

My Personal Contribution to World Peace

by Solomon Grover

Back in 1959 when I was just ten years old, I first learned about the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb. A man came to our fifth grade class at Burbank Blvd. Elementary School in North Hollywood, and after he was introduced by our teacher, Mrs. Warner, he began talking about how a single atomic or hydrogen bomb could destroy an entire city and kill almost everyone in it. He then explained to us about the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union and how it could instantly turn into a hot war if the two sides decided to use their atomic and hydrogen bombs against each other. He said to us that it could happen at any time. He said we could go to bed tonight and not wake up tomorrow morning because a thermonuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union could break out during the night, and Los Angeles could be one of the cities destroyed, killing everyone of us sitting in the classroom.

That day, I went home with an entirely new feeling of dread. That night, and every night thereafter for a long, long time, I soberly reflected on the very real possibility that nuclear war would break out and I and everyone else would not survive; that we would all be dead before morning. It reminded me of the time two years earlier after I saw the horror movie, "Godzilla", how I was terrified for weeks afterward at letting myself fall asleep during the night. I had finally got over it and now, two years later, it was happening again: except now nuclear war during the night was not merely a horror movie, but an awful real life possibility.

Miraculously, the growing dread in my mind of nighttime annihilation was slowly but surely being counter balanced by a growing resolve, within me, to find a way to change the future course of world history to one in which global peace would govern all the nations and all the peoples.

Three years later, in October of 1962, the Cuban missile crisis happened. The world stood on the brink of global nuclear war as President John F. Kennedy of the United States and Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union stood toe to toe and eyeball to eyeball against each other over whether nuclear tipped missiles pointing at the heartland of the United States would, or would not remain in place in Cuba. Each night during this crisis, before I went to sleep, I thought to myself, "If global nuclear war is going to happen, it could happen during this night." I resigned myself to the awful possibility that my world, my life, and everything in it that I loved would all perish before morning. The following morning would wake up, open my eyes and look around me in astonishment. I was still here and my whole world was still here. As this happened morning after morning, it began to dawn on me that world peace may somehow come to be after all. I experienced an awesome sense of relief when Premier Khrushchev finally backed down and removed the threatening missiles from Cuba. It was as if the world was slowly reborn, glowing with new possibilities of peace, love, and joy.

Very, very sadly, in November of the following year, President John Kennedy was, totally without warning, assassinated. The coming world of peace, love and joy suddenly seemed to be on the brink of perishing before it could fully emerge. This death process of the not yet fully born world of peace, love and joy seemed to be confirmed in the following years when large scale riots broke out on college campuses and in inner city neighborhoods across the nation, idealistic visionaries Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were also shockingly assassinated, and young American men and Southeast Asian men, women and children were routinely slaughtered by the tens of hundreds in that geopolitical cancer known as the Vietnam War. And most ominously of all, the United States and the Soviet Union were grimly arming themselves with enough nuclear weapons to destroy all of civilization several times over.

It was in this world of seemingly growing self-inflicted death throes, that I entered UCLA as a freshman, anxiously awaiting my military draft classification. I had submitted my medical history to the draft board. It was one of chronic illness during my pre teen and teenage years. Thankfully, apparently because of this, I was classified unfit for military service. I had been spared the personal ordeal of fearing that I might be sent to the killing fields of Southeast Asia. Out of respect and compassion for other young men at the time who were not

as fortunate as I, I came to the conclusion that I had been spared to fulfill some purpose of helping humankind. Such as making this world a better, happier, more comfortable place. To fulfill this vision, after graduating with a degree in physics, I entered the Department of Atmospheric Science at UCLA as a graduate student specializing in air pollution studies. After serving a two-year apprenticeship, I was given full charge of refining and expanding a theoretical computerized model of how efficiently rain removes pollution from the air under various conditions in different types of storms.

Shortly after I took over the project its financial funding from the National Science Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency was severely cut back. To ensure the survival of this project, my supervising professor, Dr. Hans Pruppacher, was forced to solicit funding from the military. I was shocked when I discovered the agency that was to become the prime sponsor of my work intended to use the information generated by our research to improve the killing efficiency of battlefield nuclear weapons. Apparently, the more efficiently a given storm removes the radioactive debris aloft created, after a nuclear bomb explodes in the air above a gathering of enemy troops, the more lethal radiation is deposited on the ground by the rain, thereby killing more human beings in the vicinity of that storm

Aware of my idealism and sensibilities, Dr. Pruppacher compassionately gave me the option of turning down this source of support. I wrestled with this decision for some time before I finally decided to accept the military funding. My first instinct was that it went against my grain to help build a better bomb. Upon further reflection, however, after being informed that we would be permitted to publish our results in non-military public scientific journals so that peaceful, uncompromised beneficial uses of the information would be made fully possible, I decided to go ahead in the hope that the constructive uses of the information would ultimately outweigh the destructive uses.

During the next few years, as work progressed, we ended up publishing our results in some ten papers in various journals. We then went our own separate ways. I stayed on at UCLA as a post-doctoral research scientist. Dr. Pruppacher, after serving briefly as chairman of the department, moved back to Europe, where he was born, to continue his own research there.

A year or two later, a miracle happened. Dr. Carl Sagan, the world famous astronomer and scientific TV personality, and Dr. Richard Turco an esteemed atmospheric scientist, mobilized a world wide research project to determine the effect on the Earth's atmosphere if the two super powers the United States and the Soviet Union, engaged in a global nuclear war. Dr. Sagan and Dr. Turco focused on the radioactive debris left behind in the Earth's atmosphere after the explosion of the many nuclear bombs that would happen in such a war. Using the results we had published on the efficiency with which various types of storms removed particulates from the air, Drs. Sagan and Turco and their research team came to the startling conclusion, now known as "Nuclear Winter", that after the most severe and intense storm possible had removed what they could of the debris in the atmosphere left after a global nuclear war, there would still be so much debris remaining in the Earth's atmosphere that all sunlight would be blocked out for years and all life on Earth would soon die and not be regenerated. In other words, no one would win a global nuclear war; everybody would lose, because everyone and everything would die.

After this information was fully publicized in the world press, the United States and the Soviet Union soon agreed to set aside global nuclear war as an option for settling their differences. This led directly to Glasnost between the United States and the Soviet Union, then Perestroika, or restructuring in the Soviet Block, which, in turn resulted in the liberation of Eastern Europe, and finally the liberation of the Soviet Union itself. Humanity had taken a giant leap toward peace, love and joy. And the universe blessed me with a direct role in all this. Namaste.