

The Hunt for Red October. Russia-Sweden Relations and a Missing Submarine

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These days, Sweden is all agog. In the midst of the coldest summer in living history that deprived the Swedes of their normal sun-accumulating July routine, the country plunged into an exciting search for a Russian submarine in the Stockholm archipelago, and (as opposed to the previous rounds of this venerable Swedish maritime saga) this time they actually found the beast.

Now we know for certain the Russians had intruded into Swedish waters! The Swedish admirals and the *Guardian* journalists probably feel themselves vindicated, as they always said so. Does it matter that the U-boat was sunk one hundred years ago, in 1916? Surely it does not, for the Russians are the same Russians and the sea is the same sea!

I would continue in the same vein and have a lot of fun, but many innocent readers (especially on the internet) are not attuned for irony. If they read Swift's *Modest Proposal*, they'd call the police. For the benefit of the reader in whom is no guile (John 1:47), I'll say it in plain words: the Swedish Navy and the great British newspaper *Guardian* made fools of themselves again, as they blamed the Russian president Putin for sending a submarine that turned out to be a one hundred year old war relic.



The U-boat called *Som* (Catfish) had been built in the US in 1901 for the Russian Navy, served in World War I and went down with all hands in 1916. The Swedes admitted that much, but, as in the one-liner about a guest suspected of stealing silver spoons, *the spoons were found, but the ill feeling loitered*.

The previous round of this pleasant Swedish pastime took place last October 2014 when the search for Russian submarines in the Stockholm archipelago, that is, in the archipelago of thousands of islands in the Baltic Sea, began in earnest. Nessie of the Loch Ness would envy the hunt. In the newspapers, on radio and on television, they spoke only of the mysterious submarine, that allegedly had sent a distress signal to the Russian naval base in Kaliningrad from the Swedish waters. Millions of krona were spent on the futile search. A video of the U-boat rising was released. Eye witnesses reported they saw a man in black emerging from the sea near a tiny island. As the water temperature was about 10°C (50°F) this could not be a Swede, it's got to be a Russian Spetznaz man, as they are immune to cold...

The old-timers told the press that the sailors of the damaged Russian submarine probably landed on an island in the archipelago and waited there for rescue. "There are many uninhabited cottages, they should be searched", they proposed to the horror of wealthy Stockholmers, the cottage owners. Dozens of military vessels in cutting-edge-state-of-art Stealth armour ploughed the waters. Depth charges killed a few dolphins and other sea animals. Newspapers warned that of Russian naval commando hunts for Ukrainians in Stockholm pubs.

There were sane voices, too, but they rarely were given a chance to be heard. Wilhelm Agrella, a professor of Intelligence Analysis at Lund University spoke of "budget submarines" invented by the Swedish navy in order to boost its budget.

In the end, all sightings were accounted for. One was a Swedish private submarine belonging to a Lasse Schmidt Westrén, another one was a Dutch one that participated in NATO manoeuvres. The alleged distress signal has been sent by a Swedish transponder, and had nothing to do with Russia or Kaliningrad.

There was no Russian U-boat to hunt. The true goal of the hunters has been Swedish neutrality. Sweden was and remains notionally neutral, while the US wants to see the country integrated into NATO.

The Hunt for Red October in October 2014 was a new round in the Second Cold War, the war against independent Russia. As a Social Democrat government came to power in September 2014, the Swedish Army, Navy and pro-NATO media plotted to prevent a possible rapprochement of Russia and Sweden.

This is not the first plot of this kind. In 1982, the Swedish military conspired with their colleagues in the United States and Britain against its Social Democrat government. Although the Swedish navy knew that NATO submarines operate in the Swedish waters, they played along with the right-wing politicians and talked about the 'Russian threat'. Only much later the truth was found out – the government commission appointed by the Social Democrats after their return to power showed that there were no Russian U-boats.

This was subsequently proven by a member of the Swedish government commission, a leading Norwegian military expert Ola Tunander in his detailed 400 page long work, *The Secret War Against Sweden: US and British Submarine Deception in the 1980s* (London:

Frank Cass 2004).

In the eighties, Ola Tunander did not doubt the reality of Russian submarines, and had written several textbooks and manuals for Swedish sailors on the subject. Only after the fall of the Soviet Union, he gained access to all files at the request of the Swedish government, and came to the unequivocal conclusion that all the evidence about the Russian submarine incursions was falsified or invented.

Classified documents clearly point to the US and the UK as the culprits, and this was confirmed by the former US Secretary of Defence Weinberger and British commanders in the secret hearing, says Tunander. It turned out that in the seventies, after the Vietnam War, the Americans and their British allies were preoccupied with the pro-Soviet sympathies of the Swedes. The Swedes stubbornly refused to see the enemy in his great eastern neighbour. In 1976, only 6% of Swedes believe in the Russian threat, and another 27% thought the USSR is an unfriendly power.

Even the Afghan war had only marginally changed these figures. And only the submarine panic bore fruit – by the mid-80s, 42% of Swedes believed in the imminent Russian threat and 83% considered the USSR being an enemy. In order to achieve this revolution in the minds, the British and American submarines made hundreds of violations of Swedish waters. They intruded into the inner harbour of Stockholm, raised their periscopes and antennas in the archipelago, posing as “the Red Scare.”

The USSR did not have submarines of the class detected by the Swedish radar (35-40 meters long), but the United States had the submarine NR-1, that was used to penetrate the Soviet waters.

In 1981 there was an amusing accident – an old Soviet submarine lost its bearings and ran aground close to the Swedish coast. This single incident was blown out of all proportion; rumours of Russian submarines in every bay flooded Sweden.

In October 1982, the Swedish fleet mounted a huge operation to capture or destroy a submarine sighted near the island of Muskö. The operation was attended by hundreds of journalists from all over the world.

Ola Tunander says the bridge of the sighted submarine had a NR-1's square shape, not the shape of the Soviet submarines. The American submarine had been delivered to Stockholm waters by the American tanker *Monongahela*, coming on an official visit. They left the submarine, so it went around and scared the Swedes. The command of the Swedish navy had been warned, the navy knew about it, took part in the hunt for the submarine, and concealed the truth from the Social Democrat government.

So the Swedish military conspired with the Americans and British against their own country. The Swedes managed to hit the submarine, and it released a cloud of yellow-green dye – the distress signal of the US submarine fleet. Swedish sailors allowed the submarine to leave.

Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, thanked the Swedish sailors for allowing the U-boat to leave and keeping mum. The Swedish government did not believe that this was a Russian submarine, but under pressure from the media and the navy, they were forced to lodge a protest to the Soviet Union. The Swedish – Russian relations soured.

In October 2014, the then (1982-1985) Foreign Minister Lennart Budström remembered this plot of the right-wing politicians and the Swedish military. He bitterly recalled in an interview for the newspaper *Expressen* how in 1982 the Swedish navy hunted an alleged Soviet submarine in Hårsfjärden thirty miles from Stockholm – it was the culmination of the scandal.

The government convened a commission to figure out where the submarine originated – in Russia or NATO. The most active member of the commission was the young right-wing politician Carl Bildt – he practically wrote the commission's report, saying this was a Soviet submarine. He claimed there was an acoustic signal recording and other evidence. Only in 1988 it emerged that the Swedish army and navy did not intercept any signals from submarines. It was all a lie of Carl Bildt, says Budström.

Bildt (with American support) had spread panic in the press. He claimed the Russian submarines make their way right into the centre of Stockholm, land troops and prepare for the invasion. Russian submarine sailors sneak into Stockholm bars to drink beer and squeeze Swedish blondes. Army and Coast Guard supplied photo of submarine periscopes for the front pages of newspapers.

"You are welcome to sink these subs – calmly said the Secretary General Yuri Andropov in 1984, after listening to the Swedish prime minister Olof Palme's complaint. – We'd only approve of such a move."

Only twenty years later, the meaning of Andropov's words became clear. The submarines in the Swedish waters were not Russian, but English and American. Instead of invasion, they had another plan, namely to sow enmity and distrust of Russia.

Budström retired as he stood for friendship with Russia, and in his stead, the Minister of Foreign Affairs became (and remained until recently) Carl Bildt, a staunch pro-American [Atlanticist](#), a supporter of Swedish accession to NATO, the greatest enemy of the USSR and Russia. It is alleged that Bildt in his youth was associated with a clandestine anti-communist combat organization created by the Americans for the event of the Soviet occupation of Western Europe, known as *Stay Behind* or *Gladio*.

Its members founded the secret US Fifth Column in Europe. The State Department dispatches published by the *Wikileaks*, indicate that the US embassy and the State Department took care of Bildt and helped his career. Bildt was a personal friend of Karl Rove, Bush's adviser, and actively supported the US intervention in Iraq.

Carl Bildt, the most inveterate enemy of Russia since the days of Karl XII, is a descendant of an aristocratic Scandinavian family (they had been Prime Ministers and Commanders since the 17th century). For a quarter of a century he was the most influential politician in Sweden, in government or in opposition, and he determined its anti-Russian course.

Carl Bildt has been closely associated with the submarine affair from the beginning to the end. In 1982, he denounced the Soviet invaders and earned brownie points. In 1990, Carl Bildt said that the Soviet Union has created a special force to attack Sweden. According to him, up to 22 Russian submarines participated in three annual manoeuvres in Swedish waters.

This fear-mongering has helped – in 1991 Bildt became the Prime Minister. In 1992 Bildt

went to Moscow with the alleged old recordings of the submarine. Now we know for certain that these were sounds made by otters, but in Yeltsin's days the thoroughly defeated Russian government agreed these were Russian submarines.

When the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994, says ex-minister Budström, a new commission was established, and it is completely refuted all allegations of Bildt. The first commission was composed of politicians, and the second – of scientists, and the findings were different. But that was too late. Sweden has been integrated in the EU and began to support American foreign policy.

One of the reasons is the media. The Atlanticist tendency in Sweden has almost complete control over the media. They manufacture a Russian threat a day, to scare the wits out of the Swedes. "Russia is a potential threat," – says a leading Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (30.05). In the same issue of the newspaper, its Moscow correspondent Anna-Lena Lauren says: "Russia is clearly threatening the Baltic States."

NATO planes fly close to Russia borders through Swedish airspace, in violation of Swedish sovereignty and neutrality, but Swedish media hardly ever reports of such frequent incidents. However, Russian air force training flights that stay clear of Swedish airspace are presented as a proof that the Russians are preparing to invade not only Sweden, but all the Baltic countries.

Even a report on delivering Russian air defence systems to far away Syria has been used to portray Russia as an aggressive monster preparing to subdue Sweden. The army provided the newspapers with a grim prediction: "The Russians can take over Sweden in a few days."

Perhaps it is true, but why should they? Neither now or in their greatest years of power has any Russian ruler—Tsar, General Secretary or President—ever wanted to invade Sweden. The last war between two neighbours took place over two hundred years ago. Russians have not the slightest intention to fight Swedes, but the Swedish army and the Swedish media are determined to present Russia as their mortal enemy. The army wants to increase the military budget; their political allies and their media say that only joining NATO would save the Swedish beauty from the Russian bear's claws.

This attitude is not helpful for the well-being of the two great northern powers. They are closely related. Ancestors of the Swedes were among founders of Russia, many Swedish noblemen served the Russian Crown. The Swedes and the Russians have the same birch trees growing along the river banks; the same mushrooms and berries grow in the same forests on both sides of the Baltic sea. Swedes and Russians experimented with socialism, mined ore and coal, felled trees, love their sauna and hockey. Russians are quite fond of Swedes: Peter the Great drank the health of the Swedish generals and called them 'his teachers', after thrashing them at Poltava.

Russia and Sweden have no dispute, no common border to argue about, no historic mishaps. All major Swedish companies – Ikea and Volvo, to mention some – have a profitable trade in Russia. Russians, especially the dwellers of St Petersburg region, go to Sweden on weekends. It is a short drive via Finland. Many Russians settled in Sweden, and Swedish businessmen are accustomed to Russia.

Russian policies towards Sweden and the West are marked with moderation, restraint and conservatism. They do not want to invade or conquer Sweden or other Western countries.

Russia wants to be treated with respect, keep foreigners out of its internal affairs, and it wants other countries to take Russia's legitimate interests into account (read: Ukraine). But these Russian wishes are considered only when the West is not united.

After 1991, all of the major Western countries for the first time in world history were united (to some degree) under the military, political and economic leadership of the United States. They have a single united system of ideological control and hegemony via global media, social networks, and universities. I called this system "The Masters of Discourse." Such setup is detrimental for Russia.

The Atlanticists want to keep the world united under their rule, military via NATO and ideological through the Masters of Discourse system. Russia does not want world domination, does not want to rule over Europe or Asia or Sweden. But it can't accept the US hegemony either, for they would turn it into a snow-bound Nigeria, an oil-producing country of the third world.

For the Russians, normal relations with Sweden are an essential element of peace and stability in the Baltic Sea. Russia appreciates Swedish neutrality and the balanced policy of Sweden in Olof Palme's times. It has no desires to meddle in Swedish affairs and would like to have friendly relations. Now, after Carl Bildt's departure, there is hope for improved relations between the new Social Democrat government in Sweden and Russia. And now the old trick is played again, the scare of Russian submarines. We'll see whether this government will manage the real threat of right-wing plots better than its predecessors.

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