

Margrit Albers



“Bad Boys Won’t Get into our Home”

**Resistance should be fun—
Nonviolence as the leading
principle**

7

Margrit Albers, born in 1946, attended the meetings to found KURVE Wustrow four decades ago. From 1981 to 1983, she was, next to Wolfgang Hertle, the first full-time trainer at the then very young “Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action”. At that time as well as in later years, she played a leading role in integrating KURVE Wustrow into the Wendland’s resistance movement against nuclear energy.

“If you want to create a world without violence, you have to get there without violence.”

Margrit Albers has no doubts about the positive impact of nonviolent action. “There is clear evidence of this in scientific studies”, says the educationist who has been closely associated with KURVE Wustrow from its very beginnings. One might get more public attention with violent means, but this would destroy the very goal one is trying to achieve. “If you want to create a world without violence, you have to get there without violence”, is Margrit’s deep conviction. “You have to anticipate your goal in the course of your action.”

Nevertheless her nonviolent activities were spectacular enough to raise a lot of public awareness and reach more and more people. It started in the 1970s with her involvement in the organisation “Nonviolent Action Husum”. She took part in sit-ins to protest against the atomic power station at Brokdorf and government plans

for further nuclear plants in the tidal mud flats of Northern Germany. “At Whitsun in 1977, we organised a big protest march which was also attended by anti-nuclear activists from Denmark”, Margrit remembers. “The Danes came across the border singing cheerfully which really impressed me. At that time, we Germans were far too serious and dour to be able to sing during demonstrations.”

Her later campaigns, however, displayed creativity and a great sense of humour, too. After moving to Wustrow in 1981, Margrit got involved with the “Gorleben Women” who protested against the nuclear waste repository at Gorleben and the transport of so-called Castor containers with burnt-out nuclear fuel rods to this site. “A particularly nice initiative in the early 1980s was our ‘living room’ right outside the intermediate waste disposal facility”, she recalls laughing. “On their

Photo: Margrit Albers



"I'm convinced that the principle of nonviolence has given a high degree of credibility to the anti-nuclear resistance movement in the Wendland."

tractors, local farmers delivered furniture items like a settee, a coffee table, arm chairs, a sideboard and even a vanity table, thus demonstrating in a self-ironic manner that the anti-nuclear resistance movement in the Wendland was spear-headed by women.”

The slogan of this activity: “Bad boys won’t get into our home!” Obviously, policemen arrived and were promptly offered chocolates on a silver tray. Some officers accepted them, looking a bit embarrassed, but still repeated their order to remove the “living room”. At least, they didn’t intervene straight away, but waited until the farmers came back with their tractors to pick up the furniture items. A potentially nasty confrontation was thus averted.

10

“Resistance should be fun”, says Margrit. She and her fellow activists certainly did have fun in the mid-1990s when they spread soft soap over the road to the nuclear waste repository, shortly before the arrival of another Castor transport. “We make the nuclear industry skid”, was the slogan of this nonviolent initiative. During an earlier demonstration, the activists wore black clothes, carried scythes and chanted “Death is a Grim Reaper from Gorleben”. The letter X, a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement in the Wendland, was re-enacted by wearing bright yellow gloves and

crossing arms. And in later years, some activists who had grown older thought of yet another creative way to protest against the incoming nuclear waste containers: Instead of sitting down on the road, they brought chairs to the loading crane area. There they sat, sang cheerful songs and offered coffee and cake to all bystanders, including the police.

“I’ve never seen policemen as ‘evil enemies’, just like I see political opponents first and foremost as human beings”, Margrit stresses. She recalls one blockade at which she bumped into a policeman who ironically had just attended one of her educational training courses on public speaking. “When the Castor with the nuclear waste finally rolled into the repository, he had tears in his eyes like me, and he told me that, just like us activists, he had never wished this to happen in his home area.”

Margrit is convinced that the principle of nonviolence has given a high degree of credibility to the anti-nuclear resistance movement in the Wendland. It had thus been possible to gain support from the local farmers who had initially been very skeptical and suspicious when more and more activists moved into their area. At the same time, groups prone to violence had been prevented from hijacking the Wendland resistance movement. In

Margrit's opinion, this is also a great merit of KURVE Wustrow: "This organisation lives and acts according to the principle of nonviolence and could thus convince more and more people of their goals." Furthermore, it was a great achievement to create public awareness for the problem of nuclear waste disposal and keep it alive over decades until today.

Nonviolence does certainly not exclude determined action when principles of human rights are being violated, as Margrit stresses. In the late 1970s, she lived in the village of Schreyahn where Neo-Nazis moved into a vacant flat. On 20th April, they celebrated Hitler's birthday and bawled out right-wing messages of hatred. Convinced that this had to be nipped in the bud, Margrit and other villagers went up to these people and told them clearly that their behaviour was not being tolerated. Further determined intervention by a united local popu-

lation finally paid off: The Neo-Nazis gave up and moved away from Schreyahn.

What has motivated her to remain involved in nonviolent action for such a long time? Margrit emphasises her deep conviction that such action is necessary to ensure peaceful coexistence of human beings and avert potential danger. She considers it vital to promote personal encounters and cooperation and to involve even opponents as much as possible rather than ostracising them from the very start. The principle of nonviolence was instilled into her by her parents already, and it has, as she says, determined her whole life, at the public-political as well as the private level.

"Instead of sitting down on the road, we brought chairs to the loading crane area. There we sat, sang cheerful songs and offered coffee and cake to all bystanders, including the police."