

1982

The Nuclear North Atlantic

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Summary:

Speeches from a European Nuclear Disarmament Conference in Glasgow with an introduction from EP Thompson on the strategic importance of the North Atlantic Ocean in NATO and the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons programs. Contains a speech from Olafur Grimsson, future President of Iceland, on the importance of links between countries, such as Norway, Denmark, and Greenland, in opposing the stationing or launching of missiles from the region. Calls for turning the North Atlantic Ocean into a nuclear free zone. Followed by a speech from activist Angus McCormack protesting the expansion of Stornoway Airport in Scotland, and the assumed militarization of the region that would ensue. Describes the creation of Keep NATO Out, the local group that opposed expansion plans, and its dealings with the Ministry of Defense/NATO.

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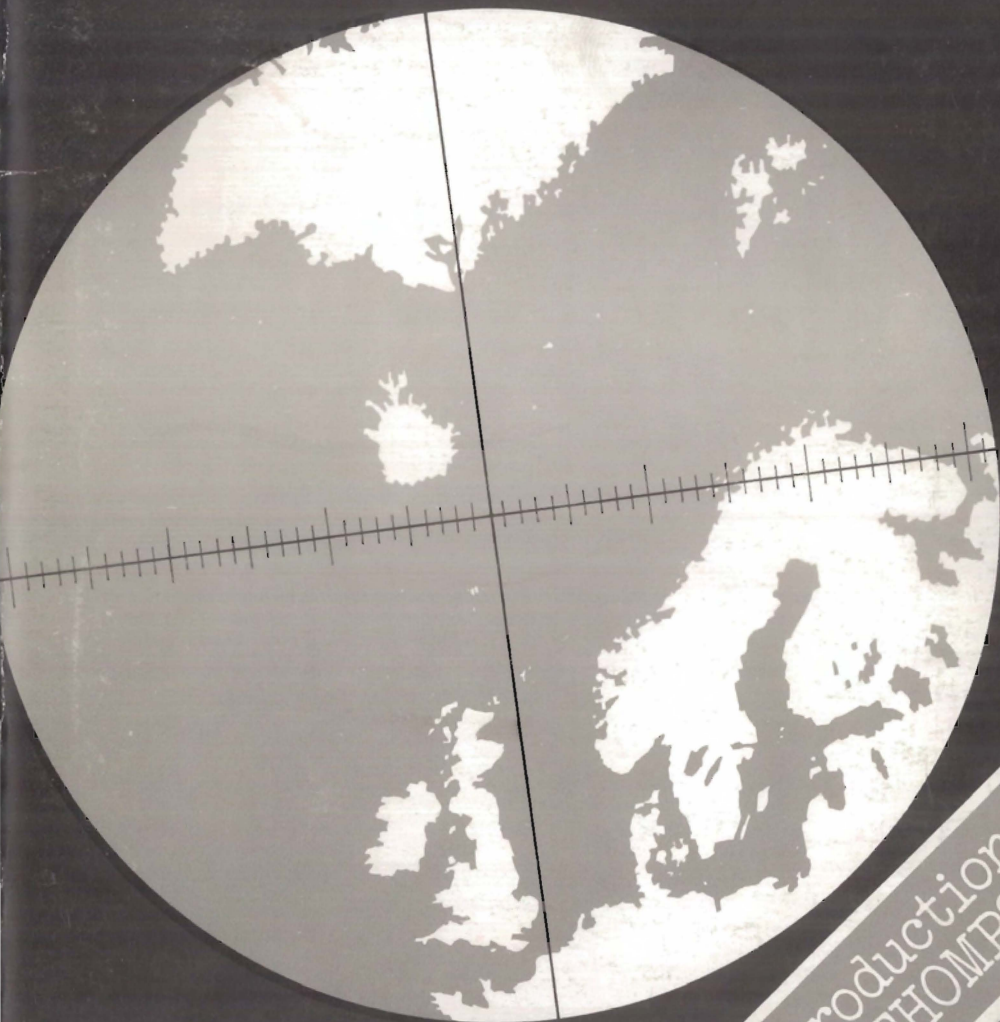
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END SPECIAL REPORT: **THE NUCLEAR NORTH ATLANTIC**

Olafur Grímsson * Angus McCormack



Introduction by
E P THOMPSON

THE NORTH ATLANTIC
AS A NUCLEAR-FREE
ZONE

ARTICLES FROM
GLASGOW END CONFERENCE
OF APRIL 1982
"THE DISARMING OF EUROPE"

OLAFUR GRIMSSON
ANGUS McCORMACK

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
E.P. THOMPSON

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FOREWORD

This booklet is based on the speeches made at the first Scottish conference of European Nuclear Disarmament (END) in Glasgow in April 1982.

The contributions of Olafur Grimsson and Angus McCormack to the conference highlight the way in which NATO has sought to expand its influence in the North Atlantic shorewards by further build-up of military bases and facilities throughout north-west Europe. Edward Thompson's introduction sets the particular experiences of Iceland and Stornoway in their wider context, showing that the concerns of the peace movement should be as wide-ranging as the superpowers' military planning; otherwise there may be a danger of successful disarmament pressure in continental Europe being cancelled out by the shifting of Cruise missiles and other weapons to submarines, ships and aircraft patrolling the North Atlantic.

The aim of this pamphlet is to set the scene for a growing awareness amongst disarmament groups in north-west Europe that the military use of the North Atlantic is growing apace, is a major destabilising influence on relations between the superpowers, and may well become the region where a nuclear war starts. At the same time, military use of the North Atlantic in peace time is already creating heavy political pressure on most of the countries in the region, particularly those with more independent foreign policies, to accept more and more militarisation. As Olafur Grimsson shows, the same arguments and pressures are used by the militarists to justify more bases and weapons in Iceland and Scandinavia as in Scotland. We hope this will be a stimulus to groups throughout the region to co-ordinate their activities with the aim of reducing and ultimately eliminating the military threat to the people of the North Atlantic.

To this end Glasgow END is organising a North Atlantic Conference in the spring of 1983 which will build on the interests and concerns of the first conference, and will bring together the ideas

and activities of peace campaigners from all corners of the North Atlantic — North America, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroes, Norway, Denmark, Scotland and Ireland. The aim of the conference, in addition to establishing contact between these groups and exchanging information on the nuclear build-up and opposition to it, would be to work towards a campaign to establish a North Atlantic Nuclear-Free Zone.

In addition, Scottish CND is publishing a book in spring 1983 which analyses the military build-up in the North Atlantic, and sets out the pattern of Scottish military bases in their North Atlantic context.

European Nuclear Disarmament
Glasgow
November 1982

"THE WET GATE"
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC

E.P. Thompson

United States' nuclear-weapons strategy (sometimes known, by courtesy, as NATO's) stands upon a tripod, whose three 'legs' rest on land, sea, and air. In the past two years public attention in Europe has been chiefly preoccupied with the first leg only — the so-called European 'theatre' weapons — the ground-launched medium-range missiles, Cruise and Pershing II, promised by NATO for 1983.

But in the next few years the second and third 'legs' are likely to acquire even more importance. Scottish opinion has already been alerted to this, in resistance to Britain's absurd, unwanted and expensive 'independent' addition to the world's sum of danger in Trident. But these two legs stand on more than Trident or Polaris, or the F-111s and other aircraft which are or will be based on the British Isles. There are also elaborate communication and tracking systems, and a growing need for fuelling, servicing and transit facilities.

Ballistic missiles and supersonic aircraft have shrunk the strategist's globe to the size of a shrivelled gourd: Greenland, Iceland, Scotland, Norway, the Soviet Kola peninsula are now all next-door neighbours, within a few minutes' missile flight-time of each other. A missile can pass from one to the other in less time than it would take for any of us to walk down to the local corner-shop or watch the 10 o'clock news.

Already, now — and for several years past — the North Atlantic ocean has been one of the most sensitive strategic areas in the world, because (in the way that strategists think) a sensitive area is not just an undefended and populous area which might be targeted and obliterated, such as Clydeside: it is, far more, a place where the missiles of the other side may be stationed, a place where one might be hit *from*. And for some time the North At-

lantic has been such a place, as both NATO and Soviet missile-launching submarines patrol the cold and stormy seas between Norway, the Shetlands, the Faroes and Iceland.

There, already, in the wide spaces of the North Atlantic they hide and they seek. In NATO's strategic thinking the Soviet navy is waiting to press through the 'gate' between Norway and Iceland, while Soviet 'Backfire' bombers might slip through the same 'gate', pass down to the west of Scotland and Ireland, and then turn sharp left and strike at Western Europe through the 'back-door'. In Soviet strategic thinking, NATO's air and sea-launched missiles serviced from bases in Scotland or Iceland, could strike at Lenin-grad or the Kola peninsula, or even strike across the Arctic cap.

All these are of course fictional 'scenarios' or 'contingency' plans, imagined in the war-games rooms of strategists. They have little to do with political or military realities. Some of this is a propaganda game which the cold warriors play to frighten their own publics.. For example, these people have long been telling us that only the very large and expensive British contribution to NATO's naval forces in the North Atlantic prevents the Soviet navy from swarming down upon our shores and playing like a school of porpoises in every Scottish sea-loch. Yet during the Falklands War the withdrawal of British warships for service in the remote South Atlantic depleted NATO's naval forces in the North by some two-thirds . The supposed 'gate' was left open and swinging on its hinges for some three months. Yet British waters were not overrun: if they had been, I am sure that Winston Churchill, Junior, would have let us know.

Some of these stories, then, are lies or 'worst-case' fictions. But the trouble with this kind of contingency thinking is that it does not stay put as fiction in the head. It gets out of the head and it gets into budgets. Hundreds of millions of pounds and billions of dollars and roubles are spent upon building weapons and bases which are justified as 'defence' or 'deterrence' against imaginary threats: these new developments are seen by the other side as threatening, and provoke it to build up new weaponry and bases in response: and so on . . . and on. In this way both sides hurry

on the 'worst-case' contingencies their measures were designed to meet.

Another reason why the North Atlantic is becoming so sensitive an area is an ironical one. The successes of the European peace movements, in bringing within reach the expulsion of ground-launched missiles from their lands, are forcing NATO strategists to look with favour on the sea. The political cost of forcing Britain, Holland, Belgium, West Germany and Italy to accept cruise and Pershing missiles upon their territories is so high that the counsels of NATO are now divided. Mrs Thatcher is eager to take the missiles as well as anything else (such as neutron bombs or nerve-gas artillery) that the Americans choose to send. But the Dutch and Belgian governments are not eager at all, and Chancellor Schmidt would be happy if the Geneva arms talks should give rise to any compromise which would get him off his own political hook. One possible 'compromise' would be to abandon plans for stationing the ground-launched missiles in Europe—a 'concession' to be paid for by the Soviet withdrawal of the highest possible number of SS-20s. While the Western media manufactured an immense self-congratulatory hoo-ha about NATO's peaceful dispositions, the United States would fall quietly back upon the other two legs of the tripod instead—on sea and air. Missiles pressed by public opinion out of Europe would be squeezed sideways and reappear, in even greater numbers, in the North Atlantic—launched from bombers, submarines, or the floating launch-platforms which are already entering service.

One can easily see the arguments in favour of this course. Weapons at sea are more mobile, less easy to target, and, above all, less politically visible than are bases at Greenham Common or Comiso. No-one can set up a peace camp in the seas off Rockall, and even if we all had water-wings it would be a wet business to sit down in the middle of the 'gate' between Norway and Iceland.

Yet this development will bring no security whatsoever to either 'the West' or 'the East', and it will make some beautiful and remote parts of Northern Europe into some of the most dangerous places on the earth. And not dangerous only if or when a nuclear

war occurs — they are (as Dr Grimsson reminds us) already dangerous *now*. With all that heavy nuclear plant moving around the ocean bed, sooner or later a *major* accident has to happen.

This is the threat which visits both Iceland and Scotland today, and Dr Grimsson — a highly-respected member of the Icelandic parliament (or Althing) — and Mr McCormack, the able and well-informed leader of the opposition to NATO's plans in the Western Isles — add other explanations for the growing militarisation of the North Atlantic zone. And as both make clear, the only possible response to this, of adequate force, must be the internationalisation of peaceful resistance among the peoples of the countries within the strategic zone.

We live in very ugly times, when there are good reasons for taking the most pessimistic view of human expectations. On the credit side there is little optimistic to be seen save in the rapid growth of the peace movement itself — and in the brotherhood and sisterhood of that common movement of resistance. 'Peace' is not just the absence of war — it is a real state or force only if it is made up of the affirmatives of understanding, exchange, common action, made possible by the international networking of movements and persons.

In the North Atlantic zone, all the elements of this international network are now present — in all the most threatened nations there are active movements built on similar principles of alliance between persons of differing party and faith — the Icelandic Campaign against Military Bases, Irish CND, the Norwegian 'No to Nuclear Weapons', the Scottish Campaign against Trident, CND and END. I have been exceptionally fortunate in the past year in being able to visit Norway, Ireland and Iceland — and even far-distant Glasgow. In each country I found strong and representative movements, deeply involved in the national and political life — in the labour movements, the churches, the women's movements, among ecologists and cultural workers, poets and musicians — movements which cherished the national traditions of their own countries (the Gaelic of the Western Isles, the ancient democratic institutions of the Icelanders) and which for that reason defended

the 'gate' between the people's past and the people's future.

Glasgow's END conference last May marked an important new stage in this international networking. This network must now be extended and strengthened, drawing together the peace workers of other nations — Ireland, Norway, the Faroes, Denmark — who share a common objective: to make the whole North Atlantic zone nuclear-free.

ICELAND AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

Olafur Grimsson

I bring you greetings from Iceland Peace Campaigners, who are encouraged by the meeting here today and by knowing that you will be discussing the peace movements of the North Atlantic area.

In Iceland we have fought against the nuclear military stations in the North Atlantic and against the American military bases in our country which play a key role in that militarisation.

It has been a long and testing struggle, but in recent months we have been greatly encouraged by the emerging solidarity among the peace movements in the smaller countries in the North Atlantic area. Only four weeks ago, Edward Thompson, who is also with us here today, addressed the largest ever anti nuclear rally that has been held in Iceland in the last few years. He gave greetings from the CND in Britain and the Welsh Anti Nuclear Alliance and related the success of the Alliance who had just managed to make Wales a nuclear-free country. And that message from the Welsh people was greeted with tremendous applause in the Icelandic Hall.

Everyone realises that a new era could be in the making. We are no longer alone. And we in Iceland are no longer alone out there in the North Atlantic. We are supported by the active workers of the same cause in Scotland, Wales, England and in other Scandinavian countries. We must realise, and must emphasise, a new solidarity which is emerging especially among the young people of our countries — along with a determination to bring about a consolidation of our joint public and political strengths.

This determination is especially significant because the military establishment, the nuclear barons, are already trying to execute extensive plans for further military annexation of the oceans surrounding our countries. We will hear today of plans for this strategy of militarisation, when Angus McCormack of the Keep NATO

Our Campaign speaks on the Stornoway experiences. We must remember that oceans can be part of the military build-up, for nuclear submarines, with ever greater strengths in warheads and destruction capabilities, are planned to sail in our waters. And battleships are now being transformed to carry hundreds of Cruise missiles on their decks. These battleships are intended to sail between Iceland, Scotland and Norway; as floating arsenals of nuclear and conventional weapons.

It is only with massive strength, and a determined demonstration of public opinion, that the people in our countries can halt these plans. Therefore we in Iceland are determined to seek your help and to give you our help. We must reinforce each other, because our adversaries in this campaign have, for a long time, maintained a network of systematic deception of public opinion. To give you just one example: last week an admiral of the British Navy attended a Conference in Iceland. He spoke on the TV and Radio and to press reporters about the importance of future nuclear submarine activities in the North Atlantic. He praised the Trident. He described the excellence of US bases in Iceland. It was quite clear, listening to him, that this officer of the British Navy had come to Iceland in a fighting spirit. But he was not fighting the Russians; he was fighting us. He was fighting the people in the peace movements who are opposing his plans. All his arguments were directed against the arguments of the peace movement.

It is significant that the military establishment of all countries of the North Atlantic have realised the importance of the public debate we have initiated. They realise that successful democratic movements can bring about a nuclear-freeze. We can make the North Atlantic a nuclear-free zone. And what is more, we can make the nuclear barons, the Lords of the Admiralty, landless, sea-less, and what is even worse for them, we can make them unemployed.

It is therefore quite clear that in the coming months the co-operation of the peace movements in the North Atlantic countries is a priority for all of us. We must learn from our friends on the European continent, and get help from the Dutch, Belgians, Ger-

mans and all other continental peace movements, so that we successfully threaten the NATO plans for imposing Cruise missiles.

We must build a similar popular force in North Europe. We must learn from our continental friends, but we must also learn from each other. And I think I am quite right in saying that the Icelandic experience will be of use to people in Scotland and Stornoway in particular. We have many lessons to offer. Our experience will show how the superpowers have systematically deceived and tricked a small island nation. These lessons can help you who are now fighting against plans for new bases off the Scottish Coast. And we must not let the extremely successful campaign against Trident overshadow the equally important fight in Stornoway. Because if they succeed in building their bases in Stornoway, then in a few short years Scotland will become a key in the nuclear militarisation of the North Atlantic. It is therefore important to fight against the Stornoway plans along with the fight against Trident.

When the US government after World War Two bluntly requested permission to have military bases on Iceland for 99 years, all the political parties unanimously refused this request. The Icelandic nation was, and still is, unique in that it has never borne arms. No Icelandic military force has ever existed. We gained independence, established a sovereign state, and developed a highly advanced modern society without any struggle whatsoever taking place. To diversify for a moment: we are the nation which successfully defeated the British Navy three years ago. We had no battleships, we had no navy, we had only three small gunboats manned with civilian sailors. The British Navy sent many warships, some of them the pride of the British Navy; but on every occasion, as you know, we won. And we won because our arguments, our democratic will, were so strong, and so right, that the British might could not, in the end, defeat our arguments. And that is why I know that in the end the arguments of the campaign against nuclear weapons will win; if we are sufficiently strong and sufficiently democratic in our campaign.

(I note with some irony that the same British Ministries we fought some years ago are using our arguments in their debate about Common Market fishing policy.)

But I did not come here to talk about old times. Rather, let us return to the time when the US request for NATO bases on Iceland was turned down. They learnt a lesson. They learnt a lesson which they are applying at Stornoway today. Because the Stornoway base, although it is called a NATO base, is in fact an American base. They learnt a lesson they will never forget; never to be blunt or frank about plans. Instead, go step by step in order to achieve the ultimate goal. It has regrettably succeeded in Iceland; but it must not succeed at Stornoway.

It succeeded in Iceland because after their initial rejection, the Americans managed through sophisticated political manoeuvrings to take Iceland, a nation which had never had any armed forces and never intended to have any such forces, into a military alliance in NATO. This was hotly debated in Iceland at the time, and the government had to issue a declaration stating the conditions for NATO membership. It promised that no foreign military forces would be accepted in Iceland in peacetime. And many people trusted this declaration. But the very term 'peacetime' turned out to be the key to further deception. Who could believe in the peace movement today, that the word 'peace' would be the key to further military efforts?

This happened because two years later, in 1951, the Americans used a war in Asia, a war that most people will now have forgotten, to take a step to further their own plans for acquiring military bases in Iceland. You might not recall much about the war in Korea; it was after all thirty years ago. But the Americans used the war in Korea to execute a scare campaign in Iceland. Korea, far away at the other side of the world, was the reason for Icelandic acceptance of NATO bases. The Americans said the Russians are coming into Korea today, and it could be Iceland tomorrow. It served the superpowers' purposes. The majority of Icelandic MPs were called into a secret one-day session, and were informed by respected American diplomats, "If the Russians are coming into Korea, why not also into Iceland?" And in a few days the American soldiers had arrived.

The old plans for bases in Iceland were first described in 1941, in

a Pentagon memo, which has now come out of the historical archives. Now 10 years later in 1951, the plans had succeeded. Now the war in Korea is almost forgotten. New generations of Icelanders only learn about it in history books, as you do. But the American soldiers, the military bases, are still in my country, and the initial justification has entirely disappeared, although new ones have been invented. The very same ones we will hear about as justification for the base at Stornoway: I have heard about the Soviet Submarines and Soviet Bombers before. We will also hear that they are justifying the base at Stornoway because they might lose the bases on Iceland; and they are justifying the Icelandic bases because they might not get a Stornoway base.

In Iceland, the American Airforce came and built runways, like they intend to do in Stornoway. Then in the early 1960's the American Navy took over and installed various technical devices related to emergence of the nuclear submarine branch of the arms race. From there on, one escalation in the military situation followed another, all tying the country into the network of nuclear weaponry in the North Atlantic. There are conflicting reports on whether or not warheads themselves have been stored in Iceland. But these stories are not the key issue. The significant fact is the gradual installation of the supporting technical facilities which enable the US to maintain vast nuclear arsenals at sea, in the North Atlantic region, and which have brought about massive counter responses by the Soviet Fleet in that North Atlantic area.

Thus the fate of my country, a country which as I have already described to you, has never experienced any armed forces whatsoever, has been to play a significant although disguised part, in the North Atlantic arms race. Through complex counter action, it has helped to encourage the enlargement of American, Soviet, British and French nuclear submarine fleets in Northern oceans. This modern network ties together Iceland, Scotland, and Norway and also brings in the Faroes and Greenland. We are all part of this same nuclear maritime system. The deepwater spying network goes from Greenland to Iceland and from there to Scotland. And I understand from Peter Segger of the Welsh Anti Nuclear Alliance speaking here today, that it was also discovered at a secret base in

Wales last year.

Through coastal links and ground satellite stations, the spying network sends messages about the movement of the deep water nuclear arsenal to the global computer centre, which last year, as you may remember, gave false alarms indicating that a nuclear war should immediately commence. The Orion and Phantom planes from Iceland and Norway serve the nuclear navy, and new runways on the islands off the Scottish coast, on Stornoway or on other islands would serve the same purpose. The story of the escalation in our countries is long and complex, but it has, regrettably, in recent years reached new heights. At the end of the 1970's Iceland was the first, and for a few years, the only country outside the US where AWACS planes were permanently stationed. Once again my nation was deceived. Even the Icelandic Foreign Minister was told by the Americans that the AWACS planes were only a slight improvement, a minor change, from the old radar planes. They were nothing special, not worth speaking about, or even mentioning. But when two years later, the selling of AWACS to Saudi Arabia caused a political explosion in the US, and the worst political crisis in the relationship between the Reagan Administration and Congress, the Icelandic people suddenly awoke to a nightmare. Our country had become the permanent site of the most advanced attack control instruments in the American airforce. The AWACS constitute a revolution in military technology: they can control a fleet of over 100 attack planes, and guide such massive attacks with a shocking accuracy. We then realised that there were only two countries in the whole world where the Americans permanently stationed these new military wonders; Iceland and Saudi Arabia. The latter you will know is in the heat of the Middle East conflict, the former in the centre of the ocean between Scotland, Norway and Greenland.

When airborne, the AWACS control the whole region from the Scottish coast right up to Greenland. Their operation in our area proves, by their very being there, the emphasis which the superpowers put on the military section of the waters between our countries. We, and the Middle East, are the only areas where the AWACS are in operation. But the military section regrettably

keeps on escalating. You are fighting Trident, and you are fighting Stornoway. We in Iceland have been fighting new plans which came out two months ago, for a new launch harbour for the American Navy, and more sophisticated fuel facilities which will enable the American Navy to keep operating in the area for months without having to return back to the US. And similar things have happened in Norway.

The plans for Scotland, for Iceland and for Norway are linked to the decision made by the Reagan government to give priority to strengthen the Navy arm of the American nuclear arsenal; increase the submarine strength in the North Atlantic; and transform battleships into floating carrier stations of Cruise missiles. Therefore we, the people of these countries, and especially we in the peace movement, face a gruesome reality. We are in the centre of a region which is being developed into a major oceanic nuclear arsenal. And Trident, Stornoway, Iceland and Norway are just pawns on the same chessboard.

In the late 1970's it was decided to make continental Europe the site for a new nuclear escalation; and we all know the campaign which followed, a campaign which has become so strong that it might succeed in reversing that decision.

But the logic of what has been happening in recent months and years in Scotland, in Iceland, and in Norway, means that in the early 1980's, the oceans off our coasts will be the key site of the future nuclear arsenal. All our coasts, and the islands off these coasts, will be used to keep nuclear navies supplied. It is our immediate task to join hands in fighting these plans: to raise the demand for a nuclear-free Northern Europe, both on land and at sea. We must work to obtain the same public support as our friends in Holland, in Germany and in Belgium have obtained. And we, the peaceworkers of Scotland, Iceland and Norway, Wales and other countries, must achieve the same degree of co-operation and co-ordination of our efforts as our friends on the Continent have achieved.

I therefore want to put forward the suggestion here today, that we

resolve to hold, next summer or perhaps this autumn, a conference of the North European Peace Movements, and discuss the specific tasks facing us in the North coastal countries. We should invite participation from Norway, Denmark, from Greenland, Faroes, as well as from Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Iceland, and any others who are concerned about the developments in the North Atlantic Ocean and lands. Scotland would be a suitable home for such a conference. The programme could include an analysis of the existing military system, which links our countries and oceans into a unified nuclear network. And we could increase the information about the future plans of the superpowers to strengthen this network. We must explain to people why nuclear-free zones must not only cover land, but also sea. And I believe that we have a golden source of convincing arguments. For there is great danger from the nuclear submarine fleet sailing close to our land masses, even if war doesn't break out. The danger also exists in peacetime. The danger from nuclear accidents in our oceans, creating radioactivity in the strong oceanic currents which criss-cross the North Atlantic and which will pollute the fishing stocks in our waters as well as harming the general environment of every country in Northern Europe.

We have not pointed out to the public that every day there are a number of floating deep sea nuclear plants in our waters, moving between Scotland, Iceland, Norway and Greenland. The Three Mile Island accident in America taught the public a valuable lesson about the dangers of radioactivity. And it has been proved that these floating monsters are not safe in peacetime. They therefore constitute, here and now, not only in war, a tremendous danger. We must make this danger of a peacetime nuclear accident in our coastal waters a major part of our campaign. By their very existence, the nuclear submarines constitute not a deterrence, but a threat, not against the Russians, but against ourselves. If and when such an accident occurs in peacetime, in the 200 miles of fishing zones around Scotland, or Iceland, or around Norway, it will be too late to learn from the fate of the American Three Mile Island experience.

Let us, dear friends, resolve here today to link the people of Scot-

land and England and Wales with those of Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Faroes and Greenland. We must resolve to link them into a strong popular front which will successfully stop this future nuclear nightmare. We must institute a joint campaign and agree on a common programme; turning the oceans as well as the lands into nuclear-free zones. We must prevent the transportation of the nuclear arsenal from the continent into the ocean. We must co-operate with our continental friends in making all of Europe free of nuclear weapons.

We have, as we say in Iceland, raised the call for a nuclear-free Europe, not only from Poland to Portugal, but also from Iceland to Italy; from the North Sea to the Mediterranean.

STORNOWAY: KEEP NATO OUT

Angus McCormack

Sandwick, the village in which I live, wraps itself unwillingly around the southern end of the main runway at Stornoway airport. In 1977 the Community Council discovered that the Western Isles Islands Council had approved an application for planning clearance from the Ministry of Defence to lengthen the runway at Stornoway and add fuel facilities. The Western Isles Islands Council did not realise the implications of the Ministry of Defence plan but Sandwick Community Council did and it resolved to oppose the plan. Immediately a campaign was launched to have the Islands Council reverse its decision. Sandwick Community Council was joined by Loch A' Tuath Community Council from the north end of the runway and together they organised a thorough and vigorous campaign gaining the support of the local Labour, Scottish National and Liberal parties, the Free Church, many other island community councils, the local MP and finally after a blanket lobby of all local councillors and much local publicity, the Western Isles Islands Council was persuaded to change its decision and oppose the Ministry of Defence on 29 June 1978 – almost a year after the campaign was started.

It was following this initial success that Keep NATO Out was formed with the remit to oppose by all means open to it the extension of MoD/NATO activity at Stornoway Airport in whatever form such extension of activity be proposed and in particular where these proposals seriously affected the island way of life.

The KNO committee was formed at a packed public meeting held in Stornoway on 29 October 1979. This meeting was the culmination of steadily increasing opposition to the siting of a NATO base at Stornoway, which had begun two years beforehand.

Because of the total and vigorous opposition to the MoD plan, KNO had a broad-based local support on which to build. The committee had three priorities:—

- (1) to establish the local support and increase it
- (2) to continue to support the WIIC in its opposition to the MoD/NATO plans and
- (3) to persuade the Secretary of State for Scotland that the plans for Stornoway were a violation of the rights of the local people and strategically irrelevant.

The commitment to these tasks was astonishing. The KNO committee numbered ten initially and five more individuals were co-opted. The committee met several times per week if necessary and at least weekly. Plans were laid and carried through with total dedication, and local support was tapped to assist in a door-to-door canvass of the villages nearest to the airport. This resulted in a petition of 4,300 signatures and 2,000 written individual objections were collected and lodged with the Secretary of State for Scotland. Simultaneously information was collected, collated and disseminated to the local people, and further afield, stating the case against the base and highlighting the devious nature of the MoL whose brief "runway" plans had escalated to:—

- (1) 2 twin runways
- (2) a mile long under sea pipe
- (3) massive new storage tanks
- (4) hardened aircraft shelters —

in short a NATO base configuration. At the same time the cost had risen from £6 million in 1977 to £40 million in 1980.

Considerable energy was directed into sustaining the WIIC stance of opposition to the MoD. Much underhand letter writing and pressure was placed on the Islands Council by the MoD, and KNO used the information ruthlessly to bolster the islanders and in particular the councillors in their resolve. On 22 May 1980 the WIIC threw out the renewed plans of the MoD by 28 votes to 2, a considerable success for our lobby and a great credit to the tenacity of the WIIC who were under considerable pressure to capitulate.

Finally KNO plagued the Secretary of State with evidence of local objections to the plans and counter strategic arguments. That together with the splendid opposition of the WIIC led to the calling of a Public Planning Inquiry on 16 March 1981. By now the KNO had gained the support of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, the Scottish National Party, the STUC, the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland, CND and END. Many of these bodies contributed to the written evidence to the Public Inquiry and the KNO produced a lengthy submission detailing its case against the base. The case presented by the WIIC at the Public Inquiry was irrefutable on Planning grounds alone. The MoD had no case. Many independent observers commented that the WIIC had won the inquiry hands down and indeed they did. The reporter to the inquiry concluded, "I therefore consider that the Islands Council was quite justified in reaching their decision not to approve the development".

George Younger, the Scottish Secretary's decision to overturn the result of the Public Inquiry is of course entirely undemocratic and was rejected by the Islands Council at an emergency meeting on 7 December 1981 when the Council called for a Public Inquiry into the strategic necessity for having a major NATO base at Stornoway. That same evening KNO called a public meeting. A packed Town Hall was addressed by eight well-known local figures representing politics, peace groups, the church and cultural groups. The meeting gave KNO a unanimous mandate to reject the Secretary of State's decision and to carry forward the fight.

Immediately KNO expanded its organisation and formed 5 sub-committees to further its campaign. At the moment KNO is conducting a massive lobby of all MPs and constituency parties and it is our endeavour to have the withdrawal of the plans for Stornoway made Labour Party Policy at this year's conference in Blackpool.

A blanket canvass of all Trade Unions and Trades Council has taken place and support is gradually building in this area.

KNO is determined to win. Never has there been a more deter-

mined group, supported by such a united people. In the islands we are fighting to support our way of life. We see it threatened by alien presence. The peace will be shattered with medically injurious effect, the language will be eroded and another minority culture will be lost. Not if we can help it.

The Real Reason for the Stornoway Plans

KNO's concern is not just selfish and insular. The fight against the MoD's plans for Stornoway should be seen as a vital part of the fight against nuclear war and for peace in the UK. The future of Stornoway Airpost is really about the ability of the United States to fight a 'theatre' nuclear war in Europe.

The MoD would have us believe that Stornoway's new NATO base is essential to the UK defence. The base is necessary, they tell us, to help plug the Iceland-Faroes Gap through which flow substantial numbers of Soviet warships, mainly submarines, and aircraft. The MoD state that these aircraft, and particularly the "Backfire Bomber", pose a very real threat to the UK since they can come at us from behind, that is the North West, and using stand-off missiles obliterate the Holy Loch etc. before we know what has hit us. That is rubbish!

Like most arguments of the MoD and the UK government only the facts necessary to hoodwink the local populace are put forward, and similar types of subterfuge are being used at Molesworth, Greenham Common and Coulport and indeed many other locations of lesser magnitude. The argument for not releasing the true facts is that Defence matters cannot be understood by ordinary mortals like you and me and hence are best kept secret for our national security. Meanwhile they stick a NATO base or a Cruise missile in our back gardens and they expect us to say nothing. It is this kind of closed-minded deviousness that CND has had to deal with all these years and the enormous growth in the CND movement is evidence of a population no longer prepared to accept the lies of government after government. I welcome this growing resolve to withstand the secret state and to demand a voice in how we live and die.

In the Western Isles KNO could have accepted the MoD arguments. They put a great deal of effort into their PR job. They took over the front page of the *Stornoway Gazette* and sent a high-ranking delegation to the islands to subdue the natives. KNO rejected their arguments and fought back with facts. Here are a few of them:—

No Soviet aircraft or submarine leaves the Kola peninsula without NATO knowing about it in a very short time. Aircraft are tracked down from the time they leave base by the Norwegian airforce, by radar, by satellite, by the USAF and our own airforce. Submarines pass through a network of undersea surveillance systems and are then tracked by aircraft, ships and NATO submarines. In short no aircraft nor ship could reach UK territory without interception and indeed such interceptions take place every week of the year.

Defence from the “Backfire”, or a new Soviet Target?

And what of the Backfire Bomber — this threat to the UK that makes Stornoway so essential?

- (1) It is substantially slower than the Phantom or F14 or the new Tornado. Its maximum speed at low level is only 560 knots. A Tornado can do 800 knots.
- (2) It is a very large aircraft like the Vulcan and an easy target, and any flying at top speed to avoid NATO fighters dramatically shortens its range.
- (3) The new AS-6 Kingfish missile has not yet come into use, suggesting problems in its development.
- (4) Not *one* Backfire has penetrated or indeed come anywhere near UK airspace since their deployment.

In other words there is no need for Stornoway's additional facilities to combat the threat from the Backfire. Indeed if we examine the details of war strategies for the North Atlantic, NATO's plans for Stornoway merely create a *new* individual target for a Warsaw

Pact strike, *without* contributing anything to maritime defence.

The Backfires concerned are for anti-shipping (i.e. they're the USSR's attempt at redressing the huge NATO superiority in surface ships). They do not carry weapons which could be used for strikes on mainland targets. All Naval Backfires seen by NATO so far have been carrying a single AS-4 "Kitchen" missile. This is a "stand-off" missile which is fired from up to 150 miles away from the target. It may carry a nuclear warhead, but no confirmation of this has yet been published. Even if an attempt to attack the UK with an AS-4 was made, the likelihood of getting within 150 miles of any UK target — even Stornoway or Shetland — undetected would be very slim indeed.

Nor does Backfire have any anti-aircraft capability, so with the current reduction in emphasis on reinforcement from USA by sea and increased emphasis on *air* reinforcement, the reinforcement of Europe is actually moving towards immunity from Soviet attack. There is not a single Soviet fighter aircraft, nor are any under development, which has the range to attack transport aircraft in the Eastern Atlantic. Backfire, and some of the older Soviet maritime patrol aircraft, have the range, but no anti-aircraft capability. So Backfire has only a limited, and declining, range of targets, none of which are targets on the UK mainland (or islands).

The important point, however, is the effect that NATO's superiority in anti-submarine warfare has on the way in which the Soviet Union would be expected to react to NATO in the North Atlantic. NATO has superiority in *all* weapons systems in the Eastern Atlantic and Channel. This is further borne out in an article in *Defence*, June 1980, p. 436 — "The Western nations claim that none of their SSBNs (nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed strategic missile submarines) have ever been detected by Soviet ASW forces while on patrol".

The result of all this is that, since the USSR has only limited ability to operate its submarine forces freely in the Atlantic, and since its own ability to counter NATO submarines is very weak, it is forced into a strategy of attacking the shore-based facilities

which support NATO anti-submarine operations — i.e. all airfields designated for use by Long Range Marine Patrol Aircraft (Kinloss, Machrihanish, Stornoway) and the shore bases of hunter-killer submarines and anti-submarine ships (Faslane, Loch Ewe, Campbeltown Loch, etc.). In other words, even though Stornoway may not be used much by such aircraft, NATO's *superiority* in Anti-Submarine Warfare leads *directly* to Stornoway becoming a Soviet target. If NATO *didn't* have such superiority, there would be less likelihood of the USSR attacking Stornoway!

NATO actually applies the same philosophy in Central Europe as the USSR is expected to in the North Atlantic — faced with considerable superiority of Warsaw Pact strike aircraft in Central Europe, NATO's strategy is not to concentrate on shooting them all down as they come across the border, but to launch waves of air strikes against airfields and other support facilities well behind the front line, so that the Warsaw Pact air offensive cannot be a *sustained* one. In the case of Stornoway, the USSR would be likely to act very quickly — if a "limited" war broke out, the USSR would want to preserve its ability to launch a strategic missile attack on the USA, so it would want to reduce NATO's ability to detect and track Soviet SSBN's as quickly as possible. Since they are outnumbered in aircraft, an air strike on Stornoway, Kinloss etc. by Backfires would be unlikely to succeed, and anyway would be too slow, and might lack accuracy. So the likelihood would be a strike with missiles — most likely a one-megaton warhead carried on an SS-4, SS-5 or SS-20 missile.

In other words in terms of UK defence Stornoway is overdefence. So of course is the Cruise missile deployment and the ultimate lunacy TRIDENT. All three are part of an appalling misuse of resources further eroding an economy bled dry by spending on armaments. In 1981–82 the UK government will spend in excess of £12.6 Billion on the military — proportionately more than any other European government.

American Plans for Europe

Now let us take another MoD claim. Stornoway is essential for the

new breed of modern aircraft. That is the Tornado. A new larger runway is necessary plus a back-up runway, parking pads, hardened aircraft shelters, new electronics and so on. Permit me to quote from an article by Group Captain R.A. Mason, Director of Defence Studies at the RAF Staff College Bracknell. He speaks with great pride of the wonderful death machine the Tornado is, but crucially for Stornoway he says, "The final advantage is its ability to operate with a full weapon and fuel load from less than 1,000 yards of concrete." Stornoway's present runway is in excess of 2,000 yards.

Now let me look at the real need for Stornoway's upgrading. Here I enter the European theatre.

Nils Orvik, Professor of Political Studies at Queens University, Kingston, Canada propounded the idea that a new NATO base be established in the NW UK in the NATO review of April 1980. Indeed the plan existed for some time before that in the military mind. There are two theories attached to the need for the NATO base at Stornoway in the European context.

It is essential as a fall-back base should the Icelanders kick the Americans out of Keflavik. There is an ever present fear of such a happening and perhaps Olafur will have something to say on the subject. And we know that the US Navy considers Stornoway a suitable base even now for the P3C Orion submarine surveillance aircraft presently using Keflavik.

However, the second theory is much more credible to KNO. This is that Stornoway is being upgraded to cope with the huge USAF transport aircraft that will be needed to transfer reinforcements to Europe in the event of America's "limited Nuclear war", and for replenishing over 1,500 US combat aircraft crossing the Atlantic to reinforce Europe.

This ties in, of course, with the deployment of Cruise missiles in Europe, with the substantial prepositioning of supplies and armaments in Europe and with the American insistence on European governments increasing the NATO Infrastructure programme fin-

ance for the year by £3.2 Billion.

This last financial programme has real significance for Stornoway because £38.5 million of the £40 million to be spent at Stornoway is to come from the Infrastructure fund. At the moment NATO is funding only high priority works for "use by all NATO forces", and in order to ensure that these go ahead the US is increasing its 27.4 per cent contributions for projects like Stornoway to one third.

In other words the development at Stornoway is largely American funded. Indeed Congress directed the US Defence Department to use infrastructure programmes "to the maximum end" to fund US construction requirements in Europe.

A further interesting point about Stornoway is that control there lies in the hands of SACLANT (Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic) rather than SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe). SACLANT has, as the name suggests, responsibility for the protection of sea and air routes for reinforcements coming from America. In contrast, RAF fighters which defend the British mainland are controlled by SACEUR, not SACLANT.

As NATO has committed itself to the strategy of flexible response, i.e. a European war-fighting strategy, the USA has realised increasingly that, with the speed at which any European conflict would escalate, and with increasing economic problems leading to inability of most European members to commit more resources to defence, the US would have to send enormous reinforcements within a few days. This has meant an increasing emphasis on:

- (1) Prepositioning of supplies and equipment in Europe, particularly weapons — to save transporting them from the USA, in a hurry. Current prepositioned stocks are reckoned to save 800 flights from the USA by C-141 Starlifter transports.
- (2) Air reinforcement rather than sea reinforcement. This means not only the entire resources of the USAF Military Aircraft Command, but also the requisitioning of virtually all available

wide-bodied airliners in the USA.

The air reinforcement is planned to involve well over a million men (including one entire US Army Corps) and in addition, at least 60 squadrons of US tactical combat aircraft — i.e. around 1,500 aircraft (Phantoms, A-10s, F-111s, F-15s, F-16s, A-7s). The annual 'Reforger' (REturn of FORces to GERmany) exercises are designed to exercise and demonstrate the USA's ability to reinforce Europe; and the 'Coronet' and 'Crested Cap' exercises, which are carried out throughout the year, with deployments of tactical combat aircraft from the USA to Europe for several weeks at a time. Deployments of B-52 bombers to the UK recommenced in 1979 after a gap of about 15 years. With this vast number of aircraft crossing the Atlantic, first of all to practise fighting a war in Europe, and ultimately to actually fight one, there can be no doubt that *all* airfields in the UK with the right facilities will be used. Stornoway is in *the* prime position to support these deployments, as it was during World War 2.

It is clear therefore that Stornoway is part of the great NATO plan to fight its nuclear war in Europe. It is further evidence of the overdefence and overkill situation that exists in the world today. It is further evidence of the escalation of armaments production and war preparations.

Of course the most heinous crime of all is the steady, nay increasing, deployment of nuclear weapons both strategic and theatre. The idea of a Nuclear-Free Zone in Europe is one which KNO espouses and KNO congratulates the initiative of END in calling for such a zone with vigour and increasing effectiveness.

These campaigns must be concerted and sustained. Never let any hurdle dissuade you in your search for peace. Pursue any legal avenue that will advance the movement one step. KNO has shown that by vigorous and determined resistance delay can be achieved and time bought is useful.

KNO has fought from strength. It is well-informed and has strong local support. But I have travelled afar in gathering support. With

the help of CND and END I, and others, marched across Europe last summer to Paris. On our way we spoke to groups of UK peace loving people. I was struck forcibly by the strong bond that peace seeking brings and the friendliness it creates. And in Paris the feeling was of happy, determined people.

George Lansbery; 20th century socialist and pacifist, wrote in his will:—

“I am a convinced internationalist and like to feel I am just a tiny part of universal life which will one day break down all divisions and make mankind one great eternal unit both in life and death.”

I feel as he; the European Peace Movement grows East and West. Let us cleave a zone of peace between war-mongers that will grow in friendship.

Remember peace is not a day's commitment, not a week's nor a year's but a lifetime's. One of our tasks within that commitment must be to fight the growing militarisation of the North Atlantic as part of NATO's plans to turn Britain into a giant airstrip from which to launch its 'flexible' nuclear war.

CONCLUSION:**THE PROSPECTS FOR A NUCLEAR-FREE NORTH ATLANTIC**

Both Olafur Grimsson and Angus McCormack have spoken about the importance of their countries for NATO in the North Atlantic. It is apparent that this ocean has been defined by both superpowers as a territory to be fought over. The fact that the territory is water is not so important for superpowers' expansionist policies. We in the peace movements of Europe are only now coming to recognise that the dangers of nuclear conflict exist over sea or land: weapons do not recognise coast-lines nor end-of-conflict zones. Such demarcation is up to pressure from peace groups.

The difficulties of peace movement influence on sea areas are immense, but even the most sophisticated of weapons require shore facilities. Without the developments in Iceland, at Stornoway and elsewhere around the North Atlantic, there would be no possibility of these waters serving as a deployment area for nuclear weapons on a massive scale. Successful opposition to nuclear bases ashore is therefore a vital first step in reducing the nuclear threat in the North Atlantic.

The prospects for peace are also greatly improved by the long tradition of independent foreign policy in the Nordic countries. Norway and Denmark have successfully maintained a non-nuclear stance despite remaining in NATO, and notwithstanding the presence of American nuclear-capable aircraft at Keflavik, the Icelanders have rejected the storage of nuclear weapons in peacetime. Moreover, initiatives for a Nordic nuclear weapon-free zone from Sweden, Finland, Norway, and, it must be said, the Soviet Union over the past two decades, place the countries bordering the North Atlantic in a prominent position in the quest for a European nuclear-free zone.

The rapid expansion into the North Atlantic of the means to wage nuclear war makes it vital that the positive aspects of Nordic foreign policy, and the successes of the peace movement in north west Europe, be built on, and extended to encompass the North

Atlantic Ocean itself.

As the peace movement in continental Europe gathers strength in opposing the deployment of Cruise, Pershing II, SS-20, Trident and the neutron bomb, it is imperative that the superpowers should not be allowed to shift their war plans to the North Atlantic. It is for this reason that Glasgow END calls on all North Atlantic countries to support its Conference for a Nuclear-Free North Atlantic in April 1983. The objective is to draw together peace groups from all Northern countries, to exchange information on the nuclear militarisation of the region, and to co-ordinate activities opposing it throughout Northern Europe.