

Behind the Soviet missile 'accident'

by Jarle Synnevaag

Jarle Synnevaag is associated with the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment. Text is abridged.

The Soviet cruise-missile that recently violated Norwegian and Finnish airspace is yet another dramatic illustration of the grave threat that exists today, not only against Western Europe, but ultimately against the survival of Western civilization. Although the possibility that the incident was an accident cannot be totally ruled out, it is far more likely that it was a deliberate provocation from the Soviets. My opinion is that the purpose of this act was indeed to frighten and subvert; however, it was not directed at the public, but at the governments of Norway and Finland.

The reaction in Norwegian mass media so far suggests that if the purpose was to promote a ban on cruise-missiles, the Soviets have probably succeeded better than they had dared hope. Even a number of conservative Norwegian newspapers seem to have bought this hoax, not to speak of the Social Democratic ones and the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation which, I dare say, is infested with KGB agents of influence.

What then should be the Norwegian response, and indeed the response of NATO as a whole to this provocation? The reaction to this particular incident really should be nothing except what is urgently needed in the present situation anyway. This may be summed up in the following three points:

- 1) Full support, both politically, and to the extent possible, also scientifically, to the U.S. strategic defense initiative.
- 2) A strengthening of NATO'S conventional forces, in the case of Norway, particularly in air defense.
- 3) Maximum effort devoted to what the present Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Willoch, has described as "the battle of public opinion."

1985 is an election year in Norway, and unfortunately, there is a very real danger that this will bring the Social Democrats to power. This could well mean a disaster, not only for Norwegian National Security, but for NATO as a whole.

If the Social Democrats in Norway win the election in September, there would be no opposition left to the establishment of a "nuclear-free zone" in the Nordic countries, through a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union, against the wishes of the United States and other major Western powers. The

Social Democrats' spokesmen have repeatedly said that this is what they intend to do.

Of course, the whole idea of a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic countries is ridiculous, since the only nuclear weapons there are in these countries are those aboard Soviet submarines violating Norwegian and Swedish territorial waters.

The way is then open for the Soviet Union to launch a limited military action against the Nordic countries with very little risk of any retaliation from NATO. Furthermore, if the Soviets are looking for a place for such an action with almost no risk to themselves, the stage has long been set in the Svalbard or Spitzbergen Archipelago north of Northern Norway. Although these islands are in principle Norwegian territory, they are also governed by a special treaty. This treaty states that the citizens of any countries which have signed it have the same rights as Norwegian citizens to do business there, provided they obey Norwegian law when doing so.

So far it is only the U.S.S.R. which has used its right to establish a presence on the islands. Today, there are approximately 2,000 Russians there, twice as many as there are Norwegians. The Russians operate a squadron of transport/attack helicopters there, camouflaged as a civilian aeroflot unit, but carrying missile mounts, although the islands, according to the treaty, are demilitarized. Accordingly, there are no Norwegian armed forces on the island, except a roughly annual call by Norwegian naval ships. Svalbard is therefore the ideal place for a limited Soviet military action with very low risk from the Soviet point of view, but which could have very grave consequences for the west. If NATO then fails to respond, due to previous lack of NATO solidarity by a Social Democratic government in Norway, this could well mean that Norway would leave NATO, since the alliance would have shown itself unwilling and incapable of defending Norwegian territory. This may then initiate a process where the smaller members of NATO would leave the alliance one-by-one, seeking bilateral agreements and treaties with the Soviet Union.

To sum up, the Soviets may be able to achieve the decoupling of Western Europe and the United States, through a process involving far less risk than a limited military action against Western Germany or even against continental northern Norway.

Because of this, the efforts of the Schiller Institute in my country should concentrate on exposing to the maximum extent the treacherous defense and foreign policy that the Social Democracy would promote if they are given the opportunity. There is also another urgent issue: to internationalize the community on Svalbard. This can be done if the major Western powers use their right to search for coal, minerals, and oil there. Simply by being on the islands in sufficient numbers, citizens from the United States, the U.K., France, and West Germany will make it far less tempting for the Soviet Union to commit any open military aggression there.