

Swedish officer was ordered not to fire on Soviet submarines

by Göran Haglund

A Swedish military officer, Col. Lars Hansson (ret.), revealed that Sweden's military high command, acting on behalf of the Social Democratic regime of Olof Palme, intervened to allow the escape of Soviet submarines trapped in Swedish territorial waters during the famous Hors Bay submarine chase of October 1982. Appearing on the television news show *Aktuellt* on Nov. 25, Colonel Hansson gave a preview of a forthcoming article, in which he also reports that the Hors Bay events showed that there is necessarily a Soviet spy somewhere high up on the Swedish military staff.

The dramatic revelations by Hansson—who was from 1982-85 chief of the Stockholm Coastal Artillery and operational commander of the Hors Bay chase—elaborate on earlier, less detailed statements by him in June 1987. They fully confirm the interpretation of the Hors Bay events published by *EIR* (for example, July 17, 1987).

Hansson's charges against the Social Democratic regime, which returned to power on Oct. 8, 1982 and remains in power today, albeit without the murdered Palme, name Rear Adm. Bror Stefenson, a member of the military command notorious for his Social Democratic leanings, as personally responsible for the Soviet submarines' escape.

Following the October-November 1981 "Whiskey on the rocks" incident, in which a Soviet submarine of the Whiskey class ran aground near the southern Swedish naval base at Karlskrona, the Oct. 1-11, 1982 Hors Bay chase was the second, major eye-to-eye confrontation between Sweden's armed forces and the Soviet submarine units deployed in the Baltic and, it is now evident, not infrequently into Swedish waters. A parliamentary commission formed on the incidents in late 1982 issued a report in April 1983, identifying the Soviet Union as the hostile power behind the submarine incursions. The Submarine Commission report also revealed the Soviet use of mini-submarines to penetrate Swedish coastal defenses, even to the extent of paying a "visit" to the harbor of Stockholm, a stone's throw away from the Royal Palace.

The subsequent exchange of diplomatic notes opened what has been called a "little cold war" between Stockholm and Moscow, with relations "normalized" only years later. The thaw was not due to any Soviet discontinuation of the incursions, but to strident efforts by the Palme regime to deny

all evidence of Soviet authorship of numerous post-1982 submarine incidents.

While the Parliament's Submarine Commission did name the Soviet Union as the culprit, it avoided the issue of how the Soviet submarines were able to escape their entrapment in Hors Bay. This issue was directly addressed by Colonel Hansson's Nov. 25 statements on nationwide television, quoted in all major press.

How the Soviet subs could escape

The following excerpt is from the Social Democratic daily *Aftonbladet* of Nov. 26:

"Defense Chief of Staff Bror Stefenson made the escape of the submarines possible by refusing me permission to fire," Lars Hansson told *Aftonbladet*. "We saw the submarines disappear." The rage of the officers over the Defense Staff's actions was so strong that a mutiny was close. "Yes, I openly admit that I considered breaking orders. I was the highest operational officer of the Coastal Defense Forces and the mine-stations, and my task was to prevent the submarines from escaping."

"I am also convinced that there was—and still is—a big spy of the Treholt type at the Defense Staff and at other military-district staffs. [Here, Hansson refers to Norwegian foreign ministry official Arne Treholt, now imprisoned as a Soviet spy.]

mander in chief. It cannot be a coincidence, every time a submarine passes a mined area, that the mines are inactivated at exactly that time. . . . There are over 1,000 people at the Defense Staff. Somebody is an agent. In this case, a high military officer or an important middle-ranking officer in an operational position."

"Hansson is as convinced that he would have caught the submarines in Hors Bay, had he been allowed to use his resources. 'Then, we would have sunk a submarine or forced it to surface. But they did not want to take that risk at the highest military and political level.'

"Initially, Col. Lars Hansson had permission to detonate the mines, granted by the chief of the Muskö Navy base, Rear Adm. Christer Kierkegaard. At a crisis session in the office of the commander in chief at the Defense Staff during the

submarine chase, the commander in chief put that permission to fire into question, adding extensive restrictions to it.”

‘We must prevent a bloodbath’

This crisis session occurred on Oct. 9, one day after Olof Palme returned to the premiership. In addition to the commander in chief, Gen. Lennart Ljung, and the Defense Staff chief, Rear Adm. Bror Stefenson, both now retired, the meeting was attended by Colonel Hansson and the Eastern Military District commander, Lt. Gen. Bengt Lehander. According to Hansson, Defense Staff chief Stefenson told him, “We are not going to stage a bloodbath of Russian submarine sailors.”

After two Navy conscripts first observed a submarine periscope on Oct. 1, and sonar later detected a submarine near the top-secret Muskö base in the Stockholm archipelago, dozens of depth-charges were dropped from helicopters. Although some oil spots were sighted on the surface, the precision of the depth-charges was inadequate for a direct hit. While unknown to the public at the time, the Swedish Navy knew that at least one vessel trapped in Hors Bay was a mini-submarine, and the relevant forces were alerted to a possible rescue attempt from the outside.

On Oct. 7, there were indications that a trapped submarine would attempt to break out, and Colonel Hansson obtained the first permission for Swedish military forces to detonate mines since World War II. Several 1,300-pound mines were detonated, compared to which the depth-charges were mere fireworks. Military intelligence instructed the civilian authorities of a nearby port to come up with a pretext for delaying the departure of a Polish freighter, as the submarines might well escape under cover of the civilian ship. The incident was coming to a head.

On Oct. 8, Olof Palme returned to office, and Oct. 9 the crisis session was called at the Defense Staff. The orders were given to exercise moderation, to avert “a bloodbath of Russian submarine sailors.” Colonel Hansson was backed by General Lehander, who told *Aftonbladet*, “I wanted to use the mine weapon more than the commander in chief and Stefenson wanted to. Now it was serious. They said they were terrified that we would hit our own personnel. But that I do not believe at all. I was more ‘trigger-happy’ than the commander in chief. Our weapons had to be used.

“I was not happy with the command conditions. I thought we ought to follow the chain of command used in war. Stefenson was of a different opinion—that this was so close to the government that we could not react fast enough.”

By-passing Hansson and Lehander, Stefenson on Oct. 10 traveled personally by helicopter to Mälsten Island in Hors Bay, where a mine-operator was based, ordering him to restrict the use of lethal force. The mines were only to be detonated if no less than five mines signaled a vessel in their vicinity, and even then, they were to be detonated only after delay, so as not to sink the submarine, but merely to damage it.

On Oct. 11 at 10 p.m., a lieutenant at the control panel in the Mälsten command bunker saw vessel-detection lights turn on, one after the other, until five were on. The observation post, equipped with night-seeing binoculars, confirmed that no surface vessels were in the area. The restrictive conditions had been met.

But the mine-operator could do nothing: A complete cease-fire order had been issued two hours earlier.

Colonel Hansson: “There, the mother-submarine sneaked out, with a mini-submarine attached to the hull. Toward the southeast.”

“I considered breaking his [Stefenson’s] orders. One could of course detonate a mine ‘by mistake.’ I considered it justified to fire after only one or two indications. The most important thing for me was to stop the submarine. I would probably have been court martialed had I done it.”

The timely escape of the submarine makes it certain that the enemy submarine had been notified of the cease-fire by an infiltrator, the spy to which Colonel Hansson referred. “A normal submarine commander, knowing that we had been detonating mines, does not pass over such a mined area if he knows that we are there with our fingers on the trigger. But if he knows that we are not, of course he will dare to do it.”

“Stefenson’s behavior was completely alien to normal military activity.” Hansson emphasized, “It has *never* happened before, and made our mission even more difficult. It was a horrible experience. A chief like myself with thousands of men under him *knows* how to use his resources.

“The time has come for somebody who was there to give a direct picture of what happened.”

What did Pankin tell Palme?

The Hors Bay chase occurred precisely as power was transferred from the non-socialist coalition government back to Palme, who had emerged as the winner of the Sept. 19 elections after an interlude of six years in the opposition. A few days after the elections, one of Moscow’s top intelligence operatives, the former chief of the KGB’s Service A disinformation bureau, Maj. Gen. Boris Pankin, arrived to take up the post of Soviet ambassador to Sweden.

Pankin was officially accredited on Sept. 30, after presenting his credentials to the king. Several days later, eyewitnesses reported that Palme, upon receiving “a courtesy visit” from Pankin, emerged from the room pale-faced, apparently shaken. According to military sources, whose accuracy tends to be supported by Colonel Hansson’s observations, the Oct. 11 cease-fire order was issued by Palme personally.

Six months later, at a May 6, 1983 press conference upon the publication of the Submarine Commission report, Palme showed the same concern for the well-being of Russian naval personnel that Stefenson had shown in the Oct. 9 crisis session with Colonel Hansson. Said Palme, “It was not our intention to kill 200 young human beings in cold blood. Our intention was to identify the submarine.”