

# 1987-07-01 The Significance of Nuremberg Actions: Concord Naval Weapons Station, Concord, California

July 1, 1987

**"We have assumed the name of peacemakers, but we have been, by and large, unwilling to pay any significant price. And because we want peace with half a heart and half a life and will, the war, of course, continues, because the waging of war, by its very nature, is total—but the waging of peace, by our own cowardice, is partial. So a whole will and a whole heart and a whole national life bent toward war prevail over the velleities of peace...Of course, let us have the peace, we cry, but at the same time let us have normalcy, let us lose nothing, let our lives stand intact, let us know neither prison nor ill repute nor disruption of ties."**

**-Daniel Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 1971**

The munitions move daily from their bunkers near Concord, CA, to their nearby piers in the Suisun Bay for loading on military or commercial ships for transport to Central American and Pacific theater military operations. On June 10, 1987, a campaign was launched, promising sustained, open-ended nonviolent resistance to the flow of these munitions of death—bombs, white phosphorus rockets, missiles, grenades, ammunition, etc., both conventional and nuclear.

This campaign is called Nuremberg Actions, invoking the Nuremberg Principles and Charter that obligates citizens who are aware of acts of government or officials of government in violation of international and Constitutional law to disobey commands furthering the illegal conduct and to refrain from participating any further in this illegal conduct.

The use and manner of use of our munitions in Central America is illegal under international and Constitutional law. In addition, the presence of nuclear weapons, some designed as first-strike weapons, all part of a planning process to wage aggressive war or to threaten to use first-strike weapons or to wage aggressive war, is illegal and in violation of international law in a Nuremberg sense. Every citizen has a responsibility to the enforcement of international law as well as our own Constitution.

The peace movement in the United States has sought a method to effectively reverse the nuclear and conventional arms race and to end our covert and overt destabilization operations throughout the world. The idea of sustained full-time peace efforts of the citizenry to directly resist and noncooperate with military policies is not a new one. In 1938, Gandhi called for the creation of a people's nonviolent army of volunteers "equal to every occasion where the police and the military are required." This "Peace Brigade" would be prepared to risk their lives as peacemakers. In 1961, A. J. Muste, a long-time advocate of nonviolent resistance in the United States, along with others from other countries created an experimental peace brigade to be a nonviolent striking force to "revolutionize the concept of revolution itself by infusing into the methods of resisting injustice the qualities which insure the preservation of human life and dignity." The Brigade's most important project was establishment of a training center for nonviolent action in Tanzania, Africa.

In 1958, the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) became a permanent group which undertook a series of creative resistance actions against nuclear weapons for a number of years. This was a committee initiated and sustained by citizens of the U.S. though they conducted interactions with other nations whom the U.S. government was covertly or overtly at war with.

Beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott on December 1, 1955, the civil rights movement in the United States began more than a decade of resistance and noncooperation of large numbers of people, many working part- or full-time, to change the racist laws and views that had prevailed in our country since the beginning.

In September 1981, the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common Air Base, England, began. This has become a model for peace camps throughout the world. It sought and continues to seek prevention of the deployment of U.S. Cruise missiles at the base and, when that fails, to remain at the base using nonviolent resistance in an effort to make use of the missiles impossible.

Also in 1981, Peace Brigades International was created in the U.S. "to undertake non-partisan missions which may include peacemaking initiatives, peacekeeping under a discipline of nonviolence, and humanitarian service." In fact, PBI now has a project in Guatemala.

In 1983, Witness for Peace began sending U.S. volunteers to the war zones of Nicaragua in areas made dangerous by the U.S. financed and directed proxy terrorists. They regularly live in remote villages and document the atrocities committed by the Contra terrorists.

At the conclusion of the Veterans Fast For Life in October 1986, the fasters suggested creation of Veterans Peace Action Teams to work with other unarmed citizens in Central America to stand between innocent residents and the U.S. terrorists, whether private or public terrorists. Several teams have already been in the war zones of Nicaragua observing and working.

The fasters also suggested development of Citizens Peace Action Teams, a reserve of people committed for specific periods of time in which they can be called upon to act in an organized peacekeeping presence at critical locations, including the critical placement of bodies to block the flow of munitions from the United States to Central America.

The extent and depth of militarization of our culture and its effects on other nations as well, and on the future of the world, is at a very critical state—a state of emergency. The most basic assumption of nonviolence, and especially civilian resistance, is that government functions only with the consent of the governed—that is, you and me. If our literal physical, financial, and other cooperation is withdrawn in an active, nonviolent manner then the diabolical policies and ethic can no longer continue.

Consequences to the resisters, of course, can be expected in this serious pursuit of justice and peace. Intimidation, harassment, jail, physical suffering, even premature death could result in some cases. However, in the long run it becomes impossible to enforce repression and diabolical policies against people who refuse to respond to it with violence.

A revolution of consciousness and action, a liberation theology, a liberation psychology, is in the making in the "Third World." The real question is whether we in the "First World" are prepared to join them in this revolution, this liberation, of pursuit of peace and justice—with our lives, our lifestyles, our action.

The number of people we kill, maim, or threaten everyday throughout the world with our various styles of intervention is probably beyond our capability for belief, certainly our capability to fully experience viscerally. We are the lead nation in promoting the nuclear arms race, holding all of us here and elsewhere in hostage.

Because we are a very privatized culture, our self-indulgence has become what some say to be our most effective method for social control—silence, acquiescence, complicity. We historically have maintained an almost eerie detachment from the happenings of our own culture as well as life elsewhere. We seem, in reality, to be disconnected from the essence of life—from other people, and ultimately from ourselves. We have chosen to be unnatural.

The Nuremberg Actions at Concord Naval Weapons Station are intended to be part of a national strategy to facilitate a major escalation of resistance and noncooperation with the insane, immoral, and illegal militarization of our culture and the daily death and maiming we impose upon people of other sovereign nations.

There appears to be a measurable minority of people in the United States who are quite aware of the lack of moral and legal authority in our government, in our national ethic. There is a rightness and ripeness for developing sustained, nonviolent resistance and noncooperation in our daily lives in the United States.

Concord, possessing both conventional and nuclear munitions, shipping arms to military operations in Central America, the Pacific theater, the Philippines and South Korea, and the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf, is the largest munitions storage and shipping depot on the West Coast. It has played a major role in supplying munitions for much of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and our military operations in Central America, as well as covert activities in countless

locations. There were daily protests at Concord during part of the Vietnam war and sporadically since by concerned citizens.

The vision for the Nuremberg Actions includes the daily upholding the law of nations and our own Constitution by placing ourselves—our bodies—in front of the trains and trucks carrying munitions of death from their bunkers to the piers for placement on ships, some destined for Central America where we can predict a specified number of human beings who will be killed and maimed once transported past our vulnerable bodies. This kind of action, similar in philosophy to the civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and '60s, requires the building of a community to provide the kind of support necessary for sustaining large scale resistance, resistance that stems from an affirmation of life—equally—for all people of the earth.

We must take "sides" pursuing fundamental principles of justice for all so that peace becomes realistic. Peace is our business. Violence is our business to stop—nonviolently. None of this is possible as long as we are unable or unwilling to pay the price or endure the risks of living and working for justice and peace.

Since the North American government serves as the principal engine of the arms race and interventionism, it seems logically flawed to expect the same government to participate in the repudiation of its basic role and identity as the guardian of our "national security" and the security of the "free" world.

There is but one place left to hope—within each of our hearts and minds. We the people must reclaim our legitimate human power, our dignity, our honor, our self-respect. It cannot happen unless we allow ourselves to become connected to our nature, and to the nature of the peoples of the world, to the nature of the earth. We must begin. Why not right here at the Concord, CA, Naval Weapons Station—our weapons station?

**"We are now in an age when men will have to choose deliberately to exchange the values, the concepts of 'security', and much else which characterizes contemporary society, and seek another way of life. If that is so, then the peace movement has to act on that assumption, and this means that the whole picture of our condition and the radical choice must be placed before people—not a diluted gospel, a program geared to what they are ready to 'buy not.'"**

**-A. J. Muste, 1962,  
as reported in Peace Agitator by Nat Hentoff, 1963**

**"We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest...we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society...A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth...it will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: 'This is not just.' ...Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.**

**"Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate-ourselves to the long**

**and bitter—but beautiful—struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history."**

**-Martin Luther King, April 4, 1967,  
speech given at the Riverside Church in New York City,  
"A Time to Break Silence," about the U.S. war in Vietnam.**

The opportunity is ours. The time is now. Peace is at stake. Our lives and the lives of our children hang in the decision we make, the real choices we make each day. Together, we shall overcome—with much work, courage, and vision.