

Northern Flank by A. Borealis

Emperor Palme's new clothes

Even a child can see that Palme's recent talk about the needs of a strong defense is merely talk: He has nothing on!

Lo and behold, Swedish Premier Olof Palme's got a new pro-defense policy! Let there be no doubt about it, even Sweden's leading "conservative" newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet*, reports the opinion of defense policy expert Carl Bildt of the Moderate Party, that Palme's new "pro-defense" profile indicates "an important shift in position which is an important signal to other countries."

This "important shift" was stage-managed at the Social Democratic party congress in Stockholm on Sept. 17, where Palme and Defense Minister Anders Thunborg, according to media hype, "virtually overrode the peaceniks inside the party." Other press accounts included observations such as "Palme uses the big sledge against the peaceniks."

Putting words to one side for a moment and looking at deeds, both Palme and the "conservative" Moderate Party are complicit in cutting back on Swedish defenses, and the current slow upgrading of submarine defense is essentially being funded out of other defense sectors. The big "pro-defense" hoop-la staged by Palme at the party congress has a different purpose: undercutting the growing demand for closer Swedish relations with the Western alliance.

A just published booklet, titled "Outdated Neutrality Policy?" is instructive. Published by Sweden's psychological defense establishment, the booklet poses the question, "Do we need to reassess the policy of neutrality?" and states that, "In the aftermath of the submarine incidents, a debate

has started over the realism of Sweden's neutrality policy," a debate in which there is "a danger of exaggerated conclusions."

Comparing today's situation with the race between Britain and Germany at the outset of World War II over who would first take control of northern Norway, the booklet asserts that control over northern Sweden today would be vital for Soviet air superiority in the "strategic triangle" between the northernmost tip of Britain, a point in the southeast of Greenland, and one in mid-Norway. This "strategic triangle" defines the air space over the so-called GIUK Gap—Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom—through which the Soviet fleet based at Murmansk has to pass to reach the Atlantic.

Given the range of relevant Soviet aircraft, the booklet says, a Soviet airbase in northern Sweden would at least double the Soviet Air Force's "combat value," defined as the duration of time during which jetfighters can carry out missions in the "strategic triangle." While a Soviet invasion of Sweden in the context of an ongoing war on the Central European front would be a costly diversion of Soviet forces, and is therefore unlikely, the booklet concludes, an *initial* Soviet strike into Sweden to secure such an airbase would be relatively easy.

Admitting the danger of a Soviet surprise strike, and that "strict neutrality is no guarantee against an attack," the booklet nevertheless insists that "there is no basis in fact, however, for abandoning Sweden's current security political aims." Offered

to support this astonishing conclusion is a version of the Swedish oligarchy's standard argument for neutrality: Even the Norwegians themselves would prefer a strong, neutral Swedish air force defend the northern flank, because otherwise, if Norway were forced to grant NATO airbases in northern Norway, the Soviets would reciprocate by demanding airbases in Finland!

A similar argument has now been seized upon by the forces promoting the disintegration of NATO. Edward Luttwak of the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) called on Sept. 25 for Denmark to be expelled from the Alliance, as NATO would "prefer a neutral but strong Denmark—like Sweden—to a weak Denmark as a member of NATO."

Luttwak's remarks, made in an interview to the Danish weekly *Politisk ugebrev*, caused an uproar in Denmark, as they intersected an intense political fight over Denmark's commitment to NATO. It was only a few weeks ago that Denmark's Radical Party, a leftist liberal party which otherwise supports the ruling non-socialist minority coalition from the outside, demanded that Denmark leave NATO. This followed upon a vote in the parliament this past spring, in which the Radical Party joined with the Social Democratic opposition to create a majority against the government, banning the stationing in Denmark of any cruise missiles.

The Radical Party could become the swing factor ousting the current regime in favor of a social-liberal coalition that could take Denmark out of NATO. That would mean the loss of the nation guarding NATO's northern flank. If the northern flank of NATO crumbles, the central front may crack soon, too.