Making of the first international environmental convention: OILPOL 1954

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Towards environmental history of pollution and protection of the Baltic Sea - the local level - the national level - international level - environmental policy - environmental science - environmental technology - environmental media
Today's presentation is part of an ongoing study.

Question:
What were the main preceding phases of legislation that enabled signing of the Helsinki Convention in 1974 and thereby international protection of the Baltic Sea from pollution?

Today focus is on one issue only: marine oil pollution

Wreck of supertanker Torrey Canyon
March 1967
The final OILPOL convention signed in 1954 and ratified and enforced in 1958
In addition, the Conference adopted eight resolutions which are submitted to the Governments and other bodies concerned for consideration and appropriate action. These resolutions (which are appended as an Annex to the Final Act) relate to:

1. The complete avoidance as soon as practicable of discharge of persistent oils into the sea.
2. The application of the principles of the Convention so far as is reasonable and practicable to the ships to which the Convention does not apply.
3. The encouragement of development and installation of efficient oil-water separators for use in ships and the preparation of a performance specification for such separators.
4. The provision of facilities for the reception of oil residues at repair ports and at oil-loading terminals.
5. The preparation of manuals of guidance for the avoidance of oil pollution.
6. Interim measures pending the coming into force of the Convention.
7. The creation of national committees on oil pollution.
8. The collection and dissemination by the appropriate organ of the United Nations of technical information about oil pollution.
The main aim of HELCOM is to stop intentional oil spills by 2021.

Implications of OILPOL:
- OILPOL, 1954 was the first global environmental convention in the world against pollution.
- OILPOL convention was amended under the guidance of IMO (1959), in 1962, 1969, and 1971.
- It activated Nordic NGOs including hunters associations, animal and nature protection societies, business organisations, and mass media.
- National and local governments and authorities in socialist and democratic countries contributed.
- It was an important catalyst for environmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region as well.

Thank you for your attention!