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By KEN BURKE

Sub Watch

Peace activists work to make Halifax one less port for nuclear submarines

As it cuts steadily through the North Atlantic, the huge black submarine's crew are growing restless with "channel fever" as their liberty port nears. During the last few months of patrol, they've grown over-accustomed to the metallic cave of the U.S. Navy Lafayette class submarine that is their home beneath the waves. Now, as the friendly harbour approaches, their spare thoughts are filled with the idea of release; liberty for a few days from the mind-numbing discipline and labour involved in keeping the ship running and all 128 nuclear warheads on board ready to fly on command toward their subjects of annihilation. As the sub slips unannounced into port, the men get ready to blow off steam in what a U.S. Consul-General calls "one of the best liberty ports they have"—Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

While nobody either in the military or out is certain exactly how long the visits have been occurring, for at least the last six years Halifax harbour has been a "safe port" for nuclear weapons the Canadian government vowed would never be tolerated within our territory. And a determined group of Nova Scotia peace activists are working to make sure this fact is no longer hidden. "We want to show how the image of Canada as a non-nuclear state is a fallacy," says Cathy McDonald, an Engineering student at the Technical University of Nova Scotia and a member of the Sub-watch Committee. "Our policy of not having nuclear weapons in Canada—what does that mean? We're just like an American port."

The policy in question is the focus of much of the area's anti-missile submarine activities, and also serves to highlight the former Liberal government's have-it-both-ways attitude towards nuclear weapons.

Background Notes on Canada's Security Policy, the only government document to state official defence policy regarding nuclear weapons, says that Canada "will not . . . allow the transport or storage of nuclear weapons in Canadian waters." It then adds that Canada "respects the policy of the United States of America to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons on their warships."

Catch-22.

While the Canadian Government may not be sure what the submarines contain, a lay-

person can read the defence industry publication *Janes's Fighting Ships* for a fairly detailed description.

Aside from nuclear-powered "attack" submarines, which regularly visit Halifax and may or may not have nuclear warheads atop their missiles, all 31 submarines of the larger Lafayette class resemble floating missile silos far more than they do "ordinary" submarines. With a crew ranging from 140 to 168 people, a Lafayette class sub's design and function revolves completely around the 16 sea-launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM'S) it is built to hold. The missiles are either Poseidon, the older Polaris, or new Trident missiles—which possess eight warheads able to separate in flight and destroy eight different "targets" at up to 7000 km range. The 100 kiloton destructive power of each warhead is five times greater than the bomb which flattened Hiroshima, and 40 times that of the "Halifax Explosion" which killed over two thousand people one bright winter morning in 1917 when an unforeseen accident befell a munitions ship in port. So much for statistics.

On average, one of the Lafayette class submarines nudges into the large concrete wharf at Canadian Forces Base Shearwater every two months, according to Major Clare, the Base Information Officer.

This pattern was interrupted in 1984 due to work done at the docking area to "bring it up to NATO standards for submarines and surface ships," says Clare. "This certainly is part of Canada's NATO commitments."

"That's just not true," says John Osborne, a committee member who works as an Engineer with the Nova Scotia Research Foundations. "These subs don't have to be here for our defence. They're part of the deterrent—part of the overkill." His whitened bushy brows form a worried "V" as he talks.

"It's no more a part of the NATO commitment than testing the cruise missile is," adds Valerie Osborne, a longtime Project Ploughshares activist and Sub-watch committee member.

Due to the extensive dockwork under way, American submarine visits fell sharply from previous years in 1984. With nowhere to dock, submarines would have to lay anchor in the main harbour, in full view of all Halifax and Dartmouth city residents. And that's exactly what the U.S.S. Casimir

Pulaski did for several days in May this year.

On April 30, following the American policy of keeping ship movements secret, the Pulaski abruptly appeared at port anchorage number two, floating high on the Dartmouth side of the harbour. Its alternately sloping and jutting outline lay clear and ominous above the waves as people on the Sub-watch Committee phoned, posted notices, and hurriedly printed leaflets in order to react before the sub crept stealthily away.

Two days later, a "die-in" was held blocking rush-hour traffic in downtown Halifax. This led to a demonstration at the Halifax Ferry Terminal with the Pulaski looking on from the harbour's opposite side. At its close, the 150-200 women and men there held hands and sang songs of peace, some facing outwards to keep the submarine in constant sight.

"It's not just a symbol," says McDonald. "When you think that in our harbour is the power to kill millions, you see how invisible and how powerful the threat is."

Dalhousie Masters of Education student Jim McCalla-Smith, also a committee member, had a substantially different view of the ship from those at the Ferry Terminal. The day after the Casimir Pulaski dropped anchor, McCalla-Smith dipped his canoe in nearby waters and paddled up close to the long black shape, acting the part of curious local. After talking for some time to several crew members who were on the ship's conning tower, he paddled alongside the vessel. "I was close enough that—partly as a means of keeping me away—one friendly guy said, 'I wouldn't come too close in here, you might get hit on the head,'" says McCalla-Smith. "That's when I could see these eight doors on each side of the ship. I said, 'Are those called the missile doors?' He said, 'No, they're called the missile muzzle doors.'"

"I was really close to him at this point and said, 'Maybe if they came open, I'd be better for other visits in earnest. He paused for a second and said, 'Yeah, maybe.' He had obviously thought about it," says McCalla-Smith.

The Sub-watch Committee first began coming together in 1982 to raise awareness of SLBM submarine visits within Nova Scotia's broader peace movement. When the local Voice of Women (VOW) group organized a march of 150 women and children in reaction

