

CUBA, BERLIN, AND
INTERNATIONAL ACTION
by Bob Swann

The Cuban crisis has helped to bring home the lesson to many of us that in view of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of national peace movements influencing their own governments, increasingly the need is to build an international peace movement, a movement which is prepared to act at many different levels. The Walk to Moscow, the Everyman III, the Sahara project, and other actions such as the Easter walks which have become international, have helped to lay the groundwork for such an international action movement. The World Peace Brigade has set up a structure through which action may take place and is working on possible moves directed at the situation in Africa, particularly Southwest Africa.

Now the Cuban action project to attempt to break down communication barriers between the United States and Cuban people and lay the groundwork for building a nonviolent resistance movement in Cuba and Latin America is underway. It is the hope of national CNVA that the team going to Cuba will be able to communicate with the Cuban people our ideas on nonviolent resistance through leaflets and discussions with people there, and that the seeds which are planted will take root. At the same time we hope to take action in this country directed at the key points of agitation for invading Cuba, such as locations in Key West, Florida, etc. Further, the idea of sending a boat with food and medical supplies to Cuba is intended mainly as a symbol of our goodwill, and it is hoped that it will be accompanied by a campaign in this country waged by all the peace groups to break down the increasing pressure for complete embargo on all supplies for Cuba. (At the moment, there is no "official" embargo on certain foods and medical supplies, but with the encouragement of government officials, pharmaceutical supply houses have enforced a boycott against sending medical supplies to Cuba. Also the ILA has initiated a ban on handling and loading all shipments, including food and medicines, to Cuba. Further, one of the leading members of a U.S. committee for medical aid to Cuba, several members of which are national CNVA members, has been called before a Congressional investigating committee.) One suggestion is for persons to send small medical items, such as bandaides, to President Kennedy, accompanied by a letter calling for medical aid to Cuba. (For further information on Cuba projects sponsored by CNVA, contact CNVA, 325 Lafayette Street, New York 12, N.Y., WA 5-9415.)

In addition to Cuba, according to all predictions, a new crisis will soon be shaping up over Berlin - the most critical point in East-West relations. Hoping to avoid the frustration and feeling of impotence which we all felt as the Cuban crisis deepened, we are proposing to begin now to plan for international coordinated action as tension over Berlin increases. This plan proposes to focus on community-level action as well as at the point of tension (Berlin) in order to achieve the widest possible participation and also to build an expanding international base for further action and commitment to nonviolence. The essential idea, an International Week of Public and Private Fasting, grew out of two actions: the Washington Fast and Vigil, and a story in Peace News of October 26 entitled "Public Fast in Wood Green", where a small group engaged in a 7-day public fast in the center of town, using automobiles for rest and sleep. Groups could begin planning such actions in communities in all parts of the world, and as tension increases over Berlin, world peace leaders could call for the beginning of the fasts, some of which could be held at appropriate points such as embassies, government buildings, etc. as well as in local communities. The Peace News author pointed out that the fast aroused compassion rather than antagonism, and that groups which are critical of civil disobedience as "negative" might support such fasts as "positive" action.

Another possibility for international action is being explored now with the Canadian Committee of 100. The proposal, which originated with the Toronto group, is to call for some kind of action, possibly a sit-down, at one of the American SAC bases, perhaps one in New York State.

New England CNVA staff has been very much involved with all of the above proposed projects, most of them having originated with us. It is our growing conviction that such action, especially where it can be related from the community level to the international level, is the growing edge of the peace movement. As someone has said, "Our strength will be increased a hundred-fold when we are working as an international coordinated movement." Perhaps you don't agree with us. Let us know what you do think.