

CATHOLIC PEACE ACTION

August 1988
No. 20

7 Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friend,

We hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the warm summer sun.

August 6-9

We just completed the peace vigil at the Ministry of Defence over this period. Not all the time was covered due to lack of help and some people were there alone. But what time was covered was worth it. The presence of people of 'peace through peace' at a place where people believe in 'peace through war' is worth every minute. It is a sign to the workers, the public and the Church that at least a few people are facing a different direction.

Pope Paul VI described the bombing of Hiroshima as a 'butchery of untold magnitude'. Even though this year August 6-9 encompassed a Sunday how many sermons dealt with peace or of that butchery which occurred 43 years ago and is being planned today with greater sophistication and consequence?

Two comments from MoD staff during our vigil reveal the range of opinion there. One said, 'What happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the best things we did.' Another said, 'Please realise that there are many of us inside who agree with.' *you*

During one slack period of the vigil MoD security painted a red line in front of the main entrance. Now we know where the MoD property line is. What they plan to do with this new border we don't know but in future actions 'crossing the line for peace' may be more than just a metaphor.

This bit of hyper-security nervousness was in sharp contrast to what happened after the Mass on the 9th (during which we disregarded the red line). Freda asked a security man if we could leave our flowers there underneath the MoD plaque. He said yes but did not think they would last long there due to the wind or passersby. So he offered, if we didn't mind, to take and place them in the MoD chapel! So this year flowers, next year who knows. Thanks to all who participated in the vigil and especially to Fr. David Standley who celebrated Mass and Nannette French founder of the Manna Centre, a place where homeless men get a meal and a warm welcome, for preaching the homily.

Dialogue help

If you were unable to make it to the vigil we need help with the twice-monthly leaflet we give to the workers at the MoD. There were over 600 people who participated in some way at the last Ash Wednesday action, and yet sometimes for the leafleting Ray has been there alone. Clive and Teresa have taken responsibility one day of the month and they could use some help also. Could you or your group spend just one hour a month (or just once with no regular commitment) to hand out leaflets or hold a sign? Or perhaps you can design a poster with the words: 'You do have a choice', or 'Prepare for peace not war'. To offer assistance write to us or ring Ray on 01) 627-1618.

1 October Christian Resistance Gathering

In advance of this meeting which will be held at Heythrop College (DEans Mews, Cavendish Square, London, 10:30-5) we enclose a draft paper regarding the Ash Wednesday witness. The paper was initially drafted by us and has been approved by representatives of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Pax Christi. Christian CND are still discussing it. The meeting will deal with the paper and other aspects of the Ash Wednesday witness as well as discussing the needs of and direction for Christian civil disobedients. Any Christian interested in this form of witness is most welcome and

encouraged to attend.

Ash Wednesday 8 February 1989

If you would like to participate in this event through civil disobedience and would like to be part of our affinity group please contact us.

New Video

Still to the subject of Ash Wednesday, we are happy to report that Fr. David's nephew, Trevor Hearing, recorded the last action. The 10 minute film begins at the MoD and includes the marking of the building and arrests. It effectively uses voice-overs, stills and music to get the message across. Along with the 1987 video this one gives the Christian peace group plenty of material for educating and building support for Christian civil disobedience/Divine obedience. Available from David Standley, 21 Heathfield Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 8NP. With your request to borrow it please include a contribution for postage.

Outreach

We invite you to two ongoing meetings and a weekend retreat.

The first meeting will occur on the first Friday of the Month at the Undercroft, St. George's Cathedral, Lambeth Road, SE1 at 6:30pm. The agenda will be decided by those who attend. The second meeting will be on 6 September, 8-10pm. We will discuss material from Daniel and Philip Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister. Dates of subsequent meetings will be decided by those who attend this one. Please notify us if you would like to attend. We are still looking for a cheap London venue for our retreat on 21-23 October. If you would like to attend let us know and we can send you the details.

Some of us participated in the very successful Summer School led by Daniel Berrigan, S.J., last month. One of the many things he said concerned the Old Testament prophets who were much more concerned with justice before God than legality before the State. Often one can not be both just and legal. A choice has to be made. To be just before God at times, requires to be found illegal and criminalised before the State (often in collusion with the 'religious' powers). Thomas Merton observed that the nuclear end of the world would be legal. Therefore, our State role is simply to be good citizens of this world to end the world.

We try, of course, to be good citizens first of the Kingdom and we thank you for supporting us in our 'lives of crime-justice'. We hope we have been of help to you in your work for justice and if we can do anything else to assist you (perhaps to prepare for civil disobedience/Divine obedience) please let us know.

May your summer days be full of peace and joy.

✕

May God bless you,

Catholic Peace Action
Ray Towey
Pat Gaffney
Sarah Hipperson
Carmel, Dan, Daniel, Sean and Clare Martin



Irving Averbach

Statement in Court

Carmel Martin was arrested on Ash Wednesday this year. She appeared in court on 4 March and was found guilty of 'marking the walls without the occupants permission' and ordered to pay £18.45 costs and compensation. During the trial she said the following:

In summing up her defense (before conviction): *Defend ourselves*

* 'I am not denying that I marked the building but I am denying that I'm guilty of a crime. My action was not only morally but legally justified and done to prevent a greater crime being committed. It would appear that such criteria is accepted by the Crown as evidenced by last week's shooting of three unarmed members of the IRA. The SAS, we are told, killed these three people in order to prevent a crime. This was done in our names, in yours and mine. *Gibraltar*

'I have three points in law that I would like to mention briefly. 1. There is a threat to life and property because of the work going on inside the MoD. I believe this threat is so great that my action on 17 February was more than reasonable in the circumstances. The nature of this threat to life and property is: a. as a nation we are committed to the first use of nuclear weapons; b. we are engaged in a tremendous increase in our nuclear arsenals through the Trident programme; c. Last week the cruise convoy was out on Salisbury plain equipped with nuclear missiles poised to vaporise innocent children, women and men. We do not know if this is an exercise or the real thing, the crew on the convoy do not know, you or I do not know. While this military expenditure grows the poor continue to starve.

'2. The threat is imminent. At any given moment we're only 20 minutes away from complete destruction. The only time to act is now. And I wish I did not have to be here.

'3. For these reasons I believe I acted as a servant of the community, to both the Church and society at large. This sort of action is required to give warning and to expose what is going on in this building not just with words and leaflets but with my life and liberty.

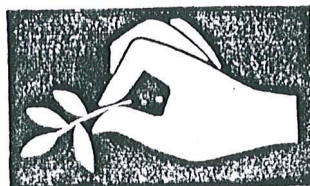
'I stand in court innocent of a crime while the greatest crime on earth is being prepared legally in that building. This court can raise a question about the legitimacy of the work going on in the Ministry of Defence by finding me not guilty.'

After being found guilty and before sentencing:

'My action was not an act of vandalism. It was an announcement of the Gospel and extension of the sacraments. I have done nothing wrong. In confronting the MoD I choose to obey the God of life rather than a summons to death. This action was a demand that resources be used in support of and to enhance life and not for its destruction. I believe we cannot have both our nuclear weapons and the children. We have made a decision here in court today and we have clearly not chosen in favour of the children.'

After being ordered to pay prosecution costs and compensation to the MoD:

'I came to the Ministry of Defence on Ash Wednesday as an act of faith and conscience and that same conscience tells me that I cannot pay a fine or contribute to costs or compensation. I believe that the mark should remain on that building for as long as we remain a nuclear weapons State.'



Letters Page

Dear Dan,

The discussion at the Pax Christi meeting last Saturday about Ash Wednesday reminded me that Carol Burns and I were going to write to you after last year's event. We did feel that it was important to evaluate what happened.

Although it is some months later Carol and I feel we would like to make some comments which we hope you will find helpful. Firstly over all I thought it was a powerful and moving experience, especially the service, and it certainly got a lot of publicity. The papers that said it was a military operation were wrong really because a lot of people broke ranks! This is where the trouble lay. I don't want to mention names but we were distressed that some people joined our group that morning to do action having never been to a meeting. Someone else did a unilateral action which had not been planned. Two people who failed to get arrested by 4:30 went back at 7pm, which I felt was putting their own need to be arrested above the spirit of the event. When I complained or disagreed I was told that it was up to individuals to use their own conscience and do what they felt best--which up to a point I agree with. To be fair, Carol did say you told her that participants in the action must make their own decisions on how and when. Which is fine but opens the action up to misinterpretation.

There were many people who did not plan to act but on the day were moved so much they really felt they wanted to mark the building; but they acted with restraint putting their own needs aside, knowing they had not planned for it. To me this is as it should be--in which case I feel they acted more in the spirit of nonviolence than those who did the action spontaneously and were subsequently charged.

So to constructive suggestions. Personally I think next year's event should be a service followed by a witness at the MoD without civil disobedience. It could be encircling the MoD and then praying, etc; or in small groups around the MoD hold a witness/service at the same time; or an all day fast and silent prayer.

I think it is inevitable that the more people there are the more difficult it is to manage--not impossible though!But I definitely (Carol also) feel a break from nonviolent direct action is needed. Maybe Dan Berrigan will be a help with working out where we go from now and how.

I do hope this makes sense, Dan. I for one shall definitely be supporting the event whatever form it takes. It is so important we don't let the issue die.

love and peace,

Margaret Scally
(June)

10 August

Dear Dan,

Many thanks for the CPA material. The Summer School was quite an experience. I have already written it up for publication in our Justice and Peace newsletter. I am trying to psyche myself up to doing something more. Everytime I go on demos I go through the usual arguments with myself--you must have gone through them many times. There are so many reasons why I should not get arrested, but none of them is very convincing. I have far fewer than you because all my children are grown up and even my mortgage is virtually paid up; my wife has her own income, etc., etc., etc., ad nauseam. I must try and join your retreat on 21 October--a week after the Upper Herford demo.

Ken Crotty

Proposals for Christian civil disobedience/Divine obedience

Ash Wednesday February 8, 1989

Introduction

During the Ash Wednesday witnesses of 1987 and 1988 at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, 45 and 66 people, respectively, were arrested, mostly for marking the building with ash and charcoal, and hundreds were involved in the liturgy and vigils. In Liverpool similar but smaller events took place with no arrests.

After evaluating these actions, especially those in Whitehall, the sponsoring organizations offer this reflection to the Christian peace movement. We do not attempt here to say all that could be said about the Ash Wednesday witness—the preparation, the day itself and the consequences. In this paper our task is to help improve the understanding amongst the sponsoring organizations and participants regarding certain key aspects of the witness and offer proposals to improve the 1989 witness. Of course, more could be said, and some participants would phrase things differently with differing emphasis, but we hope this paper becomes an agreed upon minimum, common denominator position for all who will participate in the 1989 Ash Wednesday witness.

Foundational points

Crucial to the proposals are the following three points.

1. By attempting to mark, and often actually marking, the MoD with blessed charcoal we focus on the illegality and immorality of nuclear war preparations. On Ash Wednesday we confront (i.e. to place in front of) in a clear manner, this crime with nonviolence and resistance and our lives.
2. We believe, however, that the means are as important as the ends; that is, the way in which we attempt to mark the building is as important as marking it. If the attempt is made in the spirit and manner of love and nonviolence then the right witness is made whether or not we reach the Building. But if the Building is marked by means which are not nonviolent, nor convey the spirit of nonviolence, liturgical dignity and prayerfulness, then the mark would not convey our message. Our actions would be, in a minor way, more of a reflection of what is going on within the Building than an authentic call to social repentance and conversion.
3. Through the Ash Wednesday witness we try to encourage the formation of Christian affinity groups whose ongoing work will be dialogue and resistance at places of nuclear war preparations.

Proposals

To improve the 1989 witness we offer below:

1. a code of behaviour as minimum guidelines to encourage and safeguard nonviolent means;
2. a more disciplined training and discussion procedure for people risking arrest;
3. a post-Ash Wednesday evaluation procedure; and

4. suggestions for improving the vigil and relating to supporters.

Code of behaviour for people risking arrest

In this section we specifically deal with the actions of people who are willing to risk arrest. For the ease of mind of the participants themselves and in order to convey to the public a strong, clear message, an understanding among the participants about how they will act during the witness is crucial. We hope all those risking arrest can agree to:

1. not run
2. not engage in any other scenario
3. not mark any other building or wall
4. not push, struggle with or pull away from the police
5. Own or take responsibility for your mark. That is, do not mark the building and leave but stay until arrested or escorted away or clearly ignored by the police.
6. not make any attempt to distract or deceive the police in order, for example, to reach the wall of the MoD.

The corresponding paragraphs below offer a brief explanation for each of the guidelines.

1. The reason for asking people not to run is in order:
 - a. to reduce the possibility of the police getting nervous, fearful, and violent;
 - b. to convey an atmosphere of calmness;
 - c. to convey the fact that our argument is not solely with the police person guarding the Building but with the powers and principalities which the Building represents. Our confrontation is with those powers and it does not matter if we are stopped by the police. What matters is the quality of the symbolic nonviolent confrontation between ourselves and those powers.
 - d. to avoid the action becoming an act of power over and against the police who are also victims of nuclear war preparations. Our power is of a different sort and so we should not feel the need to use prowess at the expense of the police, to show that we are better runners than they.

2. The reason for asking people not to engage in any other scenario, or act of civil disobedience:

The Ash Wednesday witness at the MoD highlights the link between personal and corporate sin and repentance. Our foreheads and our MoD are marked with the same ash and charcoal and receive the same call to conversion and repentance. To attempt to, or actually, break the law at the MoD on Ash Wednesday in any other way would not convey, in our opinion, the same message with as much clarity. For example to block the entrance, mark the police officers, barriers, or pavement would diminish the the symbolic confrontation with the work of the MoD and place the focus elsewhere (e.g. the workers, the police, the general public).

3. The reason we ask that no other building or wall is marked:

The ashes and charcoal are specially and specifically blessed for use at the MoD. To use them anywhere else (e.g. the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 10 Downing Street, the police cells, etc.) would be to expand the action and say something more about something else. Now, of course, in terms of the need for justice and peace much more needs to be said but unless and until we all agree to say it, the crime of nuclear war preparations should not be relegated to

being just one of many other crimes of the State. It is appropriate to speak in our leaflet of wider issues of justice and peace, which we do, but we should not shift the focus of our actions from, or confuse our message about, nuclear war preparations by marking other buildings or walls.

4. The reason we ask that there be no pushing, struggling with, or pulling away from the police:

We are at the MoD to confront the nuclear war preparations of this country. In so far as the police are protecting these preparations we can not avoid confronting them but we do so nonviolently, giving them the respect due to them as human beings. To physically struggle with them would be to detract from the symbolic confrontation with the State and reduce it to the personal. Our argument is not with the individual police officer but with what the police force is protecting. We attempt to dialogue with the police as we confront nuclear war preparations. To even hint at a tussle with police officers would be to shift the focus from the MoD. It would be to say that our marking the building is more important than treating the police as brothers and sisters in Christ, however misguided they may be. We should not in either our attitude or behaviour violate the physical integrity of another person. To do so diminishes the message of nonviolent respect for persons and liturgical dignity.

5. The reason for asking people to own their mark, etc....:

The public nature of the event is part of its significance. So a deliberate and open violation of the law most clearly offers society a choice of values through the individual resister. The individual resister is taking responsibility for disarmament and therefore, the responsible resister will take responsibility for his/her actions and not go out of her/his way to avoid the legal consequences. The significance of civil disobedience is the challenge to the State and the choice we offer society at large: to either cooperate with us or cooperate with the legal system which protects nuclear war preparations. The challenge is personified in the representatives of the State (e.g. security and legal personnel), so they must be made aware of the challenge and offered the choice to cooperate with us or arrest us. All this points to a philosophy of nonviolence which places conversion above coercion and the means we choose have a profound impact on this. Christian witness offers an alternative vision of what might be--we have to live out the future we hope for in our actions now.

6. The reason we ask people to not even attempt to distract or deceive the police:

The point is the confrontation not the building itself. And the points of confrontation are the barriers and the representatives of the State (ie, the police). To use distracting or deceptive techniques to reach the wall would undermine the efforts of honest communication and human solidarity we try to achieve throughout the year by the leafleting of the workers and the police. Deception destroys the trust essential for dialogue. In the shadow of the Bomb we are all poor, there are no enemies; and even if some 'activists' consider the police and workers enemies we are commanded by Jesus to love them.

TRAINING

These guidelines of behaviour are not new. They were either explicitly or implicitly stated for the last two Ash Wednesdays (and agreed to by all four

organisations). Unfortunately they were not all observed by all the people risking arrest. Therefore, to strengthen the commitment to these guidelines for Ash Wednesday 1989 the four organisations propose the following process of training.

1. All people willing to risk arrest on Ash Wednesday 1989 will attend a minimum of two meetings with their affinity group for training and discussion about the Day.
2. Representatives of all affinity groups taking part on Ash Wednesday will attend a briefing event about the day.
3. All people willing to risk arrest on Ash Wednesday 1989 will be asked to sign a 'Statement of Intent' as in the previous two years but with two additional items:
 - a. the name of the affinity group and/or group contact person;
 - b. a declaration stating that the signatory has read the proposed guidelines of behaviour and will abide by them for the duration of the Ash Wednesday witness.
4. Some mention of the guidelines or at least the spirit of them to be made and prayed about during the Ash Wednesday liturgy.
5. To convey the seriousness of these guidelines and the need for training we very much discourage people from risking arrest who have not complied with points one, two and three above.

EVALUATION

1. All affinity groups taking part in the Ash Wednesday witness will meet at least once after the event to reflect on the experience and evaluate the witness. One aspect of the evaluation would need to be on the subject of the above mentioned guidelines;
- or 2. An evaluation process dependent on the affinity group contact person raising with each member of the group points for evaluation;
- and 3. A report back procedure to the larger organisation the affinity group relates to, i.e. CCID, FoR, Pax Christi, CPA.

THE VIGIL

We need to organise the vigil in such a way that shouting and clapping is discouraged.

Explanation: We are not seeking a minor 'victory' over the police like a scored goal so clapping does not convey our message. For the day our dialogue is in our agreed statement. To express other messages undermines our solidarity and, especially if they are inappropriate, compromises the considerable risks we are taking with our reputations, lives, futures. To shout denies our desire to dialogue in the spirit of nonviolence and mutual respect. We need stewards so that pavements are not blocked and pedestrians are not forced to walk on the road.

Catholic Peace Action
Christian CND
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Pax Christi

July 1988 (Draft II)

Sister Rosemary Lynch
a little white haired Franciscan
took care to be simple
sharing her experience
of the Nevada desert.

She reflected that St. Francis
had answered the charge
of being a disgrace to the Church
--"he was so raggedy, you know"--
by saying that if they had possessions
they would have to have swords to defend them;
'and I am a man of peace.'

The mark of the beast
is probably the face
of the deified Roman Emperor
and his name on a coin
-- hard currency, let's say,
of the time
of St. John the Divine.

There are farmers today in Norfolk
who no longer apparently believe
in the lives of their children
but pursue the hard currency
the fast money
by poisoning the environment
and turning good land into dust
(only of course incidentally;
only if it pays)
getting rid of trees and hedgerows
and birds other than pheasants
in order that their children
may have enough money to eat.
It tastes not unlike stones.

Magic!
They are ten times kinder
to farm workers
because now there is only
one farm worker
where there used to be ten.

More magic:
they drive two or three cars
and have the most advanced
communications equipment
there ever has been
or ever will be!
You can hear distortions
about what has happened
anywhere in the world
immediately it happens.
You can actually see it
not happening!
Better still, it is possible now
to suppress information
before it exists!

This is the total abolition
of other people
and other people's suffering.
After-dinner coffee
may be no-dinner coffee
where the coffee comes from.
Peanuts with a pint
may be peanuts without a cup
of drinkable water.
There may even be death squads
doing the bidding
or anticipating the wishes
of the Man from Del Monte.

But by the magic
of High-Tech Communications Networks
all sorrow is made
to seem to disappear.

High Tech.
and the pursuit of money
(clever money,
fast money)
meet and embrace
whorishly
on the plane of pride.
But what is the greatest achievement
of High Tech.
and hard currency?
Is not its monument
its statue
the bomb?

Magically it talks
with an electronic
subhuman voice:
I am armed
and ready for firing...

The beast from the land
and the beast from the sea
(monsters and demons
of pride and selfishness;
nightmares of political
and economic power)
end up
in the burning lake.

As for those
whom they deceive
-- their eyes
may yet be opened;
and the invisible mark
of the beast
which they have consented to wear
may yet be removed.

Even now
after our many refusals
we are invited
to be washed in the blood
-- that is, the life --
of the martyrs,
and in the blood -- the life --
and the loving sacrifice
of the Lamb.

Oliver Bernard

More Letters

26 June

Dear Carmel and Dan,

Many thanks for the loan of videos and also for your latest newsletter.

Sadly the date of your retreat weekend coincides with a proposed Christian Witness and Civil Disobedience event which Patricia Pulham and I are arranging on Sat 22 October at Springfields, Preston. Other wise I would very much wish to join you for that w/e.

I enclose a few items which may interest you. It's a small beginning, but God willing the interest and support will continue and we can have a regular Christian presence at Springfields. Pray for us?

with much love,

Mo

(Maureen Kelly, 10 Yewlands Drive, Garstang, Preston, PR3 1JP, Lancs.)

(Dear Maureen,

While we will be talking about it you will be doing it! Great. Your event will give our retreat a special focus. Our prayers are with you all.

in peace and solidarity,

Dan)

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday this year saw a large service of repentance in St. George's Cathedral, followed by a walk to the M.O."D". buildings in Whitehall, where people tried to mark the building with charcoal. Police presence was high, and some people felt it probably wasn't the best atmosphere to carry out such an action - at times frantic rushes to mark the walls looked a bit like a rugby match, which is the sort of thing the Press picked up on.

A group I was legal observing for decided to go in the evening. So, we got a taxi "Main entrance of the Ministry of Defence please" and had five minutes of uninterrupted essay writing all over the front porch. Perhaps, groups spreading their writing over the whole of Lent would mean more time, more gracefulness, and lots more big charcoal messages covering that place of destruction.

Stephen

(Reprinted from 'A Pinch of Salt', a Christian anarchist journal. Stephen is the editor. For a sample copy write to him c/o 24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18)

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

** Important*

It has been two years since we have asked our subscribers if they would like to continue receiving this Newsletter. Our mailing list continues to grow through various contacts and since we do not require a subscription fee it is difficult to assess if those who receive it still wish to do so. If you have been in touch with us since June 1986 (and we remember!) there will be a line drawn through the reply slip below. However, if your slip is unmarked we ask you to return it if you wish to continue receiving our Newsletter.

Please return the slip to: CPA, 7 Putney Bridge Road, London SW18 1HX

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