same time, the utility companies are lobbying Congress to change the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. If they are successful, the law will allow them to temporarily store the waste in front of the mountain until the DOE approves storage inside it.

What may get the attention of non-

Indians and people of privilege, however, is that the nuclear waste the utility companies want to store here must be shipped in — by train and by truck — from all over the country. As a result, these dangerous materials will pass by and through hundreds of cities.

“We are all Indians when it comes to Yucca Mountain,” says Honor the Earth’s Brown. “That’s because it’s not just about dumping this dangerous garbage where the Western Shoshone and Paiute people live,” but also about exposing dozens of other communities to possible contamination as it is transported to Nevada.

An industry on the defensive

Despite the power of the nuclear industry to influence government policy and public opinion, Loeb believes the anti-nuclear forces may have won the cultural war against the nuclear industry.

“In the time of [President Richard] Nixon, a thousand reactors were going to be built in the next 10 years,” he says. “It sort of rolled along on schedule, then it stopped. People started asking questions. They said, ‘Don’t you need safety systems?’ and ‘What are you going to do with the waste?’ By holding [nuclear companies] accountable, what was once expected to happen by now hasn’t happened.”

Kraft adds that in addition to public opposition, the nuclear industry may be collapsing under its own weight.

“As huge and massive as the indus-

try is, the fragility is incredible,” says Kraft. “If you enforced all the regulations on the books, the nuclear industry would shut down. Some of the plants are so old and inefficient, they’re just closing down. The cost of getting things back up to even questionable standards would cost too much.”

Activists say that the prevalence of nuclear culture, and the renewed push



A private corporation began placing cement containers such as this one around Ward Valley in preparation for making the site into a radioactive waste dump. The Colorado River Native Nations Alliance, consisting of the Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Cocopah, Quechan and Colorado River Indian Tribes, has long opposed the siting of any type of radioactive waste facility on the Ward Valley land they hold sacred. Last April 3, the U.S. District Court refused to force a transfer of land to the state of California that could lead to the dump.

Dana Schuerholz/Impact Visuals

by the industry to indoctrinate the public with it, is the industry’s desperate attempt to save itself.

“The nuclear industry hasn’t given up, but it is certainly on the defensive,” says Loeb. “Anywhere you go with a proposal for a reactor or waste storage site, you’re going to get opposition. Thirty years ago, the arguments of the nuclear industry were taken for granted. It will be an uphill battle for the industry to get that back.”

Anti-nuclear coalition-building

Loeb also believes that anti-nuclear activists have to remember that “victory doesn’t always happen in mass ways, but one person at a time.”

In August, environmental activists gathered in Soni Springs, Michigan for an “action camp” sponsored by the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes. The group spent a week learning to fight more effectively against nuclear wastes in the environment.

“We did a week-long, intensive training on nuclear issues,” says Kraft. “Like how to deal with the media and what to say, how to organize a group, how to form coalitions and why.”

Kraft believes that building coalitions is one of the most important skills for environmentalists in the future.

“There are very few elements and institutions left in society where people feel that good vibe, that meaningfulness,” he says. “Churches do that. For better or worse, they do it. And we

should do it. Building this movement is a subset of building community.”

Loeb says that doing this allows activists to recognize and harness the cultural forces which would contradict nuclear culture.

“We’ll keep winning by teaching an ethic of responsibility and accountability, because the nuclear industry does not fit into that,” he says. “The basic story that must continue to be put forth is that it is irresponsible to put out technology that has so many costs deferred to the future.” **TW**

Fighting linguicide

Ninety percent of the world's languages may die out within a century, according to a story in *Action*, the newsletter of the London-based World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The Association co-sponsored a hearing on "Languages and Human Rights" in May of this year. The hearing raised issues around the accelerating disappearance of the world's languages.

"The linguistic diversity that has been an essential characteristic of the human species is being replaced by a system in which some languages are expanding at the cost of others," *Action* explained. "This is now true within nation states and the global system. Control over someone's language has become one of the primary means of exerting power over other aspects of people's life.

"Language is the house of our identity," asserted Ariel Dorfman, the respected Chilean writer, at the May hearing. "If they burn down that house we are left with nothing. It is essential to understand that every language in the world, whether five or five billion people speak it, has equal rights. When you destroy a language, you destroy the capacity of human beings to be as diverse and as plural and as expansive as possible."

Cases were presented on behalf of Creole languages, Kurdish languages, Sign languages, bilingual education in California and Berber language (Tamazigh).

Kurdish language was considered to be under particular threat of "linguicide."

According to WACC, the use of Kurdish in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria "is seen by the governments as a threat to the State. ... The speakers of Kurdish, which has been used in the Middle East for thousands of years and is spoken as a mother tongue by between 25 and 30 million people, have few if any rights.

"Turkish policy in education, in the public sphere, political life and the media, is genocidal and linguicidal ... Only those who deny their Kurdish cultural and linguistic identity can function as full members of Turkish society. Severe prison terms are

imposed on those who campaign for Kurdish (including a peaceful solution to the 'Kurdish question'), refer to Kurdish in public or the media, demand education in the Kurdish language or through the medium of Kurdish, and a number of other activities which are expressions of cultural identity."

Mauritians oppose U.S. nuclear base

The Mauritian organization Lalit is building an international campaign to close down the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia Island. The island was offered to the U.S. for a base by Britain in 1965, after Britain bought a string of islands from the Mauritian government for three million pounds and the right to sell sugar in the U.S. market. Between 1965 and 1969, Mauritians were moved en masse from their homes.

"In the mid-1990s, the British government admitted that the colony should eventually be returned to Mauritius, but only when 'the islands are no longer needed for the defense purposes of the U.K. and the U.S.,'" writes Rajni Lallah in *Reconciliation International*. "Lalit thinks that time is now.

"Internationally, Diego Garcia has been a 'hidden issue,' despite UN resolutions condemning Britain for illegally occupying the islands in the 1960s, and statements from the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity. But lately Diego Garcia has been in the news. In the 1991 Gulf War and during the more recent bombing of Iraq, U.S. B-52s took off from Diego Garcia Base. U.S. missiles were launched from vessels at the base against both Sudan and Afghanistan last year, in the wake of the Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam bombings. Following the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, President Clinton did not deny that the U.S. stocks nuclear weapons there.

"The Pelindaba Treaty for a Nuclear-Arms-Free Africa was signed in June 1995 by all African nations. But when the five nuclear powers were asked to endorse the document, the U.K. and U.S. refused to sign unless the Mauritian islands were

excluded from the Treaty. Lalit claims that 'as the U.S. prepares for a "re-colonization" of Africa, through eligibility clauses of the Africa Growth and Opportunities Bill in front of the U.S. Congress, we are concerned that the U.S. will increase its "economic interests" in Africa, and that this will, in turn, be a further excuse for maintaining its military presence on Diego Garcia.'"

Tallying auto debt

Despite the fact that cars are the single largest contributor to global warming, "the total cost of America's auto-dependency remains a dirty but hidden secret," writes Jane Holtz Kay, author of *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back* (*The Nation*, 8/8/99).

"The roads we build to serve the car, the fuel we extract, the industrial energy consumed in producing 15 million motor vehicles a year are enormous — and largely unrecorded. U.S. cars and trucks carry three-quarters of a trillion dollars in hidden costs. Often lacking a dollar sign, their tally ranges from parking facilities to police protection; from registry operations to uncompensated accidents. Cars bought on the installment plan drive up consumer debt by 40 percent, making the General Motors Acceptance Corporation the largest consumer finance institution in the world."

Other costs include "car-bred sprawl" and the wetlands and farmlands paved to accommodate it, Kay says.

"What false economy allows us to dismiss these debts? To simply credit highway-based transportation as 18 percent of our gross domestic product — more than health and education combined? What perverse sense of the environmental balance sheet lets us tamper with the fate of the planet without noting these debts?"

short takes

Independent bookstores fight back

by Patricia Holt

One of the shocks to emerge in recent years from the book industry is the fact that blockbusters such as *Angela's Ashes* and *Cold Mountain* almost didn't make it into America's consciousness.

These books hit best-seller lists, publishing experts agree, because of the thousands of privately owned, independent bookstores around the country that discovered them and spread the word. Everything else followed far behind in terms of stimulating the books' early sales.

One would think that these neighborhood bookstores — their numbers so diminished and their efforts so embattled in the "bookstore wars" of recent years — would be celebrated by publishers for saving such worthwhile books from obscurity. Instead, independent bookstores are increasingly abandoned by publishers as a kind of dying breed, as though they have already been Starbucked, Costcoed, and Amazoned right out of existence.

One would think independent bookstores have played no historic part in preserving the best of American literature. And yet, noted modern writers who were once unknown — Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, Anne Lamott, Ethan Canin, Alice Walker, Dorothy Allison, Cormac McCarthy, Barbara Kingsolver,

Charles Johnson and many others — would never have been widely read if it were not for the support of this network of independent bookstores.

As we reach the end of the 20th century, perhaps the greatest shock is that these privately owned neighborhood bookstores, so key to the health of literature in the U.S., are dying.

Under-the-table deals?

The problem began in the 1970s when the first wave of chain bookstores (B. Dalton, Waldenbooks) brought thousands of quick-profit mall stores into competition with traditional neighborhood bookstores. The result: 1,000 of the 7,000 independent bookstores in the U.S. closed down within the decade.

With more chains, department stores, and price clubs in the 1980s (Crown, Walmart, Costco), and the most recent wave of chain superstores with CDs, videos, and cafes, in the 1990s (Barnes & Noble, Borders), a few thousand more independent bookstores have gone under, bringing the total number of independents (according to the American Booksellers Association) from 5,132 in 1991 to about 3,200 today, many of them teetering close to bankruptcy.

What no independent can compete against are the alleged illegal discounts and under-the-table deals that independents believe publishers have been giving the chains from the start. The courts have agreed with independents in two separate lawsuits, but abuses continue, according to allegations in the American Booksellers Association's own lawsuit, set for trial next year.

As a consequence of the chains' success, the percentage of books sold by independents has fallen disastrously. According to the Book Industry Study Group, in 1991 independent bookstores accounted for the largest share (32

percent) of the book market. Today that percentage has dropped to 17.2 percent, leaving independents in third place, below chain bookstores (26 percent) and price club/department stores (20 percent).

Enter Amazon.com

By 1998, Amazon.com (launched in 1995), the first of the snazzy, reader-friendly bookselling Web sites, had begun to pull ahead of chain booksuperstores in sales while at the same time its stock price soared at unprecedented rates. By mid-April 1999, although Borders and Barnes & Noble kept showing declines, the stock of Amazon, which has never shown a profit and loses millions each quarter, was up more than 75 percent for the year.

The fun of browsing through Amazon's cyberstore with its virtual shopping carts, irreverent "customer comments," and alluring discounts (including the online moratorium on sales tax) has pulled many a loyal customer away from independent stores and onto the Web. Media adoration of "e-commerce" during the 1998 holiday season glorified Amazon and resulted in further hemorrhaging of independent bookstore sales.

A few cracks have opened in Amazon's armor, beginning with recent disclosures that this hip and "customer-centric" online marketplace has been taking money from publishers to place titles on its best-seller list and "recommendations" in such categories as "Destined for Greatness," without telling customers.

Amazon now tells readers about paid placements (on a hard-to-find page). Some customers seem to have lost their loyalty along the way and often go searching for cut-rate imitators like <bestsellersforless.com>.

Enter Bertelsmann

The bookseller wars are chaotic and damaging enough, but at least the separation between church and state (publishing and bookselling) remained sacrosanct — that is, until last year, when two events brought the industry into cataclysm.

This occurred in the midst of the "merger

Patricia Holt, former book editor and critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, currently writes an e-mail column called "Holt Uncensored," distributed free by the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association <www.nciba.com>.

Keeping Watch

mania" in New York that has reduced the publishing industry from 30 houses a few decades ago to about seven conglomerate firms today. Not only have foreign houses begun to dominate the scene, but Bertelsmann of Germany, the largest publisher in the world, has initiated a series of takeovers with horrifying repercussions.

Last year, though it already owned Bantam Doubleday Dell, Bertelsmann acquired Random House with all its many imprints (Knopf, Pantheon, Crown, Times, Ballantine, Vintage, Villard, Fawcett, etc.), then proceeded to buy one-half of Barnes & Noble.com, the online division (and competitor to Amazon) of Barnes & Noble.

Wham! What had been feared before, that publishers were cozying up to booksellers in compromising ways (asking chains to approve jacket illustrations, flap copy, even the authors' texts), seemed frighteningly real. Piling all the imprints together under the Random House imprint, Bertelsmann controlled more than a fifth of the publishing market; now its investment in Barnes & Noble meant Bertelsmann controlled a major player in the bookselling side as well.

And then, wham! again, Barnes & Noble announced its intention to buy Ingram, the largest book distributor in the country, whose main clientele up to that point had been — ta da! — independent bookstores. This meant that Barnes & Noble would have access to the financial records of competitors it was mowing down right and left, and also have the power to direct sales of best-selling books to itself first. A nationwide protest of the Ingram purchase has brought thousands of letters and calls to the Federal Trade Commission, which has the authority to approve or disapprove the sale. (Industry observers think the FTC will approve it when it makes its decision later this year.)

Wham! Wham! Wham! With the decline of independents, publishers are cutting back on the sales representatives who visit each store to present the publisher's list of upcom-

ing books to the store's buyers. This means that books by unknown or highly literary authors will not be explained to store buyers in a way that would inspire the staff to read them, promote them, hand-sell to customers, and get word-of-mouth going.

Fighting back

In the last few years, independents have joined together to sue the pants off the chains; create their own web sites to compete with Amazon; "brand" consumers' consciousness with "Book Sense," a branding and market-

*What no independent can
compete against are the
alleged illegal discounts
and under-the-table deals
that independents believe
publishers have been giving
the chains from the start.
The courts have agreed
with independents in two
separate lawsuits.*

ing campaign for independents that will also offer a national gift-certificate program that operates like FTD; fight the Ingram sale; and, by God, make a stand.

Do they have a chance? Perhaps. Famous authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, Larry McMurtry and Adrienne Rich are speaking out in support of independents by writing letters to newspapers, making speeches, appearing on radio and television. Meanwhile, Who Loved Ya (First) Baby campaigns (my term but that's what they are) have started up among independents to educate authors like Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*) and Stephen King to stop appearing in television ads promoting Barnes & Noble.

Other support is coming from friends of

the bookstore groups that are sprouting to help independents bring in donations, host benefits, offer lectures, present authors and conduct classes, book clubs, writers' groups, etc. Planning commissions and city councils are also beginning to deny petitions by chain bookstores to locate 25,000-square-foot super stores in areas where they would compete unfairly with independents, while some redevelopment money is being directed toward independent bookstores to help revitalize seedy areas and give the independents a chance to compete. Community centers are also forming with space for galleries, theaters, computers, cafes, conference rooms, and, at their core, independent bookstores.

So let's all slow down and remember this wonderful tradition of independent bookselling. Let's get out of the fast lane and recognize that the human element (conversation, selection, trust, opinion, love of reading, expertise, community involvement) has always been a staple of the neighborhood independent bookstore.

So here's how you can become a foot soldier in the war to preserve the heartfelt caretakers of American literature:

1. Pledge to buy nothing but books as gifts for every holiday; concentrate your shopping at one or two or a handful of independent bookstores and never set foot in a Barnes & Noble or Borders store again.

2. Seek out the best web sites of independent bookstores and never order from Amazon.com again.

3. When in doubt, buy big gift certificates right now at your local independent — this helps finance the store (cash flow is the hardest problem for any retailer right now) and brings in more walk-in traffic.

4. Join a Friends of the Bookstore group if you can find one, and if not, start one.

5. Attend autographings and other in-store events.

Do you love your neighborhood? Then love that neighborhood bookstore, because if you don't, it's not going to be there tomorrow.

TW

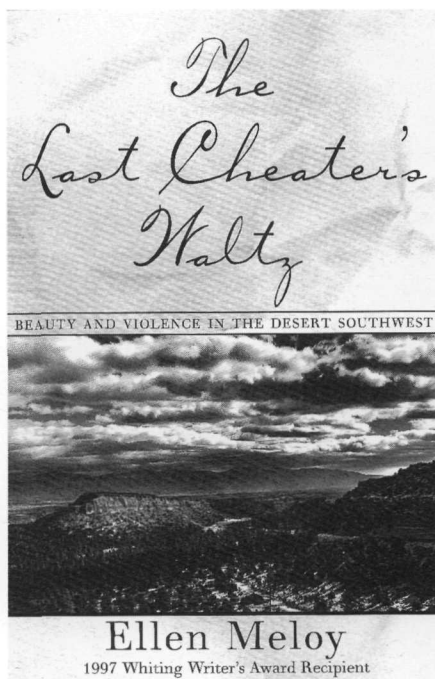
The last cheater's waltz

by Janet Chisholm

The Last Cheater's Waltz, Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest, by Ellen Meloy, Henry Holt and Company, 1999.

I suddenly realized that the music I had chosen at random, Paul Winter's *Anthem*, overflowed with a sense of vast space and time and was the perfect accompaniment. I was reading Ellen Meloy's new book about the unique history and breathtaking beauty of the great southwestern desert. Both the music and her words painted visions of a sacred, abundant and eternal creation.

In *The Last Cheater's Waltz*, Meloy, the naturalist, sets out on a personal journey to learn about the area of New Mexico where she is building a small solar home. She devises and fleshes out her own "Map of the Known Universe." With organic and sensual descriptions of both the inanimate and animate, she details the wonders of the great desert: its plants and wildlife, with their peculiar adaptations and mysterious dormant periods that climax in a multitude of resurrections after a single soaking rain; its colorful pallet of rock and sand, and the ancient geological formations which reveal upheavals and re-creations of the landscape over several million years; its archeological sites with



artifacts and bones, remnants of ordinary living and ritual, mass executions. This desert is both ancient and alive.

The sense of pleasure and feelings of security Meloy experiences initially, however, are disturbed forever. Determined to understand more about her corner of the universe, she reads and researches, talks with residents, and analyzes rocks. Clues lead her to Los Alamos, home of the Manhattan Project; to Trinity, site of the first atom bomb test; and to the missile range at White Sands. She discovers the source of the uranium ore is her own backyard. Moving ever deeper, she comes to the ghastly realization that her new homeland is "an abused, outback colony of the Cold War," and the birthplace of today's nuclear horrors. She calls it the site of the only nuclear war in the history of the world, "the bombing of the Ameri-

can West."

Meloy informs the reader that physicists and engineers traveled to the great desert and called it "nothing," nothing but space and emptiness. Most had no connection to the place or its history; they used the land to develop and test the most lethal weapons possessed by humans, the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their nuclear descendents. Later scientists pursued a variety of "peaceful" nuclear projects under banners like Atoms for Peace and Operation Plowshare, where they invented household conveniences like atomic kitchens and pursued geographic engineering to build dams and to release underground reserves of natural gas. They abused the land and left it pockmarked, poisoned and littered with tailings and radioactive garbage. Meloy finds one sign cautioning that the surrounding land will be dangerous for the next 2,000 years.

As Paul Winter played the "Kyrie" from the *Earth Mass*, Meloy's story really began to hit home — my home! I grew up on that great southwestern desert, in the "nothing out there" state called Nevada. And that desert, I was taught, looked like the Holy Land — like the land of prophets, of Jesus' 40 days and 40 nights, of nativity, crucifixion and resurrection. Riding my horse for miles across the unfenced land, I had felt free, safe, healthy and secure in the vast beauty, as if I were in my own Garden of Eden, just as Meloy described it.

These memories were shaken four years ago when my mother phoned me in Connecticut. She knew about the lump in my breast and my scheduled surgery, but her concerns were intensified by recent medical news. Researchers now believed that the winds swirling in the Las Vegas area during the bomb testing in the 1950s had carried radiation and were the cause of the high cancer rate in residents, especially in those who were children at the

review

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time. Years ago we heard about the hundreds of sheep that died downwind in Utah, and more recently we learned about Utah towns plagued by cancer. As I recalled, no one seemed very worried about the dangers at the time — loyalty and trust in the government and in nuclear testing had been strong.

Mother and I recalled how we rose early on days the bombs were scheduled, driving north before dawn — just as we did for Easter sunrise services. We took the newspaper map and directions along and hoped for a good parking spot. Hundreds of families, cars full of children, lined the Tonopah highway. We convinced our grandmother to come, too. It was the chance of a lifetime, we thought. I remembered the hush that draped itself across the line of cars — the eyes all rolled in one direction and staring, afraid to blink and miss the spectacle. There was barely a hint of morning on the horizon. Then, at a time precisely chosen (soon we would know whose watch was really most accurate!), a powerful light exploded into the dark; and huge billows tumbled up and out, forming the famous mushroom shape.

“Did we hear a sound, Mother? I don’t remember. Surely there was a terrifying boom.”

“Yes,” she answered, “it shook the ground and shot through the air into our homes, breaking windows and cracking the plaster and walls, tumbling dishware and other breakables onto the floor. There were thousands of insurance claims. It felt like an earthquake, but it was not an act of God. I later talked with a man who worked for your father who said he suffered from terrible skin cancer and had to stop working. He had been the only insurance investigator allowed on ground zero after a blast to assess the damage. He told me that the soles of his boots were eaten off after one walk-through; he was always purchasing new shoes! He was never

warned of the dangers. We were all so trusting in those days.”

Meloy’s book, though carefully constructed, reads like a surreal diary of dreamlike associations. She juxtaposes visions of natural beauty with horrific nuclear insights. She skillfully changes levels of abstraction and shifts focus from one field of expertise to another with seeming abandon, while preserving connections and carrying her readers along. She rushes along tangents which appear irrelevant at first and later prove not only interesting but integral. Expounding briefly on the abstractions of physics, she

Melloy calls her new homeland the site of the only nuclear war in the history of the world, “the bombing of the American West.”

returns to metaphysics. From high ideals she jumps into concrete examples of her own limitations and weaknesses, laughing at mistakes, wrong assumptions and fears with a gentle, self-deprecating sense of humor. This continual pattern of approach-and-retreat, or changing of the scenery, provides emotional relief and a chance for the reader to absorb new revelations without becoming too overwhelmed; it allows time to take a deep breath before resuming the journey. But Meloy offers only a temporary distraction or reprieve before she refocuses again on ground zero.

“To rechart my own terrain, I simply had to explore it with reflexes, not reason, with lips on the scarlet velvet of claret cups, bones and skin absorbing every molecule of sand, river, rock, and lucid desert air. All I had to do was savor the desert stillness, that spare landscape of

absence and seeming nothingness that in the end I knew to be so potent and full. The Map of the Known Universe, I had hoped, would be a witness of the senses, a map of my own body.

“Following a night of wailing violence outside the screenhouse, I sat myself down in a decrepit lawn chair beside a sliver of ditch water and hoped for toads. At first it seemed the proper refuge to still the fermenting ironies that grew yeastier with each foray into the Known Universe. I dragged with me, however, not soporific Thoreau or sinuous Rilke but the Los Alamos Primer and a treatise on particle physics that promised once and for all to unravel the cosmic onion.”

Meloy has carved a gem with so many facets. It begins as music and art; evolves into history, anthropology, geology and biology; turns to mystery and adventure; and becomes her personal odyssey and protest. Replete throughout with metaphors of the human condition, it inspires reflection about physical and emotional distance and about the meaning of “home.” TW

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I am the clerk, the technician, the mechanic, the driver.

They said, Do this, do that, don't look left or right, don't read the text. Don't look at the whole machine. You are only responsible for this one bolt. For this one rubber-stamp.

— Mordechai Vanunu, from Ashkelon Prison, Israel

This September 30 marks the 13th anniversary of the kidnapping of Mordechai Vanunu by Israeli agents in Italy, after Vanunu revealed details of Israel's secret nuclear weapons program to the London press. Demonstrations are planned at Israeli embassies throughout the world, demanding Vanunu's release after 13 years of imprisonment — all but a year-and-a-half of which were spent in solitary confinement.

Vanunu, a former technician in Israel's nuclear weapons facility at Dimona, was the son of orthodox Jewish parents who had moved to Israel when he was 9. His interest in religion and philosophy led him to take courses at a university in Beersheba, where he met Palestinian students, became committed to Palestinian independence, and began to question his nuclear weapons work. Before leaving his job in 1985, Vanunu secretly took photographs which revealed the extent of Israel's nuclear weapons program. He then left Israel and traveled through Russia, India, Southeast Asia and Australia.

In Sydney, Australia, he was befriended by David Smith, a young Anglican pastor

"I think that many people understand what I have done. They support it because they know the perils of nuclear arms."



Mordechai Vanunu

Imprisoned by nuclearism

by Marianne Arbogast

who shared Vanunu's enthusiasm for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He was soon drawn into the life of the church and decided to become a Christian.

Several weeks after his baptism Vanunu met with a reporter from *The London Sunday Times* and agreed to go public with his knowledge and photos of Israel's nuclear weapons program. In September of 1986, he was flown to London by the newspaper. There, he was trapped by Israeli agents, who used a woman posing as a tourist to lure him into a trip to Rome. In Rome he was kidnapped, drugged, imprisoned in a crate and returned via freighter to Israel. Charged with espionage and treason, he was placed in solitary confinement at Ashkelon Prison, a maximum security facility south of Tel Aviv.

Early letters from Vanunu to David Smith conveyed his faith and a belief that he soon would be released.

"This period in the prison I want to use

to develop my knowledge and my faith in Christianity, because now I know that my task in this world is to devote myself for working and helping other people," he wrote in February of 1987. "By God's will I'll be free, and I want to come to St. John's church and stand in the church on Sunday morning and pray and speak to all the people and to open their hearts for the love of God."

Even after his trial was postponed twice, he remained hopeful.

"I am spending 24 hours every day alone in a cell reading the Bible and other books," he wrote in June, 1987. "Here I am alone in my faith, but by reading the New Testament I feel encouraged, and it gives me strength."

"No one can say what will happen," Vanunu wrote in August. "But by God's will everything will be all right, and I'll be free soon. I think that many people understand what I have done. They support it

*Witness,
the quick and the dead*

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because they know the perils of nuclear arms."

But Gilbert Sinden, a priest from St. George's College in Jerusalem who had been visiting Vanunu, sensed that the winds were blowing in another direction.

"One thing concerns me," Sinden wrote to Smith that summer. "He really does seem to think that he will be acquitted at his trial, or at worst given a very light sentence. ... I feel it is important to build him up to be ready to receive a very harsh sentence. ... He is spiritually very strong, and I'm just praying for wisdom for us all to help him continue so."

Sinden's forebodings proved accurate. Vanunu was convicted and sentenced to 18 years in prison. He would remain in solitary confinement until March of 1998.

As time went on, Vanunu's letters began to reveal the toll that isolation was taking on him. His mental health suffered: He saw conspiracies everywhere, accused even former friends of cooperating with Israeli security services, and attributed to the security services extraordinary power and influence. At times his opposition to the Israeli state took on an anti-Jewish tone.

"Psychologists and psychiatrists who have seen the letters say they are a classic example of someone who has been isolated from the world for a long time," says Sam Day, coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Free Mordechai Vanunu, who edited a volume of Vanunu's letters to Smith titled *Faith Under Seige*.

"He went through a stretch of extreme paranoia," says Mary Miller of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, who has maintained a correspondence with Vanunu. "It is a major worry on the part of his supporters. But in the words we lightly use, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Although Vanunu's release into the inmate population has eased the conditions of his confinement, it has also brought new problems, Miller says. His contact with

Palestinian prisoners has been limited, and he has had difficulties relating to the Jewish prisoners, some of whom have harassed him and tried to compel him to observe shabbat. The prison administration has either ignored the problems or responded by returning Vanunu to solitary confinement.

Vanunu receives few visits, since visitors have been restricted to family members and most of his family has disowned him. An American couple, Nicholas and Mary Eoloff, have been allowed to visit Vanunu after adopting him under Minnesota law. Catholic peace activists, the

"Vanunu stands as the person inside the system who has risked more than any other person to blow the whistle, question the enterprise and ignore the secrecy mystique that normally protects nuclear weapons from examination."

— Sam Day

Eloffs began corresponding with Vanunu after reading about him in *The Progressive*.

"We decided if we could adopt him, they might be willing to release him to come to us," Mary Eoloff says. Although that has not happened, the Eloffs are now planning their fourth trip to Israel to visit Vanunu.

"He is very gentle, very intellectual, very aware of what's going on," Mary Eoloff says. "He is an amazing reader. He could really see that it was the destruction of creation that people were manufacturing. His determination to be firm in what he believes strengthens him in one sense, but in another it destroys him. If he would relent, I'm sure they would release him —

but he will never do that."

Edmond Browning, former Presiding Bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Church, accompanied the Eloffs on their first trip, but was not allowed to see Vanunu. Riah Abu El-Assal, the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, has also been denied access.

"I've gotten the Episcopal Peace Fellowship involved, first, because he is a nuclear resister," Mary Miller explains. "The second thing is his conversion. It is clear to me that his pacifism is not just a political but a Christian pacifism on the issue of nuclear weapons. And there are precious few Anglican prisoners of conscience in this world."

"Vanunu stands as the person inside the system who has risked more than any other person to blow the whistle, question the enterprise and ignore the secrecy mystique that normally protects nuclear weapons from examination," Sam Day says. "I regard him as an example of a person who risked all and has suffered as much as anybody in nuclear openness. It is also a very important human rights case — 11-plus years in solitary is a form of torture and psychological assault."

Thirty-six members of the U.S. House of Representatives have written to President Bill Clinton asking him to intercede with Israel for Vanunu's release on humanitarian grounds. Jimmy Carter has publicly supported his release, along with Amnesty International, the Federation of American Scientists and the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

"He would have been out years ago if he had promised to say nothing about the kidnapping in Italy or about Israeli nuclear weapons," Day says. "He became eligible for parole in 1998, but he has been turned down as a security risk because he won't promise to keep his mouth shut when he leaves. I believe we ought to really heed what he's saying and follow his example by questioning the nuclear enterprise in our own country." **TW**



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