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## Great Peace March Collection, 1985-1986

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## The Register of Great Peace March Collection, 1985-1986

**Collection number: MSS 68**

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Great Peace March Collection,

**Date (inclusive):** 1985-1986

**Collection number:** MSS 68

**Creator:** ProPeace Organization

**Extent:** 1 letter box

1/3 linear foot

**Repository:** Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, CA 90044

**Abstract:** The Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament took place in 1986 starting in Los Angeles on March 1 and ending in Washington, D.C. on November 15. It was conceived by David Mixner, a professional organizer and political activist, as a protest calling for a verifiable comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the non-militarization of space, a verifiable global freeze on nuclear weapons, and reduction in nuclear arms. In spite of staggering financial difficulties and administrative problems - Mixner's ProPeace organization had to declare bankruptcy - the historic cross-country journey continued and 1800 people entered the capital. It concluded with a candle light vigil at the reflection pool and an interfaith benediction led by Rabbi David Saperstein.

**Language:** English.

### Provenance

Donated by the ProPeace Organization.

### Access

The collection is available for research only at the Library's facility in Los Angeles. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Researchers are encouraged to call or email the Library indicating the nature of their research query prior to making a visit.

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#### **Preferred Citation**

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#### **Organizational History**

David Mixner, a political and gay-rights activist since the time of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, had organized with others the Vietnam Moratorium in 1969 and was part of the progressive movement in the Colorado Democratic Party during the 70s. He had managed Tom Bradley's mayoral campaign in Los Angeles in 1977 and Gary Hart's presidential campaign in 1984.

Late in 1984, David Mixner began to develop the concept of the Great Peace March which envisioned the participation of 5,000 people and the financial support from corporate sponsors of \$20 million. He founded the ProPeace (People Reaching Out For Peace) organization and, together with Tim Carpenter, met, among others, with the leadership of the peace and justice movement, SANE, MOBE, Women Strike for Peace, and two members of Congress, Pat Schroeder and Ed Markey. He wanted the support and collaboration of six key constituencies: religious/spiritual, labor, elected officials, peace and justice, women, minority and ethnic. In addition, he approached student organizations to raise money for supplies needed on the march and planned numerous events, fundraisers and concerts and a variety of merchandise paraphernalia to be sold during the march. During 1985, between 40 and 60 staff members worked tirelessly in the Los Angeles office and in 12 field offices along the march route to sign up potential sponsors and recruit participants. 39,000 signatures were collected calling for a verifiable comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, non-militarization of space, a verifiable global freeze on nuclear weapons, and reduction of nuclear arms. These were presented to President Ronald Reagan and both houses of Congress.

By January 1986, it became clear that the strategy to attract corporate patronage was unsuccessful and the organization experienced administrative, management, financial and legal problems, including difficulties with insurance contracts. Also hurtful was the lack of support from the anti-nuclear movement and the major peace groups. In addition, grass-root fundraising and participation by individuals fell short of initial expectations. In March 1986, ProPeace collapsed under a staggering financial crisis and had to declare bankruptcy by the time the march had already progressed to Barstow, California.

However, after restructuring the field operation, it was able to continue solely with support from individual contributions at approximately \$4,000 per day. Among the individual donors were Paul Newman, Robert Blake, Burt Reynolds, Jesse Jackson, the Peace Development Fund (Amherst, Massachusetts) and some contributions from the the Freeze Campaign. At the end, 1800 people entered the capital, 400 of whom had walked the entire distance from Los Angeles. The 8 1/2 months historic cross-country journey concluded with a candle light vigil at the reflection pool and an interfaith benediction led by Rabbi David Saperstein. Ronald Reagan did not receive a delegation from the Great Peace March at the White House.

A year later, Fred Segal, a Los Angeles retailer, organized the American-Soviet Walk from Leningrad to Moscow, a joint venture of the newly formed International Peace Walk, Inc. and the official, government-approved Soviet Peace Committee. Two hundred thirty American and 200 Soviets travelled for 2 weeks covering the 400 miles by bus and on foot and the final lap by boat.

#### **Scope and Content**

The collection consists of 6 folders of newspaper clippings from 1986, including one folder for the American-Soviet Walk from Leningrad to Moscow in June 1987, one folder of the newsletter "The Pro Peace Profile", nos. 1-5 (July 1985-December/January 1985/1986), and one folder of the organization's press releases, pamphlets, brochures, planning documents and schedules, and lists of organizations, campuses and individuals endorsing the march. Also included is the Manifesto of the National Patriotic Front "Pamyat" (Memory) with a letter, dated 5 September 1989, to Mikhail S. Gorbachev and a copy of a brochure by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith "Hatred Under Glasnost", 1989.

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