

Peace Caucus

Palestine: seeking truth amid turmoil

by Ellen Barfield

Editor's Note: Ellen Barfield traveled to Israel and Palestine during the last two weeks of December 1992 with a 16-member women's peace delegation sponsored by the Middle East Children's Alliance, a Berkeley, California organization which raises funds to help provide food, education, and health care for children in occupied Palestine. With the newly-signed agreement between the Israeli government and Palestine Liberation Organization, the importance of these efforts to support a peaceful transition to self-determination assume a new relevance. This article is excerpted from Ellen's article in the New Peace Times, February, 1993.

The special focus of our trip was to meet with and talk to both Palestinian and Israeli Jewish women peace activists and feminists. We visited with women from more than a dozen organizations, and we also heard from three women ministers at the Knesset. The common thread of all their statements was that the political troubles are both a help and a hindrance for women's empowerment. Men who feel politically pressured are often glad to have help, so many women have been able to enter the public arena as activists, or have begun to do traditional men's work out of the necessity created by men's absence or distraction. However, political tension and the militarized nature of the society lead to increased domestic and societal violence against women; fundamentalist religious pressure on both sides increases oppression of women; and women's concerns are considered secondary when the very existence of the race is, or feels, threatened.

True feminism is quite new to both Israel and Palestine, and openly feminist organizations are few. Women's shelters are rare in Israel and unknown in the Occupied Territories, where security would be an impossibility. Given the difficulties feminist groups face, that the work happens at all is amazing. At the Haifa Women's Center, which includes a Rape Crisis Center and a

hot line for battered women, Nabila Espanoly, an Israeli Palestinian, and Hanna Saffron, an Israeli Jew, agreed that, as hard as it is, their feminist work is what keeps them sane; because they feel they can make some impact there whereas peace work has no evident impact now: they feel they have no effect on the Israeli government.

We met many incredibly strong women, but we were moved most by Lawahez, an Israeli Palestinian who was seven years old when her family's house was bombed and her father imprisoned. At 12 she was arrested and held for a week for joining a march for Palestine. At 15 she was arrested for belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, tortured, and sentenced to 5 years. She said, "I was born in prison. They tried to break me, but I came out stronger." At first she wanted to kill Jews, but other prisoners convinced her that "we can live together."

People have a dismaying propensity to hate and abuse each other when they let their fears overwhelm their humanity. Both Israeli and Palestinian fears are real. There are people on both sides who would like to see every one of the other side dead. Those people are a minute minority, however. If someone as horribly treated as Lawahez can learn in the midst of her torture that "we can live together", then anyone can learn it.

Yolanda Huet-Vaughn Continues to Face the Loss of Medical License for Refusing to Participate in Operation Desert Storm

Yolanda Huet-Vaughn was convicted at court martial and continues to face the loss of her medical license because of her refusal to participate in Operation Desert Storm. It took courage for Yolanda to stand up to the war hysteria whipped up by George Bush, the Pentagon, and the media. It took even more courage for her to become the only military refuser to the Gulf War to base her defense unambiguously on the rule of law and to continue to stick to that defense despite continuing harassment.

Yolanda's lawyers have argued before the Army's Court of Military Review the appeal of her desertion conviction; the appeal was based on the denial of her right to present evidence of her motivation to the jury. A ruling is expected soon; if her conviction is upheld she will appeal to the military's highest court.

In addition, despite hundreds of letters and a broad-based campaign by physicians and other medical workers, the Kansas Board of Healing Arts voted in April to go ahead with proceedings that could strip Yolanda of her medical license.

Furthermore, the grounds for license revocation have been separated from her court-martial conviction, so she is at risk even if her conviction is reversed on appeal. A hearing is scheduled for September at which time Yolanda's defense can present evidence that her actions in refusing military duty did not bring "dishonor" on the Kansas medical profession. This hearing will provide the opportunity to present, for the first time before a military or civilian panel, evidence which will demonstrate that Yolanda's resistance was both lawful and morally appropriate.

Your support is essential to underwrite the costs of mounting a defense to the Kansas Board. Please write a check, payable to "Alternatives to Militarism, Inc.". Your check is tax deductible if you write "YHV Defense" on it. Mail your check to: Citizen Soldier, Suite 808, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10160-0265. It is important for Yolanda personally, and for all of us, to demonstrate that a 1950's-style vendetta against unpopular political acts will not be tolerated.

OPENNESS at the Department of Energy

by Larry Egbert

The Pantex Plant, located 17 miles northeast of Amarillo in the "panhandle" area of north Texas, is the only final assembly and disassembly facility for U.S. nuclear weapons. A brochure publicly distributed by Pantex states: "The mission of this government-owned, contractor-operated facility is fourfold: assembly of nuclear weapons, disassembly of nuclear weapons, fabrication of chemical high explosive components for nuclear weapons, and maintenance and evaluation of nuclear weapons. In all operations, the top priorities are the safety and health of plant personnel, the safety and health of the public, and the protection of the environment."

On February 24, 1993 a visit to Pantex was sponsored by the Red River Peace Network, formed in 1982 to protest the nuclear weapons production at Pantex, and Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). The sponsors of the Network include Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Action (formerly SANE/Freeze), PSR, Veterans for Peace and War Resisters League. The purpose of our visit was to ascertain what has been

done or will be done to monitor health conditions, safety and the environment at Pantex.

The only study publicly available on the health status of workers at Pantex is an article published by Acquavella and colleagues in 1985. The investigators assembled the records for all workers employed at Pantex between 1951 and 1978 and determined cause specific mortality among all who could be traced. The study, which "found no evidence that mortality from any cause was increased as a result of employment at Pantex," has been criticized by knowledgeable epidemiologists because of its failure to use an appropriate population standard for comparison (to avoid the "healthy worker" fallacy) and because of other flaws. We asked officials at Pantex if there had been any published research since the study by Acquavella. We were told that there is no current internal effort to update the Acquavella study and none is planned.

We stated our view that the fundamental issue in evaluating health and safety is openness. Crucial
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DOE Openness

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 for our evaluation was the question, "Will dismantling bombs and storing bomb components be primary at Pantex, or will environmental safety and health take some precedence?" While we heard numerous statements about attempts to have less secrecy, the officials refused to share any data with us. Inconsistency appeared when officials told us that workers were now being told they were working with depleted uranium, the implication being clear that they had not always in the past been told when they were working with hazardous materials. The most fascinating display of resistance to openness was the response to questions about water contamination from various chemicals. The reply in detail, with several officials contributing, was to describe the level of natural uranium in soil and water, while not

providing data on radioactive or toxic releases.

At the present time we do not know of any sources for research funding outside of the DOE for use by independent researchers interested in studying health conditions at Pantex. We know of no research concerning the health status of relatives of employees. We will continue to develop contacts and attempt to report such information as we locate it. This past August 6-9 the Red River Peace Network marked its tenth anniversary by celebrating "OPENNESS of the DOE and Pantex." We will evaluate the degree of OPENNESS which will be considered professionally satisfactory for us as citizens to get an idea of environment, safety and health conditions in Pantex. Opportunities for citizen participation abound. For more information please contact Larry Egbert, PSR Dallas, c/o Department of Anesthesiology, Parkland Memorial Hospital, Dallas Texas 75235. Tel: (214) 590-8536.

APHA Resolutions of Interest

Several resolutions addressing issues of great concern to Peace Caucus members are before APHA's governing council this year. These resolutions are titled:

1. *Free Exchange of Medical Supplies, Information, and Personnel with Cuba*
2. *A Ban on Antipersonnel Landmines*
3. *Illegality of Nuclear Weapons*

You can support the passage of these resolutions by lobbying members of the governing council to vote in favor of them, and by voicing your support at the hearings about these resolutions. The time and location of the hearings can be found in the final APHA program; these resolutions are in "Group D".

Full Member \$10.00

Contributing Member \$25.00

Sustaining Member \$50.00

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Yes, I want to join the Peace Caucus!

Enclosed is my check, made payable to "APHA Peace Caucus," for \$_____.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ (This is an Address Change: YES NO)

____ New Member APHA Member? ____ Yes APHA Membership Number: _____

____ Renewal ____ No Primary APHA Section: _____

Return to: APHA Peace Caucus, 2644 Sherwood Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84108.

A Call for noncooperation with the Arms Industry

We all know there is a world market for weapons. Weapons are big business in the United States. They are sold, obviously, to the Armed Forces as well as to various dictators around the world. Weapons are made by private companies and sold for profit. Buyers meet sellers at what is best known as a bazaar, an arms bazaar. Such a bazaar occurs every September when the U.S. Air Force sponsors what has been referred to as an "open market for death." The peddlers hawk their wares and senior Air Force officers shop around to plan their purchases. They celebrate this process together. Last year, they had a \$100 a plate dinner with Bob Hope as the entertainment.

Weapons bazaars take place in the Sheraton Washington Hotel at Connecticut Avenue and Woodley Road in Washington, D.C. You were there just last year if you attended the APHA Annual Meeting. During the meeting, the APHA Peace Caucus met and decided to join groups opposing weapons bazaars. APHA has a long history of opposition to militarism. All phases of militarism are detrimental to public health and should be opposed.

The Peace Caucus contacted other organizations who have made their presence felt during the Sheraton Washington arms bazaars. The Disarm Coalition includes People's Fast for Peace, Justice

in the Americas, Little Friends for Peace, and others. They met the merrymakers at the bazaar with pickets, posters, leaflets and public statements. Police were called. Arrests were made. Dave Dellinger, aged 77 years, was one of those arrested. Several entered the dining hall, where Art Laffin made his way to the podium where he reminded the diners what weapons really do. He was promptly carted out and arrested. Someone threw on hundred \$1 bills soaked in blood and oil from an upper balcony. That brought more arrests. Chanting "STOP THE KILLING" brought more.

An interesting thing happened later. The Hotel did not press charges. All protesters were released. The hotel likely prefers to avoid bad publicity which might follow from court proceedings. Hotels are vulnerable to unfavorable public relations. The Peace Caucus has submitted a resolution suggesting that APHA boycott the Sheraton hotel chain until they refuse to host the arms bazaar. Remember, we will be meeting in Washington, D.C. and using the same hotel at the 1994 Annual Meeting.

You can reach the Disarm Bazaar Coalition c/o Olive Branch Catholic Worker, 1006 M Street N.W., Washington, DC, 20001, Tel. (202)682-9056.

**APHA Peace Caucus
2644 Sherwood Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84108**

1993 PEACE CAUCUS PROGRAM

Monday, October 25

- 2:00 - 3:30 PM **The Cold War Legacy: Radioactive Health Risks in Russia and America**
Presider: David Rush, MD
- 4:00 - 5:30 PM **Gun Violence: A Call for Physician Activism**
Presider: Robert C. Wesley, Jr, MD
4:00 Guns and Kids — Reed V. Tuckson, MD
4:20 Gun Violence: Lessons from the Struggle for Global Arms Control — Victor W. Sidel, MD
4:40 Gun Violence: Where Do We Go From Here? — Robert C. Wesley, Jr, MD
5:00 Questions and Discussion
- 6:30 - 8:00 PM **JOINT SOCIAL HOUR** sponsored by Rainbow Coalition Health Commission & APHA Caucuses
- 7:00 - 8:30 PM **Hidden Casualties: Environmental and Political Consequences of the Gulf War**
Presider: Saul Bloom
7:00 The U.S. Government's Prior Environmental Impact Assessments, and Suppression of Evidence
Linking the Oil Fires with Monsoons and Floods in Asia — Saul Bloom
7:20 Censorship of Mortality Estimates, Bomb Tonnage and Other Matters — Philippa Winkler
7:40 The Direct Consequences for the Health of Iraqi Civilians: An Update
— Daniel Robicbeau and Ross Mirkarimi
8:00 Questions and Discussion

Tuesday, October 26

- 2:00 - 3:30 PM **National Health Insurance and the Peace Dividend**
Presider: Victor W. Sidel, MD
2:00 Victor W. Sidel, MD
2:20 Thomas Bodenheimer, MD
2:40 Robert Gould, MD
3:00 Questions and Discussion
- 4:00 - 5:30 PM **Africa: Transcending the Heritage of Violence and Social Disorder**
Presider: Dennis M. Davidson, MD, MDiv
4:00 Albert Schweitzer in Africa: The Legend and the Legacy — Dennis M. Davidson, MD, MDiv
4:25 Uganda's Challenge — Janet Gottschalk, RN, DrPH
4:50 A Strategy Toward Buffering Planned Social Disorganization in South Africa
— John Hatch, PhD; Jack Geiger, MD
5:15 Questions and Discussion

Wednesday, October 27

- 2:00 - 3:30 PM **Weapons and Waste: The Legacy of U.S. Nuclearism**
Presider: Robert Gould, MD
2:00 The Department of Energy: Perceptions and Reality — Jacqueline Cabasso
2:20 The San Francisco Bay Area's Backyard: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
— Marylia Kelley
2:40 Low Level Radioactive Waste: The Ward Valley Issue — Robert Gould, MD
3:00 Questions and Discussion
- 4:00 - 5:30 PM **Women, Health and War**
Presider: Ann G. Hirschman, FNP
4:00 A Model to Assess Women's Health Status in Iraq and Kuwait
— Penny A. Hatcher, MSN, MPH; Fouzieyha Towghi, BA
4:30 Cuban Health Care: Successes and Struggles — Jody Steinauer, BA
5:00 The Vietnam War and Women's Health — Ann G. Hirschman, FNP

5:45 - 7:00 PM **PEACE CAUCUS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING - Everyone Welcome!**