

ECOLOGICAL SELF-DEFENSE



Save Majs Hill –
No To Uranium In Nianfors

Agneta Enström Mineralbolaget i Stockholm AB (The Mineral Company in Stockholm) is the name of the company wanting to drill in the rock of the Majs hill, but that has met with surprisingly strong resistance from a countryside in revolt. In Nianfors, the local population has given up resultless symbolical actions for a real resistance, for the simple reason that protection of the bedrock equals self defence ecological self defence.

No-one in Nianfors wants to have anything to do with the test drillings, and even less with having a uranium mine as a future neighbor. This has made the villagers organize themselves with inspiring decisiveness.

We are going to do all that's in our power in order to stop the [assault], says their own press responsible Inge Sylvén. One can see how other communities have been affected by drilling and mining of uranium, and against this background we obviously choose life.

On a summer night's forest walk in 1800, the iron factory patron met a small, dirty woman, and spat after her. After that, his factory went downhill. This is the legend of the curse of Finnmajsa, in Nianfors, a small village southwest of Hudiksvall in the naturally rich Hälsingland. Today the threat of the patrons is again present, but this time, it's uranium they are after, disrespectfully trying to bulldoze over the whole local population.



road blockade
in Nianfors

Ecocide with state support

The inhabitants of Nianfors have reasons for their suspicions. The test drillings conducted by Sveriges Geologiska Undersökningar (Sweden's Geological Surveys) in the 1970-ies, and where multinational corporations continue drilling today, have affected the population gravely. Three Saami villages got deformed reindeer calfs in the years after the drillings, and SGU warned against drinking the water or picking berries in the area. Local medicians also noticed an increase in cancer cases in the region, and according to the surveys of the regional government the radon levels remarkably increased.

The environmental specialist and activist Louise Ågren, who comes from Enångar, one of the neighboring villa-

ges, says that uranium contamination in nature causes problems and health hazards that persist for long time and can aggravate practically infinitely. But despite consequences and risks being known and cold fact, the national mining authority, Bergstaten, has passed over two hundred permits for uranium prospecting in the last two years, and in several places drilling has already been commenced.

It's incomprehensible that the state sanctions and actively participates in a deadly activity such as the uranium industry, says Louise Ågren.

Because of uranium mining causing large-scale, dangerous and serious problems, it has usually happened in regions where people have small opportunities of protesting and defending themselves, such as sparsely populated or indigenous regions. Besides radionuclides, emissions of heavy metals, acid, and other forms of groundwater contamination are big problems. Louise Ågren emphasizes that mining and enriching of uranium also always carries the risk of proliferation, i.e. spreading, of nuclear weapons.

And the test drilling is in itself always the first step in a chain that leads to these potential disaster scenarios, she says. It must never be forgotten that uranium is exclusively used for nuclear power or nuclear weapons.

In Stockholm's Fria Tidning (Stockholm's Free Paper), Thomas Toivonen writes that the most remarkable and paradox argument for test drillings, that is used by authorities and drilling companies, is that they do not lead to any mining. But the fact is that the govern-



Majs Hill, the place where the test drillings are planned, is only 600m from the bathing area of Nianfors.

IN HÄLSINGLAND

ment lawfully can surpass municipal decisions and allow mining against the will of the local population. And according to the Euratom treaty from 1958, the EU is the owner of all fissionable material within the union, a fact that very possibly can be applied in the future.

Nature as living environment

The nature is differently valued by different people, and in Nianfors is clearly illustrated the conflict between those who have a personal relation to it (the villagers), and those who see it as a separate area (the mineral company). While for the local population it is a living environment and concretely signifying survival, it's merely a resource to exploit and make profit of for a company like Mineralbolaget i Stockholm AB.

In Nianfors, over 80 percent of the food fish comes from local waters, and the Majsja mountain, where they want to drill, lies on a peninsula in the Finnsjö lake, only 600 meters from the village. The hunt for uranium therefore threa-

tens to destroy the most fundamental of living prerequisites, as well as the locality's capabilities for self sufficiency in the future. These waters are furthermore the second largest of the municipality, and therefore an extremely important resource for so many more than just the people of Nianfors.

The struggle continues and spreads

Nowhere in the country the resistance against uranium drilling is as massive as in Nianfors, where the villagers besides having sent complaints to authorities, distributed information and protested, also have made blockades, and promised resistance with all means.

But the law is a knife that never cuts the one who holds it. Despite the impressive resistance the mineral company still have their permit, although for the moment they have postponed the drillings. For how long, the company's CEO Carl Wiktorsson does not want to tell, and therefore the villagers feel they can't really start relaxing.

We're on our guard and will do what is needed to protect us also in the future, promises Inge Sylvén. This is a question on life and death.

Perhaps it is the curse of Finnmajsa that's haunting, or the uncompromising resistance of the villagers that is delaying the company. In any case, the countryside rebels of Hälsingland have got a respite.

Now we're working on strengthening ourselves, says Inge Sylvén. We'll also help other villages to organize themselves.

And it's needed. For as the oil is running low and getting more expensive, prices are rising and the demand for uranium, as well as the threat of climate changes, have awakened interest in nuclear power again.

But Nianfors is a village with a future. A living countryside to be inspired by when it's late on earth, and the future is glowing radioactively.

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weblinks:

web page of the initiative in Nianfors:
nianfors.nu/engvers.html
 Uranium Project. Drillings Delayed:
greenkids.de/europas-atomerbe/index.php/News:Uranium_Project_Drillings_Delayed_Sweden

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