



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

OSLO, NORWAY

May
NEWSLETTER
05/2016

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Number 410



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Forum Diary

DATE	EVENT	TIME	PAGE
June 1	IF Singers' Spring Concert	19:00	8
June 2	Inger J. Rasmussen - Hovedøya	11:30	5
June 6	Annual General Meeting	18:00	4
June 13	Fritzøe House & Colin Archer - Larvik	08:15	5

Committee leaders:

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MONTHLY MEETINGS	Elizabeth S. Rasmussen	mob. 406 02 686
SPECIAL EVENTS	Wenche Mohr	mob. 901 14 259

From the President



Dear members,

The wonderful month of May, praised by poets everywhere, is here again!

And although the Norwegian Constitution Day, with its brass bands, jubilant children and masses of flags and national costumes, will be over when this *Newsletter* reaches you, there are still plenty of hot dogs and ice cream to enjoy.

Yet another Forum year is coming to an end, and what a fantastic year it has been! However, there are still a couple of events to enjoy before we close for the summer.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you to sign up for the forthcoming Annual General Meeting on June 6. The AGM is your chance to voice your opinion, so please join us.

Regardless what temperatures we may have, May should be enjoyed outdoors. So let the blond evenings and fresh green colour lighten up your face; and take long walks!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Berit Lindstrøm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Berit Lindstrøm
President

COMING EVENTS



The Annual General Meeting

Monday, June 6 at 17:45 (for 18:00)

Please note the time.

A light buffet and wine and soft drinks will be served after the meeting.

PLACE: Vinderen Seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo
PRICE: **Free of charge**
SIGNUP: By email: int.forum@online.no or telephone **22 83 62 90** no later than **Wednesday, May 25**.

NB: The Annual General Meeting is for members only

SPECIAL EVENTS

Spring Trip – In Baroque Style to Larvik

Monday, June 13, 2016

The Special Events Committee is preparing a very special outing to Larvik. First, we shall visit Mille-Marie Treschow at Fritzøehus. Afterwards, we shall drive to Tollerodden – the home and museum of Colin Archer, the famous boat builder – where we shall have lunch and a guided tour.

For more details, see the *April Newsletter*.

ART COMMITTEE

Inger Johanne Rasmussen's studio at Hovedøya



Visit www.ingerjohanne.no

The Art Committee is happy to invite Forum members to an exhibition featuring Inger Johanne Rasmussen, who works with textiles and monumental tapestries - often made from used cloth and fabrics that she dyes, cuts and uses in her own appliqué technique – in fabulous colours and designs. She transforms trivial functional textiles and ordinary patterns into something new and fascinating. Sweaty, dirty rags are washed, coloured, and clipped and become richly coloured spring flowers! When set up against strong geometric forms, the sweat is neutralised into the organic. It enriches and highlights without creating unrest.

Textile work is often associated with women's work. The patterns Inger Johanne so richly presents bear the history of women in them. Her studio at Hovedøya, the island closest to the city centre, gives you relief and respite from the grey ordinary city day. Just a 10-minute journey on the little boat and you are in a peaceful fairy tale land.

Noble trees. Rare plants. Whispers of bygone Cistercian monastic life and wars. The ancient arsenal has taken on a new expression: picturesque summer galleries downstairs and bright workshops along the white painted hallways upstairs. What a dream to be creative in such an environment!

You may stay for lunch at Klosterkroa, and Hovedøya itself is worth a visit. Boats take you back every half hour.

We are so privileged to be invited out there on a fine summer day in June

TIME: Thursday, June 2 at 11:30

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

A C T I V I T I E S

The Cooking Group

The cooking group had an inspiring cooking morning amongst art and lovely dishes from the Middle East served by Armin Fandler. A very big thank you. Our next meeting is going to be a visit to MATHALLEN.



DATE/TIME: Wednesday, May 25 at 11:30

PLACE: Mathallen, Vulkan 5

Liss R. Laan

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

Monthly Bridge

The Wednesday Bridge will take place on June 8 at 10:30. Eli Kristvik will again host the last bridge before the summer, and we can easily set up three tables. Please let Eli know if you will join us. Inger Støtvig

For more information, please contact the IF Office.



Forum Singers Spring Concert Wednesday, June 1

The Forum Singers choir invite you to our traditional Spring Concert, on Wednesday June 1, at 19:00 at Vestre Aker Menighetshus. This will be the first concert with our new conductor, Eva Landro (see April *Newsletter*). We have put together a varied repertoire: a mixture of folk songs, Negro spirituals, jazz, pop music, and ballads. The songs are in several languages, including Japanese!

We also have some singalongs so that you, the audience, can join in. Our conductor, who has a lovely voice and sings in 'Det Norske Solistkor', will be treating us to a solo accompanied by her excellent pianist, Margrete Moen Birkedal. After the concert, there will be a tempting finger-food buffet with wine and beverages for you to enjoy.

This year we are returning to our favourite venue, Vestre Aker Menighetshus, a pleasant and cosy place with good acoustics. There is plenty of free parking in the church grounds, and it is easily accessible by public transport – trams and buses stop almost at the door. So please do join us, bring your friends and family, for an enjoyable musical evening with delicious refreshments.

DATE/ TIME **Wednesday June 1st at 19:00**

PLACE: Vestre Aker Menighetshus, Ullevålsveien 117, (in the grounds of Vestre Aker Kirke, immediately behind the church). See map below on page 12.

N.B. The entrance to the driveway up to the venue is from Kirkeveien.

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

R E P O R T S

MAY MONTHLY MEETING

Major General Tryggve Tellefsen: Peacekeeping missions

General-Major Tryggve Tellefsen talked to us about four international peace operations that he has led over a period of twelve years, in former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Sinai, and Hebron.

Mr. Tellefsen approached the many dilemmas facing peacekeeping missions, including: What can be achieved when none of the warring parties has a sense of what democracy is? How do you proceed when the belligerent parties do not want to see one another? When is it time to use force?

At times, the peacekeeping forces are sent in as a buffer unit between hostile enemies, which is what happened on the border between Serbia and Macedonia in former Yugoslavia. The commanders of the opposing parties, who did not wish to meet in person, met with the commander of the peace operation in separate white trucks belonging to the peacekeeping unit. The trucks were positioned front-to-front on a hilltop. The two sides eventually signed a cease fire, using separate documents. The peacekeeping forces still control the hill.



Mr. Tellefsen with Barbara Ødegaard and Berit Lindstrøm

Mr. Tellefsen also explained how the mission in Sinai worked, involving representatives from both the Egyptian and Israeli governments. Disputes and smaller skirmishes now tend to be solved fairly quickly because of the rules that were laid down in a joint agreement signed by the two countries and the commander of the peacekeeping forces. He also talked about the many supply tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, and how the peacekeeping forces never intervene if the things carried through to Gaza are regular merchandise. They only intervened when military supplies were being smuggled into Gaza. Usually, conflicts involving the two countries are solved within 48 hours.

In Hebron, the peace forces were also on a complicated mission. Former UN negotiator in the Middle East, Barbara Ødegaard, thanked Mr. Tellefsen for his work, and for bringing back memories of earlier missions.

When asked, Mr. Tellefsen was rather pessimistic about the prospects of a final agreement between the Israeli and the Palestinians in general.

All the conflicts were illustrated with maps showing the positions and pictures from the field. I definitely felt that I may have a slightly better understanding of the conflicts and what peacekeeping forces are actually doing. Mr. Tellefsen stated and reiterated his great respect for the Norwegian Constitution, which – he claimed – is unique in its kind in that it has managed to unite the Norwegian people and give them a sense of nationality and belonging. This is lacking in many parts of the world, especially those which are experiencing civil war and ethnic conflict.

President Berit Lindstrøm thanked Major General Tellefsen and presented him with a bottle of wine and the Forum vase. An informative evening, indeed!

Elizabeth S. Rasmussen

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Norwegian Nobel Institute

The Norwegian Nobel Institute, founded in 1904, houses a research department and a library. It functions as Secretariat of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which has its seat and offices there. The primary role of the Institute is to provide assistance to the Committee's work in selecting a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize each year. The Institute's director is also the Committee's secretary.



But, how can we explain the combination of dynamite, peace and Norway, a mix that led to the creation of one of the world's most prestigious prizes? Our host, Research Director Asle Toje, PhD in International Relations, addressed the topic.

Alfred Nobel was born in Stockholm in 1833. Soon after, the family moved to Russia, where his father manufactured weapons for the Russian army. Alfred Nobel got his first tuition in St. Petersburg, later in Paris, and became a chemical

engineer. The discovery of nitro-glycerine led Alfred Nobel to invent a parallel explosive: dynamite. He named it after the Greek word ‘dunamis’, i.e. ‘miraculous power’, which in turn brought him miraculous wealth. However, ‘dunamis’ failed to bring him personal success.

Nobel’s motto was ‘my home is where I work and I work everywhere’. He set up factories all over the world and patented 355 inventions. Unmarried and childless, Alfred Nobel died in 1896 in Italy. His fortune was worth the equivalent of proximately 1.5 billion modern Swedish *kronor*.

As a consequence of his work, Alfred Nobel was a realist in his views on international relations. He believed in the balance of power and that the horrific nature of future weapons would reach such magnitude that no nation would dare to use them.

By a twist of fate, he became lifelong friends with Bertha von Suttner, an Austrian writer and anti-war activist with opposite conceptions. Unlike him, she believed in people and the refinement of human nature. There is evidence in their correspondence that she inspired Alfred Nobel to institute the Peace Prize.

The prize, as he stated in his will of 1895, “*shall be awarded by a committee of five persons to be selected by the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) to persons who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses*”.

Bertha von Suttner herself became Peace Prize Laureate in 1905.

We lack evidence as to why Alfred Nobel wanted a Norwegian Committee to select the winners of the Peace Prize. It may be that he regarded Norway, by then in union with Sweden, as a peaceful nation compared to militant Sweden.

The Norwegian Nobel Institute is the rebuilt home of merchant families. Inspired by the Peace Prize, architects Carl and Jørgen Berner decorated the ceiling of the Nobel Hall in relief, depicting clusters of doves watched by an eagle: a suggestive symbol of peace and the balance of power.

At first, the Peace Prize award ceremony was held at the Nobel Institute. As a tradition it always takes place on the anniversary day of Alfred Nobel’s death, December 10. The Prize consists of a Diploma, a Medal and money, at present eight million SEK to be used at the winner’s discretion.

Mr. Toje revealed the Committee’s unexpected soft spot. The members of the Committee are proud to be part of the only institution of its kind that has the same number of employees today as when it all started! They all help arrange chairs, make coffee and share daily chores.

Traditionally, the Committee’s decisions are made by consensus and there is usually a harmony within the Committee that is not necessarily reflected in the

impact that the decisions may have on the outside world. The members are associated with different political parties, but their decisions are independent from the official policy of the Norwegian government.

De facto, in the early years, the Committee manifested Norway's official policy line, as its members were government ministers and Storting officials. Such practice ended in 1936 in connection with the Peace Prize award to Carl von Ossietzky, who revealed facts about secret German rearmament after World War I. As an insider, Mr. Toje believes that this was by far the most controversial and damaging award in terms of bilateral international relations. Original documents, full of hostile correspondence between the governments of Germany and Norway are available to the public, as the case has passed the 50-year secrecy rule.



There are criteria for who may nominate candidates for the award. Typically, governments, organizations, universities and former laureates will suggest possible candidates. The deadline for nominations is February 1 of the year in question. In the early days, less than 10 applications were submitted, whereas in 2016, there are 376 proposed laureates.

Mr. Toje's Research Department, with many local and international scholars, assists the Committee in the selection process. The first review is

cut down to a short list with fewer than 30 names, and so, by spring, down to about 10. The final notes include remarks such as – ‘the candidate is shy’; ‘the candidate has a weak voice’, etc.

The official announcement is made around October 10. It takes place in the Nobel Hall and is broadcast across the world. The event is staged to look formal, as if the Chair of the Committee has just walked out of the Committee Chamber, where the decision is, in fact, taken. The rostrum is rigged up at the door leading, through the Small Hall, to the Committee Chamber.

The walls of the Small Hall display copies of the diplomas adorned by the work of Norwegian artists. The newest collection, often expressionistic and colourful, caused a delightful blunder by a prominent laureate, who praised the Committee for inspiring children to paint for the cause of peace...!

The Committee Chamber has been maintained in the art nouveau style: A mahogany table with 6 chairs, one extra for the secretary, stands in the centre of the room and blends with the conventional green tones of the carpet, walls and upholstery. The walls are covered thickly with black and white photos of 129 Peace Prize Laureates, of whom only 16 are women.

War and peace ... still a man's world?

Elizabeth Groth Kolby

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