

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

Are the Russians coming?

As Gorbachov offered naval disarmament in the North, his navy sent a battle group through Danish waters.

At this very hour, a powerful Soviet naval force is en route through Danish waters from the Baltic Sea to the North Sea and the Atlantic. The force is composed of three destroyers of the Udaloy Class, one of the Soviet Union's most modern battle units. The ships are about 8,000 tons each, and are armed with a large selection of modern, nuclear-capable missiles."

Those were the dramatic opening words of an Oct. 2 press release, wired at 12:53 hours, by the Operations Command of Danish Naval Defense, headquartered in Århus on the Danish mainland. While largely hushed up in the media, the mass circulation tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* of Oct. 3 ran a banner headline, "Help—the Russians Are Coming," across a two-page spread featuring a facsimile of the news wire, a map, drawings, and close-range pictures of the Soviet destroyers taken by Danish F-16 fighter pilots sent up to monitor the Red Navy deployment.

While a convoy of three destroyers does not represent an invasion force, the three Udaloy Class guided-missile destroyers—named *Admiral Tributz*, *Admiral Zakorov*, and *Marshal Shaposnikov*—did combine sufficient naval power to raise more than one eyebrow in the West. Carrying 64 nuclear-capable missiles each, as well as helicopter gunships, torpedoes, and other military hardware, the Soviet Union has only a handful of destroyers of this class, of which three are assigned to the Northern Fleet, and one each to the Baltic and the Mediterranean.

Rather than choosing the nearest route from the Baltic to the North Sea,

through the straits separating Denmark from Sweden, which are international waters, the three Soviet destroyers made a significant detour, following a path close to the Baltic coast of the West German state of Schleswig-Holstein, and then north through the Great Belt, the inner Danish waters between the mainland peninsula of Jutland and the largest island, Zealand, where the greatest share of Denmark's population is concentrated.

While territorially Danish waters, per international agreement the Great Belt is open to world shipping, civilian as well as military, a fact often exploited by the Red Navy. As noted by defense sources, the Soviet flexing of muscles here was chiefly remarkable in that the naval battle group was dispatched toward Denmark only hours after Soviet Communist Party Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachov finished his famous Oct. 1 "peace and disarmament" speech in Murmansk.

In one of the first public appearances since his return from a prolonged, nearly eight-week "summer vacation," Gorbachov chose the Kola Peninsula, the site of the greatest military concentration on this planet, to issue another set of "peace" proposals for the edification of the gullible.

Gorbachov presented his proposals for disarmament on the Northern Flank as a follow-up to the upcoming INF treaty, hypocritically speaking of the Arctic Sea as a "Zone of Peace." This phrase is usually reserved by the Russians for the Baltic Sea, which is similarly dominated by overwhelming Soviet sea power.

Calling upon Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland to join the Soviet Union in an effort to reduce the military activities in the North, Gorbachov proposed NATO-Warsaw Pact consultations to reduce naval and air force operations in the Greenland Sea, the Norwegian Sea, the North Sea, and the Baltic. As with the "Nordic Nuclear-free Zone"—Russia is the only nuclear power in the region—Gorbachov's Murmansk speech, which called upon the small, appeasement-ridden Nordic states to reduce their military operations, reeks of the wolf calling on the sheep to become vegetarians.

While most Scandinavian officials carefully avoid anything that could be interpreted as hostile to Moscow, and Gorbachov's Murmansk speech consequently was welcomed in many quarters, a healthy exception was demonstrated by Navy Commander Hans von Hofsten, known as the spokesman of "the Swedish officers' revolt."

In a 40-minute report on the Soviet threat to Sweden, designed by Hofsten and broadcast on nationwide TV Oct. 14, he observed, "Gorbachov speaks of peace. But he is waging a ruthless war of conquest in Afghanistan." Then pictures were aired of Hitler, and Hofsten went on: "Hitler was a man who waged ruthless wars of expansion."

Hofsten noted that people say there will be signals warning us, before any outbreak of war. True, but will the signals be correctly interpreted? Hitler's invasion of Denmark and Norway was signaled a week in advance, but there was nobody in a responsible position willing to read the signals for what they were. Today, in the age of satellite reconnaissance, the case of Afghanistan and many others show that surprise strikes are not a thing of the past.