

## NEIGHBOURS AS FRIENDS, NOT ENEMIES.

We, a Nordic group of people working for peace-and cultural activities, and others interested in the subject matter, have recently been on a ten days peace-and dialogue trip to Russia. Our intention with the journey was hopefully to contribute both to mutual understanding as well as to prevent rearmament and war.

We have met cultural institutions and organisations, among others, the Russian branches of Physicians against Nuclear Weapons, Pugwash, the Gorbachev Foundation, the National Committee for Co-operation with the UN's Environmental Organisation UNEP, UNESCO, the Federation of Peace and Consideration, For Saving the People, St. Petersburg Peace Council, Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg and Movement for Conscientious Objectors from Military Service.

We are overwhelmed by the warm reception and interest meeting us everywhere. We were told how pleased they were for coming "with open and friendly faces".

We have enjoyed the beauty of Moscow, St. Petersburg, the landscape and the small places we visited along the old waterways, where also the Vikings sailed hundreds of years ago.

Our experiences have increased the wish to strengthen the contacts we made, so important to secure peace. In the spirit of the UN Agreement to "create peace through peaceful means", we suggest governments, media and people in general should focus on:

- Stop creating images of people as enemies, using the rhetoric of the Cold War. This belongs to the past!
- Support Nordic-Russian people-to-people communication politically, practically and economically.
- Promote real and positive knowledge about Russia through visits, dialogues and exchange through the media and in political discussions.
- Re-evaluate the sanctions against Russia.
- Invite President Putin and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Lavrov, for conversations among neighbours in all the Nordic countries, like we have seen in Finland.
- Sign- and ratify the UN Treaty against Nuclear Weapons.
- Reduce the defence budget in the Nordic Countries like Russia has done. (Cfr. Report from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, about military expenses in the world, 2017).

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