

Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

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Harvesting the Seeds of Peace:

JOURNAL ENTRIES OF MARY EVELYN JEGEN

The following words from GPS Board member, Mary Evelyn Jegen, are reflections on her two recent adventures spreading the news of Global Peace Services.

In April I gave both written and oral testimony on conscientious objection before representatives of Member States of the United Nations. The occasion was the 54th annual session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva. I was representing Pax Christi International, a nongovernmental organization that has consultative status with the United Nations. This was another opportunity to advance the vision of Global Peace Services. (Pax Christi, a supporter of GPS from the beginning, organized a GPS speaking tour for me in Belgium, Holland and Germany in 1996.)

The statement I presented on the Right to Refuse to Kill accented reasons why an increasing number of young people object to military service. I said:

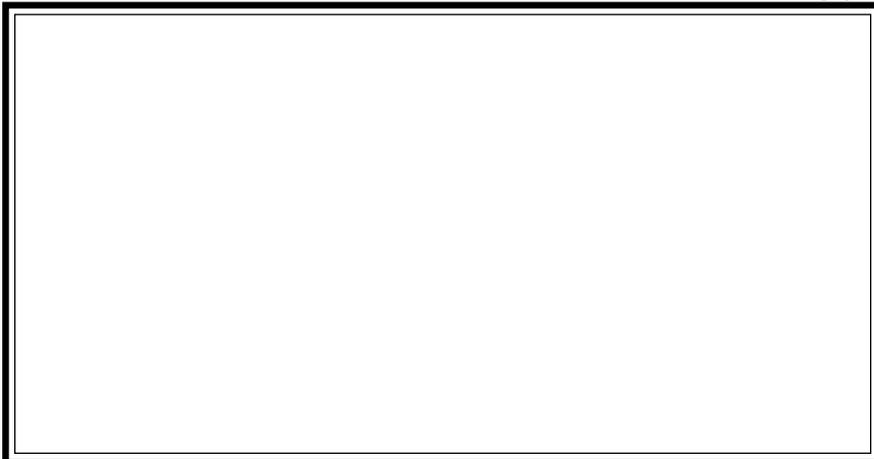
It is the young who are ahead of their elders in viewing the urgent need to resolve human conflict by means other than violence and to protect and support those who reject violence.... In cases where countries choose a volunteer army, young people enter the ranks for such advantages as guaranteed employment, education and training. If funds for these advantages were available from other sources, many young people would forego the military uniform....

By rejecting the option of violence, the Right to Refuse to Kill opens up the question of how human beings can act when violence is the accepted option.... Ridding people and societies of the propensity for war-making relies in the end on a transformation of consciousness. The assertion of the human right to refuse to kill will contribute to this transformation of consciousness.

Global Peace Services promotes conscientious affirmation, an alternative to military service, a way to contribute to comprehensive security through constructive services in situations that are ripe for outbreaks of violence, or are struggling to recover from war or other kinds of violence.

While I was in Geneva I was invited to a conference on civilian

(cont'd on page 4)



GOOD NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS...

The Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek, Croatia, serves as one model of GPS, incorporating formal and nonformal education and sustained service projects in post conflict peacebuilding.

Recently we had a long visit by phone with Dr. Katarina Kruhonja, M.D., Chair of the Center's board (1998 recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, see story on page 2). She was in New York at the invitation of the United Nations, for a Lessons Learned meeting about UN Peacekeeping operations in Croatia. Besides her own presentation, Katarina also translated for a Serbian woman who had been invited, this itself a witness to reconciliation.

Katarina told of work with displaced persons, preparing them for return, and also of efforts to promote and support integrated communities of Croats and Serbs in the border areas near Osijek, and in Osijek itself. There are regular workshops for teachers and for other adults, teaching how to build trust in places that have suffered from forced movements of both Croats and Serbs during the war. Osijek is ideally located for this work because it is in the center of an area of mixed population.

For the third time since its founding in 1992, the Center for Peace organized a week-long public event, Days of Peace Culture. Many other groups, some of them offshoots of the Center, collaborated. The main idea of the Days of Peace Culture is to gather citizens in Osijek and environs every two years around the promotion of the idea of peace, tolerance, and nonviolent action for human rights and democracy. There are workshops, conferences, exhibits, and interfaith prayer services. ■

(cont'd from page 1) volunteer service to be held in Rio de Janeiro in May. Co-sponsored by the program to Overcome Violence of the World Council of Churches, this conference brought together representatives of civilian service programs for an exchange of experiences and ideas.

The conference was organized by Viva Rio, a nongovernmental organization founded in 1993 as a response to the killing of street children on the steps of a church in downtown Rio and the massacre of 22 people in a shanty-town (favela). Since then, Viva Rio has been organizing schools, training in conflict mediation, and community development programs.

Building on this track record, Viva Rio presented to the government a proposal for a carefully planned alternative to military service for 18-year olds. The Brazilian government had earmarked funds from the defense budget for this purpose, recognizing that the modern army could not absorb a growing number of young adults who had not completed an elementary education.

Viva Rio's program, now in its first year, is educating 3,120 students known as Agents of the Future. To qualify, young men and women must be 18 and have attained a third grade reading level. The program is demanding, but promises an elementary school certificate after nine months of rigorous schooling in "stations" established in 102 sites. The curriculum includes basic computer skills, which is a great attraction. On weekends the Agents of the Future do community service in their local communities. They first assess the needs and establish priorities.

We visited two sites while classes were in session. In both places the young people had defined environmental problems as top priorities. In one site they had organized themselves to collect garbage and had taken responsibility for a green area surrounding their favela. In another station they were already in consultation with the local authorities about a clean water supply. They had also painted a local clinic.

Those of us at the conference from Brazil, South Africa, Mozambique, Germany, England and the United States had been invited because we had some personal experience with an idea whose time has come, namely, that education for building the common good needs to include service experience as well as classroom learning. Viva Rio's program showed that it also requires social analysis and planning by students themselves.

Although the Brazilian program we visited was just beginning, it clearly had much to teach us. I came away convinced more than ever that an arena for GPS, perhaps the most important arena, is among the urban poor worldwide. Viva Rio's Agents of the Future, proudly wearing their "Agente do Futuro" t-shirts sporting a very energetic peace dove, are indeed a Brazilian peace service pioneering for all of us. ■

The newsletter of Global Peace Services USA is published quarterly. GPS-USA is incorporated in the District of Columbia and is tax-exempt. Contributions and comments are always welcome. Current Board members are: John Eriksson, Mary Evelyn Jegen, Bill Price, Mindy Reiser and Tricia Sullivan

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SAVE THE DATE!
JOIN US IN WASHINGTON DC
MARCH 27, 1999
"BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PEACE SERVICES"

Military Dialogue Working Group

Board member Mary Evelyn Jegen recently spent a week at the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. She was one of a group of civilians invited to join some 250 senior military officers who were completing a ten-month course. Together they attended lectures and held discussions on issues of domestic and foreign policy.

Mary Evelyn experienced first hand the potential as well as the difficulties of constructive dialogue on non-military and military approaches to security, and on ethical questions about contemporary methods of warfare. She introduced Global Peace Services and shared our brochure and newsletter.

There was also the opportunity for a private breakfast meeting with Professor Mark Walsh (Col. U.S. Army, ret.) who is on the staff of the U.S. Army Peacekeeping Institute located at Carlisle Barracks.

The Military Dialogue Working Group of GPS aims to develop skills of careful listening and of identifying areas of common concern as well as fundamental differences. Underlying this dialogue are fundamental questions about war-making and its preparation: Are there not more effective ways to serve the security needs of people? Can the military-industrial complex adapt to new ways of providing security? ■

CONGRATULATIONS

KATARINA KRUHONJA!

Katarina Kruhonja, Chair of the Board of the Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek, Croatia, was the recipient of an "alternative Nobel Prize" (also known as the "Right Livelihood Award"), awarded in Stockholm in October. Katarina shared the \$58,000 prize with another Croatian (Vesna Terselic, founder of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign). What a great affirmation -- Congratulations, Katarina! See an update of the Center's work on page 1.

Religious Dialogue Working Group

The goal of the Religious Dialogue Working Group is to foster among religious bodies of Christians, Jews, Muslims and other faiths, an understanding of the GPS-USA approach as a practical way to realize peace through violence-free action.

Bob Pettigrew, chair of the Religious Dialogue Working Group, continues to organize the group through correspondence, including e-mail where possible. In a recent letter to members he reported on a meeting with Addai Sebo of Ghana. The meeting was arranged by the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C.

Addai Sebo has worked with the London-based International Alert (IA) since the early nineties. He was a special envoy for IA to Sierra Leone. Using Gandhian-inspired methods of nonviolence, Addai helped to bring together aggrieved citizens controlling northern Sierra Leone and the junta controlling the capital city.

Addai described his religious background as "traditional African ancestral religion." He explained that though there are many regional differences, there is a basic concept common to all, akin to the Western idea of God. Africans, however, put a stronger emphasis on "feel," holding that the deity is centered in the "deeps" of all persons and also in all creatures: animals, plants, and also inanimate creatures, e.g. rocks. Thus, all creation is revered as embracing the "seed of God."

Europeans who colonized Africa were by and large insensitive to and ignorant of traditional African religions. These religions continue to nurture the lives and values of many Africans today. They have a role to play in developing peace services in Africa. The Religious Dialogue Working Group will continue to watch for opportunities to listen to African followers of traditional African religions, and to be receptive to distinctive contributions of these religions. ■



Education and Training Working Group

The goal of the Education and Training Working Group is to enable large and diverse groups of professionally trained peacemakers to respond to conflict situations.

Washington area members of the GPS-USA Education Working Group met in May and again in August. At the August meeting, the following topics were discussed:

1. The revised "Education Proposal" with its continuing focus on an undergraduate major or minor program with academic, practicum and placement components.
2. Broadening the approach (as proposed by Bob Merikangas) to include: (i) Professional schools; and (ii) Adult or continuing education.

Some very practical questions were raised by group members, including:

-- How is the information clearing house proposal going to be implemented? This resource must be current and proactive; more than "just a list." One thought was that the program under development at Xavier University, once established, could become a prototype placement service, particularly in view of the local opportunities for such service in the vicinity of this Cincinnati campus.

-- The likelihood that few organizations beyond Americorps and the Peace Corps would have the resources, without additional financial support, to pay a stipend to a practicum student for six to nine weeks.

The discussion of the professions ranged from law, to education, to engineering, to business administration, to seminarians (professional training for leadership in religious bodies). The challenge would be to introduce peace, active nonviolence, and related value dimensions into training for the professions. It was decided that John Eriksson would revise the Education proposal to incorporate these new dimensions, including professional and adult education. ■

Link-Creating Working Group

The goal of the Link-Creating Working Group is to foster communication and exchange between GPS-USA and peace service initiatives at the local level both in the United States and in countries across the world.

The 17th International Peace Research Association General Conference held in Durban, South Africa from June 23rd-26th, provided the Link-Creating Working Group with a rich opportunity to exchange ideas and visions for the future with kindred groups from across the world. GPS-USA Board member, Mindy Reiser, organized and facilitated a workshop at the Durban Conference focusing on "Peace Initiatives in Burundi." With the support of the United Nations University and the Belgian Development Cooperation Administration, David Niyonzima and Modeste Karerwa Mo-Mamo were able to travel from Burundi to Durban to serve as the workshop speakers and share their peace-building experiences.

In the workshop, GPS Partner, David Niyonzima—a Quaker pastor and General Secretary of Burundi Evangelical Friends Church—and Modeste Karerwa Mo-Mamo—Director of the Magarama Nursery and Primary School ("The Peace Primary School") in the province of Gitega, Burundi—described their efforts to bring together people from the Hutu and Tutsi communities in a variety of contexts. David spoke of his activities in peace building in Burundi through the development of the Gitega House of Peace, the organization of the Kibimba Peace Committee, translating important works on peace building into Kirundi (a major Burundian language), development of a peace outreach campaign utilizing bumper stickers, leaflets, cards, calendars and posters, and the launching of the Peace Primary School.

Modeste described the evolution of the Peace Primary School which presently has three nursery school/kindergarten classes and classes for the six years of primary school. In the school, Hutu and Tutsi children explore the history and traditions of Burundi and to-

gether with their parents and teachers share visions of a peaceful future for their country. Modeste brought with her maps and artwork produced by the Burundian students and teachers, which embody their hopes and dreams for the creation of a harmonious community.

Workshop participants from Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States explored with David and Modeste the applicability of their initiatives to other settings and cultural contexts. Over the next months, the Link-Creating Working Group looks to build upon the dialogue begun in Durban with these individuals and organizations, peace researchers and peace activists, sharing infor-

mation and exploring collaborative efforts.

The IPRA Conference also provided GPS the opportunity to talk with Dr. David Adams of the Culture of Peace Program at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). GPS will be exploring opportunities to work with UNESCO in the development of the International Year for the Culture of Peace—the year 2000—in which a variety of peace building activities will be undertaken linking individuals and organizations throughout the world.

We invite your suggestions and assistance as we develop these and other link-creating activities in the coming year. ■

WHAT CAN YOU DO? *Are you interested in becoming more involved with Global Peace Services USA? There are many ways to multiply our efforts!*

Consider:

- Distributing our brochure or newsletters at your place of worship*
- Making a financial contribution to GPS-USA*
- Becoming a Partner on one of the Working Groups*
- Praying for worldwide openness to the ideas and actions of GPS*
- Helping establish a staffed national office*
- Sending us names and addresses of possible new members*
- Inviting your organization to become a GPS Associate member*
- Sending us your ideas for the growth of GPS-USA*

Xavier University Update

Three Xavier University students jointly prepared and presented a proposal for a Peace Services major to the Faculty Peace Studies Committee of the university. Each of the students developed a section of the proposal, which includes an account of Global Peace Services efforts internationally with the underlying vision and principles of the effort, a possible sequence of courses for a Peace Services major, and identification of sites in Cincinnati and abroad for fulfillment of the service requirement. The proposal concludes:

The interdisciplinary nature of the Global Peace Services major offers students a broad perspective in the areas of theology, political science, psychology, social work, and economics, thus enabling students to make critical social and cultural analyses of situations where there is peace and/or conflict.

The GPS major, however, expands beyond knowledge found in books and in the classroom. With the inclusion of a placement experience in the GPS major, students will gain concrete, useful skills in the areas of conflict resolution, conflict management, negotiation, mediation, and community organizing.

Moreover, by providing volunteer service, students will gain an understanding of new people and cultures, while at the same time developing, utilizing, and strengthening their skills of nonviolence. The practical experience of the GPS major will train students for a career in peacework and nonviolent conflict resolution. In turn, graduates of the GPS program will further establish a "culture of peace" by utilizing their knowledge to build structures that create a more just and sustainable peace for our communities, countries, and the world. ■