

KGB exposé foils appeasers in Norway

by Clifford Gaddy

Last month's exposure of a high-level KGB mole within the Norwegian administration may signal a crucial turning point in Norway's policy within NATO and trigger a sorely needed reinforcement of the vulnerable "Northern Flank" of the Alliance. The determining factor will be the extent to which public outrage over the "Treholt Affair" dissuades Norwegian politicians from their appeasement tendencies toward the Soviet Union and forces the country's defense establishment to confront the reality of the Soviet build-up in northern Europe.

Arne Treholt, a 42-year-old official in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and a highly influential figure in the left wing of the Norwegian Labor Party, had been a Soviet agent for at least 15 years before his arrest Jan. 20. The son of a former cabinet member, Treholt had apparently been recruited to Soviet service in the late 1960s, during his days as an activist against the right-wing Greek junta.

The sparse information so far released from Treholt's interrogation by Norwegian security police reveals that he held the rank of colonel in the Soviet KGB. However, Treholt is no ordinary spy. Rather than merely passing military secrets to the Russians, Treholt's role was to shape national policy; for over 10 years he acted to decouple Norway from the Western Alliance and ensure that Norway would yield to Soviet pressure.

Thus, in the early 1970s, Treholt was one of the leaders of the campaign to keep Norway out of the EC, and he had been all along an avowed opponent of the country's membership in NATO. More recently, Treholt was the author of the plank in the Labor Party's platform calling for a nuclear weapons-free zone in Scandinavia—a long-standing Soviet demand.

As the No. 2 man in the Norwegian Ministry of Maritime Law in the late 1970s, Treholt had been such an important figure in the Soviet-Norwegian negotiations on the rights to the militarily sensitive Barents Sea that observers in Oslo remarked after Treholt's exposure that "the Soviet Union was in fact sitting on both sides of the negotiating table" when an agreement—patently favorable to the Russians—was finally signed.

Quisling syndrome

In Norway, popular reaction to the news of Treholt's betrayal of the country to the Soviets has been outrage—at

Treholt himself, of course, but perhaps no less at the Norwegian elites who had not only tolerated Treholt but even lionized him as the "Golden Boy" of Norwegian politics. Norway bears the stigma of having produced one of history's most notorious traitors—Vidkun Quisling—during World War II, and nothing is more painful to the average Norwegian today than the idea of having his country again achieve the notoriety associated with national betrayal.

The experience of the Second World War produced a sort of "Quisling syndrome" in Norway—an attitude of "never again!" which has shaped national consciousness since that time. Norway's history in the 1930s and 1940s was a tragic one: Having been disarmed during the 1930s by a cowardly leadership terrified of Hitler, Norway was militarily helpless on April 9, 1940, when the Nazis did invade. A citizenry that wanted to fight was denied the real chance to do so and had to pay the humiliating price of living under Quisling's puppet government. Participation in a fierce anti-Nazi resistance movement was a way for many Norwegians to reassert national pride.

Norway's postwar membership in NATO was also a result of the wartime experience. Norwegians had learned that neutralism and pacifism do not work. As a visitor to Norway quickly learns today, that is still the opinion of an overwhelming majority of the population.

Yet compromises have been made in that commitment to national defense, and looking at Norway today, one can get the eerie sense of seeing history repeat itself. Undeniably, Norway has made some of the same mistakes it did in the 1930s. Under Soviet pressure, Norway has imposed a number of limitations on its own defenses and on its membership in NATO. Norway, for instance, declared at an early stage that it would permit neither foreign bases nor nuclear weapons on its soil in peacetime except under the imminent threat of an attack. The country has pursued a policy of virtually total demilitarization of its own northernmost province of Finnmark.

All of these measures have given the Soviet Union a tremendous military advantage over the West on the Northern Flank, with profound implications not only for Norway, but also for the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. The key factor is the huge Soviet naval complex around Murmansk, only 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Norwegian border. Murmansk is the biggest concentration of military force anywhere in the world, owing mainly to its status as home base for 60% of the Soviets' strategic nuclear submarine fleet. Thus, self-imposed Norwegian weakness in the north has in effect given the Soviets a sanctuary for their submarine force which is targeted on the United States.

The exposure of Arne Treholt as a KGB officer has a direct bearing upon this situation. Norwegian parliamentarians have already demanded that Norway revoke the Treholt-negotiated Barents Sea agreement. But more broadly, there is discussion of revising the policy of "low tension" vis-à-vis the Soviet Union altogether.