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USSR Planned to Invade Sweden

Front page / Society

21.02.2006 Source:



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Detailed maps of Sweden made by Soviet secret agents shocked the Swedes

It is known that a human mind has a certain inertia. Sometimes fear comes after a danger is gone. Something like that occurs to whole nations. The Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet has recently published Soviet military maps of 1987. The maps depicted the coast in the area of Stockholm and Karlskrona – the major army base of the Swedish Navy in the Baltic area. The detailed maps showed all defensive installations on the outskirts of the two cities, as well as the spots for landing commandos, and the depth of secret waterways.

Swedish experts concluded that the Soviet Headquarters used those maps to organize an incursion in Sweden. The maps were of very high quality – better than the creations of best Swedish military mappers. As a result, the nation was so scared like never before, not even during the worst Cold War period. When Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson looked at the photographs, he said that the worst apprehension of those people, who considered Moscow a source of direct danger, was verified. The prime minister also said that after the documents are studied in detailed, the Swedish government will decide, if it is worth making a protest against Russia or not.

The publication in the Swedish newspaper ruined two myths at once: the Swedish production is always of better quality against the Russian one, and Sweden managed to conceal very important information about its coastal defense from Russians. The published maps contained the information even about the berth length and the depth at secret naval bases, not to mention the location of secret mine fields. Christer Holm, a military intelligence chief had to acknowledge that it was the first time, when they saw such revealing information about Karlskrona army base. He added that the maps were most likely drawn on the base of secret agents' information.

Tore Foshberg, the retired chief of the counterintelligence department of the Swedish secret police told reporters about the way the exposed maps were drawn up. Russian Central Intelligence Administration and KGB agents (there were up to 45 of such agents at the Soviet Union embassy in Stockholm) would go on a tour around the country. During their short journeys they would check loading capacities of bridges, they

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would also measure the distance between trees in a forest. Such information was necessary to plan the moves of the Soviet incursion army on the territory of Sweden. Soviet diplomats would arrange picnics in the places of strategic interest, they would be very friendly and sociable to the local population. "One of them, military attache Pyotr Shiroky, went to a beach near Stockholm one fine day in the summer of 1982. On that beach he started a conversation with an excavator driver (as if incidentally), who was resting on the sand nearby. As it turned out, the driver dug trenches for the cables, which were connected to mine fields. However, there was a Swedish secret agent on the beach too. He heard the entire conversation, Tore Foshberg remembers. – We sent the Soviet agent back to Moscow right on the Agent Day, December 20." In the words from the former counterintelligence chief, the Swedes usually expelled Soviet agents from the embassy on December 20th, which is celebrated in the Soviet Union as the day of the so-called Emergency Committee. "KGB agents still celebrate this day, it is their biggest holiday. Yet, we wanted to have a reason for fun too, so we would expel Soviet agents right on the day of their holiday," clarified Tore Foshberg.

Nevertheless, as Swedish counterintelligence officers acknowledge, that they did not manage to detain a lot of Soviet agents. The details of the Soviet maps are a very good proof of that. It is curious that KGB and Central Intelligence Administration used a specific category of so-called duplicate people in order to set up the intelligence network in Sweden. In the 1930s thousands of communists with their families emigrated from Sweden to the USSR. They came to live in the Soviet Union, because they admired the new country. However, romantic foreigners' lives in the Soviet Union ended up in a very sad way: they were killed in GULAG (a system of Soviet concentration camps). However, a lot of their children survived the horrific period of the Soviet history. They started going back to Sweden in the 1960s. Some of them left Sweden when little babies. Their relatives were left to take it for granted that a grown up man, who came back home all of a sudden, was that very "baby Sven," whose communist parents left for the USSR years ago.

As a rule, those new Swedes did not speak Swedish very well. It was an absolutely natural thing for children, who lived in the Russian environment, and who lost their parents at a very young age. As a matter of fact, there could be no better way to send secret Soviet agents to Sweden under the disguise of re-emigrants. The newspaper Dagens Nuheter has recently published a story about one of such agents, 33-year-old Karl Ulof Svanson. He was born already in the USSR, but then he returned back to Sweden in 1961. His relatives were so happy about his return; they could never imagine that Karl was actually a KGB major. Karl lived in Sweden for several years and then disappeared as suddenly as he appeared there. The Swedish counterintelligence managed to learn about him incidentally: from the memoirs of a former senior KGB agent, who escaped to the West.

Tens of agents like Karl were supposed to work on the preparation of the Soviet Union incursion in Sweden. They would check their data over and over again, collecting the information for drawing up detailed maps of the country. They would also arrange secret ammunition depots for saboteurs, develop plans for sabotage actions, which were supposed to be carried out together with landing Soviet commandos on the outskirts of Stockholm and Karlskrona.

Sweden was not of peculiar interest for the Soviet Union. However, in case of a war with NATO in Europe, it was very important to occupy the Swedish territory – the base of the further offensive. The Swedes found themselves in the strong claws of Moscow on account of those published maps. As soon as Sweden recovered from the shock, it started looking for someone to blame for those unpleasant moments. However, the person, who was guilty of the national shock, did not even want to run away and hide.

His name was Ulf Erlingsson, a scientist of geography. In the beginning of the 1990s he took part in an international project to create a computer database about the Baltic region geography. High-quality

maps were needed for that. Latvia-based Erlingsson's pal found out about scientists' problem. He bought a marvelous set of maps of the Russian Central Intelligence Administration at a market place. The set contained Swedish maps as well. "The whole set of those maps was very cheap, I think I paid one dollar for them. The thing is about the fact that Swedish military maps used to be printed in Latvia during the Soviet era. When the Soviet troops were withdrawn from the Baltic region, it was ordered to destroy the maps. Yet, the people, who were supposed to do it, preferred to sell them," Ulf Erlingsson said.

Why did the geographer conceal the fact of owning the unique secret information for years? The reason why is very simple. Ulf Erlingsson said that he had to complete the computer database within the scope of his project. He could not do it without the Soviet maps. If the Swedish counterintelligence had learned about the unique set of Soviet maps, they would have taken it away from the scientist. The scientist finished his peaceful work, and a piece of the Cold War history, which was purchased on a market place in Latvia's capital Riga, was handed over to Swedish secret services. The publication in the Dagens Nuheter became a direct push for the geographer to go to a media outlet. Swedish military expert Yan Lejonelm, of the total defense research institute, wrote in his article that Moscow planned landing commandos and arranging sabotage actions in Sweden. However, Lejonelm did not have any evidence to back up his own opinion on the matter. "Our military specialists did not see the Russian maps. They wouldn't have had any doubts if they had seen them," Ulf Erlingsson said. He decided to send his maps to the newspaper Aftonbladet. He thought it right: military intelligence agents did not have an idea about the existence of such explicit evidence of Moscow's secret-service activity in Sweden. "These are unique maps, which could be bought only during the first years after the break up of the USSR. It is impossible to get such documents nowadays, when Russia was closed again," Erlingsson said.

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