

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

Poles seized at secret navy base

Initial spy charges were dropped, as Swedish Premier Carlsson discreetly met Soviet special emissary.

Shortly before midnight on July 16, a 30-foot sailboat, with a crew of four Poles, entered the militarily restricted waters of the Swedish naval base at Muskö, 25 miles south of Stockholm. The Navy intercepted the boat just a few hundred yards away from the sensitive base.

After a brief interrogation, the crew and ship were seized and towed ashore, where they were handed over to police. While residents of Sweden, the four crew members were of Polish origin, although one had become a Swedish citizen. They claimed they were on a sailing vacation, got lost, and overlooked the large, multilingual signs posted everywhere forbidding admittance to unauthorized vessels.

Following a search of the boat, which produced a camera, several rolls of exposed film, and a nautical chart with military objects marked on it, Acting High Prosecutor Bengt Strömberg announced on July 17 that the crew faced charges of espionage. One day later, however, it was suddenly announced that evidence to support charges of espionage was insufficient, although the crew may be liable for other offenses, such as entering the militarily restricted area.

Built in the 1960s, the Muskö base is Sweden's largest defense installation. In order to withstand a bomb assault, the equivalent of a small city has been blasted into the rocks, 75 yards beneath the surface. Since its construction, the base has aroused great

interest among Sweden's neighbors across the Baltic. In November 1983, Navy divers found traces of foreign submarines near the base. Military sources say that the Soviet Union, the country known to be behind most of the espionage targeting Sweden, often employs the services of other Warsaw Pact countries for this purpose.

During the same week that the Polish crew sailed into the Muskö base, three East German boats were caught intruding into Swedish waters. The three were part of a group of six East German sailboats that left their home ports on the southern Baltic coast bound for Estonia, today a Soviet Socialist Republic, on the eastern Baltic coast. For reasons not yet explained, at least three of the boats ended up on Sweden's western Baltic coast and, in at least two cases, the militarily sensitive island of Gotland.

Incursions were also reported along Sweden's northern coast. On the evening of July 16, the crew of a small private boat 170 miles north of Stockholm, observed what seemed to be a submarine conning tower. In continuous radio contact with the Härnösand coastal artillery headquarters, another 70 miles north, the small boat followed the object, which maintained a safe distance of 600 yards, for about an hour and a half.

Reflecting the sorry state of Swedish coastal defenses, Defense Staff spokesman H. G. Wessberg answered a question as to why no heli-

copter was sent to the scene, stating that Sweden's coastline was 1,700 miles long, and that no helicopter had been available.

In a statement on July 21, the chief of Sweden's northern coastal artillery, Col. Karl Vilhelm Hansen, revealed that there is now only one patrol vessel for the northernmost 600 miles of Swedish coastline, and called for four patrol boats and one helicopter to be immediately added to the northern coast.

As these intrusions went on, a little-noticed visitor appeared in Visby, the port town of Gotland. On July 17, Soviet Foreign Ministry adviser Andrei Aleksandrov, a special emissary of Soviet Communist Party boss Mikhail Gorbachov, paid a discreet visit to the Gotland governor's residence, for a meeting with vacationing Swedish Premier Ingvar Carlsson.

Where on July 17 the evidence against the Poles at the Muskö base was found insufficient, on July 18 the premier's office acknowledged only that the Soviet visit had occurred and that the talks had concerned the international situation and disarmament.

Speculation had it that Aleksandrov carried a special message to Carlsson from Gorbachov, regarding the Aug. 5-7 meeting in Mexico of the members of the so-called Five Continent Initiative. A group of non-aligned or neutralized government chiefs advocating Soviet-inspired disarmament proposals, the other members of the initiative are India's Rajiv Gandhi, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Greece's Andreas Papanandreu, Argentina's Raúl Alfonsín, and Mexico's Miguel de la Madrid.

It appears that useful fools like Carlsson are arm-twisted into running "disarmament" errands for those who are themselves authoring the arms build-up, including the escalating intrusions against naive neutrals.