

Sweden Capitulates to USA/NATO

Phantom u-boats are deployed to incite the surrender of peaceful neutrality

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IN HIS 2005 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, playwright Harold Pinter excoriated the U.S. empire and noted that it “now occupies 702 military installations throughout the world in 132 countries — with the honourable exception of Sweden, of course”.

Since then, the global military presence of the United States has continued to expand; but the literary laureate was misinformed about the honourable exceptionalism of Sweden. Around the same time that the fatally ill Pinter was video-recording his speech, an official of Sweden’s Defence Ministry observed that the country was already so deeply involved in USA/NATO² that there would be little noticeable difference if it were to formally become a member.

That was true in 2005, and even more so ten years later. Although Sweden is still not officially a member, its armed forces are now almost completely incorporated into the USA/NATO system. Swedish troops have participated in wars of aggression and occupation by the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan, Libya and the Balkans. A top-secret Special Operations Group has fought alongside USA/NATO troops in far-off places like Chad and the Congo, and is represented at U.S. special forces headquarters in Florida.

Joint military exercises are conducted with increasing frequency in the air, on the land and in the territorial waters of Sweden. Since April of last year, USA/NATO has been granted free access to Swedish air space in order to spy on Russia with its AWACS surveillance airplanes.

Last August, the government signed a so-called host nation agreement which greatly expands USA/NATO access to Swedish territory in time of war and, as at present, preparation for war. The agreement — which has yet to be ratified by the Swedish parliament — also appears to violate Sweden’s long-standing rejection of nuclear weapons and associated policies. And just recently, USA/NATO led the world’s largest air warfare exercise over the northern one third of Sweden’s territory. Part of the deepening struggle with Russia for control of the melting Arctic, “Arctic Challenge Exercise” involved some 100 warplanes from ten countries, including the U.S., Germany, France and England.

*This is a slightly modified version of an article in the German monthly, *Welt Trends*.¹

“Tyranny of small steps”

All of this and more has taken place with little or no public discussion, in a secretive process that has been called “the tyranny of small steps”. That phrase refers to a long series of decisions, beginning toward the end of World War II, which have steadily drawn Sweden deeper into the sphere of USA/NATO.³ The result has been to nullify the policy of peaceful neutrality which had previously kept Sweden out of war for nearly two centuries and, especially during the Cold War, enabled it to pursue independent policies in support of disarmament, environmental protection, Third World liberation movements, etc.

The many steps leading toward USA/NATO have been taken by a narrow segment of Swedish society, operating mainly without the knowledge or consent of the majority. Deceit has been necessary, because public opinion has been strongly opposed to NATO during most of its existence — most notably among supporters of the Social Democratic Party which dominated Swedish politics throughout the Cold War.

Among the interests that have most actively collaborated with USA/NATO are the armed forces, especially the navy and to a lesser extent the air force. Since the end of World War II, tens of thousands of Swedish military personnel have participated in a variety of activities that have intensified co-operation with the United States and its allies. Most such activities were conducted out of sight, until Sweden joined USA/NATO’s so-called Partnership for Peace in 1994. Since then, collaboration has taken place openly and routinely — although it may be assumed that some contacts and activities are still kept secret.

Other key actors include the various intelligence agencies which, due to Sweden’s strategic location near the Soviet Union, became valuable spying partners of USA/NATO during the Cold War. Their value has increased substantially in the Internet era, given that some 80 per cent of Russia’s Internet traffic passes through Sweden. The extensive collaboration of Swedish intelligence agencies with the global spying apparatus of the U.S. and its allies is documented in the materials disclosed by whistleblower Edward Snowden.⁴

The mass media serve USA/NATO in the customary manner by providing the essential services of indoctrination and obfuscation. There are exceptions, of course; there *must* be exceptions in order to maintain the illusion of democracy. But for the most part, Sweden’s mainstream media function as reliable cogs in USA/NATO’s global propaganda apparatus.⁵

Within the political arena, there was little movement toward an open embrace of USA/NATO until Prime Minister Olof Palme was assassinated in 1986. That cleared the way for control of the Social Democratic Party to be seized by its right wing, which has transformed the SDP from a peace-making to a war-making party — all in the name of “humanitarian intervention”, women’s rights and other good things.⁶

Partnership for war

The rightward shift of the SDP was followed in the 1990s by membership in the European Union, which is interwoven with USA/NATO, and in the military alliance’s so-called Partnership for Peace — a partnership for war that enables non-members to become *de facto* members, with one exception. That exception concerns Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, which “states that an ‘armed attack’ against one member is an attack against all and sets in motion the possibility of collective self-defense.” The key word is *possibility*. “It does not automatically result in military action.”⁷

Nevertheless, Swedish advocates of NATO membership choose to interpret Article 5 as a guarantee that the alliance will rush to the defence of any member-state that is attacked. Such a guarantee is needed, they argue, to protect Sweden from Russia.

Fear of Russia is hardly a new element of Swedish politics. The two countries have a long history of military conflict, much of it initiated by Sweden before it adopted its policy of neutrality at the start of the 18th century. But anxieties subsided after the Cold War, and Swedish policymakers concluded that the country was not subject to any military threat from Russia or anywhere else. Universal conscription was abolished and a large portion of the military infrastructure was dismantled. Swedish strategy shifted from a focus on national defence by a popular army, to “rapid response” abroad by relatively small professional forces under the leadership of USA/NATO in places like Libya and Afghanistan.

Reviving Russophobia

In recent years, however, there has been a revival of Russophobia, co-ordinated with an intensifying campaign for Sweden to formally join NATO as a member. It is loudly and repeatedly proclaimed that “Putin’s Russia” has become dangerously aggressive and threatening. Therefore, the protection offered by NATO membership is needed to guarantee the nation’s security.

Perversely, one of the main arguments is that the country is vulnerable due to the military reductions following the end of the Cold War. In other words, it is necessary to join USA/NATO because the military was converted from a popular army of national defence to a “rapid response force” in the service of USA/NATO.



“Yesterday’s tasks – and today’s” is the headline of this presentation by the commander-in-chief of the Swedish armed forces. Contrasting with “yesterday’s” focus on national defence (left half of illustration), “today’s” military perspective reaches all the way to China and Africa. Thus, Swedish troops are no longer primarily concerned with defending their own country, but with helping USA/NATO to attack and occupy other countries.

In any event, the available facts suggest that it is actually Russia that has the greatest cause to worry. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, USA/NATO has steadily expanded in the direction of Russia's borders, in violation of a commitment not to do so in exchange for Soviet/Russian acceptance of German reunification. That expansion has been accompanied by an increasing number and variety of military activities which clearly threaten Russia. As noted Sweden has become an active participant in those activities.

Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader who negotiated the agreement with the United States, has lamented "the rejection of the strategy for a new, common European system agreed to by myself and all the Western leaders when we ended the Cold War. I feel betrayed by the West. The opportunity we seized on behalf of peace has been lost. The whole idea of a new world order has been completely abandoned."⁸

That disappointment has been echoed by other statesman, including Helmut Schmidt, Gerhard Schröder and such eminent U.S. Russia experts as George Kennan and Stephen F. Cohen.

An obvious reason for Russian concern is the enormous imbalance of resources. While the population of Russia is less than 150 million, the combined total for NATO's 28 member-states is approaching one billion. The Russian economy is roughly the same size as Italy's, and military expenditures are around one-tenth of USA/NATO's.

But that perspective is seldom if ever conveyed by the voices and media that now dominate Swedish public debate. Instead, Russia is incessantly portrayed as a powerful and growing threat to its surroundings. Currently, the most serious example of that aggression is said to be occurring in Ukraine. In fact, however, that conflict has escalated due primarily to meddling by the European Union and an anti-democratic coup orchestrated by the United States.⁹

No matter. Russia is entirely to blame, according to a nearly unanimous chorus of accusations and condemnations from Sweden's political, military and journalistic elites — parroting a *leitmotif* chanted throughout the USA/NATO sphere of influence.

Phantom submarines

Closer to home, Russia has been accused of violating Swedish waters in the Stockholm Archipelago with spying submarines, most recently in October of last year. An intense hunt for the suspected intruders failed to detect any, but that has not prevented the hunters from declaring success. The most important piece of "evidence" is a photo of an impression made on the sea floor by... something. Independent experts are not convinced that a U-boat was involved, suggesting that the mark could have been made by a fishing boat, for example. And even if it were a submarine, it provides no proof of nationality. There is strong evidence that previously suspected underwater intruders were, in fact, from NATO countries.

Something very similar occurred in October of 1982, when Soviet U-boats were said to be violating the same Swedish waters. An even more intense hunt was then launched, and the outcome was the same — no intruders were ever discovered. But the Soviets were found guilty nonetheless, largely on the basis of hydrophonic recordings of various sounds which were later determined to have been made by swimming minks, schools of flatulent herring and other non-military sources.

The most "damning" piece of evidence was a brief hydrophonic recording that was guarded as a state secret until 2008 when it was finally analysed by technicians at the Swedish Defence Research Agency. Their conclusion: The sounds had almost certainly



*"Soviet submarine", October 1982,
in its guise as a Swedish training ship.*



*"Proof" of Russian submarine,
October 2015*

been produced by the *Amalia*, a training ship that had been hired by a newspaper as a floating platform from which to observe the great submarine hunt of 1982. Sensitive journalistic soles could presumably feel vibrations from the training ship's propeller as it propagated the 'ultimate evidence' of the presumptively Soviet intrusions which the reporters had come to document.¹⁰

All that was seemingly forgotten when the new undetectable submarines surfaced in the news last October. The latest accusations have been as poorly documented, and as mindlessly accepted by the mainstream media, which have exploited the phantom intruders as an excuse to intensify the ongoing campaign to instil dread of Russia in the Swedish public.

That campaign appears to have had some effect. Recent opinion polls indicate an increase in favour of NATO membership. There is also growing political pressure to formally join the military alliance. The ruling Social Democrats remain opposed to formal membership, but in numerous other ways have acted to deepen Sweden's collaboration with USA/NATO.

The question remains: Would formal membership make much difference? Probably not.

What is certain is that Swedish leaders during the past three decades have abandoned the country's long and widely appreciated tradition of peaceful neutrality. The result has been to heighten tensions in the Baltic and Arctic regions, increase the importance of Sweden as a military target in the event of war, and deprive the entire world of a mediating influence which it clearly needs far more than a few more troops in the service of USA/NATO.

NOTES

1. "Schweden – Von der Neutralität zur NATO". *Welt Trends* No. 104, June 2015.
www.nnn.se/nordic/americult/nato/welt-deutsch.pdf
Note: The title of the German-language journal's no. 104 is "Goodbye, Neutralität?"
Link: www.welttrends.de/heft-104
2. The acronym USA/NATO is used here to underline the essential fact that NATO is primarily an instrument of U.S. foreign policy.
3. For a detailed account of the many "small steps" toward USA/NATO, see "From Neutrality to NATO", *Nordic News Network*, September 2012.
www.nnn.se/nordic/americult/nato/neutrality.htm
4. "The Snowden Documents and Sweden." *Swedish Public TV*, 11 December 2013.
www.svt.se/ug/view-the-report-about-the-snowden-documents-and-sweden-with-english-subtitles
5. The current Swedish media climate is outlined on pages 112-118 of "From Neutrality to NATO", *op. cit.*
6. "Collateral Damage: Sweden's Legacy of Peace." *Nordic News Network*, 21 Oct. 2001.
www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/damage.htm
7. Robert Coalson, "What Are NATO's Articles 4 And 5?" *Radio Free Europe*, 26 June 2012.
www.rferl.org/content/explainer-nato-articles-4-and-5/24626653.html
8. Al Burke, "Open Letter to Swedish Institute of International Affairs". *Nordic News Network*, 21 April 2009. www.nnn.se/nordic/americult/nato/utinst.pdf
9. Ray McGovern, "Ukraine: One 'Regime Change' Too Many?" *Consortium News*, 2014-03-02.
<http://consortiumnews.com/2014/03/01/ukraine-one-regime-change-too-many>
10. "From Neutrality to NATO", *op. cit.*, p. 7