

Greenpeace ships confront whalers at sea

Public relations guerrillas also challenge nuclear power, sealing

(Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series on the Greenpeace Foundation. Friday's installment described how the foundation operates in the field. For those interested, a chapter of Greenpeace Oregon is being formed in Eugene. For more information contact Bruce Walker at the Survival Center, Suite 1 EMU, ext. 4356.)

VANCOUVER, Canada (AP) — While Greenpeace's offices and staff functions may not match the modern chrome and plastic image of most business operations, the foundation's performance in its field operations can only be described as professional.

Those who turn out to be unsuitable for the Greenpeace expeditions and voyages are put ashore or otherwise sent back at the earliest possible opportunity.

Savvy in the ways of public relations, Greenpeace has become almost a household word in Canada. Watson claims the support of 90 per cent of the nation's population "outside Newfoundland."

For its \$200,000 antiwhaling mission this summer, Greenpeace chartered a 153-foot retired minesweeper capable of a 12-14 knot pace to keep up with the Russian and Japanese factory ships.

To locate the whalers, the mission carried radar and equipment to find the direction of radio signals, plus a detailed report of the movements of the whaling fleets in previous years. Watson says the report was obtained through a source in Washington, D.C.

The captain was George Kurotva, a Czechoslovakian refugee from a Siberian prison camp and veteran seaman.

Hunter reported that the Russians were kept from firing at about 90 whales and probably were kept away from another 300.

The late winter seal campaign didn't go so well.

Presenting figures indicating the seals might be wiped out by 1983, Greenpeace planned to halt the hunt by spraying organic green dye on the young animals.

The Canadian government quickly adopted regulations banning the spraying and barred



Drawing by Steve Sandstrom

Greenpeace's rented helicopters from approaching the herds.

Hostility and threats of violence from Newfoundlanders also helped convince Greenpeace to call off the spraying plans.

Next year, Watson says Greenpeace will be back, using tactics similar to those of the antiwhaling campaign — placing themselves between the hunters and their prey.

He is quick to add that the main target will be the Norwegian fleets rather than the Canadian landmen.

Greenpeace also has urged a halt to the government's CANDU nuclear reactor program, saying the Canadian process results in too much leftover plutonium — the raw material for atomic bombs.

In a sworn statement last June, Hunter said he had been offered an ounce of black-market plutonium, enough to give thousands of persons lung cancer.

"Our worst enemy is the Canadian government," says Watson. Few governments have been friendly.

The first Greenpeaceers were arrested by the U.S. Coast Guard for taking on supplies in Alaska without checking properly with customs.

French Navy officers and sailors threw cameras and other equipment into the sea and beat up the crew of the Greenpeace III as it approached Mururoa Atoll to try to prevent another nuclear test in 1973.

But one of the Greenpeace crew hid a roll of film, proving fraudulent the French claims that the incident never occurred.

Still on appeal in the French courts is a damage award to David McTaggart, skipper and owner of the 38-foot ketch, who nearly lost an eye in the beating.

After Amchitka, Watson says, "We sort of disbanded, fell apart and got together for the Mururoa thing. Then we sort of fell apart and got together again on the whaling thing."

Since Greenpeace V, the first antiwhaling mission in 1975, the organization has been an ongoing operation.

A \$2-a-ticket lottery now being planned is the first big fundraising drive not tied to a specific campaign.

Watson and Gary Simmerman of San Francisco, head of the fledgling U.S. Greenpeace organization, say they expect to continue the same kind of tactics while joining groups like Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club and other environmental and pacifist groups in more sedate activities such as petitions and legal battles.

Meanwhile they are pushing for proliferation — lots of affiliated Greenpeacees, all over, rather than a single ever-expanding organization.

Ross Wursthorn, an Indiana native and sometimes provincial social worker in Vancouver who went on this year's whaling mission as a cameraman, says he and Kurotva hope to get another boat and form a Greenpeace unit in Hawaii to pursue the antiwhaling effort more aggressively.

"We intend to stop them from whaling," he said, "and we won't stop until we do."

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