

Finland and Sweden pulled into Soviet orbit

by Göran Haglund

Finland and Sweden have abandoned the last pretenses of neutrality and complied with Soviet demands that they deploy systems capable of shooting down NATO cruise missiles passing over their territory. This concession to Soviet pressures places Finland and Sweden de facto in the Warsaw Pact wartime defense structure—with the sole difference that while Finland is using predominantly Soviet military equipment, Sweden is using independent Swedish and other Western military technology. All this at a time when, according to *Die Welt*, the Soviet Union is installing a helicopter base on the island of Spitzbergen to the north of Norway in the Barents Sea, equipped with a mobile radar installation which will assist Soviet submarines which can reach every sizable target in the United States with their missile armaments.

Finland is already supplied with Soviet MiGs, ground-based anti-aircraft missiles, and other forms of advanced Soviet military hardware capable of destroying cruise missiles in flight. Now it has been compelled to acquire advanced radar capability that could locate and track the cruise missiles. Finnish Foreign Minister Paavo Vayrynen justified this by announcing that the cruise missiles to be stationed at NATO bases in Europe pose “a new threat” to Finnish “neutrality,” and, therefore, “Finnish capability to shoot down missiles crossing Finnish airspace is of prime importance.”

Finnish Army Lt. Col. Gustav Haeggglund, Finland’s Defense Committee spokesman, announced that the real task for the Finnish armed forces is the detection and shooting down of submarine-, ship- or air-based missiles, launched by the United States and NATO, which might “shortcut” through Finland. “Given our neutral status we cannot disregard the threat,” he said.

Over the past month, the Soviets have extended exceptional diplomatic gestures to the Finns. On Nov. 5, the Soviet media announced with fanfare that the foreign affairs commission of the Supreme Soviet had ratified an extension of the Soviet-Finnish Friendship and Assistance Treaty of 1948, at a session chaired by Politburo member Konstantin Chernenko and addressed by Leningrad party chief Zaikov and the chief political commissar of the Armed Forces, the notorious chauvinist General Yepishev.

On Nov. 16, the chief of the KGB border guards, Gen. V. A. Matrosov arrived in Helsinki for consultations with the

chief of the Finnish border guards, Gen. Ilmari Kirjavainen. Finnish Foreign Minister Vayrynen will visit Moscow on Dec. 13.

The Soviets responded to Finland’s compliance by awarding Finnish President Mauno Koivisto the highest Soviet mark of honor, the Order of Lenin, at his 60th birthday Nov. 25. No other Western head of state has ever been given this award.

Invasion threats

Behind Soviet diplomatic niceties, however, have been threats that Finnish and Swedish neutrality would be called into question unless the two countries committed themselves to preventing cruise missiles from crossing their territory en route to the Soviet Union. Historically, such Soviet demands on Finland have been coupled with threats of outright invasion should Finland not comply.

As for Sweden, a Soviet spokesman insisted on Swedish television earlier this fall that Sweden’s neutrality was not credible, Sweden being merely “part of the capitalist camp,” unless Sweden agreed to sign a Friendship and Assistance Treaty with the Soviets.

It was shortly after that blunt threat, in connection with the Swedish military’s “East Coast” maneuvers, that the Swedish defense ministry announced the completion of tests designed to demonstrate Swedish capability to shoot down cruise missiles. During wartime, such missiles, even if destined for targets outside of Sweden, will be shot down, according to the defense ministry.

‘Military consultants’

In Finland, now that the military command has agreed to integrate its air defense system with that of the U.S.S.R., the Soviets are maneuvering for even tighter assimilation of the country into Warsaw Pact military programs. Parliamentarian Mikko Kuoppa, a member of the Finnish communist party, has demanded “military consultations” with the Soviets, due to the possibility that American cruise missiles would fly over Finland. When Nikita Khrushchev asked for such “military consultations” in 1961 and 1962, in the era of the Berlin and Cuba Missile crises, the demand was linked with a Soviet desire to install their missiles on Finnish territory. The Finns refused the consultations.

The consultations are provided for in the treaty of friendship and assistance between the U.S.S.R. and Finland in case of a military threat to the Soviet Union. Were they to be held, it would be read as a sign that the present situation is even more critical than in 1961-62.

The former head of the “Euro-communist” wing of the Finnish CP, Aarne Saarinen, accused the Soviet leadership of interfering in Finnish internal affairs. Saarinen’s was responding to the fact that the Soviets had engineered the election of a pro-Stalinist as head of the Soviet-Finnish Friendship Society, against the wishes of the majority. The society is extremely powerful in Finland.