



IPPNW

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Inc.

Report

"We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive."

Albert Einstein

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Summit Meeting on Mt. Elbrus

In July 1986, an international team of doctors and medical students, organized by IPPNW, undertook a three-week trek in the Caucasus Mountains. They planned a "summit meeting" atop Mt. Elbrus, Europe's highest peak.

The 24-member team included ten Soviets, thirteen Americans and one Swiss. The Caucasus expedition was the first to be composed of medical professionals from East and West. At the summit they buried a capsule containing the following proclamation by Drs. Bernard Lown and Evgueni Chazov.

This message, buried beneath the snows of Mt. Elbrus by an international group of physicians and medical students, represents their struggle and commitment to prevent nuclear war and maintain life on Earth.

When climbers are roped together on a steep mountainside, their linked security depends upon their ability to cooperate. It is inconceivable that climbers would threaten one another by shaking the rope that binds them. In the nuclear age, the nations of the world are all climbers on a mountain, depending for their survival on the rope of tolerance. Either they co-exist, or they cease to exist.

The bonds of friendship forged in the wilderness are threads spanning the chasm between countries long separated by fear and ignorance. Each thread may itself be minuscule on the world scale, but thousands of threads together will weave a sturdy fabric that can resist forces leading to perilous confrontation and bind countries together in lasting stability.

May all people learn to care for this beautiful planet with a love that is faithful and constant. May there be future generations to discover these words and know their meaning.



Martin Vosseler, MD

After several days of training hikes, we prepared for our ascent of Elbrus by crossing two difficult passes on a five-day trip to Svanetia in Soviet Georgia. As we approached the Dongus-Orun pass we had to cross the Nakra, a mountain river. Ordinarily the river can be crossed either by a wooden bridge or a snow bridge which covers the river. As luck would have it, the snow bridge had thawed and caved in and the wooden bridge had washed away. We had to find another way across. Ignoring ice-cold turbulent water, some members of the group took off their shoes and, holding hands, formed a living bridge across the river. The others then crossed. We were all astonished at this smooth crossing. We donned dry socks and shoes and continued our way to the pass in high spirits. We were united and confident that no obstacles would prevent us from accomplishing our mission. It was a wonderful metaphor for what our nations could achieve if they could only join hands in cooperation.

We discovered that real cooperation takes constant effort -- that it's one thing to talk about cooperation, and another to do it. When necessary, we would smooth over hurt feelings with a hug, a cup of hot tea brought to the door of a tent, a song. There was, even in the remote beauty of the mountains, far away from politicians, military bases and newspapers, a sense of urgency in the air. We *had* to make this work, to prove it was possible, or else the prognosis for our planet would be bleak indeed.

--Gale Warner and David Kreger

--Vyacheslav Onishchenko