

This Symbol . . . Peaceful or Satanic?



What Do You Think?

Courier readers are invited to send their opinions to the editor.

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This Is the Courier Second Section

For the past few weeks, readers of the Courier-Journal have sent to our offices inquiries and statements on the familiar sign popularly known as the peace symbol.

Recently, it has been alleged the symbol is an ancient sign of the demonic world, once used in magical and satanic rituals.

Leaders of religious peace groups, headquartered in New York and elsewhere, however, have denied the allegation that the familiar pendant hanging from the necks of peace demonstrators or pasted to the windows of their automobiles is a "Communist-inspired" sign representing an inverted broken cross, a witch's foot or an "eye of Lucifer".

Controversial reports declaring that the peace sign is a "symbol of the anti-Christ" inspired by the "Reds," have been circulated nationally by groups including a unit of the American Legion and the John Birch Society.

The Rev. John Neuhaus, co-founder of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, said the charges were the result of an "imaginative persecution complex."

"The imaginative persecution complex of these right wing groups leads them to see Communist associations in everything.

"If you're really looking for these things, and if you think that everything is controlled by these 'Godless atheistic forces' you can find all kinds of alarming things to confirm your preconceptions."

Nathaniel W. Pierce of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship explained that the peace symbol is a composite of the semaphore signals for the letters "N" (flag held vertically) and "D" (flags held at a 45 degree angle). The encircling sphere represented the world.

The symbol stood for "Nuclear Disarmament in the whole world."

The continuing controversy of the origin of the peace symbol was analyzed by Linda Greenhouse in the New York Times, Aug. 3.

Miss Greenhouse reported that the un-American activities committee of the American Legion Post 544, Minersville, Pa. had prepared fliers on the peace symbol and circulated them across the country.

The flier sent by Post 544 is said to include statements as, "the Communists have infiltrated the garment industry and you find the broken cross embroidered on pockets and other garments for the casual American to wear."

The Times also described a 16-page article on peace symbols published in the June issue of American Opinion magazine of the John Birch Society. The article relates the adoption of the symbol in London led by the late Lord Bertrand Russell, whom the article described as "the radical and atheist."

The author, David E. Gumaer reports that when the "Saracen hordes crossed into Spain to establish their Moorish kingdom, the shields of the invaders were decorated with the inverted broken crosses.

Gumaer suggested that the peace symbols were part of the "resurgence of satanism, and the proliferation of black magic shops in areas where leftist students and radicals gather... They are symbols of the anti-Christ!"