

(ND) Gwynu (Wales) held a press conference before the visit to highlight the inadequacy of the public safety plans prepared to deal with a nuclear reactor accident at the docks. This prompted Welsh local authorities to launch a campaign against the use of port facilities by nuclear subs.

The three protesters were arrested when one of them chained himself to the sea gates of Queen Alexandra Docks in an attempt to stop the sub entering the harbour until the tide had turned. This would have led to the tireless having to wait until the next tide before entering.

Barry Docks, the only other berth in Wales where nuclear subs can dock is unusable at present as the sea gates are leaking, which might lead to a sub being stranded at low tide.

As a result the Royal Navy is now carrying out a feasibility study into the use of Swansea Docks for this purpose, their main criteria being a 550 metre zone around the berth free of public buildings. Negotiations are due to start soon with the City Council, but if the response to the Cardiff Docks visit is any indication, the Navy may be unable to answer criticisms of their safety plans. The City Council will be under pressure to insist on very detailed and widespread emergency and evacuation plans, which may mean the Navy has to withdraw its proposal.

These developments come at a time when the Welsh peace movement is pressing the UK government to recognise the fact that all eight County Councils in Wales have declared themselves Nuclear Free Zones, to respect the fact that Wales itself was declared a Nuclear Free Zone seven years ago, and remove all nuclear facilities based there.

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## USA

The U.S. nuclear weapons production industry is virtually shut down, with major facilities at Rocky Flats, Colorado; Hanford, Washington; Savannah River, South Carolina; and Fernald, Ohio all closed for safety and environmental reasons. Since no tritium is being manufactured, the 18-year half-life of tritium is causing a phased

unilateral disarmament of the U.S.

nuclear stockpile as warheads become less dependable. Huge amounts of money, in the order of \$100,000,000,000 have been requested to clean up, reopen and build new facilities; this is controversial because of the sorry state of the U.S. economy, but the peace movement suggestions to 'stop the restart' haven't yet made it into mainstream debate. Bush's new Secretary of Energy (the Department of Energy manufactures nuclear weapons) is retired Admiral James D. Watkins, author of the 'Maritime Strategy' and the first career military man to head the DOE.

Though Bush has had to admit defeat over his selection of John Tower as Defense Secretary, other appointments signal a more professional, competent, and rational administration (hard to be less after Reagan), but no more humane or progressive underpinnings. The CIA gives one a different perspective than the cinema, but the results are no less dangerous. Although the obsession with overthrowing the Nicaraguan government will probably end, U.S. military entanglements in Central America, the Middle East, and East Asia are likely to continue or increase. Financial realities will restrict the Pentagon's access to money somewhat, but new crises will probably be manufactured to justify continued feeding of the military mammoth while people are starving and homeless across the U.S. Demands on U.S. allies to share the financial burden will also increase. Star Wars, Trident, naval deployments, SLOMs, and the B-2 (Stealth) bomber will be demanded: only the last has much possibility of being stopped.

Gorbachev is extremely popular here - some feel that if he had been on the ballot he would have beaten both Bush and Dukakis. In spite of this, and of the clearly lessening tensions between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., there is little popular, Congressional, or governmental support for changing fundamental military and foreign policies. Although the superpower enemy is disappearing, the U.S. continues to be hostile to countries formerly labelled Soviet puppets - Cuba, Nicaragua, north Korea, Syria, Iran, Libya. The decline of the American Empire and the disappearance of its official rationale will cause upheavals in U.S. foreign policy with worldwide effects.

"Scottish Fishing Weekly" reported two near-misses in the Clyde area - the first on February 27th, when a US sub passed between two fishing boats about 100 yards apart as they fed out their nets, the second on March 3rd, when Campbelltown fisherman Cecil Finn, whose boat "Aquila" was towed backwards by the US sub "Wall Rogers" in 1980, reported that an unlit sub came dangerously near his boat as it worked off Arran. Following complaints to the Clyde coastguard, reports of these traffic violations have been passed on to the Fisheries office, and the Marine Surveyors Office in Glasgow.

On March 5th, as we were going to press, news was coming in of a Belgian trawler, based at Zeebrugge, "Tijl Ulenspiegel", which sank in calm seas between the Isle of Mann and Liverpool, having sent no Mayday call. The alarm was raised when the body of one of the crew was found, as yet both the boat and the other five crew are still missing.

Much confusion surrounds the orders to submarine captains in the event of an accident. In the "Face the Facts" programme, Richard Sharpe said that ballistic missile subs were under orders not to reveal their presence to anyone, but that discretion lay with the commanding officer, and he personally would find it insupportable if a sub did not offer help to a stricken vessel if life was in danger, although the rules might be stricter than he suggested. In the same programme, the Navy said "protecting life is the Commander's first responsibility" but this directly contradicts a Fastlane source quoted by the UK "Independent" newspaper on November 4th 1988 as saying: "When a Polaris submarine on patrol is involved they have orders never to surface under any circumstances. Even to pick up survivors of a collision. That goes against the grain of any seaman, but secrecy is everything for these vessels." Apparently the paper did not quote a statement made at the same time that subs would stop and offer help "if operations permitted" (the source refused to explain when operations might not permit). It is against International Maritime Law to refuse to stop and assist in any circumstances, and the evidence so far is that subs do not respond to problems on the surface, even if all the 17 civilian vessels and 32 lives lost in the past 7-8 years cannot be blamed on subs.

## Danish fatalities

Danish MP Jens Thoft has unearthed the only fatalities so far which have been officially acknowledged as due to a sub incident. On 28th March 1984, Danish fishing boat "Ana Kathrine" was sunk by the West German sub "Simpson", drowning the 3 crew.

The sub was test-diving off Skagen, in the Skagerrak area before being delivered to Chile, and was accompanied by the surface ship "Pasasus II". When the subsequent enquiry proved the sub was responsible, stricter regulations were agreed between the West German authorities and Denmark to cover future tests in the Skagerrak area, and the victims' families were awarded compensation of between 1 and 3 million Danish crowns (190-500,000 sterling) from the Howaldts Werke shipyard in Kiel. Although the Danish government still has the option to prosecute the sub captain, it has not chosen to do so.

## Swedish troubles

Meanwhile, Sweden continues to be troubled by foreign subs intruding into its waters. In mid-January, the Swedish Navy launched a full-scale search of the sea-bed in the Stockholm Archipelago after a sub was detected. As yet all efforts to catch foreign subs have failed, since a Russian submarine grounded near a Naval base in south-east Sweden in 1981.

On a more positive note, Friends of the Earth International agreed at their Annual General Meeting in Krakow, Poland last October to launch a campaign "Nuclear-Free Waters: Nuclear-Free World". Coordinated by Irish environmental group "Earthwatch", an international network of groups from South America, Africa, Asia and West and East Europe will work to set up nuclear-free zones and ports, and point out the hazards of nuclear-powered, nuclear-capable vessels, radiation risks inland and sea, and risks to other vessels.

Further information: "Earthwatch", Harbour View, Bantry, County Cork, Ireland. Telephone +353/21-56096, Telex: 25 5871.