

# Sabotage, submarines and the secret Norwegian connection

*Officially, Norway maintains a firm stand against allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on its shores. Officially, its government is anxious not to provoke the Soviet Union. But the Norwegian people – who support both policies – are beginning to find out that something quite different is going on in secret. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports.*

Three days ago, Oslo's criminal court sentenced one of Norway's most decorated and distinguished Resistance veterans to a suspended term of imprisonment and ordered him to pay £700 costs, on charges of breaching official secrecy. Major Svein Blindheim's crime was to expose one of the most unpleasant parts of the secret history of this ostensibly peaceable country. During the 1950's, Blindheim, then a military intelligence officer, was sent to Finland on a secret mission to train right wing Finnish nationalists in sabotage and subversion. This was part of a considerable programme of CIA and British secret service intervention in Scandinavia. The sabotage squads trained by Blindheim then penetrated the Soviet Union across the Finnish border.

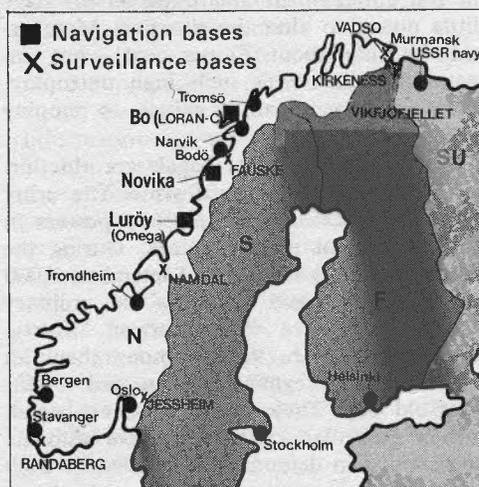
Blindheim revealed this work publicly last summer. He had supplied information about the sabotage training for an article in *Ny Tid*, a political weekly in Oslo. When the government and leading politicians of the period flatly denied the story, Blindheim was so enraged that he gave his own personal account in the next week's issue. Soon afterwards he was arrested.

Blindheim's is just one of a series of secrecy trials and proceedings which are currently hitting the headlines in Oslo. They highlight the considerable gap between Norway's official foreign policy and her

real – but covert – role in espionage and sabotage missions directed against the Soviet Union, and clandestine technical assistance to nuclear submarines.

The Norwegian people are not the keenest members of the Nato alliance. The Norwegian Labour Party, which has predominated in power since 1953, has traditionally inclined towards neutrality and anti-militarism. Just two months before signing the Nato pact in 1949, the government declared that no 'bases for the armed forces of foreign nations' would exist on Norwegian soil, save in case of imminent or actual attack. In 1961, the General Conference of the Labour Party voted almost unanimously to ban the stationing of nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil. This declaration duly holds force today.

Officially, Norway has maintained a posi-



*Norway's proliferation of clandestine surveillance and navigation bases in Norway, supervised by the US.*

tion of relative independence within Nato. The 'no bases' and 'no nuclear weapons' policies have had passive popular support. Now, however, with the increasing importance of Norway as the strategic 'northern flank' of Nato, the 'no bases' policy is being thoroughly undermined. And the 'no nuclear weapons' policy was undermined more than fifteen years ago when special facilities were constructed on Norwegian soil for Polaris submarines.

Norway has always sought (publicly) to avoid provocation of the Soviet Union. It forbids, for example, more than a token military presence closer than 500 kilometres to the Soviet border. This region includes the arctic plains of Finnmark, which were liberated in 1944 by the Red Army – who did not stay longer than necessary after the Nazis were vanquished, a fact still not forgotten. Yet immediately after the war Norway played eager host and partner to the clandestine operations of the British intelligence services, and later of the CIA, dispatching spies, saboteurs and killers to the Soviet Union – and Major Svein Blindheim among others to Finland.

Radio eavesdropping stations and undersea listening posts, established in conjunction with the United States, continue in operation today, even in sites pressed hard up to the frontier and the sensitive Soviet military complex around Murmansk.

The Norwegian government has always claimed a belligerent independence of other intelligence agencies and has officially confined its own operations to counter espionage on Norwegian territory. In fact, it seems the Norwegians have been taught how to spy by the British. And the CIA has been going strong in Norway since the very start. The infamous U2 spy flight of CIA pilot Gary Powers, shot down over Soviet territory, was targeted to land at the Norwegian Bodo airfield.

Former CIA Director William Colby recently described in his memoirs *Honourable Men – My Life in the CIA*, how he worked in Scandinavia in the 1950's, training what he chooses to call 'resistance' teams to carry out sabotage operations within the Scandinavian states in the event

of Soviet invasion. His account overlapped with what Blindheim had already revealed, although his own description of the squad's purposes was a little more anodyne – and it provides further embarrassment for the foreign policy makers of the Norwegian Labour Party. In recent press interviews, Colby has made it quite clear that the Norwegian government was as much 'in the know' about the CIA work as it wished to be.

Another embarrassing revelation has been the secret *Schei Report on Loran-C and Omega*. Two former MPs of the Socialist Left Party, Berge Furre and Finn Gustavsen, are currently under threat of impeachment by the Protocol Committee of the Storting (somewhat similar to the UK Commons Committee of Privileges) for leaking the report to the public. It concerns two navigation systems for ships and aircraft which work by transmitting radio signals. These have a special relevance to the cold and not so cold wars of the last twenty years since they can provide navigation information underwater to US and British Polaris submarines in the Norwegian and Arctic seas.

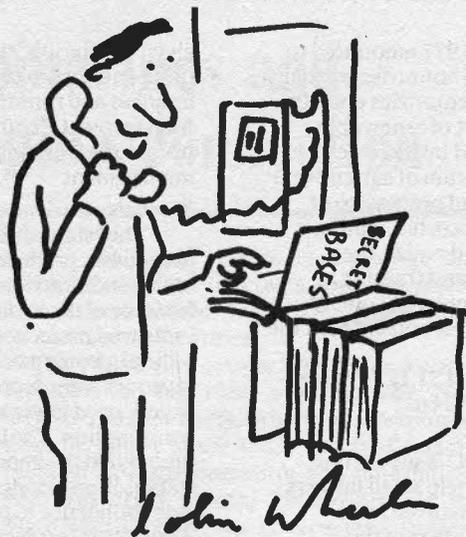
To launch missiles accurately, the submarines must always know exactly where they are. Good, continuous underwater navigation is therefore vital – and in providing it, the Loran-C and Omega stations are indirectly violating Norway's official 'no nuclear weapons' policy.

The first Loran-C station was constructed at Bo in 1959 to meet an urgent US 'Top Secret Military Requirement'. To anyone with the slightest awareness of the path of the arms race in the 1960s, that had to mean Polaris submarines. Yet the connection with Polaris was lightly passed over by the then Prime Minister and Cabinet sub-committee concerned with security and intelligence. The decision to build a Loran-C station was ratified by the Storting, somewhat belatedly, and with no guidance as to its true military role. The Schei Report makes it clear that clandestine co-operation between Norwegian defence officials and the US was aimed at avoiding democratic supervision and the inconvenience of public policies on nuclear weapons: 'the US authorities would do their best to make it possible for the Norwegian government to avoid submitting the matter to the Storting'. The Loran-C station was disguised as a development of an earlier and considerably different system which had been approved as part of the NATO deal. The Storting

believed, moreover, that it was largely a civil system.

Similar obfuscation surrounded the establishment of an Omega transmitting station, of a special communications station at Norvika, and of other projects including underwater listening, tracking and monitoring of Soviet satellites and seismic bomb explosion detectors. In each case the United States conspired to play down the military significance of the project, not for reasons of US or allied security, but to avoid embarrassing helpful Norwegian politicians who might one day be confronted with their own dishonesty. The Norwegian civil servants who dealt directly with the Americans had a fairly clear picture of the real purpose of the projects; they misrepresented the facts to other departments and to ministers; the Cabinet sub-committee looked at the issues and weeded out the controversial points, and finally, Norway's elected representatives took their decision on the basis of a 'sanitised' version of the truth.

Even so, some of the decisions, such as



the final establishment of the Omega station, created controversy both in Norway and elsewhere.

In 1976 the Norwegian debate on Omega and Loran-C intensified when a former intelligence analyst, Captain Hellebust, published a report which criticised the government's decision-taking and secrecy in such affairs. The official response was to set up the Schei Commission. But when the Commission reported it affirmed that no civil servant deserved reproach and that information provided had been 'correct and sufficient'. The Schei Report was an example of the very duplicity the Commission had been charged to investigate. More than half, containing all the vital evidence, was kept secret to avoid official embarrassment. The two Socialist Left MPs, Furre and Gustavsen, leaked it quite openly last summer after the government had turned down their demand that it be declassified. So far, 20,000 copies have been sold.

The next trial in Norway this autumn will be a classic of official secrecy. Although final charges have not yet been prepared despite an intervening lull of a year, the bare bones are known. Ivor Johannsen, a publisher's assistant, had devoted considerable time to discovering the nature and history of Norway's intelligence services, and the connections of the eavesdropping

bases with US intelligence. He had consulted telephone directories and official lists, visited sites all over Norway, and pieced together a list of the eavesdropping bases. Others have repeated the easy task since (see map). It can be seen that there are far more of these than Norwegian national security requirements would suggest. Three are extremely close to the Soviet border, and all of them are 'secret', it is alleged. It may be that the stations do provide useful material for Norway. But, although the bases are undoubtedly known to the Soviet Union, and their presence (including American officials for 'liaison') an undoubted provocation, they are once again a secret from the Norwegian people and the Storting. One can argue that the advantages of such stations, although theoretically illegal, outweigh the risks. But it is incontrovertible that the secrecy serves only to avoid embarrassing officials and some politicians whose dishonesty is revealed by the lack of accord between public pronouncements and secret activities.

Similar fear of embarrassment led the Norwegian government to lean heavily on the United States to censor a book by two former US intelligence analysts, Marchetti and Marks, who wrote *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. Several of the sections censored from the book concerned clandestine activities in conjunction with the Norwegian government and were struck out on Norwegian insistence. It was, said Marchetti to Oslo journalists investigating the Johannsen case last year, '(Norwegian) internal political considerations which were decisive'.

Johannsen had also gathered lists of names of Special Branch and military intelligence personnel, largely by telephoning police stations and asking. He had brought Blindheim and his researches to *Ny Tid* last summer. The publication of the two *Ny Tid* articles and a subsequent interview with Johannsen in another paper led directly to the arrest of all concerned. Two *Ny Tid* journalists, Jan Otto Hauge and Ingolf Hækkon Teigene will be tried with Johannsen, in what is now known as the 'Lists' case. One friend who helped Johannsen store his research material has already been given a six-month prison sentence, although this verdict has now been overturned on appeal.

A new line in Nato thinking holds that the Soviet presence in the north has hitherto been genuinely defensive and designed to repel Nato aggression – justifiable in the light of recent revelations. But now, the Nato line goes, the expansionism of Soviet foreign policy, combined with the buildup of the Soviet Navy at Murmansk as elsewhere, provides a new threat to Nato and Europe – that of a direct attack on and invasion of northern Scandinavia to protect the sea routes from Murmansk.

Nato planners and Norwegian politicians will have to examine and confront these new views. So will the Norwegian people. But if the truth of these issues is as deliberately concealed by politicians and civil servants as it has been in the past, then they will serve only to undermine further the democratic institutions that Nato is so fiercely avowed to defend.

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