

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

Fired for telling the truth

A Swedish Defense Staff spokesman said allegations about NATO submarines are a Social Democratic campaign.

Recently revived allegations, that at least one of the submarines involved in the October 1982 Hors Bay incident near a Swedish Navy base came from a NATO country, "smell of a Social Democratic campaign to defame and discredit the defense forces in order not to have to pay more money." Those were the last words in office of Defense Staff spokesman Jan Tuninger, before he was abruptly fired on Jan. 31 for telling the truth.

The timing and circumstances of Tuninger's dismissal indicate that the aim was to create a warning example, to shut up any officers daring to do anything but mouth the official line. Tuninger was fired by Commander-in-Chief Gen. Bengt Gustafsson, in his response to a question asked at a defense conference Jan. 31. "There is no basis for the spokesman's statement," an angry commander-in-chief replied. "And of course, I cannot keep persons in my information service whose judgment I do not trust."

The allegations that a NATO country submarine was involved in the large-scale incursion into inner Swedish waters in October 1982 had been revived by former Army Chief, Lt. Gen. Nils Sköld, a consultant at the defense ministry since his 1984 retirement. The day before the commander-in-chief issued his new report on submarine incursions, whose classified part identifies Russia as the foreign power continuing to violate Sweden's territorial integrity, Sköld in a Dec. 17, 1987 interview for *Dagens Industri* made his astonishing claims about NATO involvement in 1982.

Sköld asserted that during conferences in the fall of 1982, at which the chiefs of the armed services took part, information was made available saying, first, that a NATO submarine had been present in Swedish waters shortly before the Hors Bay submarine chase in 1982 and, second, that after several mines had been detonated, a damaged, *submerged* submarine left the Baltic Sea through the Öresund, the narrow strait separating Sweden from Denmark. This damaged submarine leaving the Baltic must have come from a NATO country, Sköld insisted.

These allegations were originally issued on March 15, 1983, in the same *Dagens Industri*, and by the same journalist who interviewed Sköld in December 1987. At the time, Sköld himself, still chief of the Army, categorically refuted the allegations, saying that "it sounds like a fairytale," and pointing out the well-known fact that the Öresund, with its water depth of merely 9 meters, does not physically permit the passage of a submerged submarine.

This simple fact, it seems, has now escaped Sköld's memory.

Both Defense Minister Roine Carlsson and the highest military command—the current one as well as those in office in 1982—have all denied Sköld's allegations, confirming the truth of the spring 1983 parliamentary Submarine Commission report, which concluded that "no observation has been reported which indicates an incursion into Swedish territory by a submarine belonging to NATO."

Had there been the slightest indication of a NATO submarine in Swedish waters, one can be confident that this fact would have been exploited to the utmost by the neutralists in the Social Democratic regime.

The spring 1983 Submarine Commission report uniquely identified the U.S.S.R. and the Warsaw Pact as the home of the submarines sent into Swedish waters. It formed the basis for an unusual Swedish diplomatic protest against Moscow's policy, and led to the freezing of high-level official travel exchanges between Sweden and the Soviet Union; the ice was broken only three years later, with Premier Ingvar Carlsson's visit to Moscow. For the chief of the army to have known about NATO submarines violating Swedish waters in the fall of 1982, without reporting this information, would have constituted gross neglect of duty.

The clue to the sudden reinvigoration of Sköld's memory, about five years later, is the timing of the event: one day before the commander-in-chief's new submarine report, the first one since 1983 clearly to identify the Soviets, if only in the classified part. Indeed, making his allegations of a NATO submarine last December, Sköld whined "that today one does exactly as then, making use of the doubtful conclusions of the commission in order to jump to conclusions today."

Before making his new allegations, Sköld supposedly informed Defense Minister Carlsson, who voiced no objections. In fact, the allegations of Sköld, a senior adviser of the defense minister, as well as the son of a former defense minister and leading Social Democrat, represent the unofficial reply of the Social Democratic regime to the *unfortunate naming of the Soviets* in the classified part of the commander-in-chief's new report.