

UN DAY STUDENT PEACE PRIZES

by **John Scales Avery, Chairman**

Danish National Pugwash Group

We invite the Mayor of Hiroshima to visit Copenhagen

In 2007, the Danish National Group of Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs invited Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba, the Mayor of Hiroshima, to visit Copenhagen. Dr. Akiba was the President of Mayors for Peace, an organization that was working very effectively for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Copenhagen was not a member of Mayors for Peace, and our Pugwash group thought that it ought to be.

By arranging for Dr. Akiba to visit several other countries in Scandinavia, we were able to get the Mayors for Peace organization to support his travel expenses. We were also able to persuade the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, Ritt Bjerregaard, to join Mayors for Peace, despite a Danish law that forbids mayors from expressing themselves on foreign policy issues.

In connection with Dr. Akiba's visit, we also arranged a day of peace education at Copenhagen's Open Gymnasium. About 15 people from various branches of Denmark's peace movement arrived at the gymnasium at 7.00 a.m., and between 8.00 and 10.00 they talked to 15 groups of about 25-50 students about topics related to peace. At 10.30, all 500 students assembled in a large hall, where Dr. Akiba gave an address on abolition of nuclear weapons. A chorus from the gymnasium sang, and finally there was a panel discussion. The students were extremely enthusiastic about the whole program.

The success of our 2007 effort made us want to do something similar in 2008, and perhaps to broaden the scope. Therefore we wrote to the Danish Minister of Education, Bertel Haarder, and proposed that October 24, United Nations Day, should be a theme day in all Danish schools and gymnasiums - a day devoted to the discussion of global problems and their solutions. We received a very kind reply. The Minister said that he thought our idea was a good one, but that he did not have the power to dictate the curricula to schools. We needed to contact the individual schools, gymnasiums and municipalities.

In the autumn of 2009 we arranged a United Nations Day program on October 24 at Sankt Ann Gymnasium with the cooperation of Nørre Gymnasium. We offered prizes to drama students at the two gymnasiums for the best peace-related dramatic sketch, a condition being that the sketches should be performed and judged before a large audience. Our judges were the actress Mia Lyhne, Johan Olsen, the lead singer of "Magtens Korridorer" and the dramatist Steen Haakon Hansen. The students' sketches and the judges' speeches about the meaning of peace were very strong and moving. Everyone was very enthusiastic



Figure 1: *In 2007, we decided to invite Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba, the Mayor of Hiroshima, to visit Copenhagen.*

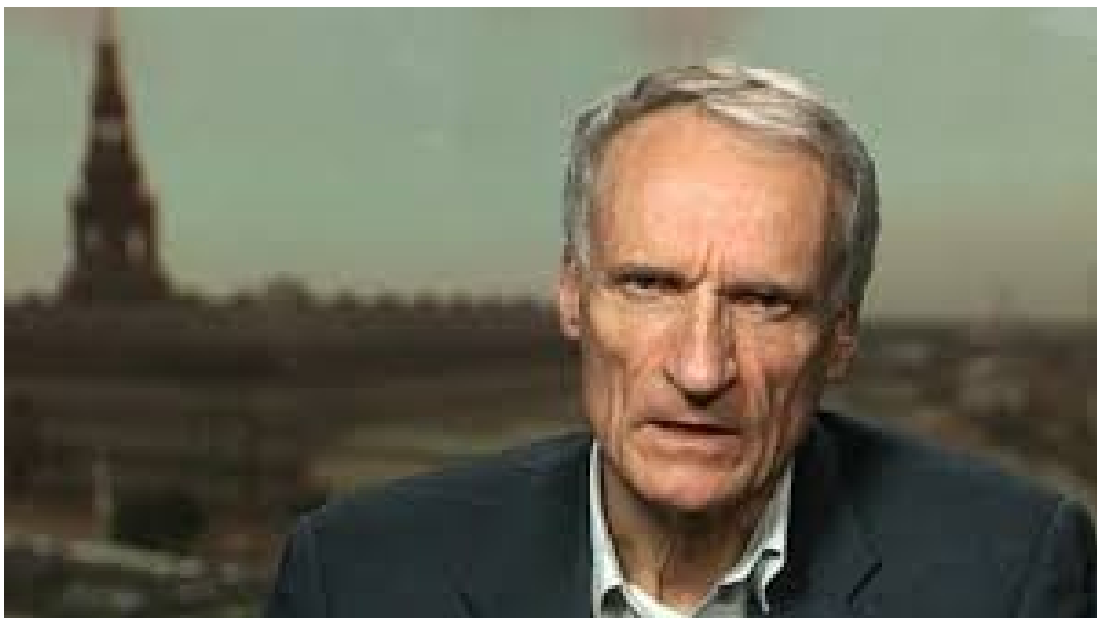


Figure 2: *Minister of Education Bertel Haarder.*



Figure 3: *United Nations Day at the International College in Helsingør.*

about the day. The judges have said that they would be willing to work with us again on peace-related cultural events.

In 2010, with the help of the Hermod Lannung Foundation, we offered student peace prizes to the students in 9 Danish gymnasiums. In 2011, and subsequent years, the Hermod Lannung Foundation gave us sufficient funds to offer United Nations Day Student Peace Prizes at between 8 and 11 Danish gymnasiums. However, in 2019, the Lannung Foundation's support for the project ended.



Figure 4: *Student Peace Prizes at Frederiksborgs Gymnasium.*



Figure 5: *United Nations Day at Rysensteen Gymnasium.*



Figure 6: *United Nations Day at Sankt Annæ Gymnasium.*



Figure 7: *A flag flying in front of Sankt Annæ Gymnasium on United Nations Day.*



Figure 8: *United Nations Day at Christianshavns Gymnasium.*



Figure 9: *A group of peace-singers at Christianshavns Gymnasium.*



Figure 10: *Student Peace Prizes at Bagsværd Gymnasium.*



Figure 11: *A painting representing the work of the United Nations. It won first prize at a UN Day Student Peace Prize event.*