

## Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

### Soviet sub base is not 'defensive'

*Is U.S. indifference to the mini-sub incursions into Swedish waters a result of a superpower agreement?*

**R**eports of continuing submarine incursions have generally met with hysterical disbelief on the part of the Swedish Social Democratic regime, whose policy is based on the assumption that under glasnost, no such thing is possible. But they have also been met with great skepticism by many Western naval officials, unwilling to admit that a minor sea power like Sweden might have come across a phenomenon—systematic penetration by mini-submarines—not observed by the worldwide submarine surveillance systems operated by the Western powers. During most of the 1980s, the U.S. naval attaché in Stockholm was known to disregard the Swedish preoccupation with Russian submarines as nonsensical.

U.S. indifference regarding Russian submarine incursions in the Baltic may, however, be based not merely on ignorance, but on a mutual understanding between the superpowers not to interfere with submarine incursions by the other side. This is charged in a series of articles published in January and February in the Swedish conservative magazine *Z*, revealing previously unpublished details about the mini-submarines.

The Soviet mini-sub operating in the Baltic Sea are a more developed, second-generation vessel following those first designed for operations in the Atlantic, according to an unnamed specialist of the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence cited by *Z*. The mini-sub is 9.5 meters long, and is the fruit of decades of R&D work at the Leningrad submarine shipyards, taking off from the German constructions the Russians got their hands on at the end

of World War II.

Although these mini-sub are built and maintained in a super-secret, closed area of the Leningrad Sudomech shipyard, their base of operations is elsewhere. According to U.S. intelligence analysts, whose evidence includes high-resolution satellite photographs, the Soviets have developed a mobile basing system, using a special trailer permitting land transport of the mini-sub. Those trailers have been observed in or near several Baltic ports.

The main base of the mini-sub is Primorsk, some 10 kilometers north of the headquarters of the Soviet Baltic Fleet in Baltisk (Pillau), in the region of Kaliningrad (Königsberg), East Prussia, now a Russian exclave located between Poland and Lithuania. Primorsk is the headquarters for the special operations of the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence, and is only 300 kilometers away from Karlskrona, Sweden's chief southern naval base, put on the world map back in 1981 when the famous Whiskey-class Soviet submarine got stuck on a rock there.

In a March 18, 1988 press conference, Swedish Supreme Commander Gen. Bengt Gustafsson revealed that since 1982, the evidence collected by the Navy showed that the Russians were using a very small, heretofore unknown submarine 28.5 meters in length, apparently as the mother ship of the mini-sub. After some indications in 1988 of a mini-sub paying a visit inside the Kiel naval base, the West German Navy, according to *Z*, sent one of their own submarines on a special mission, visiting a Soviet base

area in the vicinity of Baltisk, shooting a series of pictures through the periscope, using infrared film.

The photographs, circulating among Western intelligence services, reportedly show the 28.5 meter Soviet submarine, but have never been published, since they would prove a flagrant violation of Soviet territorial waters by a German submarine. The Soviet capability is known in the West, even if you're not supposed to talk about it.

Concluding its article in the Feb. 8-21 issue, *Z* reports that "a former American middle-level intelligence chief, who for several years was controlling the regular U.S. electronic surveillance in the Baltic Sea from bases in West Germany, says:

"There is an agreement between the U.S. and the Soviets about how to deal with different crises which could erupt in connection with the submarine operations of the great powers in times of peace. There is also an agreement which means that border incursions should not immediately result in whole submarine crews risking their lives, with consequent risks of retaliation in other parts of the ocean."

"For Sweden, this silent understanding is not a very happy phenomenon. In practice, it is a kind of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact under water, where Sweden has been made part of the area in which the Soviet Union is allowed to carry out its espionage activity. And exactly like last time, when Finns, Balts, Poles, and Romanians discovered that they had been given the shorter straw, nobody has considered it his job to inform the Swedes of how the rules of the game are actually written."

While the Swedish people and Navy may not have been informed, the government, in its appeasement of Moscow, acts as though the rules of the game were laid down for it.