

Environmental protection: Greenpeace

The Americans Jim Bohlen, Irving Stone and Paul Cote founded the organization Greenpeace in 1970. At first it was called "Don't make a wave committee".

It all began with nuclear tests on the island Amchitka, near Alaska. Jim Bohlen, Irving Stone and their wives Marie and Dorothy planned to do something against these tests. Their goal was to stage a protest and passive resistance by staying in a boat near the coast of Amchitka.

It took more than a year to raise \$15000 through donations. But it was enough money for a very old boat that they bought.

Their protest could not block the tests, but it caused a strong resonance in the (American) public. After 4 months the American Nuclear Commission was forced to abort the tests.

In 1972, the group around Bohlen, Stone and Cote was named "Greenpeace Foundation". The group expanded its protests against the French nuclear test.

On May 1972, David McTaggart started with his yacht Vega to the French nuclear test site at the Moruroa Atoll in the South Pacific. He reached the restricted military zone at the island in June.

French warships and helicopters tried to drive him and his crew out of the area. On the first day of July a French warship rammed the Vega. The yacht was damaged severely and the French towed it to Moruroa. The crew tried to resume its mission after repairing the yacht. But French soldiers ambushed the ship and arrested McTaggart.

The French government told the public that the crew had an accident, but Ann-Marie Horne could smuggle out photos of the attack by the French warship. The pictures were published worldwide in the press and France had to abort its nuclear tests for the year 1973.

In 1974 Greenpeace turned its attention to whales, which were nearly extinct.

The first action against whale hunting started in 1975. With two boats, the Phylis Cormack and the Vega, the environmentalists humiliated the Soviet whaling ships by taking videos that alarmed the world.

In 1976 Greenpeace started actions to protect seals and in 1982 the European union enacted the ban on the import of sealskin.

In 1978 Greenpeace got his first own ship, the Rainbow Warrior.

Greenpeace discovered that Great Britain and other European countries dumped radioactive waste into the ocean and they started actions against this environmental pollution.

In 1979 Greenpeace protested against American nuclear submarines, nuclear waste and nuclear power stations in the USA and Canada.

1979 was also year of the birth of Greenpeace International with its head quarter in Washington D.C and later in Amsterdam.

In 1981 Greenpeace launched a new ship, the Sirius. 1981 was also the year when Greenpeace Germany was founded. Its first campaign was against the chemical industry.

In 1984, the French secret service sank the Rainbow Warrior near Auckland (New Zealand). The Greenpeace-photographer Fernando Pereira drowned during this action. Finally, in 1987 after a long legal battle the international court of justice ordered France to pay 15 Million DM to Greenpeace. The wreck of the Rainbow Warrior was sunken as an artificial reef in the bay of Maturai (New Zealand).

In 1985 Greenpeace launched a river ship, the Beluga. The ship is named for the small white whales that used to appear in European rivers before pollution. The Beluga was built in 1960 and purchased from the city of Bremen in 1984. Greenpeace workers and some 40 volunteers spent over 10,000 hours converting the former in-shore fire-fighting patrol boat into a laboratory ship for work in rivers, estuaries, harbours and coastal waters. Exactly four years after the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior Greenpeace launched the Rainbow Warrior 2 in Hamburg.

In its 33 year history Greenpeace undertook numerous actions against nuclear test, whale hunting, seal hunting and pollution.

The ships were often confiscated and the crews arrested by police or the military, but usually not longer than two or three days.

In the last years Greenpeace opened offices in many countries like the USA, Great Britain, Australia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Italy and many others.

In 33 years, Greenpeace had more than 50 successful actions against pollution and for the protection of the environment. The most important success for Greenpeace activists is that more and more people learned about the threats of pollution against the natural environment.

And, Greenpeace is still fighting throughout the whole world for this big goal.

(This text provides a small insight into the organization Greenpeace and its actions. It's only a brief excerpt and one could write books about this subject.)