

Navy commander warns of Soviet plan for surprise attack against Sweden

by Göran Haglund

In two articles published on Jan. 20-21 in Sweden's largest morning newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, Navy Commander Hans von Hofsten warns of a Soviet surprise strike against Sweden, in a repeat of Hitler's successful surprise occupation of Denmark and Norway at the outset of World War II. Hofsten is the ranking officer and spokesman of the so-called officers' revolt that erupted after the Swedish elections last September. At the time, Hofsten bluntly accused Social Democratic Premier Olof Palme of lying, after Palme had claimed, in his inaugural address to the parliament, that Sweden now had "created respect for its borders."

The first of Hofsten's two articles, titled "Do the Swedish People Know About This?" asserts that "the Soviet Union, by means of espionage, assassination, and submarine operations, is planning an attack against Sweden, regardless of the season of the year or the time of day."

The extraordinary warnings by an active Swedish officer were issued to the public amid intense efforts by the Palme regime to "normalize" and warm up relations to the Soviet Union, in spite of new hard evidence of continued submarine incursions into Swedish waters. This evidence includes analysis of the "noise spectrum" of a detected submarine as distinctly that of a Soviet "Whiskey class" submarine's characteristic double poppler.

Underscoring the treasonous policy of Olof Palme, the British military analyst John Erickson, in an interview broadcast on Jan. 12 by national Swedish TV, asserted that the Swedish Navy in the fall of 1982 captured a Soviet submarine during the Hors Bay incident, but was ordered by the incoming Palme regime to allow the submarine to escape, "for diplomatic reasons." The successful cover-up of that incident inaugurated the close cooperation between Olof Palme and Soviet Stockholm ambassador Boris Pankin, both of whom took office at the time of the incident.

On the same day that Navy Commander Hofsten's new dramatic call for an alert was published, Palme's undersecretary of state, Pierre Schori, gave a press conference in Stockholm upon his return from a visit to Moscow, announcing that "the relations to the Soviet Union have improved" and "have been normalized." Schori's visit, which he claimed took place in "a good atmosphere," was made in preparation of Palme's own, much-heralded visit to the Kremlin, scheduled for early March.

Writing in direct response to Palme's official foreign policy, and drawing upon some lessons of history, Hofsten shows that appeasement doesn't protect you from an attack by a ruthless enemy that needs your territory: Hitler attacked Denmark and Norway without warning in 1940, despite the fact that these countries had declared their neutrality at the outbreak of war on the continent. Thus, the real hostilities of World War II started with an attack on Sweden's neighbors—two peaceful, non-aggressive nations.

Hofsten emphasizes that Hitler's attack was based solely on strategic logic: He had to have these countries to have forward bases for the fight against England. The lessons of World War I informed Hitler that he had to gain supremacy at sea before undertaking a coastal invasion, and he also needed fifth columnists, quislings, to assist him.

"These historical events are of utmost interest for us today, since the strategic situation has many remarkable similarities with the situation 45 years ago," Hofsten writes.

The Soviet Union has virtually all its shipyard capacity bottled up in the Baltic, and its strategic fleet is way up north in Murmansk. In addition, both fleets are far from the NATO lines of supply across the Atlantic. It is a strategic necessity for the Warsaw Pact to acquire forward basing for its navy and supporting aircraft, Hofsten concludes. "Can this be the reason why the Soviet Union has tried, and succeeded, in using diplomatic rumblings to persuade Norway to refrain from having allied forces on its territory during peacetime?"

Sometimes it's not comfortable to look the truth in the face, Hofsten admits, but the experience of Sweden's neighbors proves that it is necessary.

Today there are huge standing armies on the continent. To start hostilities there by either side would be extremely risky and would lead to enormous losses. But in Scandinavia the situation is different, Hofsten points out: "In Norway there are in this connection pathetically small standing forces." Sweden has no standing army. Only its Air Force and Navy are ready for action at all times, but they have been halved in strength in the recent period.

"A surprise opening gambit by the Warsaw Pact on the Scandinavian peninsula would, for that reason, be likely to succeed," Hofsten writes. To attack Sweden after a Swedish mobilization would be risky, but a surprise attack would be different. Some experts have said that Sweden runs a greater

risk today of being drawn into a major war in an early phase. "Well, in fact, there are strong grounds to assume that a major war would begin here. Neutrality, weakness, and general peaceability would be as little help to us as they were to Finland in 1939 and Denmark and Norway in 1940."

"Achieving rapid success against an unmobilized and unsuspecting Sweden can therefore appear to be a simple and inexpensive venture. But," Hofsten asks, "can the aggressor really be entirely sure that the Swedes are actually 'sleeping' at the moment the attack is to begin?"

A single Swedish submarine or missile cruiser, or a few fighter-bombers, could wreak havoc on the invading forces. Although Hitler was wont to take big risks, the Russians have historically been very cautious. This does not necessarily mean that they would not take the risk, but there is ample evidence that they would do everything to minimize the risk ahead of time.

Spetsnaz for Sweden

On two occasions the Swedish police have arrested groups of persons alleging to be "door-to-door salesmen" of paintings, traveling around the Swedish countryside. These groups had a total of 66 detailed maps of Swedish strategic and military targets, Hofsten writes. They also visited the homes of officers from every Air Force squadron in the country. Before the summer of 1984, 60% of the pilots in the Jämtland Air Force wing had been visited by these "salesmen."

"The Soviet Union has close to 4,000 elite troops specially trained for sabotage and assassination in Sweden," Hofsten reports. "They are trained against prisoners condemned to death in order to work off any scruples they may have. Knowing this is enough to understand the merciless brutality these units would apply as they went about their jobs in our idyllic Social Democratic paradise. They are trained for two years and then serve in the reserves, which now total 150,000 men, of which 15,000 are earmarked for Sweden."

"If the Soviets are to rotate these numbers of sabotage groups every other year, it is not surprising that their training requires frequent operations for those of them that are going to operate from submarines in Swedish waters."

"An attacker knows 'to the t' how many submarines and missile ships Sweden has, what their names are and where they are stationed and whether they are armed. He knows exactly how many Air Force units we have of various kinds and where they are located. He knows the name of every officer on every ship and every Air Force base. He also knows where all of these officers live and in many cases in which room they sleep; they are only a few hundred of them who have key positions in a surprise attack, not more. He knows all of this and more from public, up-to-date and reliable sources."

"... our air force would be totally paralyzed without pilots. For professionally trained and equipped sabotage units,

it would not be difficult to murder most of our few hundred pilots."

"If the aggressor would like to increase the certainty that the Swedish navy's ships will be unusable, he only has to extend his hit list by a few key individuals in their crews. If he wants to pour sand into the entire mobilization machinery in the opening stage of the war, he can blow up a few well-chosen telephone stations and electric switching stations. The list of the chaos that can be achieved by extremely modest means in our modern society by a well-informed attacker can be made quite long."

Some might say that this is alarmist. But all the Soviet submarine violations are reality, Hofsten emphasizes, and the implications anything but far-fetched: "This picture of a foreign power who is intensively engaged in preparations for sabotage against Sweden by espionage, assassination and submarine operations to provide routine security for a surprise attack in any season of the year and at any time of the day or night, is one that has been compiled by adding two and two from published sources and supplementing this information with professional knowledge."

The Soviet Republic of Sweden

In his second article, titled "The Soviet Republic of Sweden?" Hofsten outlines Russian expansionism after World War II. Throughout the postwar period, communism has been on the offensive, and more and more countries have been gobbled up. Referring to a report issued last summer by a Swedish parliamentary defense commission, which stated that "the border-line between war and peace can become floating," Hofsten writes that "my only objection is that the border-line *is* floating."

Sweden is now in the situation that if the Soviets were to attack, one of two things would happen, according to Hofsten: NATO would come to Sweden's assistance too late or not at all, and Sweden would be "the Soviet Republic of Sweden," or NATO would come to Sweden's aid at an early stage, and the country would be a battlefield that would be laid waste. In any case, the only thing that can prevent both possibilities is action by the Swedes themselves, Hofsten emphasizes.

"I and some of my colleagues presented some of these ideas in public last fall, and we were subjected to severe criticism. Prime Minister Palme answered us in public by saying that 'I'm not worried. On the contrary, I feel secure, thanks to our consistent security policy.' As far as the military defense element of that policy is concerned, it certainly has been consistent: continuous disarmament for the past 15 years!"

Writes Hofsten: "Sometimes, when a person notices some disturbing fact, you will hear him ask facetiously, 'Do the authorities know about this?' I would like to turn that around and ask, quite seriously: 'Do the Swedish people know about this?'"