

Norway

Disarm the Seas

Last year branches of W.T.A. combined politics and culture. In the west, Orsta N.T.A. arranged a sight seeing trip up a local fiord to focus attention on the naval build up in the Atlantic and North Sea, while Kristiansand W.T.A. in the south marked the week with a 'dragon festival'.

Norway W.T.A. hope to repeat Disarm the Seas actions this year and to date have three large branches committed.

Ports Visits.

The most important exercise takes place at the end February/beginning March when there will be a naval exercise following the traditional 'Barfrost' exercise in Tromsø. W.T.A. hope to collect information on the ships involved.

Actions

Despite the Norwegian winter W.T.A. has encouraged groups to participate in actions under an umbrella organisation connected to the Brundtland Commission. The theme was "Environment & Health", and they brought in nuclearisation of the seas. W.T.A. is stimulating branches to make a concerted action in April. The theme may be the 'host agreement' (see below), ports visits or possibly modernisation of European weapons.

The Host Agreement

Informal talks are currently underway between U.S. and Norwegian officials. The U.S. wishes to build new installations as supports to the U.S. fleet of nuclear weapons war ships (sound familiar, anyone?). The Norwegian Defence Minister assures W.T.A. that there is, as yet, no agreement and that it will be open. W.T.A. seek to ensure that no secret agreements are reached and are working to this end. The crunch may come in March, but as a host agreement would not be popular in the ruling Labour Party, they are hoping for the best, but fearing the worst.



Jan Verleuwe, persfotograaf Brugge

HMS CHURCHILL AT SOUTHAMPTON

On February 23rd, the Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine HMS Churchill was greeted by a demonstration by 'Sea Action' as it visited Southampton Docks on its way to Rosyth for a refit.

In keeping with 'Sea Action' policy, the seaborne demonstration by a single boat was backed up by a land-based action involving about 10 people. Having protested the sub's arrival by displaying banners, a van carrying four protesters drove into the docks area, and the occupants approached the sub as it was docking. They were immediately asked to leave, but three others managed to walk in past security guards. Two protesters walked onto the sub and asked to speak to the captain about the local public safety scheme. They were eventually told he was too busy to see them, whereupon they left, to return a second time. At this point, they were given an official warning of arrest if they refused to leave.

The group then took a petition out on to the streets of Southampton asking people to register their protest at nuclear subs visiting the port, and in a short time collected over 1,000 signatures. The petition was then taken to the Associated British Ports office in the city where no-one would accept the petition. The protesters refused to leave the offices until it was handed over, until a security guard threatened to have them arrested, but eventually agreed they could return in the afternoon when they might have more success. Associated British Ports' embarrassment was obvious when they returned as agreed to find that the Port Director had driven back from London especially to accept the petition, fearing the publicity if the protesters had to be arrested.

Pressure will now be put on Southampton City Council to take action on this issue, and the obvious public concern may force them to make a stand.

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Twinning

TWINNING & DISARM THE SEAS WEEK

Twinning between groups from the many countries taking part in the Disarm the Seas Week of Action (May 24-June 4) is one way of ensuring that the international dimension of our campaign gets local coverage. It also helps break down the sense of isolation felt by some near

ideas and sending representatives to events are just two ideas. A link-up between two groups who already share a similar focus - e.g. uranium transportation or port calls, not only benefits the groups concerned but the campaign as a whole if the exchange of information that follows is reported in the NAN Newsletter. A peace group which has no immediate focus can twin with another from the town or city already twinned through civic auspices. The possibilities are numerous. Please contact Kate Cameron-Daum if you would like any help with your twinning plans and keep her up-to-date with those successfully taking place. Kate would like to know of any exchange of local details such as parliamentarians and local papers as this will greatly assist in media work for disarm the seas week, and, in the event of an accident at a port or whatever, a solid data base for communication and press work.

For further information contact:- Kate
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NENIG

NENIG - Northern European Nuclear Information Group

NENIG operates as an information and research centre on nuclear issues which threaten the communities around the northern North Sea and North Atlantic. The group ensures that these threats are monitored and the information widely circulated through a co-ordinated approach between local and national government bodies together with fishermen and environmental organisations.

NENIG's first international meeting was held in the House of Commons, London in November 1987. Since then, NENIG has helped raise nuclear questions in the European Commission, the parliaments of Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Faroe, Greenland and the UK as well as in many international conferences.

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