# A (very) short term mission in Norway

by Mark Gronceski

Oslo, NORWAY — Hearing the Battle Hymn of the Republic sung in Icelandic was just one of the unexpected experiences of Operation Rescue National (ORN) participants traveling on a "pro-life mission" to Norway during the Winter Olympics.

The group was invited by Norwegian pastors to join their anti-abortion activities.

"From the beginning, God had a different plan," said one participant.

Two separate planes, originating in Orlando, Florida and Baltimore, Maryland, carried a dozen pro-life activists who were to meet in Reykjavik, Iceland. Weather prohibited the meeting. Both groups arrived separately in Oslo, Norway.

Upon arrival, passports were seized by airport police at the Passport Control desk and the activists were detained in the airport police station.

Explaining that Norwegian officials were concerned that ORN would disrupt the Olympics, local officials held the 12 activists.

ORN leaders explained that they had been invited by Pastor Ludvig Nessa and that no disruption was intended.

*Above: Pastor Ludvig Nessa displays a poster based on Edvard Munch's* The Scream *at a pro-life rally in Norway. Pastor Jim Anderson of Spokane, Washington, (second from right) who was one of the ORN participants who got through, listens.*

*Below: Pastor Jan Agetorp (center) stands with three of the American ORN participants who were not detained and deported. From the left, the Americans are Don Roberts, Sue Gray and Jim Anderson.*

Norwegian officials, however, thought of Nessa as a criminal despite having never broken any laws. Nessa was defrocked by the state-run Norwegian church several years ago for his outspoken and flamboyant opposition to abortion.

Being invited by Nessa became cause to search the activists' baggage for super-glue and tomato juice — which Nessa had once poured over plastic dolls as a symbolic protest of abortion. All pro-life literature was taken. One member's bookmark was confiscated because it contained a picture of an aborted baby. ORN participants were questioned and it was decided to eject them from the country.

ORN, Christian Defense Coalition, and others made complaints to both the Norwegian government and to the U.S. State Department — to no avail. It was later revealed that the FBI had contacted the Norwegian government and supplied them with the activists' names.

"Why would our government care about 12 American Christians going to Norway?" asked one. "Why and how did they get our names?"

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a Washington, D.C.-based public interest law foundation, is investigating the U.S. government's role in the affair.

"It seems clear the Norwegian government had been scared," said Rev. Gordon Peterson of Calvary Temple Church in St. Louis, Missouri who, with his wife Nancy, were among the detainees.

Local attorneys and some parliamentarians decried the deporting of the 12 as "shameful."

Upon hearing the news of the arrests, Rev. Pat Mahoney of Christian Defense Coalition made immediate plans to fly from Washing-

*Pro-life activists in Norway during the Winter Olympics passed out these flyers with a design based on Edvard Munch's* The Scream, *to Norway's international visitors.*

# A painting is stolen and other tales from the north

by Paul deParrie

Oslo, NORWAY — While 12 Americans languished in detention in the Oslo Airport, two of their number from the west coast of the United States had missed the flight — detained by storms.

Their late arrival resulted in their being missed by the "security net" spread by Norwegian authorities.

Not knowing of the arrests of their compatriots, they called their contact, Pastor Ludvig Nessa, who blithely informed them of the situation.

Nervously, the two, Pastor Jim Anderson and Don Roberts, both of Washington state, made another call and were told to meet a driver at the Parliament House where they would be taken to a "safe house."

It was all taking on the air of a bad spy movie.

"At first, we did not realize that the police were looking for us and that we needed to be hidden," Anderson said.

At the safe house, the two met with Susan Dray, a pro-life activist from England.

From there they were introduced to Pastor Ludvig Nessa and Pastor Borre Knudson, both of whom were given what they called "the right foot of fellowship" by the state-run Norwegian Lutheran church because of their vocal opposition to abortion.

Knudson's father had been on a Gestapo death list during WWII for his opposition to the quisling Norwegian government. He remembered being carried off secretly to an island to hide from a Nazi "security net."

Roberts and Anderson did a secret interview with national television about their surreptitious presence in the country.

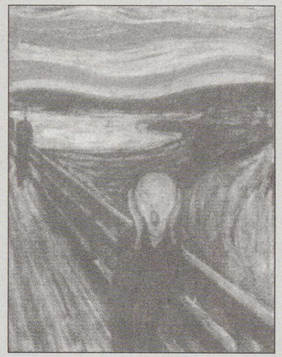
"Don and I went looking over our shoulders to see if we were being followed, turning left and right, zigzagging our way to the rendezvous point," Anderson explained.

During the interview, Anderson asked the Norwegian audience, "Is this the kind of Norway you want to be? Is this the Norway that awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to individuals like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela? Yet, now Norway has deported 12 Americans whose only crime is to be pro-life."

Two days later, Anderson was given the chance to speak in a local church. Due to the existence of a "church sanctuary" law prohibiting arrests in churches, authorities were unable to arrest him.

Later, a police interrogation took place, but the two were released.

While Anderson and Roberts were in Oslo, the Edvard Munch painting entitled *The Scream* was stolen. The painting is regarded as one of Norway's national treasures and has been used repeatedly in political movements in "take-offs" from its famous horrified-looking, screaming figure.



*Edvard Munch's* The Scream

Nessa and Knudson publicly hinted that they were involved in stealing Edvard Munch's masterpiece and asserted that the painting would be returned if state television showed *The Silent Scream,* a film that depicts abortion as murder.

Knudsen cautiously refrained from claiming responsibility for the theft or saying he had direct knowledge of who might have committed the crime.

Police said they were "studying" his comments but that for the moment they had not found any reason to call him in for questioning about the theft.

"We simply can't be too open about this," Knudsen said in a radio interview. "We have sent a signal and we want this signal to be understood, but we must be very secretive about it."

The painting was stolen from Oslo's National Gallery the same day as the opening ceremony of the Lillehammer Winter Olympics. A man and an accomplice climbed a ladder and smashed a window, then grabbed the 1893 painting and fled before police arrived. The theft took less than a minute and was recorded by security video cameras.

Two days earlier, a local radio station received an anonymous fax that portrayed a woman's fist clutching a screaming fetus. A faint reproduction of *The Scream* could be discerned in the background. "Which is of greater value: a child or a painting?" the message asked in English and Norwegian. ■