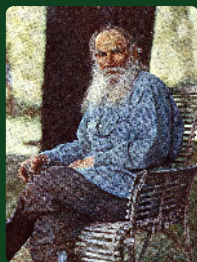




Bike for Peace

50 Years on Wheels of Peace

The legacy of Tolstoy, Gandhi, King and Nærland



Erik Berge

Anniversary Edition 2026

Bike for Peace

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The legacy of Tolstoy, Gandhi, King and Nærland

Author: Erik Berge

Published by Bike for Peace for the organisation's 50th anniversary, 2026.
Bike for Peace dates its beginnings to 1976, when Tore Nærland first encountered the tandem bicycle at the Ridderrennet (Ski for Light) at Beitostølen and presented it later that year during NRK's national telethon at Forus trotting track.

The book builds on Tore Nærland's lecture "Bike for Peace — from Tolstoy to today" and on Bike for Peace's own book and photo archive. Translated from the Norwegian original.

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Preface

This is a book about Tore Nærland — and about his philosophy. When he rolled off on his first long peace ride, he was a visually impaired farmer's son from Jæren. Since then he has met popes, presidents and secretaries-general, torn loose pieces of the Berlin Wall with his own hands, and left wheel tracks through more than a hundred countries. Fifty years on, he is still in the saddle. Bike for Peace, the organisation he built, is the instrument and the expression of a single conviction: that dialogue — above all between ordinary people, people to people — is the answer to conflict.

The backbone of this book is a line of succession. Leo Tolstoy showed that peace is a matter of individual conscience. Mahatma Gandhi turned non-violence into action. Martin Luther King Jr. carried it into the struggle for equal rights. Tore Nærland has practised the same philosophy through fifty years of organised peace work — with the bicycle as his tool. The book tells the story as it grew: from the ideas of Tolstoy, Gandhi and King, through the first ride in Northern Ireland in 1978, the historic peace ride between Moscow and Washington in 1983, the fall of the Wall, the world rides, and on to the peace dialogue between Norway and Russia in 2026. The narrative is built on Tore's own lecture in Sokndal in the summer of 2026 and on the rich archive of photographs and books he has assembled along the way.

Tore takes no side between the parties in the conflicts he seeks out. His method is a different one: to build bridges. To cycle together, share a meal, look one another in the eye and discover that the person

on the other side of the border would much rather have peace too. It is a simple idea, but it has proved remarkably durable.

Two things should be said openly. I do not write as an outsider: I am a project leader for Bike for Peace, I took part myself in several of the meetings this book describes in 2026, and I am a co-signatory of the appeal reproduced in the final chapter. And the line of succession on the cover — Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, Nærland — is my reading as the author, not Tore's own; he would himself have protested at being placed in that line. Where the first three belong to the history of ideas, Tore's place in this book rests on what can be documented: fifty years of organised peace work in the same tradition.

The book is written to serve as the basis for a lecture. Whoever reads it should be able to tell the story themselves and explain why dialogue — especially people to people — is the answer to conflict. Every chapter therefore carries the same thread: what does this episode teach us about dialogue and people-to-people diplomacy? If Tore himself cannot stand at the podium, someone else should be able to do it from these pages — and the audience should leave with a single thought: dialogue is the answer to conflict, especially people to people.

The second part of the book turns its gaze forward. How do we create a world free of nuclear weapons by 2045? What can each of us do in our own local community? And how can the method of dialogue be applied to the most painful conflicts of our time — in Ukraine, in the Middle East, in Sudan? These are not finished answers, but contributions from a man who has spent half a century practising the difficult craft of talking with everyone.

Erik Berge
Project Leader, Bike for Peace
2026

PART 1

The Story

Tolstoy, Gandhi, King and Nærland

CHAPTER 1

The Roots

On the cover of this book, four faces stand side by side: Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. — and Tore Nærland from Bryne on Jæren. It is no accident that they stand there together. Non-violence runs in a single line between them: Tolstoy formulated it, Gandhi turned it into a political method, King carried it onward — and Nærland has practised it through fifty years of organised peace work in more than a hundred countries. To understand him and what he has built, one must begin where the idea itself begins — with the three who went before.

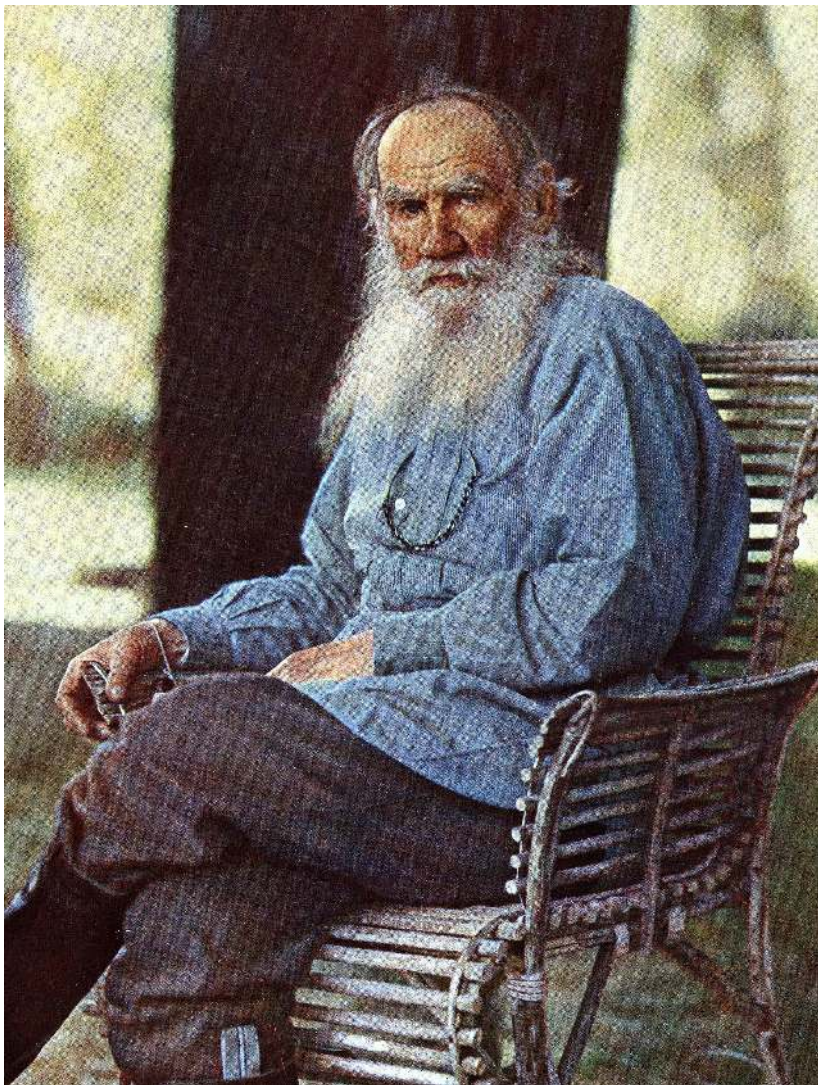
The idea they carried is older than all of them: that evil cannot be conquered by evil, that violence breeds violence, and that whoever wants peace must choose the means of peace even when it costs. But each of the three carried the idea one step further.

Leo Tolstoy did not merely write some of the greatest novels in world literature. In his final decades, the Russian writer became one of the world's most uncompromising advocates of non-violence. He drew the idea that one must not meet evil with evil from the Gospel

and shaped it into an entire philosophy of life. From his estate at Yasnaya Polyana, letters and writings streamed out across the world — and one of them found its way into the hands of a young Indian lawyer in South Africa. Already here we see the pattern that runs through this whole book: an idea crossing borders, not through states and treaties, but from person to person, in a letter, in a conversation.

The young lawyer's name was Mohandas Gandhi. The correspondence with Tolstoy became one of the formative experiences of his life, and Gandhi even named his first commune in South Africa "Tolstoy Farm". What Gandhi did was to take non-violence out of the book and into politics. With *satyagraha* — firmness in truth — he led an entire people to freedom without lifting a rifle. But *satyagraha* was never mere resistance; it was a form of conversation. Gandhi refused to see the Briton as an enemy, only as a counterpart who had not yet understood. That the world's greatest empire finally had to give up India to a man in homespun cloth changed forever our understanding of what ordinary people can achieve.

From India the idea travelled on to America. When Martin Luther King Jr. led the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, he made Gandhi's method his own. The Montgomery bus boycott, the marches, the speeches — all rested on the same conviction: that love is stronger than hate, and that whoever endures injustice without repaying it will in the end win the opponent's conscience. Not defeat it — win it. That is the deepest form of dialogue: to speak in such a way that even the one who stands against you may one day say yes. And from his cell in Birmingham, King wrote the sentence that has followed everyone who works for peace since: injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. King paid with his life, as Gandhi had done before him; Tolstoy paid with expulsion from church and society. But the line from Yasnaya Polyana to Montgomery had been drawn.



Leo Tolstoy — the Russian writer who made non-violence a way of life · 1828–1910



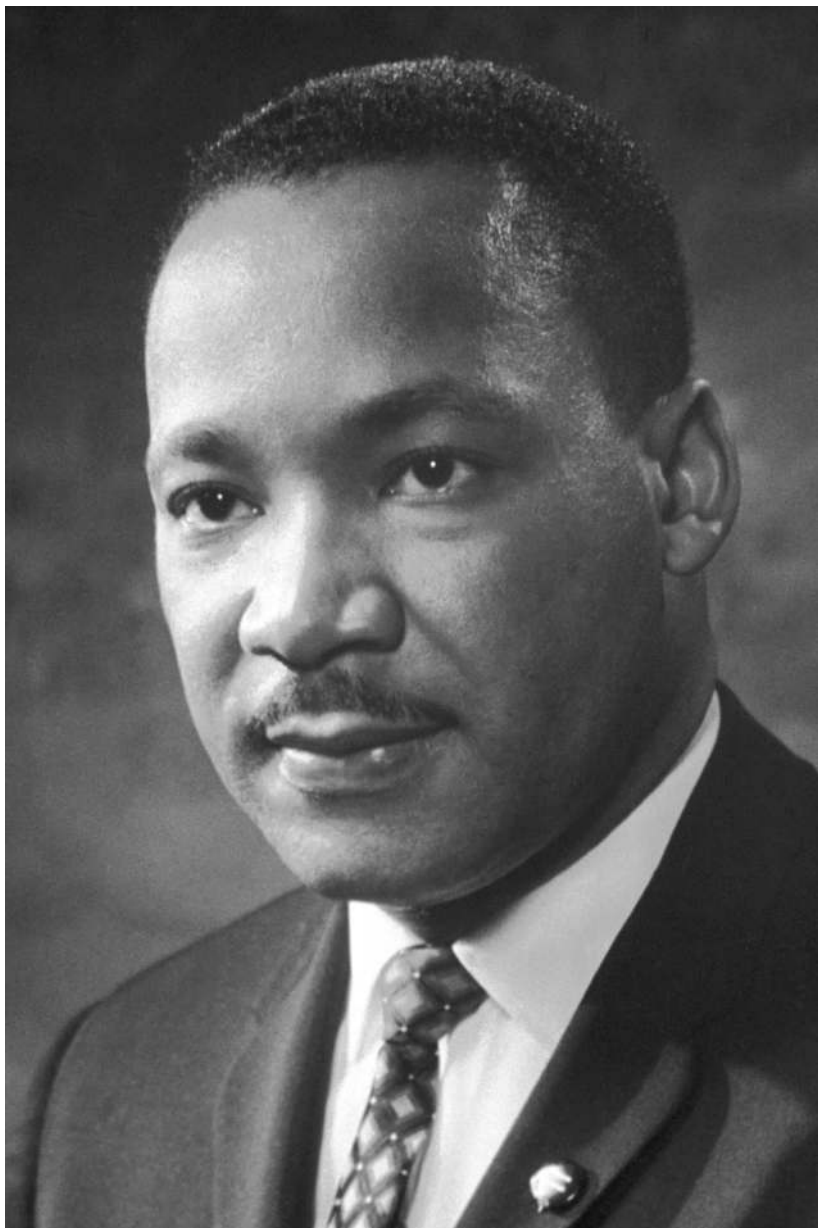
Mahatma Gandhi — who took non-violence from the page into politics · 1869–1948

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

— Martin Luther King Jr.

What Tolstoy, Gandhi and King had in common was that they never divided the world into friends and enemies to be crushed. They saw a human being even in the adversary — and they believed that the conversation with that human being was the way out of the conflict. Tolstoy wrote the idea. Gandhi carried it into politics. King bore it into the hardest struggle of his own time.

Then came the fourth. Tore Nærland did not invent this tradition — he has followed it for fifty years, from the first ride in Northern Ireland in 1978 to the peace dialogue between Norway and Russia in 2026. But he gave the legacy something it had never had before: he put it on wheels, and he built Bike for Peace as the instrument of one simple conviction: that dialogue is the answer to conflict, and that this conversation cannot be left to heads of state alone. It must be carried on by ordinary people, face to face, across borders others have closed — not with grand words, but with a wheel that turns and a hand held out. That is the story this book tells.



Martin Luther King Jr. — the voice of non-violence in the civil rights struggle
· 1929–1968

CHAPTER 2

The Boy from Jæren

Tolstoy wrote from an estate in Russia. Gandhi walked through the villages of India. King preached from pulpits in the American South. The fourth in the line came from a farm on Jæren. Tore Nærland from Bryne grew up in a Jæren farming community where work was second nature — milking, driving the tractor, toil from morning to night. But Tore developed a rare, hereditary disease of the optic nerve, and his sight began to fail.

The turning point came at the Ridderrennet (Ski for Light) at Beitostølen in 1976, a collaboration between Erling Stordahl and the Lions: there Tore was introduced to the tandem bicycle for the first time, with the medical student Johan Stanghelle on the front seat. With Tore's eyesight, the open road was closed to an ordinary bicycle; on the tandem it opened up. That same year Lars Gellein of the Lions gave him a tandem as a gift, and at Forus trotting track Tore lined up with six tandem bicycles during NRK's national telethon, which that year was devoted to the work for the blind and visually impaired. It is from this year that Bike for Peace dates its beginning. And it was



Tore on Jæren — life on the farm before and after his sight failed

precisely in the tandem that Tore found the image on which his whole later philosophy would rest: two people who must work together, pedal in step and trust one another for the bicycle to move forward. The one in front sees the road; the one behind provides the power. Neither of them gets anywhere alone. Where Tolstoy had the pen, Gandhi the spinning wheel and King the pulpit, Tore had the tandem — a tool that did not merely carry a message of cooperation, but which *is* cooperation, every single metre. It is hard to imagine a more tangible expression of the core idea of people-to-people diplomacy: that peace is not negotiated over people's heads, but pedalled into being between them.

As early as 1977, Tore cycled by tandem across the USA — Coast to Coast — and drew the attention of the American press. The ride was a physical feat, but it was also something more: proof that a visually impaired boy from Jæren could set himself goals that made people stop and listen. The headlines in the Daily News were the first of many.

It was here that the seed was sown. If a bicycle ride could attract attention, it could also carry a message. And was there any greater



Tore featured in the Daily News after the Coast to Coast ride across the USA
· 1977

message to carry than peace? Tore had read his forerunners and grasped the heart of the legacy of Tolstoy, Gandhi and King: that

the opponent must never be crushed, but won over — and that whoever wishes to win a human being must first meet them. His own contribution to this tradition was to make the meeting literal. Not to wait for people on either side of a border to find their way to one another, but to cycle across the border and greet them. In the years that followed, Tore transformed the bicycle from a means of transport into a tool of peace, and built Bike for Peace as the instrument of this conviction — a movement that fifty years later is still rolling, carried by the same simple insight from the tandem seat on Jæren.

CHAPTER 3

It Begins in Northern Ireland

The year is 1978. Northern Ireland is ravaged by “the Troubles” — the bloody conflict between Catholics and Protestants that had cost thousands of people their lives. Ten years earlier, Martin Luther King had been shot in Memphis, and many wondered whether non-violence had died with him. But in the midst of the Northern Irish despair, a movement of ordinary women had grown up who refused to accept that violence should have the last word. Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, who founded the Peace People, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for their courage. They proved that non-violence was not dead — it had simply moved to where it was needed most.

This was where Tore Nærland set his course. He could have begun his peace work anywhere — at a conference, in a safe capital, among like-minded people. Instead he chose to cycle into the place where the violence was at its worst. It was a choice that revealed his whole

philosophy: whoever wants to work for peace must seek out the conflict, not talk about it from a distance. Just as Gandhi went to where injustice struck and King marched through the cities where hatred ran deepest, Tore Nærland went to Belfast.

The meeting with Mairead Corrigan in Belfast became one of the formative experiences of Tore's life. Before him stood a perfectly ordinary woman — no head of state, no general — who together with a few others had brought hundreds of thousands out to demonstrate for peace in a country where neighbours were killing neighbours. The affirmation he carried home with him was simple, and it would sustain him for fifty years: one person, or a few, really can make a difference. Not by defeating the other side, but by refusing to turn any human being into an enemy.

For what was it that Corrigan and the Peace People had done? They had not taken the side of the Catholics or the Protestants. They had risen up *between* the parties and insisted that the people on both sides were exactly that — people. In Belfast, Tore saw this insight at work in practice, in Europe's most inflamed conflict, and he understood that it could also be carried on two wheels.

Northern Ireland became the true international birth of what would become Bike for Peace. Here Tore laid down the pattern he would follow in all the years to come: to cycle into conflict areas, not to take sides, but to meet the people on both sides — and to seek out those already working for peace, and lift up their work. Diplomats negotiate between states; Tore's method was to create contact between people. Where a negotiation can break down, a handshake between two ordinary people cannot be taken back. That is the founding principle of people-to-people diplomacy, and it was formulated with pedals in the streets of Belfast in 1978.

From Belfast the road led out into the world. Tore travelled home with something more valuable than attention: a method. The bicycle



Mairead Corrigan in Belfast — Nobel laureate and co-founder of the Peace People · 1978

was the means of transport, dialogue was the goal — and the rest of this life's work is, at heart, variations on what he learned in Northern Ireland that year.

CHAPTER 4

Out into the World

With Northern Ireland behind him, 1979 became the year Tore Nærland showed how far a peace cyclist could reach. He no longer travelled alone, but together with his friend Marit, and their journeys took them from Rome in the west to Hiroshima in the east. For Tore the journey was more than a series of meetings — it was a testing of his own founding conviction: that peace is not decreed from above, but built from below, in one encounter after another, between people who choose to see each other.

In Rome, Tore and Marit were granted an audience with Pope John Paul II. The Polish pope had himself felt the iron grip of totalitarianism and had become one of the world's most listened-to voices for human dignity and peace. That a Norwegian peace cyclist was admitted to the halls of the Vatican said something about the door-opening power of a message that asks for nothing but conversation. Tore came with no demands and no programme — he came with an outstretched hand, and precisely for that reason it was taken.



Pope John Paul II — the first of several audiences Tore was granted at the Vatican · 1979

In Cairo, Tore and Marit were received by Jehan Sadat, Egypt's first lady and the wife of President Anwar Sadat, who that same year signed the historic peace treaty with Israel. Jehan Sadat was herself a prominent champion of peace, education and women's rights. Egypt, moreover, was among the countries that a few years earlier had brought the proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East before the United Nations — an idea the country has carried forward ever since. The meeting linked Tore's young peace work to some of the greatest events in the peace politics of the age.

The journey continued to India — the country where Gandhi had shown the world what non-violence can achieve. From Bombay, Tore and Marit rode the tandem across the country towards Calcutta, through crowds that gathered every time they stopped. At the school for the blind in Bombay, the boys got to try the bicycle themselves,



Tore and Marit in audience with Egypt's first lady Jehan Sadat in Cairo · 1979

with Marit at the handlebars — a meeting that unites everything Tore stands for: the bicycle, the partnership, and the particular care for those who see poorly or do not see at all. For Tore, who is himself visually impaired, this was never charity from above, but a meeting of equals. His people-to-people diplomacy always begins there: not with presidents and popes, but with the individual — the child on the bicycle seat, the person in the street.

Nor was Gandhi's non-violence ever the property of one religion. Among his closest allies stood Abdul Ghaffar Khan, "the Frontier Gandhi", who among the Pashtuns of the north-west built an army without weapons — one hundred thousand "Servants of God" who took a vow to serve without violence. The friendship between the two stands as one of the last century's most beautiful proofs that non-violence has a Muslim pillar too, and that the borders of faith are not the borders of peace.



Tore and Marit on the tandem through the crowds — the ride from Bombay to Calcutta · 1979

In India, Tore was also received by Prime Minister Morarji Desai. That a sitting head of government in the world's largest democracy took the time to meet a peace cyclist from Norway testified that the message carried. Desai was himself a devoted follower of Gandhi's non-violence: here sat a man who had lived his whole life in the same tradition Tore had made his own — the line from Tolstoy through Gandhi to King, which Tore was now drawing onward into his own time, on two wheels.

The journey ended where the terror of the atomic age is most powerfully present: in Hiroshima. In the Peace Park, laid out where the bomb fell in August 1945, the gravity of Tore's cause was chiselled in stone. Here he stood before the ultimate evidence of what happens when dialogue breaks down and the weapons have the last word.

In a hospital in the city, Tore met Kameno Fujiwara, who had survived the bomb of 6 August 1945. She told him how she had seen



Meeting India's Prime Minister Morarji Desai — a conversation in the spirit of Gandhi · 1979

the light flare across the sky and woken in hospital six weeks later — blind and paralysed from the shoulders down. After his return to Norway, a letter arrived from her: it was good that they cycled for the rights of the disabled, she wrote — but why on earth did they not cycle against nuclear weapons? The question never let go. The struggle against nuclear weapons would become a thread running through his entire life's work — and it began here, with one single human being in Hiroshima.

Thus 1979 became the year the pattern from Belfast took on a global scale. From the Vatican to Cairo, from Bombay to Hiroshima, Tore had shown that the same simple method worked everywhere: go there, reach out your hand, talk together. What the organisation he built would later put into system, he had already lived out, one meeting at a time.



The Peace Park in Hiroshima — where the struggle against nuclear weapons became a life's cause for Tore · 1979

CHAPTER 5

The USA and the UN

As the 1980s progressed, Tore turned his gaze towards the centres of power. Peace begins from below — that he had learned from his three teachers — but sooner or later the message must be carried all the way in to those who hold power. If Tore was to work for disarmament in the coldest phase of the Cold War, he had to reach those whose hands rested on the buttons — in Washington and at the UN. People-to-people diplomacy was never meant to replace official diplomacy, but to open doors that official diplomacy could not find the key to itself.

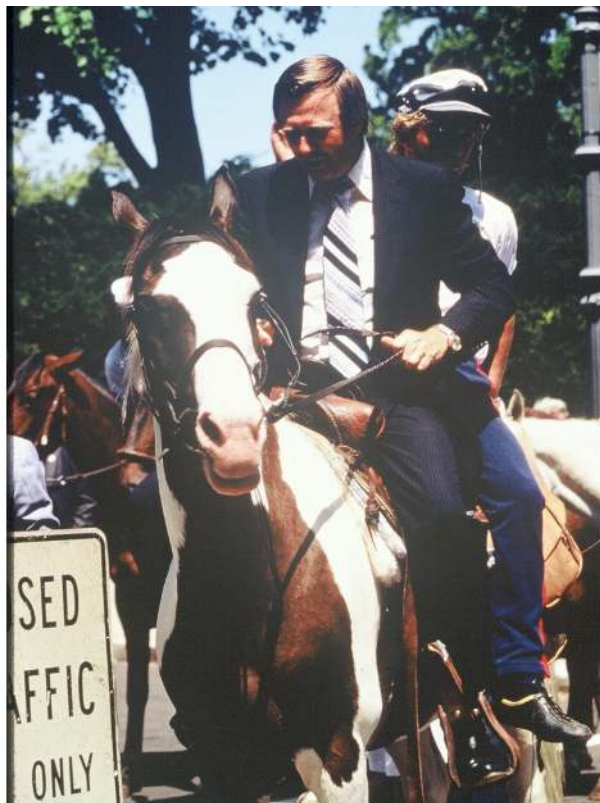
In 1979, Tore was received by the Vice President of the United States, Walter Mondale. Mondale had Norwegian roots and a warm relationship with Norway, and the meeting became a reminder of something Tore has since made into a principle: that personal bonds across borders can open doors that politics otherwise keeps shut. A vice president and a Norwegian peace cyclist found each other not in politics but in what is human — and that is precisely where all dialogue begins.



Meeting with US Vice President Walter Mondale · 1979

Two years later, in 1981, Congressman Arlen Erdahl received Tore in Washington DC — not through lobbyists or campaign money, but through the only thing he had: his own story, told face to face.

In 1982 the road led to Buenos Aires and a meeting with Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, the Argentinian who had received the Nobel Peace Prize for his struggle for human rights under the military dictatorship. For Tore it was important to forge bonds with those who paid a high personal price for their commitment to peace — and to learn from them. Esquivel stood in the same tradition as King: non-violent



Congressman Arlen Erdahl in Washington DC · 1981

resistance to a regime that answered with violence. To seek him out was to seek out the legacy of Gandhi where it was most alive in the present day.

That same year came perhaps the weightiest meeting so far: the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, received Tore in Vienna. To be welcomed by the highest leader of the world organisation gave his work a legitimacy that few volunteer peace workers ever attain — and Tore would cultivate this connection to the UN all the way up to our own time, through secretary-general after secretary-general.



With Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel in Buenos Aires · 1982

Seen as a whole, these years reveal the method clearly. Tore made no distinction between “the man in the street” and the man behind the desk in the White House or at the UN. Both are human beings, both can be talked to, and both are needed if peace is to become



Meeting with UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in Vienna · 1982

reality. This is what sets people-to-people diplomacy apart from both the protest movement and official diplomacy: it does not shout from the outside, and it does not negotiate behind closed doors — it speaks with everyone, openly, as one human being to another. And this is how Tore, in the space of a few years, had cycled his way from Bryne to Washington and the UN.

CHAPTER 6

The 1983 Peace Ride

If a single year is to be held up as the breakthrough for Tore Nærland's philosophy, it must be 1983. The Cold War was in its coldest phase. The superpowers were rearming, missiles were being deployed on both sides, and the rhetoric had reached freezing point. The states were no longer truly talking to each other — and precisely there lay Tore's opportunity. For what he had learnt from his forerunners was that peace is not first and foremost negotiated between governments, but grows between people who are given the chance to meet. Where diplomacy was frozen, people could still meet. It remained to be proved.

So Tore set about the proof. The idea was his and his wife Bjørg's; the execution was a collaboration across three countries: a project committee in Oslo, the young American Christopher Senie as coordinator in the USA, and the Soviet Peace Committee as host in Moscow. The route ran from Moscow via Oslo to New York and Washington DC — from the capital of one superpower to that of the other, with Norway as the bridge between them. Twenty Soviet and twenty

Scandinavian-American cyclists pedalled the same road, shared the same meals and slept under the same roof.

And here the ride showed why dialogue works. Propaganda lives on distance; it needs an enemy one never meets. But no one can cycle a hundred kilometres beside another human being, eat of the same bread and fall asleep in the same room, and still see only an enemy. Week by week, stretch of road by stretch of road, “the Russian” and “the American” became Vladimir and Christopher — people with aching thighs and good stories. The abstract image of the enemy cannot survive the encounter with the concrete human being. It was Tolstoy’s insight, Gandhi’s method and King’s dream, translated into two wheels and the open road.

Nothing captured this more powerfully than the tandem on which the American Christopher Senie and the Soviet Vladimir Semenets pedalled together. Two men from countries that had aimed nuclear



The 1983 Peace Ride — from Moscow via Oslo to New York and Washington
DC · 1983



Christopher Senie (USA) and Vladimir Semenets (Soviet Union) on a tandem
— from Moscow to Washington DC · 1983

missiles at each other, physically joined to the same bicycle, dependent on one another to get anywhere. The tandem was Tore's own symbol — the bicycle he himself, as a visually impaired man, had to share with another — now raised to a parable of world politics: if the bicycle is to move forward, both must pedal, and neither can steer alone. The picture went around the world and came to stand as the very emblem of Tore Nærland's method.

The ride ended on Capitol Hill itself, where Tore was given the chance to speak in front of the United States Congress building — before the very seat of the world's most powerful national assembly — for disarmament and dialogue. But his strongest argument was not his words — it was the company behind him. At his back stood living proof that Soviets and Americans could work together, pedal in step and become friends, in the midst of the coldest of wars. The message from the tandem seat on Jæren had been carried to the very doors of the chamber where disarmament is decided.

The 1983 Peace Ride became the template for everything Tore built thereafter. It proved that people-to-people diplomacy is not naive dreaming but a concrete tool: where states stand locked against each other, ordinary people can still meet — and every such meeting pulls a stone out of the wall of enmity. The professionals have since given this channel a name, track two diplomacy: the conversation kept open between people when the official one is closed. Tore never needed the term — he and his friends had already put it on wheels.

**Every meeting pulls a stone out of the wall of
enmity.**



Tore speaks for disarmament in front of the Congress building on Capitol Hill
· 1983

CHAPTER 7

The Mid-Eighties

After the triumph of 1983, Tore Nærland could have rested content in the knowledge that his method worked. Instead he spent the rest of the decade deepening it. If the peace ride had shown that a bicycle could cross the Iron Curtain, the years that followed would show something more: that the dialogue Tore believed in had to be pursued in every direction at once — with students and statesmen, with children and dissidents, with the Church and with the workers at the shipyard in Gdańsk. In the mid-eighties it became clear just how many doors his wheel could open.

First he took the time for something as down-to-earth as an examination. In 1985 Tore completed a B.A. in history and political science at Concordia College in Moorhead, USA. For a man who had made the world his classroom, the formal education still mattered. Gandhi was a lawyer, King a doctor of theology — both knew that conviction without schooling is easily brushed aside. Tore understood the same: if a farmer from Jæren was to discuss disarmament with ministers



Graduation at Concordia College in Moorhead, USA · 1985

and professors, he had to be able to meet them on their own ground as well. Dialogue is not only will; it is also craft.

That same year Tore sought out Lech Wałęsa, the Polish electrician who led the trade union Solidarity in its struggle against communist rule. Wałęsa, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983, stood at the centre of what Gandhi had proved half a century earlier: that a peaceful popular movement can shake even the mightiest regimes. For Tore, who was constantly seeking contact across the Iron Curtain, the meeting was more than a courtesy call. It was a confirmation of his own founding idea — that change does not come from above, from those who hold power, but from below, from ordinary people who refuse to see one another as enemies. The electrician from Gdańsk and the cyclist from Bryne spoke the same language.

Back home in Norway, Tore turned to those whom dialogue is ultimately about: the children. At the event “Children as Peacemakers” in front of the Royal Palace in Oslo in 1987, he lifted up an insight



With Lech Wałęsa, leader of Solidarity in Poland · 1985

that runs through his entire life's work — that peace is not merely something adults negotiate, but something that must be planted in the rising generation. Children have a particular gift for seeing across the borders that adults have turned into walls. They have not yet learned whom to fear. If people-to-people diplomacy was to have a future, Tore reasoned, it had to begin where prejudice has not yet taken root.

That same year Tore travelled to Moscow to meet Andrei Sakharov, the nuclear physicist who had helped develop the Soviet Union's hydrogen bomb, but who later became the country's most famous dissident and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. To seek out Sakharov was to seek out the very conscience of Soviet society — a man who knew exactly what nuclear weapons were, and who fought against them precisely for that reason. For Tore the meeting had a deeper resonance as well. It was in Russia that Tolstoy had shaped the doctrine of non-violence on which his own entire philosophy



"Children as Peacemakers" in front of the Royal Palace in Oslo · 1987

rested, and in Sakharov he met an heir to that same Russian tradition of conscience. The meeting said something essential about Tore's method: he spoke with the authorities and with their sharpest critics, without setting himself up as judge over either. Whoever wants to build a bridge must have footing on both banks.

In April of the same year, Tore returned to St Peter's Square for a new meeting with Pope John Paul II. The bond with the Vatican, forged as early as 1979, he kept warm through the years — and it would be renewed with popes far into our own time. For Tore this



With nuclear physicist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov in
Moscow · 1987

was never a matter of collecting names. It was the work of patience: dialogue is not one great meeting, but many small ones, repeated year after year until the trust holds.

**Dialogue is not one great meeting, but many small
ones — repeated until the trust holds.**

Thus the mid-eighties became the years when Tore's philosophy showed its full breadth. No conversation partner was too great, none too small. A pope and a schoolchild, a union leader and a dissident — all of them were human beings, and with human beings one can always talk. And the idea was in the air: the same year Tore sought out Sakharov, Mikhail Gorbachev stood in Murmansk and spoke of the Arctic as a future zone of peace, while the Norwegian peace movement was campaigning for a Nordic zone free of nuclear



A new meeting with Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square · April 1987

weapons. What Tore was cycling on was no fringe idea — it was a conversation the whole Nordic region was beginning to have. Soon it would be put to its greatest test, when the Wall in Berlin began to crack.

CHAPTER 8

The Wall Comes Down

As the 1980s drew to a close, Europe stood on the brink of a transformation few had believed they would live to see. The Iron Curtain, which Tore Nærland had spent a decade cycling straight through, was beginning to unravel. For Tore this came as no surprise — not in the sense that he had calculated it, but because he had believed in it, with the same faith he had inherited from Tolstoy, Gandhi and King: that the walls people build always rest on fear, and that fear melts away when people actually meet one another. Every tandem ride across the border, every meal shared with “the enemy”, had been a small chip out of the wall long before it fell.

**Walls rest on fear — and fear melts when people
actually meet.**

The friendship ship to Poland in 1988 was a Kristent Fredslag project, led by Guro Ulfrstad and the physician Johan Stanghelle, with Tore



Johan Stanghelle by the friendship ship to Poland · 1988

on the board. The ship carried aid and solidarity to a neighbouring country in upheaval. It was people-to-people diplomacy as Tore has always understood it: not merely words and meetings, but material help from one people to another. Gandhi had taught him that non-violence is not passivity but action — and a ship laden with aid is an action every human being understands, whichever side of an iron curtain they stand on.

Then, in November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. For a man who had worked for years to build bridges across this very dividing line, it was a moment of almost unfathomable fulfilment. Tore set out for Berlin himself. On the way, in late November, he spoke from the podium at one of the great Monday demonstrations on Karl-Marx-Platz in Leipzig — the police estimated the crowd in the square and the sur-

rounding streets at more than a hundred thousand — with an appeal for a united Europe, an Iron Curtain that had to go entirely, and a world without nuclear weapons. Then he continued on to the wall, tearing loose pieces of it with his own hands. A peace cyclist hacking away at the Cold War's foremost symbol — the image captures his entire outlook on life. King had dreamed of the day when the walls between people would fall; that day had now come, and the pieces lay scattered in thousands of hands. For Tore the lesson was clear: the wall fell not because anyone had shot it to pieces, but because ordinary people on both sides had stopped believing in it. Dialogue had done what weapons never could.

The pieces of the wall did not become mere souvenirs. For Tore they were teaching material — tangible evidence to lay on the table before those who govern. One of them he presented to Norway's Foreign Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik: a palpable reminder that what people have built, people can also tear down.



Tore tears loose pieces of the Berlin Wall · 1989



Foreign Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik receives a piece of the Berlin Wall
· 1989

The fall of the Wall is perhaps the clearest single piece of evidence in this entire book for what Tore has maintained for fifty years: conflicts are not resolved by one side crushing the other, but by the people on both sides getting to meet one another until they no longer let themselves be frightened out of being neighbours. People-to-people contact leads the way; politics follows after. That was true in Berlin in 1989 — and it is the same truth Tore has carried with him ever since, to every new wall the world has seen fit to build.

CHAPTER 9

Nuclear Disarmament in the Nineties

With the Cold War over, one might have thought the struggle against nuclear weapons had been won. Tore Nærland knew better. The vast arsenals still stood there, and in the dissolution of the Soviet Union lay a new and frightening danger: what would happen to the weapons, the materials and the scientists when the states that had controlled them fell apart? Where many in the West leaned back, Tore did the opposite — he directed his efforts at the very heart of the nuclear complex. For him it followed logically from everything he had learned: whoever wants to change something must seek out people where they are, even — and especially — where no one else goes.

In 1992 Tore and his companions reached Arzamas-16 — one of the Soviet Union's secret nuclear cities, so closed that it appeared on no map. Here, where the nuclear physicists had built the country's bombs, the Norwegian peace cyclist was received by Mayor Takoyev

— the door had been opened by Deputy Defence Minister Shlykov, after contact was forged during his visit to Bryne the year before. That a volunteer peace delegation was admitted to such a city at all was remarkable. But it was no accident: Tore came not as an accuser but as a guest — with a handshake, not a wagging finger. It is the bridge method in its purest form, and it was what opened the gate.

At the same time, Tore knew that people-to-people work must be carried all the way up to those who hold formal power. In New York he was received by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The connection to the UN's highest leadership, which Tore had forged already under Pérez de Cuéllar ten years earlier, he kept alive throughout the decade — patiently, meeting by meeting.

Tore never worked alone. Ole Kopreitan, long-time leader of *Nei til Atomvåpen* (No to Nuclear Weapons) and a face of the Norwegian campaign of the 1980s for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Nordic region, presented the Norwegian peace organisations' joint appeal to UN Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Petrovsky. Tore stood beside him. In this way the peace movement's message was carried into the corridors of the world organisation, and the appeal to the UN became a track Bike for Peace has followed ever since.

**Peace is not made by talking with the like-minded,
but with the other side.**

And in 1993 Tore stood face to face with the man responsible for Russia's entire nuclear arsenal: Minister of Atomic Energy Viktor Mikhailov. Here the core of Tore's philosophy shows itself more clearly than perhaps anywhere else in this book. Peace is not made by talking with the like-minded, but by talking with the other side — with the one who actually administers the weapons, not only with those who demonstrate against them. Tolstoy wrote letters to rulers;



Top: Tore meets Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Vitaly Shlykov in Bryne, 1991. Bottom: with Mayor Valery Takoyev in the nuclear city of Arzamas-16 · 1991-1992

Gandhi negotiated with the Viceroy; King sat down at the table with



Meeting with UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in New York · 1992

presidents. Tore sat down with the minister of atomic energy. It is the same movement, the same faith: that the other side, too, is a human being one can talk with — and that the conversation, not the condemnation, is what in the end moves the world.

The disarmament work of the nineties thus became a textbook in what Tore had preached from the tandem saddle since 1978: the dia-



Ole Kopreitan presents a peace appeal to UN Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Petrovsky · 1993



Russia's Minister of Atomic Energy Viktor Mikhailov · 1993

logue must be carried on with everyone — from the nuclear physicist in the closed city to the minister holding the keys to the arsenal.

CHAPTER 10

People-to-People Diplomacy and Sport

In the mid-1990s Tore widened his palette. Peace is not decided in negotiating rooms alone; if the work for peace is to endure, it must also live where people actually meet — and few places allow people to meet across borders more easily than in sport and in family life. This was the next step of people-to-people diplomacy: not only to seek out those in power, but to build bonds between entirely ordinary people.

For Tore, people-to-people diplomacy began at home. In 1994 he brought his sons Fred and Tom to Egypt, and at the pyramids several generations of commitment to peace stood side by side. For Tore, working for peace was never an office one could lay down; it was a life, and a life is something you share with those closest to you.

Cycling opened doors of its own. In 1995 the American Tour de France winner Greg LeMond climbed onto a tandem with Tore in



Tore with his sons Fred and Tom at the pyramids in Egypt · 1994

West Virginia. That one of the world's greatest cyclists would pedal together with a visually impaired Norwegian peace activist gave the message a visibility no press release could have bought. But the image carried something deeper than celebrity shine: on a tandem, the champion and the amateur, the sighted and the visually impaired, are equals. Neither gets anywhere without the other. It was Tore's philosophy turned into motion — cooperation is not a fine idea, it is the very means of propulsion.

That same year Tore returned to Ireland — the country where his peace work had had its international birth in 1978, now at the highest diplomatic level. Jean Ann Kennedy Smith, sister of President John F. Kennedy and the American ambassador to Ireland, received him. The Kennedy name carried a weight of its own in the work for peace, and the meeting demonstrated something Tore has always held firm: dialogue is not a single event, but a relationship tended over decades.



Tour de France winner Greg LeMond on a tandem with Tore in West Virginia
· 1995

The man who came back to Ireland seventeen years after Belfast did not come as a stranger.

Higher still it went when the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, received Tore. As a gift he had brought a sheep bell from Moi in Jæren — a symbol of Jæren farming life presented to a European head of



Jean Ann Kennedy Smith — sister of John F. Kennedy and American ambassador to Ireland · 1995



Meeting the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson — with a sheep bell from Moi as a gift · 1995

state. It is precisely in such details that the core of Tore's people-to-people diplomacy lies: he never came to the presidential palaces as anything other than who he was, the boy from the farm in Jæren. The great and the small, the power of the state and a sheep bell, met in the same handshake — and precisely because he met the powerful as a human being, not as an adversary, he was welcomed. Dialogue people to people means bringing yourself, not a role.

Football, too, became a bridge. In Rio de Janeiro in 1996 Tore met Romário, named the world's best footballer in 1994. Sports stars reach millions, and their support carried the message of peace far beyond what Tore and his small movement could manage on their own. Sport has this in common with the tandem: it speaks a language everyone understands. Here people meet across faith, language and politics, and here the very skills that peace requires are practised



Romário — the world's best footballer of 1994 — in Rio de Janeiro · 1996

— playing together, losing without hatred, seeing a fellow player in one's opponent.

In the autumn of 1995 the Nobel Peace Prize went to the nuclear physicist Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences he led — the scientists' own peace network, born of the Russell–Einstein Manifesto. Two days after the ceremony, Tore met the laureate in Oslo, at an event arranged by No to Nuclear Weapons, the Norwegian Humanist Association and the International Peace Bureau, together with Geir Fotland of Bike for Peace. Rotblat was the man who had left the Manhattan Project as a matter of conscience — and in that handshake two of this book's threads met: the scientist's responsibility and the power of conversation.

And Tore continued to tend the bonds with Russia. In 1996 he took part in the international Chernobyl-2000 memorial ride, in support of the victims of the nuclear accident ten years earlier, and at the finish on Red Square in Moscow he met Russia's sports minister, Shamil Tarpishchev. Throughout his entire working life — in cold war and in thaw, in fair winds and foul — Tore has held fast to one principle: contact with Russia must never be broken. For Tore the Russians have always been a self-evident partner in peace — not a problem to be managed, but a people one talks with.



With Russia's sports minister Shamil Tarpishchev on Red Square at the finish of the Chernobyl-2000 ride · 1996

Contact with Russia must never be broken.

Tore was not alone in keeping the northern channel open. In those same years the heart surgeon Mons Lie, a professor in Tromsø, helped build a bridge of health to Arkhangelsk: from 1991 he took part in the medical cooperation that gave the city a cardiac surgery department of its own, and in 1997 he was made an honorary doctor of the city's medical university — in those same years he led Norwegian Physicians against Nuclear Weapons at home. By the time the cooperation reached twenty years, more than seven thousand heart operations had been performed. People-to-people diplomacy speaks many languages, and medicine is one of them: there, the result is counted in lives saved.

The mid-nineties taught Tore — and teach us — that people-to-people diplomacy has many arenas. A son at the pyramids, a world champion on a tandem, a sheep bell in a president's hand, a football star in Rio: all of it is a variation on the same underlying idea. Peace is built not only where the conflicts stand, but everywhere people meet as equals and discover that the other resembles themselves. It is dialogue in its simplest and perhaps strongest form.

CHAPTER 11

The 1999 World Ride

Everything Tore Nærland had learnt through two decades on wheels of peace culminated in the great world ride of 1999. From 18 March to 29 June the journey ran from Beijing via Almaty and Moscow to Bergen — straight across the Asian and European continents, through countries and cultures, with the message of peace as the only luggage that truly mattered. Gandhi had shown that an entire people can be set in motion by one man's walk; Tore translated that insight into his own language. Where the Salt March went on foot, his march went on two wheels — but the idea was the same: the message must be carried through the landscape, past the people, at a pace that makes it possible to stop and talk.

The preparations had begun as early as 1997, when Tore led a delegation from Beijing to Xi'an in China. Along the way they were met by flocks of curious schoolchildren. Children ask the simple questions that adults have forgotten to ask: Why war? Why not peace? For Tore, such encounters were never interruptions of the mission — they were the mission itself. People-to-people diplomacy begins precisely



Schoolchildren meet the delegation during the Beijing–Xi'an ride · 1997

there: in the unplanned meeting by the roadside, where no one is negotiating and no one has anything to lose by being curious.

The world ride itself in 1999 was a logistical feat of vast dimensions — planned and carried through by Tore and the movement he had built around himself. The map tells its own story: an unbroken line from China's capital, through the steppes of Central Asia, across the vast Russian land and home to the Norwegian city on the west coast. A line that knows no blocs and no alliances, only roads and people.

Tore understood early on that a message of peace needs bearers whom people know and trust. Norwegian sporting heroes lent the ride extra weight: cycling ace Dag Otto Lauritzen rode along on the first legs out of Beijing, and Magnhild Elise Fundingsrud was among the riders. And before departure Tore had the whole delegation invited onto TV2's "Søndagsåpent" — popular attention at prime time. It was the same approach he had used ever since Coast to Coast in 1977: attention is not the goal, but the door-opener for the message.

From the starting line in Beijing the caravan rolled out into the unknown. Along the way, Kazakhstan opened up as one of the ride's



The world ride — the route from Beijing via Almaty and Moscow to Bergen
 · 18 March – 29 June 1999

great highlights — a country that had itself been the site of the Soviet Union's nuclear test explosions, and that after independence chose to give up its nuclear weapons. Here Tore and his riders were met with a warmth that left deep marks: school visits, bread of peace, and people streaming out to greet them. For Tore, Kazakhstan became



Dag Otto Lauritzen, Magnhild Elise Fundingsrud and Tore in TV2's studio in Oslo · 1999



Deng Pufang — head of China's disability federation and son of Deng Xiaoping — and environment minister Guro Fjellanger before the start in Beijing · 1999

living proof of what he had always maintained: that ordinary people, even in countries that have borne the heaviest burdens of the nuclear age, want peace — and that they recognise a sincerely outstretched hand when they see one.

Then the road led into Russia — the country Tore has never stopped returning to. Through the Russian landscape the tandems carried on bearing their message of cooperation across borders. In the Ural Mountains, Kjetil Ragde from Odda and Ada Kosynkina from St. Petersburg pedalled together — a Norwegian and a Russian on the same bicycle. Tore, who always sat at the back of the tandem himself and trusted the one who steered, knew better than anyone what that image meant: two people from opposite sides of a border get nowhere unless they pedal in step.

**Two people from opposite sides of a border get
nowhere unless they pedal in step.**



Out of Beijing — the world ride is under way · 1999



Kjetil Ragde (Odda) and Ada Kosynkina (St. Petersburg) on a tandem in the Ural Mountains · 1999



Bread of peace — the hospitality in Kazakhstan made a deep impression
· 1999



Tore and Olympic champion Vladimir Smirnov in Almaty · 1999

The ride rested on a network of local enthusiasts. Elena Kozhyr, secretary of the Russian peace committee, arranged meetings and smoothed the way along the route — one example of the countless helpers without whom no such journey would have been possible. Tore has always insisted on this point: dialogue is not something one man accomplishes alone. Whoever wants to build a bridge must find those on the other side who already carry the same longing — and they always exist, in every country, even where official channels are closed.



Elena Kozhyr — secretary of the Russian peace committee — arranged meetings along the way · 1999

And the ride was open to everyone. The Russian Aleksander Velikine — the engineer who in 1986 helped stop the stricken reactor at Chernobyl, and who was himself injured in the effort — rode along from St. Petersburg, and on Swedish soil he lent his power to Lily Persson's handcycle. Yet another reminder that this was never about the fittest, but about the fellowship. Tore had built a movement in which no one was measured by the body's capacity. Whether you pedal with your legs or your arms, whether you see well or poorly, you belong. Just as King had gathered black and white in the same march, Tore gathered the able-bodied and the disabled, Norwegians and Russians, in the same column.

When the caravan rolled into Bergen on 29 June, Tore had quite literally cycled halfway round the globe for peace. The 1999 world ride stretched across two continents and more than three months — but its significance did not lie in the kilometres. It lay in what the



Aleksander Velikine (Russia) with Lily Persson on a handcycle in Sweden
· 1999

ride proved: that a line can be drawn from Beijing to Bergen through hundreds of meetings between perfectly ordinary people, and that every single one of those meetings is a small piece of peace. Conflicts are not resolved first and foremost in conference halls; they are resolved where people meet people and discover that the other side has faces, schoolchildren and bread of peace.

CHAPTER 12

Into a New Millennium

Guatemala, 2004. In a country still marked by a long civil war, Tore sought out Rigoberta Menchú Tum — the indigenous woman awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her struggle for the rights of native peoples and for social justice, who lifted an overlooked people's cause into the world's field of vision. That is how Tore had always travelled: to those attention does not reach, to the conflicts that slip out of the news. Menchú joined the long line of peace laureates he has sought out over the years, from Corrigan and Pérez Esquivel onwards. It was never a matter of chance whom he travelled to see: he was looking for those who had shown that non-violence and perseverance can carry an entire people.

By the turn of the millennium, Tore Nærland had been cycling for peace for more than twenty years. The rides continued, and so did the meetings. For him, the 1999 world ride was not a conclusion but a confirmation of what he had believed all along: that conversation between ordinary people is the most powerful instrument of peace there is — and that it is never finished.



With Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum in Guatemala · 2004

In 2006, Tore stood at one of the most tense borders in the world: the one between North and South Korea. Together with Egil Meihack and Åse Simonsen, his very presence was a reminder that not even the most entrenched conflicts are beyond the reach of peace's attention. Where others saw a border no one could do anything about, Tore saw two peoples who must one day talk to each other — and when that day comes, someone must have kept the door ajar. That is the heart of his people-to-people diplomacy: you do not wait for politics to thaw; you show up, extend your hand, and keep the connection alive until the day it is needed.



Tore, Egil Meihack and Åse Simonsen at the border with South Korea · 2006

In 2008 Tore set out from Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim towards Oslo and Rome — a peace ride that tied the pilgrim tradition to the cause of peace. At the starting line he stood together with pilgrim priest Rolf Martin Synnes and Bjørn Hilt of No to Nuclear Weapons and Norwegian Physicians against Nuclear Weapons: the church and the anti-nuclear movement gathered behind the same ride.

Kazakhstan, which had made such a deep impression on Tore during the world ride, became a fixed point. In 2011 he launched a new peace ride in the city of Semey — the very region where the Soviet Union had detonated atomic bombs for decades, and where the population still bears the consequences. That the streets filled with enthusiastic people showed how powerfully the message of peace resonated precisely here. To those who have felt the price of nuclear weapons on their own bodies, the peace cyclist from Norway was no stranger — he was one of their own.



At Nidaros Cathedral before the peace ride towards Oslo and Rome — Tore with pilgrim priest Rolf Martin Synnes and Bjørn Hilt, No to Nuclear Weapons and Norwegian Physicians against Nuclear Weapons · 2008



Tore, Secretary of State Kanat Saudabayev, Norway's ambassador Dag Halvorsen and Frank Tomlinson at the presidential palace in Astana · 2011

The hospitality knew no bounds. In a yurt in eastern Kazakhstan, Kuat Tumabayev, Frank Tomlinson, Saule Kudajbergenova and Tore gathered for lunch — a meal shared across languages and borders. This is exactly what people-to-people diplomacy looks like when it works: not communiqués and negotiating tables, but people breaking bread together and getting to know one another. Guatemala, Korea, Kazakhstan — three very different places, but the same lesson: dialogue begins where someone sits down together. Tore had made it his life's work to be the one who sits down first.



Lunch in a yurt — Kuat Tumabayev, Frank Tomlinson, Saule Kudajbergenova and Tore in eastern Kazakhstan · 2011

CHAPTER 13

Around the World in 72 Days

In 2014 Tore carried out one of his most ambitious journeys: around the world in 72 days. He turned sixty en route and had been visually impaired all his adult life when he set out on the journey that ran from Manchester via London and Rome to New York. But the journey was not primarily a physical feat. It was a demonstration of something Tore had spent nearly forty years building: a network of trust that stretched around the entire globe, built door to door, handshake by handshake. People-to-people diplomacy cannot be delegated; it must be lived.

In London Tore gathered with Thore Vestby, Angus Robertson and the Norwegian cyclist Anita Valen in front of Parliament. Vestby — mayor of Frogn and vice president of the worldwide mayors' network Mayors for Peace — a prominent champion of peace, and Robertson, the Scottish politician, gave the journey political weight from the



Thore Vestby, Angus Robertson, Anita Valen and Tore in front of Parliament in London · 2014

very start. It was a fixed part of the method: he never travelled alone when he could travel with others, and he knew that a peace cyclist who arrives with mayors and parliamentarians at his side is listened to in quite another way than one who comes alone.

Vestby did not come along just this once — he helped arrange the start in Manchester. The following year he cycled with Tore from Washington to New York ahead of the review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in 2021 he followed him from mayor to mayor through Agder and Telemark, and in the anniversary year 2026 he is still there, one of the movement's steadfast supporters. "A very

practical man and a strategist,” Tore says of him. That is how the network of trust is built: not from names on a list, but from people who come back.

In St Peter’s Square Tore renewed his bond with the Vatican — now with Pope Francis, the Argentine pope who made peace, poverty and the climate the core concerns of his pontificate. Tore and Anita Valen were received by him. From John Paul II in 1979 to Francis in 2014, Tore had kept his connection with the Holy See alive for thirty-five years — through two popes and a world in constant change. Here lies one of the lessons of Tore’s method: those who only knock when they need something are left standing outside. Those who come back again and again, in good times and bad, are let in.

And in New York, Tore and his delegation were received by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The succession of secretaries-general Tore has met — Pérez de Cuéllar, Boutros-Ghali, and now



Tore and Anita Valen meet Pope Francis in St Peter’s Square · 2014



Bike for Peace meeting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York
· 2014

Ban Ki-moon — tells its own story: four decades of contact with the highest leadership of the world organisation, maintained meeting by meeting.

Seventy-two days, an entire globe, and in every capital a door that opened. Around the world in 72 days showed that the borders between people are thinner than the maps would have us believe — if only someone is willing to cross them.

**The borders between people are thinner than the
maps would have us believe.**

CHAPTER 14

New Riders, New Countries

A movement that rests on one man's philosophy stands or falls with whether that philosophy can be passed on. The years from 2015 onwards gave the answer: Tore did not live on past achievements, but kept finding new people to pedal in step with — and every new rider became fresh proof that the idea of dialogue was not bound to one generation or one continent.

In 2015 Tore once again stood in front of the Capitol in Washington, where he had spoken for disarmament in 1983. This time he launched a peace ride together with Karipbek Kuyukov — the Kazakh artist who was born without arms because of the nuclear test explosions at Semipalatinsk, and who guides the brush with his mouth and toes. Kuyukov has become a living face of the human cost of nuclear weapons, and a close friend of Tore's. Kuyukov's own message is simple: no one else should have to bear what the test explosions



The start in front of the Capitol in Washington — together with Karipbek Kuyukov · 2015

laid on his generation. It is the same struggle Tore has waged since Hiroshima in 1979.

That same year Tore visited the organisation Shanti Sahyog in Delhi, which works for the poorest in India's slums. Suman Aggarwal received him, Frank Tomlinson and Maria Bilyk, and the bonds forged here would last — India, Gandhi's own country, has since been one of the most important countries in Tore's peace work. For a man who counts Gandhi among his teachers, this was more than a project visit: it was a homecoming — and a reminder that people-to-people diplomacy begins from below, with those who own the least, not from above with those who decide the most.

It was also the way of Gandhi's heir Vinoba Bhave: in the years after Gandhi's death he walked on foot from village to village asking landowners to give land to the landless — millions of acres changed hands, voluntarily, face to face. One man, one movement, one meeting at a time. It is the tandem's method, only on foot.

At home in Norway, recognition came from the highest level. On 7 November 2017 Tore Nærland received the King's Medal of Merit for his many years of peace work. Together with Maria Bilyk he thanked



Frank Tomlinson, Suman Aggarwal, Tore and Maria Bilyk at Shanti Sahyog in Delhi · 2015

King Harald V at the Royal Palace — the state's official seal on a life's work that began with a tandem on Jæren. In the tradition he stood in, such official honours were never the driving force: the work was aimed at the meetings, not at the distinctions. The day after the ceremony, the work continued as before, from the saddle.

Perhaps the strongest sign that the philosophy held was that the wheels were now turning even where Tore himself was not on board. In Colombia, Åse Simonsen and Anne-Sofie Henningsen pedalled the steep hills — in a country that had itself just concluded a historic peace agreement after decades of civil war. New riders had made Tore's method their own: to cycle in where the wound is fresh, not to judge, but to meet the people.

In 2019 Tore gathered the whole group on the Great Wall of China — the mightiest of all structures built to separate people, now turned into a meeting place for a peace delegation. Few pictures say more clearly what Tore's life project is about: walls that were built to keep people apart can become places where people meet — if someone is willing to make the first journey.



Tore and Maria Bilyk thank King Harald V for the King's Medal of Merit at the Royal Palace · 7 November 2017

Tore maintained his connection to Norwegian politics as he always had: face to face. Outside the Storting the group met Member of Parliament Himanshu Gulati — yet another of the many meetings with elected representatives who over the years have listened to Tore. For him there has never been any contradiction between talking with the man in the street and the man in parliament; the dialogue is the same, only the address differs.



Åse Simonsen and Anne-Sofie Henningsen in the hills of Colombia · 2018



The whole group gathered on the Great Wall of China · 2019

In August 2021, Bike for Peace cycled through Geneva together with Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator of the Parliamentarians for



The group outside the Storting meeting Member of Parliament Himanshu Gulati · 6 August 2020

Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and head of the Basel Peace Office. Ware had gathered signatures ahead of the Geneva summit between Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin on 16 June that year, and together the group rode to the nuclear powers' delegations at the UN Conference on Disarmament to hand them over. The photograph from that ride later became the cover of the book *Peace Campaigns in the Spirit of Gandhi and Mandela*. The partnership has endured: ahead of the 2026 “Around the World” anniversary tour, PNND again stands with Bike for Peace, connecting the delegation to parliamentarians in the cities it visits, from New Delhi to New York.

In the summer of 2024, Bike for Peace joined Veterans For Peace on the peace walk from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. — the organisation American war veterans founded in Maine in 1985: people who



Geneva, August 2021. Bike for Peace with the Russian delegation to the UN Conference on Disarmament, together with PNND Coordinator Alyn Ware
· 2021

know the price of war better than anyone, and who have made it their life's task to abolish war as an instrument of policy. Since 1990 it has been recognised by the UN, with chapters across the USA and in several other countries. There Tore walked side by side with Mary Ann Wright, a retired U.S. Army colonel and former diplomat who handed in her resignation in protest on the eve of the Iraq war in 2003 and has devoted her life to peace work ever since — today also as an adviser to Veterans For Peace itself. The two first met at the peace summit in Vienna in June 2023, and have met again in Brussels and Washington. In *Kvinner jeg har møtt* (Women I Have Met), Tore calls her one of the most inspiring peace advocates he knows. Today she lives in Honolulu, and when the jubilee journey reaches Hawaii in the autumn of 2026, it is Wright who opens the doors: to veterans, schools and peace organizations across the island.

During the same 2024 US tour, Tore met the leadership of the International Peace Bureau (IPB) — the peace network that the year before had awarded him the Seán MacBride Peace Prize. In Washington he met IPB Executive Director Sean Conner and IPB Vice-President Dr. Joseph Gerson, who also chairs the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security. The meeting drew Bike for Peace closer to one of the world's oldest peace networks, founded in 1891 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910.

The peace work in Ukraine became a chapter of its own. Since 2016 Tore has worked for peace in Ukraine, and one image carries the whole effort: Tore by the railway line leading into the “Tunnel of Love”, together with Stanislava, Maria, Frank and Alexandra — peace trees planted, cycling events held, people met on both sides of the front lines. Here the philosophy was put to its hardest test: insisting on meeting the people on both sides, as he had done in Belfast in 1978, grew ever more contested as the conflict sharpened. Tore nevertheless held firm — for whoever believes that dialogue is the answer to



Tore with retired Colonel and peace activist Mary Ann Wright at the peace summit in Vienna · 2023

conflict cannot make an exception precisely where the conflict runs deepest. The work is gathered in the book *Peace in Ukraine — Our Peace Work since 2016*, a testimony to an effort he stood by even when it cost him.

**Whoever believes in dialogue cannot make an
exception where the conflict runs deepest.**



Washington, D.C., 7 July 2024. Tore Nærland with IPB Executive Director Sean Conner (centre) and Vice-President Dr. Joseph Gerson · 2024



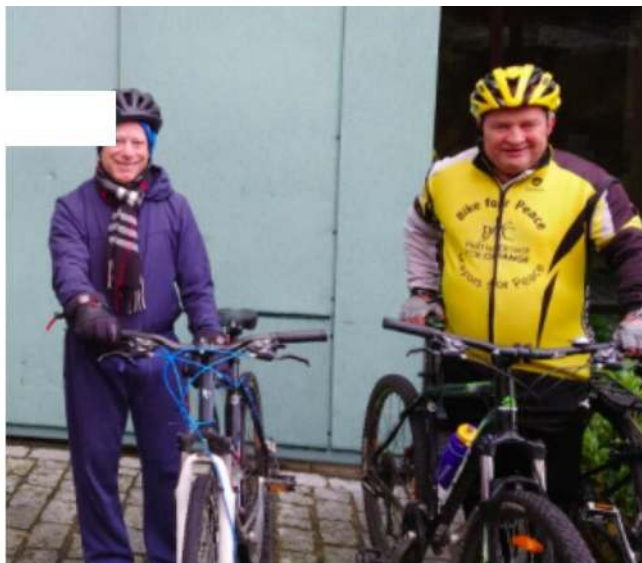
Tore Nærland with Stanislava, Maria, Frank and Alexandra by the railway line leading into the "Tunnel of Love" in Ukraine — the motif from the cover of the book "Peace in Ukraine — Our Peace Work since 2016"

CHAPTER 15

The Embassies in Norway

In recent years Tore has increasingly conducted his peace diplomacy from home — through a close-knit web of contacts with the embassies in Norway. It may look like a lesser form of peace work than the great rides, but in truth it is the same philosophy in concentrated form. Building bridges does not always require a long bicycle journey; sometimes it is enough to extend a hand to an ambassador on a beach at Sola. What matters is not the distance covered, but the willingness to meet a human being — even the human being who represents a state that others have turned their backs on.

In November 2020 Tore met Israel's ambassador Alon Roth-Snir at Tananger, near Sola. For Tore it has always been an unshakeable principle to talk with all parties to a conflict — not because he lacks opinions, but because, like the three he follows, he refuses to divide the world into those one speaks with and those one silences. The meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian representatives spring from precisely this.



Tore and Israel's ambassador Alon Roth-Snir at Tananger, Sola · 6 November 2020

This balance became evident in March 2026, when Josy Kang — the spokesperson Tore has brought into Bike for Peace — showed Palestine's ambassador around the Rogaland Art Centre. That it was someone other than Tore who extended the hand this time is itself a point worth noting: his philosophy is not bound to one person, but can be learned, carried and passed on. To receive both sides with the same openness is not evasiveness; it is the very heart of bridge-building. Whoever talks with only one party is not engaged in dialogue, but in recruitment.

**Whoever talks with only one side is not engaged in
dialogue — but in recruitment.**



Josy Kang shows Palestine's ambassador around the Rogaland Art Centre · 11
March 2026

His contact with China Tore has gathered in the book *Fredelige Kina — for fred og miljø* (*Peaceful China — for Peace and the Environment*), which ties the work for peace to the cause of the environment — two sides of the same responsibility for the future of the planet, and

two fields where nothing is solved unless people actually talk to each other across borders. For Tore, the people-to-people principle applies to every country, whatever its system of government: it is not an endorsement of any regime, but an insistence that the peoples are always parties to peace.

And China meets him with an ancient peace teaching of its own: Confucius's idea of harmony, in which peace — he ping — is society's natural state when people show one another mutual respect. Tore has himself named Confucius among those he learns from; the bridge eastward rests on both sides having something to gain from the other's sages.

The nuclear weapons issue, Tore's life's cause since Hiroshima in 1979, stood at the centre when, in March 2026, he presented the book *Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki inspired Bike for Peace* to Iran's ambassador in Oslo. The testimonies of those who survived the bombs of 1945 are among the most powerful arguments that exist against nuclear weapons — and Tore carries them onward to everyone willing to listen, regardless of which side of world politics' dividing lines the recipient stands on. That is precisely where the



From the China journey in May 2025 — the motifs from the covers of the book “Fredelige Kina — for fred og miljø” (“Peaceful China”): students and teachers at Beijing Foreign Studies University greeting the delegation (left), and Atle Berge, Tingting Tang, Tore Nærland and Mr Tang aboard the high-speed train (right)

method lies: the message is the same to everyone, and therefore it can be carried to everyone.



Tore presents "Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" to Iran's ambassador in Oslo · 13 March 2026

That same day Erik Berge met Mexico's ambassador Omar Fayad Meneses — yet another example of how the work Tore built up now continues through more hands than his own. Mexico is no ordinary country in this connection: in the capital's district of Tlatelolco was signed the treaty that in 1967 made Latin America the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in an inhabited part of the world, and the and OPANAL still guards it from the same city. Latin America, where Tore's roots go back to his meetings with Pérez Esquivel and Menchú, remains an important part of the network.



Erik Berge meets Mexico's ambassador Omar Fayad Meneses in Oslo · 13
March 2026

No connection has Tore held on to more firmly than the one with Russia — even when it has become unpopular. On Sola beach he and

the delegation received Russia's ambassador Nikolai Korchunov. For Tore this is not a departure from his principles, but their ultimate consequence. Peace is not concluded between friends; it is concluded between those who have something to put behind them – and it almost always begins with ordinary people daring to meet before the states do.



On Sola beach with Russia's ambassador Nikolai Korchunov · 3 March 2026

To mark the 45th anniversary, Tore gathered the whole story in the book *Trå til for verdensfreden – «Bike for Peace» 45 år* (*Pedal for World Peace – Bike for Peace at 45*). The back cover sums up the half century in plain words: peace campaigns in more than a hundred countries, meetings with the man in the street, schools, universities, mass media, religious groups, mayors, and members of parliament and government in countries such as China, India, Russia, Kazakhstan, the USA, Ukraine, Myanmar and England. The list reads like a programme for people-to-people diplomacy: from the street to

the government office, without skipping a single link. The embassy meetings in Norway point the same way — forward: the doors that have opened in Oslo, Iran's, Israel's, Palestine's and Russia's, lead straight into the conflicts the second part of this book takes up. What began with a bicycle ride in Northern Ireland now sits at the hardest tables of our time.



Tordis Landvik, Tore Nærland and Member of Parliament Fabian Hamilton in front of the Houses of Parliament in London — the motif from the back cover of the book "Trå til for verdensfreden — Bike for Peace 45 år" · 2019

CHAPTER 16

Norway–Russia Peace Dialogue 2026

When relations between the West and Russia froze over after 2022, Tore Nærland faced a choice he recognised from his forerunners: to follow the current or to follow his convictions. While ever more channels were being closed, Tore launched his own peace dialogue between Norway and Russia in 2026 — faithful to the line he had followed ever since the peace ride of 1983. For him this was not a break with the times, but the application of everything those fifty years had taught him: that dialogue matters most precisely when it is hardest, and that a people is never the same as its government. Russia, moreover, was not just any country. It was Tolstoy's country — the land where the idea of non-violence that carries this whole book was once formed. To travel there to speak of peace was to return to the source.

Tore knew the objections well: that visits from the West can be used as legitimisation, that pictures from Moscow have propaganda value, that the timing — in the middle of an armed conflict — made the journey unpopular at home. That the hosts, too, had their own reasons for opening the door, the delegation knew full well; the point for Tore has always been to use whatever opening exists. His answer was the same as during the Cold War, when he was both kept under surveillance and criticised for crossing the Iron Curtain: he chose the conversation then too. Whoever waits to talk until it carries no risk always comes too late.

The journey began in the north. At Murmansk Arctic University the delegation was welcomed for a lecture and conversation — a concrete piece of academic cooperation across a border that most others had closed. It was people-to-people diplomacy at its simplest: human beings in the same room, listening to one another.

That same evening the delegation was received by Barents Dialog, a Norwegian-Russian friendship club that has been meeting in Murmansk since the turn of the millennium — some twenty regular



Murmansk Arctic University · 20 March 2026

members, a couple of hundred in the wider network, gathering twice a month in a library in the city. Fishermen, teachers, pensioners. “Amateurs,” as the hosts put it themselves, “just people who want to stay in touch.” Official cooperation across the northern border had long since been suspended; the club kept setting the table.

Then a letter was laid out. It was dated 1995, sent from Tore and forwarded by way of Moscow to a cycling club in Severomorsk — an early invitation to what four years later became the world ride from Beijing. The club had to decline back then; it was deep in preparations for its own long journey to the Netherlands. But the reply carried a wish to cooperate one day, and the letter was kept. For more than thirty years it had lain in the archive, through every turn in the relationship between the two countries, until the evening its sender sat at the table himself. Tore recognised it at once. Between the letter and the reunion lay three decades of bicycle rides across the northern border, arranged not by ministries but by neighbours.

In Moscow the road led all the way into the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, for a conversation with Sergey Kislyak — the seasoned diplomat and deputy chairman of the foreign affairs committee, formerly Russia’s ambassador to the United States. The conversation was about the same things as the rest of the journey: disarmament, people-to-people contact and possible roads to peace.

Kislyak gives this a face. He was Russia’s ambassador in Washington in the years when the two nuclear powers’ strategic arsenals were still bound by treaty — limits that in our own time have fallen away, with nothing put in their place. To meet him was to keep open the one channel such agreements have ever come through: the direct conversation between adversaries.

That the delegation Tore had built up was admitted to such conversations in 2026 was the fruit of fifty years of patient trust-building



Erik Berge meeting Sergey Kislyak, deputy chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the Federation Council, Moscow · 23 March 2026

— the same capital of credibility that Tore had gathered meeting by meeting since 1983.

The experiences from the journey are gathered in the book *Peace Dialog Norway–Russia*, a record of conversations held at a time when almost no one else would hold them.

The most powerful moment of the journey came at MGIMO — the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia’s foremost training ground for diplomats, where more than two thirds of the



The motifs from the covers of the book "Peace Dialog Norway–Russia": on the staircase of the State Duma after the meeting with the committee on international affairs, 24 March 2026 (left), and Tore Nærland and the delegation with students at MGIMO, 25 March 2026 (right)

country's diplomatic service have been educated. While Western universities had cut off contact, Tore went the opposite way. He lectured on his more than forty years of peace work, and the book *Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* was presented to the university — the testimonies of 1945 carried into the very room where Russia's future diplomats are formed.

Then came the moment that says more about the possibilities of dialogue than any speech. Five students — all named Maria — rose and asked questions in Norwegian, Swedish and Danish. Five young Russians who had spent years of their lives learning their neighbour's languages, at a time when the neighbour would scarcely speak to them. For Tore, the five Marias came to stand as an image of everything his philosophy of peace rests on: the other side is not an abstraction, but people with names, faces and an outstretched hand. "These students are curious, open and multilingual. They want dialogue," he said afterwards. "The question is not whether they are

willing to talk to us — the question is whether we are willing to talk to them.”

Boycotting young people solves nothing. It only builds the walls higher.

— Tore Nærland, after the visit to MGIMO, March 2026

In that sentence the whole legacy is gathered. None of the three forerunners accepted that a human being can be written off because of the flag they were born under. Tolstoy wrote to the young Gandhi across the borders of empire; Gandhi sought out conversation with his British opponents to the very end; King insisted that even the adversary has a conscience that can be won. When Tore sat down with Russian students in 2026 while the world around him was building walls, he was doing nothing new — he was doing what the three before him had done, in his own time and with his own means.

Nor does Tore stand alone in this work. In the spring of 2026 he met several of the Norwegian peace movement’s leading experts — among them Alexander Harang, the peace researcher who has devoted his entire career to the struggle for peace and against nuclear weapons, today a professor at Soka University of America in California and a senior researcher at the Ikeda Center in Boston, and Bjørn Hilt, physician and professor emeritus at NTNU, a board member of Norwegian Physicians against Nuclear Weapons — the Norwegian branch of the Nobel Prize-winning IPPNW. Such meetings bind Tore’s people-to-people diplomacy together with research and the academic community — two sides of the same struggle for dialogue and disarmament to prevail over rearmament and silence.

The Soka institutions where Harang works spring from a Buddhist peace tradition of their own: as early as 1957 Josei Toda declared nuclear weapons an absolute evil, and his successor Daisaku Ikeda



Tore and the peace researcher Alexander Harang — “has worked for peace and against nuclear weapons throughout his career” · April 2026

— who built bridges of friendship to Zhou Enlai, Gorbachev and Mandela alike — put forward annual peace proposals for their abolition across four decades. It is yet another tradition that has arrived at Tolstoy’s answer: peace begins in the human being, and is carried between human beings.

Among the international voices on the same line is one of the world’s best-known economists. Jeffrey Sachs, University Professor at Columbia and for decades an adviser to the UN on the Sustainable Development Goals, has argued openly that the West’s and NATO’s eastward expansion bears a substantial share of the responsibility for the armed conflict in Ukraine, and that no lasting peace is possible without negotiations and dialogue with Russia. He has been branded naive and a mouthpiece for Moscow, yet carries his argument forward

with undiminished patience, in the conviction that the rejection is fed by fear and by what one does not yet understand, not by knowledge. That one of the most cited social scientists of our time shares the basic outlook of a visually impaired peace cyclist from Jæren shows that the dialogue line is not one man's eccentric notion, but a stance held by some of the sharpest minds in the world.

**The rejection is fed by fear and by what one does
not yet understand — not by knowledge.**

The same resistance reaches those who carry the line from the universities. Urban Wråkberg, a Swedish historian of science and professor of Northern Studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, travelled in the summer of 2024 on a private holiday to a cultural festival in Arkhangelsk, with no sanctions broken. When the media learned of the trip, there followed a week of intense attention and a threat of a disciplinary case from the university leadership, withdrawn after twenty-four hours, while a professor of law at the University of Oslo publicly called the reaction disproportionate and a threat to academic freedom. The Finnish Arctic professor Lassi Heininen met a harsher version: the University of Lapland terminated his emeritus contract after a conference trip to Moscow. Neither of them was turned. In 2026 Wråkberg, now retired, stood with Tore and Erik at the meetings in Oslo and travelled again to Murmansk — and where the private holiday of 2024 had cost him a media storm, this time the aim was declared: to rebuild academic cooperation at the city's Arctic university. That is patience in practice. They carry their scholarship forward with the same calm as Tore.

Support came from the diplomatic ranks as well. In May 2026 Tore met Erik Solheim — the politician and peace mediator who was central to the peace process in Sri Lanka and later led the UN Envi-



Erik Berge, Urban Wråkberg and Tore Nærland in Oslo · 16 April 2026

ronment Programme — in Stavanger, where Solheim was presented with the book *Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki inspired Bike for Peace*. When Tore mentioned the strong criticism he faced at home for having travelled to Russia, Solheim was unequivocal: a conflict like that cannot be solved without dialogue, and Tore should simply carry on. But dialogue does not mean the absence of criticism. That same evening, in a panel conversation at Kåå in Stavanger, Solheim himself was challenged by the historian Torbjørn Færøvik, who held that he took the human-rights situation in India too lightly. It was no rejection, but a contribution to a more nuanced debate — precisely the open disagreement a culture of dialogue lives on. To choose conversation over condemnation is not to stop making demands; it is to keep the debate going rather than cut it off. Solheim, a highly respected international voice, has argued that peace is made by talking to all

parties — including those one strongly disagrees with. It is Tore's own conviction in a diplomat's words.



Tore and Erik Solheim at Kåkå in Stavanger — Solheim with the book "Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" · 29 May 2026

From the economist at Columbia to the professors in the north runs a single line: whoever chooses conversation over condemnation is often met with suspicion, but does not answer by condemning in return. He keeps sharing, patiently.

The Peace Dialogue of 2026 shows what this book is ultimately about: that peace begins between people, long before it reaches the negotiating tables. Five students named Maria wanted to talk. Tore Nærland wanted to listen. That is how peace has always begun.

CHAPTER 17

Mandela, the Popes and the Legacy

This book began with three portraits: Tolstoy, Gandhi and King. Now, fifty years after Tore Nærland got on his bicycle, it is time to say what the whole story has shown: the line does not stop at King. Tolstoy drew non-violence out of the Gospel and made it a way of life. Gandhi took it out of the book and into politics. King carried it into the struggle for civil rights and paid with his life. And Tore Nærland put it on wheels. His contribution to the succession is people-to-people diplomacy in its most tangible form: the tandem, where two people from opposite sides of a border must pedal in step and trust each other to get anywhere at all. Where his predecessors spoke to the masses, Tore has for fifty years done something different — he has sat down beside the other party, quite literally, and started to pedal.

It is no accident that it turned out this way. Tore has consciously followed in the footsteps of the three: to Tolstoy's Russia he has

returned again and again, in war and in thaw, refusing to let the contact break; to Gandhi's India he has travelled since 1979, from the blind children of Bombay to Prime Minister Desai and the jubilee plans of our own day; and to King's America, where he himself ended up at the podium on Capitol Hill with the same message: that love is stronger than hate, and that the one who reaches out a hand will, in the end, get further than the one who clenches a fist. The lesson from all four is the same: the conversation must be kept going, and it carries furthest when it is conducted between ordinary people.

The place of a man from Jæren in this succession rests on half a century of documented practice: meetings with popes and presidents, secretaries-general and Nobel laureates — people who have seen Tore's work at close quarters and recognised the tradition he stands in.

One meeting gathers this whole legacy together: the meeting with Nelson Mandela. The man who spent 27 years in prison and yet emerged without hatred, who chose reconciliation over revenge and led South Africa out of apartheid without the bloodbath everyone feared, is the very incarnation of this legacy — he proved at the scale of a state this book's simple thesis: that dialogue is the answer to conflict, that the adversary is a human being, and that the conversation with him is the way out of even the deepest conflict. And the proof was African — made in Africa, by an African: lasting solutions belong to those who must live in them.

Lasting solutions belong to those who must live in them.

The line in this book begins in that same country. Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg carried Gandhi's idea, but not his name on the deed: the Transvaal law of 1885 barred "Asians" from owning land, so

his friend Hermann Kallenbach bought the farm and placed it at the satyagraha movement's disposal. Gandhi's own settlement, Phoenix, lay in Natal, in Inanda, on land he could own himself — next door to Ohlange, the school of John Dube, the ANC's first president and Gandhi's neighbour. There, at Dube's school, Nelson Mandela cast the first vote of his life on 27 April 1994. He had chosen the place himself.

In August 1990, half a year after his release, Mandela came to Oslo to take part in the conference "The Anatomy of Hate", arranged by the Elie Wiesel Foundation and the Norwegian Nobel Committee. There Tore was able to greet him — and he has since recounted, in several of his books, that before he himself managed to congratulate Mandela on the struggle against apartheid, Mandela beat him to it and praised the work of Bike for Peace. The meeting joins the movement to this history: the same idea — that the adversary is to be won, not crushed — practised by a statesman in South Africa and by a peace movement on two wheels. It is the idea that once travelled in letters from Yasnaya Polyana, and that is still rolling.

Yet perhaps the strongest affirmation a peace worker can receive is not even praise of that kind. It is to hear his own cause proclaimed from a pulpit higher than his own. The cause Tore carried to the Vatican in 1979, and kept warm through John Paul II and Francis, is taken up in our own time by Pope Leo XIV. When Leo took office in May 2025, some of his very first words rang out as a call for "a peace that is unarmed and disarming"; in the days of remembrance for Hiroshima and Nagasaki that same summer he rejected the illusory security built on the threat of mutual destruction. It is not the peace cyclist from Jæren who gives the pope anything here — it is the pope who, from the world's foremost pulpit, proclaims the very cause Tore has pedalled forward for fifty years, from Belfast to Hiroshima. For Tore there is a quiet encouragement in that: that the message he long



Nelson Mandela came to Oslo in August 1990, half a year after his release, for the conference "The Anatomy of Hate" — where Tore met him (archive photo)

carried alone on the open road now echoes from St Peter's, borne by voices far mightier than his own.

From Tolstoy by way of Gandhi and King to Nærland there runs, then, an unbroken line — the belief that human beings, in spite of everything, can choose peace over violence, conversation over the sword. The first part of this book has told the story of how Tore received that legacy and carried it through fifty years, from Belfast to Moscow, from Hiroshima to Capitol Hill. The second part will do something different: it will take Tore's philosophy — dialogue, the bridge method, the people-to-people idea — and apply it to our own

time. For the questions that drove Tolstoy to his writing desk and Tore onto the tandem have not become any less pressing. They await us in the next chapter.

PART 2

Visions

The philosophy of nonviolence applied to our time

CHAPTER 18

Visions — Bike for Peace 2026–2027

Fifty years is a milestone at which many look back and rest on what they have achieved. Tore Nærland does the opposite. For him Bike for Peace's anniversary is not a conclusion but a kick-off — and Bike for Peace, the instrument he has built over half a century, is to be used more actively in the next two years than perhaps ever before. Just as Tolstoy wrote until his last day and Gandhi marched until his, Tore's philosophy knows no retirement age. As long as there are closed doors, there is work to be done.

The work follows two main tracks. The first is the dialogue between Norway and Russia. After the journey to Murmansk and Moscow in 2026, Tore will deepen the professional and people-to-people ties: new visits, exchanges with Russian universities and peace organisations, and a continued insistence that contact is better than silence. These ties have deep roots: the Soviet Peace Committee was

a co-organiser as early as the 1983 Peace Ride, the peace committee's people smoothed the way for the 1999 world ride — and in our own time the contact eastward runs, among other channels, through the Russian Peace Foundation. Here Bike for Peace has a role of its own. Norway's authorities are bound by their alliance commitments, and where official contact is locked, the civil kind matters all the more — what experts call Track Two diplomacy: the conversation between people that keeps the connection alive and prepares the day when the states can meet again. The journey in 2026 showed what this looks like in practice: the friendship club that received the delegation in a Murmansk library, Tore's letter from 1995 still in its keeping, meets there still — and already that evening a new invitation lay on the table, an off-road ride in the north in August, open to whoever would come. Here lies the core of everything he has learned from his three forerunners: it is precisely in the times when talking together is most unpopular that keeping the lines open matters most. Tolstoy saw a human being in every adversary; Tore refuses to see an entire people as the enemy. The dialogue with Russia is not a departure from the work for peace — it is the very test of whether the philosophy holds when it costs something.

The dialogue with Russia is the very test of whether the philosophy holds when it costs.

The second track is a new journey around the world — an anniversary voyage that will carry the message of peace, and this book, from continent to continent. From Delhi to Latin America, from Central Asia to the United Nations headquarters in New York, Tore and his companions will once again do what he has done for fifty years: meet people face to face, cycle together, and remind the world that peace is possible when we choose to see one another. For this is his method,

as *satyagraha* was Gandhi's: not to persuade states from above, but to bind people together from below, one handshake and one tandem ride at a time — and let the states follow.

At the same time, Tore keeps building at home. The contact with the embassies in Oslo, with the Storting and with local forces in Rogaland — where it all began — is to be strengthened. For Tore, peace has never been something that happens only in distant capitals; it begins in the local community, in the school, in the workplace, in each person's willingness to reach out a hand. People to people means exactly that: all peoples, your own included, your neighbour too.

The vision for the years ahead can therefore be summed up simply, and it is the same one that has carried Tore from Northern Ireland in 1978 to this day: to keep the dialogue alive where others shut it down, to lift the struggle against nuclear weapons into a new generation, and to show that one man with a simple message — and the movement he has built around it — can still make a difference in a troubled world. Dialogue is the answer to conflict. Tolstoy taught us that, Gandhi and King showed it — and Tore Nærland has pedalled it into the asphalt of five continents for fifty years.

CHAPTER 19

What Can You Do for a More Peaceful World?

It is easy to feel powerless in the face of the world's great conflicts. The wars are so vast, the powers so mighty, and you so small. But this whole book is one long rebuttal. Tolstoy was one man with a pen on an estate in Russia. Gandhi was one lawyer in homespun cloth. King was one preacher from the American South. And Tore Nærland was one visually impaired farm boy on a tandem. None of them held power in the usual sense, and none of them waited for permission. What they had, you have too: a voice, two hands, and the chance to talk with another human being.

For this is what Tore's fifty years on wheels of peace comes down to in the end, and it is the one thought you should carry with you from this book: dialogue is the answer to conflict — and the strongest dialogue happens not between states, but between people. People to people. You do not need to be a diplomat to practise people-to-people

diplomacy. You need only do what Tore has done since 1978: seek out the person it has become customary to fear, and talk with him.

In Your Local Community

Peace begins where you live — Tore's began in Bryne. There he met Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Vitaly Shlykov in 1991 — the meeting that later opened the gates of the closed nuclear city of Arzamas-16. The road to the world's most guarded doors can begin in your own neighbourhood. You can invite conversation across the dividing lines in your own neighbourhood: between generations, between newcomers and long-time residents, between people who think differently about contentious questions. You can organise a peace ride, a discussion evening or an observance on UN Day. You can ask your municipality to consider a friendship link with a town in a country we otherwise hear little good about. You can bring peace education into the local school. None of these actions is great in itself. But neither was a bicycle ride in Northern Ireland — until it became the beginning of fifty years of work for peace.

The Russian saint Seraphim of Sarov put it this way two hundred years ago: acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will find peace. Peace in the world begins as peace in a mind — and spreads from there, neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

Nationally

At the national level, much comes down to keeping the debate open and decent. You can write letters to the editor, take part in public discussion, and defend the right to talk with all parties — including those it is unpopular to talk with. To defend that right is not to grant anyone their case: you can hold firmly to your own moral convictions

and still refuse to make agreement a precondition for talking together at all. Conversation is not the same as consent. When Tore in 1983 put an American and a Russian on the same tandem from Moscow to Washington, that was precisely such an unpopular conversation set on wheels; history proved him right. You can ask your elected representatives to give priority to disarmament, diplomacy and development aid – and ask your own member of parliament to join Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), the cross-party network of legislators for a nuclear-weapon-free world. The network's global coordinator, Alyn Ware, has himself cycled with Bike for Peace up to the nuclear powers' delegations in Geneva. You can support those who work for peace, with your time, your money or your vote – or step into organised peace work yourself as an active member. The doors are open everywhere: the Red Cross and Red Crescent need volunteers in every country, Lions works worldwide – including for sight, the cause closest to Tore – the United Nations Associations run public education in most countries, and through Mayors for Peace – the network in which Tore's long-time travelling companion Thore Vestby served as vice president – you can ask your own mayor to enrol your city in the world's largest network of peace cities. At the back of this book you will find an overview of international peace organisations open to you wherever you live. And you can remind both yourself and others that disagreement is not enmity – that a society can bear, and needs, our disagreeing deeply without ceasing to talk to one another.

Conversation is not the same as consent.

The Objections You Will Meet

Whoever follows the advice in this chapter will sooner or later meet resistance — rarely from enemies, most often from friends, colleagues and sincerely engaged people. The objections deserve to be taken at their strongest, for they are usually carried by genuine moral seriousness. Here are the most common ones, and what fifty years of practice have taught us to answer.

“Meeting representatives of sanctioned states grants them legitimacy — the meeting itself is a gift.” Conversation is not consent, and the meeting grants no one their case. But it gives peace a chance: every ceasefire in history has been negotiated with an adversary someone thought it wrong to meet. Whoever refuses the meeting refuses the only mechanism peace has.

“You become a tool. The host controls the stage, and the pictures end up in their propaganda.” They may — and the delegation that travels knows it. But the ledger has two sides, for propaganda lives on distance: the enemy image grows freely where no one meets, and shrinks where someone does. And the meeting works both ways. Five students named Maria put their questions to a Norwegian peace cyclist — that image, too, endured.

“Gandhi and King were masters of the boycott. You invoke them against boycotts.” True — and the distinction they practised is the answer itself: they boycotted cooperation, never conversation. Gandhi boycotted British goods, but sat down with the Viceroy in the middle of the campaign. King boycotted the buses of Montgomery, but sought negotiation with the city’s leadership throughout. Bike for Peace conducts no trade and breaks no sanctions; we keep open the one channel the boycott was never meant to strike.

They boycotted cooperation — never conversation.

“Letting the question of guilt rest’ is not neutral. For the one under attack, guilt is the very issue.” Quite right — and no one asks the attacked to lay it aside. The question of guilt belongs to the affected, and the negotiating table exists precisely so that it can be settled there: South Africa’s truth commission was the question of guilt settled among the affected — as dialogue. What this book asks concerns one particular role: the unaffected who wants to build a bridge cannot at the same time act as judge. From the outside, talk of guilt becomes condemnation, condemnation closes the channels, and closed channels prolong the suffering. Facts are not verdicts — the bridge-builder carries the testimonies forward, but the verdict belongs to the affected and to the courts the parties themselves have accepted. This holds, too, when condemnation dresses in the language of rights: the rights are universal, but carried from outside as a verdict they close the very doors the conversation needs.

“This may work on open societies. Against closed systems it is naive.” History says the opposite. The closed nuclear city of Arzamas-16 opened its gates to a handshake. Barred from his Nobel in Oslo, Sakharov received a peace cyclist. The bridge of health to Arkhangelsk was built straight through the chaos of the nineties. In closed systems the civil channels are not the method’s weakness — they are its justification, for there are no others.

“Thirty years of people-to-people did not prevent 2022. Dialogue has had its chance.” But it was not the dialogue that failed — it was we who shut it down. The channels were frozen from above, not by the professionals who carried them; New START died when the parties stopped talking, not while they talked. The diagnosis after 2022 is not too much conversation. It is too little.

Internationally

As an individual you have an international reach greater than any generation before you. You can build friendships across borders through travel, letters and the internet. You can listen to people from countries in conflict with one another — and discover what Tore has discovered on every single journey: that the vast majority, whatever their flag, would rather live in peace. You can support international disarmament agreements and humanitarian work. And you can do as Tore before you: refuse to reduce an entire people to the enemy, and instead seek out the one human being you can build a bridge to.

But to refuse to reduce a whole people to the enemy is only the first step; the next is to recognise the forces that drive the reduction. For in every conflict there is a force that slowly turns the other party into the Enemy — a faceless mass it is neither useful nor seemly to talk with — and so makes societies ready for war. This is no conspiracy, and it is not something to be sought in the words of others alone: the enemy image is a human temptation, and it works on every side of every front, including our own. To resist it is therefore neither to distrust those who report the atrocities of war nor to doubt everything one reads, but to keep watch over one's own gaze, so that a whole people never melts together into a single word. Tolstoy wrote that the first step towards peace is to refuse to hate; Gandhi refused to see a beast in the British soldier; King held fast that the adversary too has a conscience — the enemy is an idea before he becomes an enemy, and the idea can be refused. In our own time this test meets us most sharply in the relationship with Russia, and precisely when it is most unpopular to keep the line open, it matters most: not because one side is right and the other wrong, but because Russia is a people peace must in the end be made with, never a people to be shut out. To keep contact with Tolstoy's country alive, even in the midst of

the armed conflict, is nothing other than what Tore has done for fifty years: to refuse to let distance have the last word.

This insight is older than every treaty. Two and a half thousand years ago the Chinese philosopher Mozi taught that misfortune comes of people loving only their own — their own family, their own city, their own state — and that war loses its ground the day one regards the other's state as one's own. He condemned the war of aggression as the greatest of crimes, without pointing at any single prince. When China in our own time launched its quantum satellite, the country gave it his name. The enemy image, in other words, is no modern invention — and neither is the antidote.

And the antidote has acquired modern tools. World BEYOND War, founded in 2014, is a worldwide network working to abolish the institution of war itself — not merely the individual war — with chapters in more than thirty countries and open to individuals everywhere. Bike for Peace met the network at close quarters during the 2024 US tour: in Washington Tore met executive director David Swanson, and in Connecticut the network's local chapter hosted the delegation.

**The enemy is an idea before he becomes an enemy
— and the idea can be refused.**

A tandem goes nowhere if only one rider pedals. The bridge is built from both sides, one stone at a time. Your stone counts.

CHAPTER 20

How to Create a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World by 2045

No single cause has followed Tore Nærland more closely than the struggle against nuclear weapons. It became his life's cause in the Peace Park in Hiroshima in 1979, where a young peace cyclist from Jæren stood on the spot where the first atomic bomb struck a city full of people. Since then the cause has run like a red thread through everything he has done: he sought out Andrei Sakharov in Moscow, the man who had built the bomb and repented; he sat down with the Russian ministers of atomic energy, the men who held the keys to the arsenal itself; and in our own time he presents the book *Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* to ambassadors in Oslo, with the survivors' testimony as his letter of introduction.

Tore is not alone in travelling with the testimonies. Since 1983 the Japanese organisation Peace Boat has sailed with peace education on board, in time around the whole world, and on its global voyages hibakusha — survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — have told their story port by port. It is the same method on a larger keel: travel to where people live, bring the witnesses, and let the meeting do the work.

Behind all these meetings lies the same conviction, the one Tore inherited from Tolstoy, Gandhi and King: that there is a human being in the adversary too. Applied to the nuclear age, that means something quite specific — behind every arsenal sit human beings, and human beings can be talked to. Nuclear weapons will not disappear because we shout ever louder at one another, but because someone takes the first step and begins the conversation. That is why Tore has never been content merely to demonstrate against the bomb; he has sought out those who command it.

The stakes have grown, not shrunk. In the winter of 2026 New START, the last major treaty binding the strategic arsenals of the United States and Russia, expired with no successor. For the first time since 1972 there is no treaty-bound limit on the world's most dangerous weapons. Here lies the hard core of everything Tore has tried to say: disarmament is a mutual act. No one can compel it, and no one can condemn their way to it. If the weapons are to grow fewer, the parties must sit down together — there is no other mechanism. New START was built by adversaries who did exactly that; it died when they stopped talking.

**No one can force disarmament — and no one can
condemn it into being.**

Here Tore does not stand alone. Pope Leo XIV too raised the matter from his pulpit. He renewed his encouragement for “every constructive effort in favour of disarmament and mutual trust”, and urgently appealed that the treaty not be abandoned without a concrete and effective follow-up — for everything possible had to be done to avert “a new arms race that would further threaten peace among nations”. The pope singled out no guilty party, but pointed to the logic itself: a system in which two nuclear powers drive each other upward instead of downward. It is exactly what Tore has been saying for fifty years. And the pope has his own church’s peace movement at his back: Pax Christi, born of French-German reconciliation in 1945, has for eighty years shown that peace is made between adversaries — and carried the cause of disarmament among the world’s Catholics.

And the cities have organised. Mayors for Peace, the network of mayors founded by the mayor of Hiroshima and still led from the city where Tore’s life cause began, today gathers more than 8,500 cities around a single goal: a world without nuclear weapons. Norway’s man in the network’s leadership was for many years Thore Vestby. A visit to the peace museum in Hiroshima made disarmament his cause; as mayor he enrolled Frogn, he served for years as the network’s vice president, and after his time in office he carried on working to bring Norwegian municipalities in. His reasoning is as simple as Tore’s own: nuclear weapons quite simply cannot be used — their humanitarian consequences are so enormous that the weapons are unusable. Leaf through the history books, he likes to remind us, and page after page is about war — but no one has ever heard of a mayor who declared war on the neighbouring municipality. Mayors must use the power they have, says Vestby. That is why the appeal at the back of this book is dedicated to Mayors for Peace as well.

At the 50th anniversary, Tore and Bike for Peace set themselves a goal: a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2045 — one hundred years

after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is also the answer to the question Kamenô Fujiwara posed in her letter after the Hiroshima visit of 1979: why on earth do you not cycle against nuclear weapons? The goal is ambitious. But it is not unrealistic, for the world has already shown that it can be done.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones

Large parts of the globe have already been declared free of nuclear weapons through binding treaties between states. Latin America and the Caribbean led the way with the Treaty of Tlatelolco of 1967, named after the Mexico City district where it was signed — concluded between countries such as Argentina and Brazil, which had themselves been nuclear rivals, and today administered by the organisation OPANAL. Through the treaty's additional protocols, the nuclear powers pledged not to use or threaten nuclear weapons against the region. Then came the Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and Central Asia. Today the nuclear-weapon-free zones cover most of the southern hemisphere and a great number of states.

For Tore, the zones are more than international law; they are the method of dialogue raised to the level of states. Every single zone came into being because neighbouring countries sat down and talked — often neighbours with old mistrust between them — and agreed to keep nuclear weapons out. What they achieved proves a simple point: where the conversation is allowed to begin, the impossible becomes possible, and the world is safer for it.

**Where the conversation is allowed to begin, the
impossible becomes possible.**

The road to 2045 runs through extending this web: new zones in regions that still lack them, and a growing number of states acceding to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Every state that says no to nuclear weapons shifts the boundary of what is politically possible.

A Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Nordic Region

The idea is not a distant one here at home either. As early as 1963, Finland's President Urho Kekkonen proposed a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone — an idea later carried on by Sweden's Olof Palme and by the Norwegian peace movement throughout the 1980s. In 1987 Mikhail Gorbachev lifted it into his Murmansk Initiative, with the Arctic as a future zone of peace. For Bike for Peace, which has forged so many ties precisely in the north, this is a vision worth working toward.

Much has changed since then. Finland and Sweden — non-aligned at the time, and for that very reason conceivable as the zone's core — have in our own day joined NATO, as Norway, Denmark and Iceland had long since done. Today the whole Nordic region is bound by the same alliance commitments. That does not make the vision less important, but it shifts the centre of gravity from official policy to civil dialogue.

But a credible zone must be honest about what long held it back. A Nordic zone as it was usually drawn would have bound the Nordic countries while the Russian nuclear weapons on the Kola Peninsula — the most heavily armed region on earth — lay outside it. A zone that binds only one side is no zone at all. If it is to mean anything, it must commit both: the nuclear powers too must pledge, as they have done toward Latin America through Tlatelolco, not to use nuclear

weapons against the zone's countries. This is what common security means — the term the Palme Commission gave the world in 1982: safety is created with your neighbour, not against him.

Safety is created with your neighbour, not against him.

Here two tracks meet. A Nordic zone stands in conflict with Norway's alliance commitments as long as that binding holds — and precisely where official policy is bound, civil dialogue finds its role. This is where Bike for Peace contributes: not to replace the states' diplomacy, but to keep open the popular channel to neighbouring Russia that the authorities cannot use themselves. The goal the movement shares with the whole Nordic disarmament tradition — that the Nordic countries accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and that the Nordic region may one day be free of nuclear weapons. Bike for Peace shares this thought with a whole family of peace associations in the Nordic region and beyond — from *Nei til Atomvåpen* (No to Nuclear Weapons), which has carried the zone idea in Norway since the 1980s, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which has long held that common security and dialogue are the Nordic way, to the sister movements in our neighbouring countries and the associations gathered under the International Peace Bureau (IPB), the world's oldest peace network. Many of them work against the wind, with state funding being cut and a line of dialogue that has become a minority voice. It is the same patience demanded of all who choose moral integrity over applause: to bear a rejection nourished by fear more than by insight, and to keep sharing all the same. Bike for Peace carries the same cause forward on the international, person-to-person arena.

Kazakhstan — proof that it can be done

No story is more powerful than Kazakhstan's. On the steppes at Semipalatinsk, the Soviet Union detonated atomic bombs for more than forty years, with appalling consequences for the people who lived there — consequences still carried forward today, as the artist Karipbek Kuyukov, born without arms, bears living witness. When Kazakhstan became independent, the country inherited the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal.

And then Kazakhstan did what almost no one had expected: the country gave up all its nuclear weapons and closed the test site. The date of the closure has since been made the United Nations International Day against Nuclear Tests. That a country can voluntarily renounce nuclear weapons — not out of weakness, but out of strength and foresight — is the strongest proof we have that a nuclear-weapon-free world is not a dream, but a choice.

The choice has deep roots. Well over two thousand years ago the Indian emperor Ashoka saw the costs of his own war of conquest, laid down the sword and ruled on with justice as his only weapon. Kazakhstan stands in an ancient tradition: the voluntary renunciation of the powerful is history's strongest language of peace.

Tore discovered Kazakhstan long before the rest of the world opened its eyes to the country's example. Through many journeys he forged bonds there — in classrooms, in yurts, in the streets of Semey — and he has lined up at the start alongside Kuyukov himself, the man who paints with his mouth and toes and carries the legacy of the test explosions on his own body. This is people-to-people diplomacy in its purest form: not the treaties first, but the human beings behind them. Kazakhstan's story has become a fixture of Tore's message, for it says what he has been trying to say for fifty years: what Kazakhstan did alone, the world can do together — if we dare to talk to one another.

What Kazakhstan did alone, the world can do
together.

CHAPTER 21

How Can We Achieve Peace in Ukraine?

No conflict has been harder for a peace worker to stand in than the armed conflict in Ukraine. The suffering is immense, the fronts are entrenched, and even to speak of peace is seen by many as betraying one side. Tore Nærland has nevertheless chosen to stand where he has always stood. For him this is not a new position forced upon him by a new armed conflict — it is the same conviction he has carried since Northern Ireland in 1978: every war must in the end conclude at a negotiating table, and the sooner the talks begin, the more lives are spared.

Here Tore rests on the legacy he has followed all his life. Tolstoy — himself a Russian, himself a former soldier — wrote that the first step towards peace is to refuse to hate. Gandhi showed that one can stand immovably firm on one's own ground without turning the opponent into a monster. King insisted that the goal is never to defeat the

other, but to win him as a friend. Applied to Ukraine, this tradition means something very concrete, and something uncomfortable: that Ukrainians and Russians alike are people to be spoken with, and that Russia is a party peace must be made *with* — not a people to be shut out.

Tore does not refrain from holding views on what is happening. But he refuses to make agreement on the question of guilt a ticket of admission to conversation — whoever demands that the other side first condemn itself will never get anyone seated. He therefore leaves the question of guilt, and the shape of a final settlement, with the parties themselves, and points instead to certain cornerstones that all his experience — fifty years of it — shows peace rests upon.

First, the channels of dialogue must be kept open, even in the midst of the armed conflict. This is what Tore calls people-to-people diplomacy, and it is the very core of everything he has built: when the states of the Cold War stood rigidly against each other, he and his friends cycled straight through the Iron Curtain and proved that contact between people can endure when contact between governments breaks down. Such channels are not ornamental. They save lives through prisoner exchanges and humanitarian corridors, and they are the thread from which negotiations may one day be spun. Norway itself carries the proof in the north: the bridge of health between Tromsø and Arkhangelsk, which the heart surgeon Mons Lie helped build from 1991, saved lives for three decades — until it was frozen from above in 2022, not by the professionals who carried it.

Civil channels are not ornamental: they save lives.

Second, the civilian population must come first: the protection of life, the exchange of prisoners, the reunification of families, safe access to food, water and energy. These are steps that can be taken before

the great political disagreement is resolved — and they build the trust that negotiations require. Trust, Tore has learned, is not created in communiqués, but in actions people can see and feel.

Third, there is a need for third parties whom both sides trust — states and organisations that can carry messages, facilitate and mediate. Here small countries with clean records have a role to play, and so do popular movements with no self-interest. It is precisely such a movement that Tore has spent his life building: Bike for Peace owns no agenda beyond the meeting between people, and can therefore sit at tables where others are not admitted.

The Vatican, too, has offered to be just such a third party. In the winter of 2025 Pope Leo XIV urged that a solution in Ukraine be sought together — among “Ukraine, Russia and, of course, the United States” — and offered the Holy See as a facilitator for such mediation. He warned at the same time against any single party drawing up a peace plan on its own, and made clear that Russia belongs among those with whom one must negotiate, not around. The pope laid the blame on no party; he pointed to the very form the negotiations must take. It is the same basic conviction Bike for Peace is built on: that no lasting peace can be hammered together over the head of one of the parties.

Ukraine is not something Tore discovered when the world’s press did. As the first part of this book recounts, he has worked for peace there since 2016 — year after year, on both sides of an ever-deepening conflict. He keeps insisting on the uncomfortable but necessary truth that is this book’s one lesson in concentrate: peace is not made between friends, but between adversaries — and the road there always, without exception, runs through conversation.

The sooner talks begin, the more lives are spared.

CHAPTER 22

How Can We Achieve Peace between Iran, Israel and the USA?

The tension between Iran on one side and Israel and the USA on the other has for years been among the most dangerous in the world. Here the nuclear question, regional rivalry and deep mutual distrust meet in a knot that at regular intervals threatens to unleash a major war.

Tore Nærland approaches this conflict as he has approached every other — with the conviction that carries his entire life's work: that enemy images are more dangerous than the peoples behind them. Gandhi refused to see an enemy in the British soldier; King refused to hate those who hated him. In the same way, Tore refuses to reduce Iranians, Israelis and Americans to pieces in a game. They are, like all peoples, human beings who want safety for their children. The

politics that divides them is real and serious — but it was made by human beings, and what human beings have made, human beings can change.

The road towards détente runs, as Tore sees it, through some familiar steps. The nuclear question must be handled through negotiations and mutually verifiable agreements that safeguard the security of all parties. The de-escalation must come from all sides — threats and attacks only entrench the desire for deterrent weapons, whoever they come from. Direct and indirect channels of contact must be kept open even when the rhetoric is at its hottest. And — here lies the core of everything Tore has learned through fifty years of peace work — the countless bonds between ordinary people across the front lines must be cultivated, not cut. Scientists, artists, athletes and fellow believers who know one another are the trust held in reserve that makes it possible to build anew the day the political climate turns. States can break off relations; peoples need not do so.

So Tore acted as he always has: not with a resolution, but with a meeting. In 2026 he presented the book about the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Iran's ambassador to Norway — one human being handing a book to another, and with it the testimonies that are the strongest arguments the world possesses against nuclear weapons. It is people-to-people diplomacy in its simplest form, and a concrete expression of the fact that the road to peace in this region also runs through the struggle against nuclear weapons. For Tore, a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, long called for, would go to the root of one of the world's most dangerous rivalries.

The lesson of this knot is the same one that has carried Tore since 1978: dialogue is not a reward you grant the other side once the conflict is resolved. Dialogue is the very tool that resolves it.

Dialogue is not a reward — it is the very tool that
resolves the conflict.

CHAPTER 23

How Can We Achieve Peace in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel?

Few conflicts stir stronger emotions than the one between Israelis and Palestinians, and few have claimed more innocent lives over a longer span of time. That is precisely why it is a touchstone for the philosophy Tore Nærland has lived by for fifty years. If dialogue only works where it is easy, it is not worth much. Tolstoy, Gandhi and King all stood in conflicts where the hatred seemed bottomless and reconciliation impossible — and all three insisted that the human being on the other side can never be written off. That is the lesson Tore carries with him into the Middle East — and he has carried it before: his very first peace ride, in 1978, went through Belfast, a city where the walls between neighbours seemed just as insurmountable then.

Tore has met both parties — Israeli ambassadors and the Palestinian ambassador — with the same openness. This is no accident, and it is not diplomatic courtesy. It is his method in practice: whoever wants to build a bridge must stand with one foot on each bank. Had he chosen a side, he would at the same time have discarded half the bridge. In the firm conviction that peace can only be built when the dignity, security and right to a future of both peoples are recognised, he has refused to be pressed into the question everyone else asks first: who is in the right?

**Whoever wants to build a bridge must stand with
one foot on each bank.**

For Tore, the answer is that the question is wrongly put. He takes no side, because he recognises that both Israelis and Palestinians carry deep fear, real grief and a legitimate longing for a safe home. Playing one party's pain off against the other's has never brought the region closer to peace; it has only dug the trenches deeper. This is not indifference — it is the opposite. It is taking the suffering of both peoples seriously at the same time, just as King took seriously both the oppressed and the oppressor, in the certainty that both must in the end live in the same society.

What is needed first is the most fundamental thing of all: an end to the killing. A ceasefire that holds, unimpeded humanitarian aid to those who starve and suffer, and the release of prisoners and hostages. These are not political concessions but basic human requirements — and they can be met before the grand political solution is found. Here lies an insight Tore has repeated throughout his life's work: one need not wait for the great peace to do the small, concrete things that save lives. Every human step builds the trust that negotiations require.

In the longer term, there must be an arrangement in which two peoples can live side by side in security and dignity, whether through two states or other frameworks the parties themselves agree upon. Tore does not prescribe the solution; it must come from the parties. But he insists on the precondition: that people talk to each other, that they see the human being on the other side, and that children on both sides have the same right to grow up without fear. And he knows, after half a century on the roads, that this precondition is rarely created by summits alone. It is created from below — when an Israeli and a Palestinian meet as human beings, not as representatives of opposing causes. States can sign agreements, but only peoples can keep them.

Here, as everywhere, the role Tore has given Bike for Peace is limited but clear: to keep the contact where others break it off, to meet both sides with the same open hand, and to remind us that this wall too, like all walls, can in the end be torn down — not by those who shout the loudest, but by those who refuse to stop talking to each other.

CHAPTER 24

How Can We Achieve Peace in Sudan?

While the world's attention has been fixed on Ukraine and the Middle East, Sudan has suffered one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes of our time. The war between rival military forces has driven millions from their homes and plunged an entire people into hunger and destitution — all too often in silence, forgotten by the world's press.

That is precisely why Tore holds Sudan up to the light. Beneath it lies a conviction he shares with those in whose footsteps he has followed: Martin Luther King wrote from his cell in Birmingham that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. For Tore, this means that a forgotten war is a double injustice — first the suffering, then the silence that surrounds it. Peace requires attention; a conflict no one sees is a conflict no one resolves. The first thing the world

owes Sudan is to see the country — to bring its human suffering into the light and demand action.

For Sudan, the same foundation stones apply as everywhere else, but with a particular urgency. Humanitarian access must be secured, so that food and medicine reach those who are dying. The warring parties must be pressed and coaxed to the negotiating table by a united international community and by the region's own forces. To press them means, in the end, to talk with them: even those who carry the weapons are people peace must be made with, and to separate the deed from the person is not to excuse the deed, but to keep open the one road forward that does not run through more war. And Sudan's neighbours and the African Union have a key role to play — for lasting peace in Africa must first and foremost be built by African hands.

That last point is not a figure of speech for Tore, but a lived experience. He has met Africa face to face throughout his life's work — with Jehan Sadat in Cairo, at the pyramids with his sons, and above all in his encounter with Nelson Mandela, the man who showed that reconciliation can carry an entire country. From these meetings Tore learned what has since shaped everything the movement he built has done: solutions owned locally last longest. No one can cycle peace in from the outside; but one can cycle in attention, friendship and contact — and let peace grow among those who will have to live in it.

Lasting peace in Africa must first and foremost be built by African hands.

Tore's contribution for Sudan is therefore the same as it has always been, for fifty years and across four continents: to keep the country on the agenda, to build bridges to African forces for peace, and to refuse to accept that some people's suffering counts for less than

others'. Here too, the lesson is the same one that runs through his whole life: dialogue is the answer — and it begins not between states, but between people who choose to see one another.

CHAPTER 25

Bike for Peace's Appeal to the United Nations

Across fifty years, Tore Nærland has met one Secretary-General after another — from Pérez de Cuéllar and Boutros-Ghali to Ban Ki-moon. For him, the bond with the United Nations rests on something quite simple: the UN is, for all its flaws, the closest humanity has come to a common house of peace — the one place where adversaries are condemned to sit in the same room. For a man who has built his entire life's work on the conviction that the conversation must be kept going, that house is hallowed ground.

It is no coincidence, then, that Bike for Peace's fiftieth anniversary culminates in an appeal to the world organisation itself. Nor is it a coincidence which names the appeal invokes. Tolstoy, who taught the world that evil cannot be fought with evil. Gandhi, who turned that teaching into political force. King, who carried it across the Atlantic and into the struggle of his own time. This is the lineage in whose

footsteps Tore has cycled for half a century — and the appeal is his way of passing the baton on: not as theory, but as a concrete plea to the leaders of the world for the one thing he has always known works. Dialogue.

Nor is it the first time the movement has carried its appeal to those who hold the weapons — it has done so throughout its history. The 1983 Peace Ride carried the message of disarmament from Moscow all the way to Capitol Hill; Ole Kopreitan presented the peace appeal to the UN Under-Secretary-General in 1993; the 1999 world ride carried it from Beijing across Asia and Europe; in 2014 it was carried in to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York; and in Geneva in 2021 Tore and Alyn Ware pedalled up to the nuclear powers' delegations at the UN disarmament conference. The appeal of 2026 joins this long line.

The United Nations' own disarmament office, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, is the house where these threads gather: with roots in the UN's first special session on disarmament in 1978, it carries the treaties at the back of this book onward — through review conferences, negotiations and public education. It was the UN's disarmament leadership that received the peace appeal of 1993.

The appeal will be presented at the United Nations headquarters in New York in October 2026, together with the names of everyone who has signed. Here it is, in its original wording.

TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AND THE LEADERS OF THE WORLD,

We sign this appeal in the tradition of Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., and in solidarity with the survivors of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Semipalatinsk, Nevada, and the Marshall Islands, whose testimonies remind us that nuclear weapons are a humanitarian catastrophe the world must move past.

We, the undersigned, appeal to you:

- For lasting peace in Europe, between Ukraine, Russia, and the European community.
- For a renewed diplomatic focus to ensure peace in the Middle East by de-escalating tensions between Israel, Iran, and the USA.
- For urgent efforts to secure peace and stability in Sudan.
- For a world free from nuclear weapons: we appeal to all nuclear powers to disarm as soon as possible, and by 2045 at the latest.

The world needs active peace work now. Dialogue is the only way out of locked conflicts.

The appeal is dedicated to the United Nations, Mayors for Peace, the victims of nuclear testing and war, OPANAL, and Lions International.

The appeal apportions no blame, names no enemies and prescribes no solution over the heads of the parties. This is how Tore has worked all his life: Russia is addressed as a party to peace on equal footing with all others, and the demand is not victory for anyone, but conversation among all. This is exactly why the appeal's demand for disarmament and its demand for dialogue are inseparable: to ask for a world without nuclear weapons is to ask that adversaries talk. Nuclear weapons do not disappear through condemnation, but only through the very conversation no one can be forced to hold. It is the method of Tolstoy, Gandhi and King translated into the conflicts of our own time — the faith that the adversary is a human being one can talk to, and that the bridge is built from below, people to people, long before the statesmen dare to meet.

**To ask for a world without nuclear weapons is to
ask that adversaries talk.**

The appeal is open to everyone. It can be signed at *2045.bikeforpeace.no* — and every name travels with it to New York. It is as much the possession of peoples as of movements: any peace organisation is free to add its name to it, read it aloud at its own gatherings and carry it forward as its own. In this way the document itself becomes a piece of people-to-people diplomacy: not ready-made answers from an organisation, but thousands of individuals stepping into the same line — behind Tolstoy, behind Gandhi, behind King, behind the visually impaired man from Jæren who for fifty years has pedalled uphill to show that dialogue is the answer to conflict. He keeps on pedalling. Will you join him?

About Bike for Peace

Bike for Peace is the instrument Tore Nærland built to put his philosophy into practice. The visually impaired boy from Jæren found his teachers early in Tolstoy, Gandhi and King — three figures who each in their own way showed that conflicts can be resolved without weapons, through conversation and non-violence. For fifty years Tore has practised the same philosophy, and from 1976 — the tandem encounter at the Ridderrennet (Ski for Light) at Beitostølen and the presentation during NRK's national telethon later that year — he gave his conviction a form: a movement in which the bicycle — and above all the tandem — is both trademark and symbol. Two people who must work together to move forward.

Across half a century Tore has led peace campaigns in more than a hundred countries and met everyone from the man in the street to schools, universities, mass media, religious leaders, mayors and members of parliament and government. He has had audiences with several popes, been received by Secretaries-General of the United Nations, and met a long line of Nobel laureates and heads of state — always with the same message: that peace is built by talking to all parties, including those who are hardest to talk to. This is people-to-

people diplomacy in practice — the belief that peace begins where two people meet.

Tore takes no side between the parties in the conflicts he seeks out. His method is that of the bridge: to forge bonds between people where others raise walls. He and his movement have held to this line through good times and bad, through the Cold War and into our own troubled age.

Bike for Peace — facts

Origins: 1976 — the Ridderrennet (Ski for Light) at Beitostølen and NRK's national telethon at Forus

Legal form: voluntary association, Norway

President: Tore Nærland

Vice President: Frank Tomlinson

International Spokesperson: Josy Kang

Project Leader: Erik Berge

Contact: erik@bikeforpeace.no · 2045.bikeforpeace.no

Timeline

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1976 | The Ridderrennet (Ski for Light) at Beitostølen: Tore encounters the tandem bicycle. Presentation with six tandems during NRK's national telethon at Forus trotting track |
| 1977 | Coast to Coast: across the USA by tandem |
| 1978 | The first peace ride: Northern Ireland |
| 1979 | Rome, Cairo, Bombay, Hiroshima: the world tour that made the struggle against nuclear weapons a life's cause; reception with Vice President Mondale |
| 1981 | Congressman Arlen Erdahl receives Tore in Washington |
| 1983 | The Moscow–Washington Peace Ride: Soviet and Western cyclists together through the coldest of the Cold War |

1985	B.A. from Concordia College; meeting with Lech Wałęsa
1987	Andrei Sakharov in Moscow; “Children as Peacemakers” in Oslo
1988	Friendship ship to Poland
1989	The fall of the Berlin Wall; speech at a Monday demonstration in Leipzig
1990	Meeting Nelson Mandela at the “The Anatomy of Hate” conference in Oslo
1992	Into the closed nuclear city of Arzamas-16
1993	Meeting Russia’s minister of atomic energy Viktor Mikhailov
1995	Tour de France winner Greg LeMond on a tandem with Tore in West Virginia
1996	The Chernobyl-2000 ride concludes on Red Square
1999	The Beijing–Bergen world ride
2001	Bike for Peace visits orphanages in Moscow
2004	Rigoberta Menchú Tum in Guatemala
2006	At the border between North and South Korea
2008	Peace ride from Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim towards Oslo and Rome
2011	Peace ride in Semey; reception at the presidential palace in Astana
2012	The Trans-Siberian peace tour Moscow–Beijing with 23 Norwegians
2014	Around the world in 72 days
2015	Washington–New York peace ride with Karipbek Kuyukov
2016	The peace work in Ukraine begins: cycling events, peace trees and meetings
2017	The King’s Medal of Merit
2018	New riders cycle Colombia after the peace accord
2019	The peace delegation gathered on the Great Wall of China
2020	Hiroshima at 75: commemoration with a meeting outside the Storting; meeting with Israel’s ambassador
2021	Peace rides through Agder and West Telemark; peace walk in South Rogaland: the work carries on through the pandemic
2022	Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by MP Fabian Hamilton; peace ride Leeds–Bradford and a meeting in the British Parliament

2023	The Seán MacBride Peace Prize from the International Peace Bureau; Tore made an honorary citizen of Semey
2024	Tore turns 70; in Astana the delegation meets Nihon Hidankyo – six weeks before the organisation receives the Nobel Peace Prize
2025	The Peaceful China tour with university lectures in Beijing; the meeting with Russia’s ambassador in Oslo on 21 November becomes the starting shot for the peace dialogue
2026	Norway–Russia Peace Dialogue; 50th anniversary, anniversary book and a new journey around the world

Sources and further reading

The book builds on Tore Nærland’s lecture “Bike for Peace – from Tolstoy to today” (Sokndal Frivilligsentral, 24 June 2026), on Bike for Peace’s book and photo archive, and on contemporary press clippings reproduced in the books listed below. Where the account rests on Tore’s own recollections, the text says so.

Bike for Peace has documented its work in book form for nearly fifty years. A selection, in chronological order:

- 1979 — *Tore Nærland trår til* by Karthou Håland. The first book about Tore, written by someone else, while the peace work was still in its infancy.
- 1993 — *Mennesket utrydder atomalderen — eller omvendt!* Tore’s own contribution to the nuclear weapons debate, written in the years when he visited the closed nuclear cities.
- 2019 — *World Ride for Peace — Bike for Peace Across the World*. The rides that together traced a cycling route around the globe.
- 2023 — *Trå til for verdensfreden — «Bike for Peace» 45 år* (3rd ed.), with its English companion volume *Pedal On for World Peace* (3rd ed.). The movement’s own history up to the 45th anniversary.
- 2023 — *Look to Kazakhstan!* The country that gave up 1,410 nuclear weapons, told as an example for the rest of the world.

- 2023 — *Peace Campaigns in the Spirit of Gandhi and Mandela*. The campaign years 2021 and 2022, also published in Norwegian as *Fredskampanjer i Gandhis og Mandelas ånd*.
- 2025 — *Fredelige Kina — for fred og miljø*. The China tour, with peace and the environment as two sides of the same cause.
- 2025 — *Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki inspired Bike for Peace*. The meetings with those who survived the bombs, and what they asked Bike for Peace to do.
- 2026 — *Kvinner jeg har møtt i fredens tjeneste*. Portraits of the women who have carried the peace work, many of them little known.
- 2026 — *Peace Dialog Norway–Russia*. A record of the peace dialogue meetings in Murmansk and Moscow in the winter and spring of 2026.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones and disarmament treaties

For readers who want to know more. Five regions have already declared themselves free of nuclear weapons by treaty, and together with the global agreements below they show that a world without nuclear weapons is not a dream, but work in progress.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones

- 1967 — Tlatelolco: Latin America and the Caribbean. The first in a populated region; administered by OPANAL. The only zone whose protocols all nuclear powers have ratified.
- 1985 — Rarotonga: the South Pacific (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and others).
- 1995 — Bangkok: Southeast Asia (the ASEAN states).
- 1996 — Pelindaba: Africa.
- 2006 — Semipalatinsk: Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).
- In addition: Antarctica (1959) and Mongolia, self-declared and recognised by the UN.

Peace, disarmament and test-ban treaties

- 1935 — The Roerich Pact: the first international treaty on protecting cultural treasures in war; honoured in both East and West.
- 1963 — Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT): banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, outer space and under water.
- 1968 — Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): in force 1970; the mainstay of the non-proliferation regime.
- 1987 — INF Treaty: eliminated an entire class of intermediate-range missiles; lapsed in 2019.
- 1996 — Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT): bans all test explosions; not yet in force.
- 2010 — New START: capped the strategic arsenals of the United States and Russia; expired in 2026 with no successor.
- 2017 — Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW): in force 2021; bans nuclear weapons entirely. Norway is an observer, not a party.

International Peace Organisations

The doors that stand open to you. All of these are present and welcome in practically every country — including those Bike for Peace visits.

- **IPB — International Peace Bureau** (1891) — the world's oldest international peace network, with more than three hundred member organisations; Nobel Peace Prize 1910, and the body that awards the Seán MacBride Peace Prize. Associations may apply for membership; individuals can support the work.
- **The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** (1863) — neutral humanity in nearly every country; volunteer with your local branch.
- **Lions International** (1917) — service clubs in over 200 countries and areas; works for sight, youth and humanitarian aid.
- **The United Nations Associations / WFUNA** (1946) — public education about the UN; a national association in most countries, many with student and youth wings of their own.

- **Mayors for Peace** (1982) — Hiroshima-led network of more than eight thousand peace cities in over 160 countries; check whether your city is a member, and ask your mayor to enrol it.
- **The Pugwash Conferences** (1957) — scientists in dialogue on disarmament across the blocs; Nobel Peace Prize 1995.
- **IPRA — International Peace Research Association** (1964) — the worldwide scholarly association of peace research, with regional associations in Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America; for peace researchers and social scientists.
- **PNND — Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament** (2002) — cross-party network of legislators; ask your representative to join.
- **World BEYOND War** (2014) — global network for the abolition of war as an institution; chapters in more than thirty countries, online peace courses, open to individuals in every country.
- **IPPNW — Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War** (1980) — founded jointly by American and Soviet doctors; Nobel Peace Prize 1985. In Norway: Norske leger mot atomvåpen — the association the heart surgeon Mons Lie led in the nineties, and on whose board Bjørn Hilt sits. Health workers can join their national affiliate; everyone else can support the work as a donor.
- **Religions for Peace** (1970) — the world's religions in shared peace work, with councils on every continent.
- **SGI — Soka Gakkai International** (1975) — a Buddhist lay movement with members in 192 countries and territories, founded on Guam and, since 1957, one of the clearest voices against nuclear weapons; runs peace exhibitions and youth work, open to all.
- **Veterans for Peace** (1985) — soldiers and veterans working to abolish war, with chapters in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Japan and Vietnam; the first veterans' organisation invited into the IPB. For veterans, with associate membership for others.
- **Servas** (1949) — a hospitality network where peace is built by opening one's home to travellers from other countries.

Objections and Answers

For you who will carry the conversation onward — the most common objections to the line of dialogue, in short form. The full treatment is in the chapter “What Can You Do for a More Peaceful World?”.

- **“The meeting grants them legitimacy.”** Conversation is not consent. Every ceasefire in history was negotiated with an adversary someone thought it wrong to meet.
- **“You will be used in their propaganda.”** Propaganda lives on distance: the enemy image grows where no one meets, and shrinks where someone does. The meeting works both ways.
- **“But Gandhi and King boycotted.”** They boycotted cooperation — the goods, the buses — never conversation. Both sat at the negotiating table in the middle of their campaigns.
- **“Letting guilt rest is not neutral.”** Guilt belongs to the affected, and the table exists so it can be settled there. The unaffected who wants to build a bridge cannot also judge — facts are not verdicts.
- **“Naive against closed systems.”** Arzamas-16 opened its gates to a handshake. Where official channels are closed, the civil ones are not the method’s weakness but its justification.
- **“Dialogue had its chance before 2022.”** The channels were frozen from above, not by those who carried them. The diagnosis is not too much conversation — it is too little.

How you can support the work

- Sign the peace appeal at 2045.bikeforpeace.no — every name is presented to the UN in New York
- Become a member of, or volunteer for, Bike for Peace
- Give a donation to the work — contact erik@bikeforpeace.no
- Invite Bike for Peace to give a lecture in your town, school or organisation

The Delegation and the Team

Bike for Peace is the sum of everyone who has pedalled, planned, translated, hosted and cheered through fifty years — more than any book can hold. Special thanks go to Tore Nærland, who founded the movement and has devoted his life to it, and to the many faithful co-workers, cyclists and friends at home and abroad who have made every single journey possible.

Thanks also to everyone who made photographs, memories and sources available for this book, and to our hosts at Sokndal Frivilligsentral, where the lecture on which this story is based was given on 24 June 2026.



www.bikeforpeace.no

Bike for Peace

50 Years on Wheels of Peace

Tolstoy formulated non-violence, Gandhi made it a political method, King carried it onward — and Tore Nærland, a visually impaired farmer's son from Jæren, has practised the same philosophy for fifty years. He has met popes and presidents, torn pieces off the Berlin Wall and put enemies on the same tandem, always carried by a single conviction: that dialogue is the answer to conflict — and that the strongest dialogue happens people to people, where two human beings meet face to face. Bike for Peace is the instrument he built for this philosophy, and this book tells how it has carried him through more than a hundred countries — all the way to the peace dialogue between Norway and Russia in 2026.

“Boycotting young people solves nothing. It only builds the walls higher.”

— Tore Nærland



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