

The unfolding of an international Soviet disinformation campaign

by Konstantin George

Late in the night of Feb. 28, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme was murdered on a main street in downtown Stockholm. Of all the responses and reactions from around the world, only from one very specific quarter, the Soviet Union, did one hear definitive statements—within 48 hours of the crime—proclaiming “knowledge” of what, if not who, was responsible for the assassination.

On Sunday, March 2, a Soviet Central Committee member and director of Moscow’s U.S.A.-Canada Institute, Georgii Arbatov, was quoted on Radio Moscow, saying regarding the murder of Olof Palme: “We know who is responsible. It was the work of right-wing extremists who want to stop the international peace movement.”

Killers have motives. Russia had several motives to murder Palme. In the last months of his life, Olof Palme had begun certain policy shifts, which infuriated Moscow:

1) Palme moved to have Sweden join the policy of the U.S.-NATO Coordinating Committee (COCOM) of enforcing a ban on military and related technology exports to the Soviet Union and the COMECON. Until then, Sweden had been the source of perhaps the biggest “leak” of Western high technology into Russian hands.

2) Just before his death, Palme had ordered an investigation and crackdown on financial speculation and stock-market manipulation in Sweden, conducted by companies belonging to the Volvo-Gyllenhammer group, and the Wallenberg group of companies. These two groups, taken together, represent the core of the Swedish corporate networks trading extensively with Russia.

3) A warning, if not an obituary, on Olof Palme, was published in the January 1986 issue of the Soviet journal, *International Affairs*. The article, signed, Yu. Venisov, stated, “Troubles in Soviet/Swedish relations also made themselves felt after the Olof Palme government came into office in 1982. Although the government’s programmatic statement did refer to its intention to improve relations with the Soviet Union, it failed to take consistent and decisive practical steps in this direction. . . . The [Palme] government was under strong pressure from the right-wing opposition which grouped around the Moderate Party and sharply opposed whatever

contacts with the Soviet Union they deemed political.”

A component of any assassination of a high-ranking political figure, is to lay a false scent, distract attention from the perpetrators and their motives, focusing attention in other directions. Arbatov’s declaration that it was the “extreme right-wing,” was a signal for Western outlets of KGB disinformation to begin a campaign against a target labeled by Moscow “extreme right-wing.” The choice of target conforms to the fact that elimination of the target is a top strategic priority for Moscow. That target was the European Labor Party (EAP)—the European parties in Germany, Sweden, France, and Italy which promote the policies of the American statesman and economist Lyndon LaRouche, and his wife, the prominent German political figure and expert on the Weimar Classics, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, head of the German EAP.

KGB outlets spring into action

Synchronized with the dissemination of the Arbatov statements, the KGB’s disinformation operation commenced on Monday, March 3, with the Danish mass circulation tabloid, *Extrabladet*. The article was written not by a Dane, but by a Lebanese national, **Paul Gazan**, who came to *Extrabladet* from the KGB’s Danish mouthpiece, *Informasjon*, run by **Juergen Dragsdahl**. *Extrabladet* declared that the EAP is suspected of involvement in the murder of Olof Palme, with Gazan writing: “Sources in the police leadership reveal they are looking intensively at right-wing extremist organizations, including Swedish neo-Nazi groups and the so-called European Labor Party.”

That same day, March 3, the West Berlin-based pro-terrorist newspaper *tageszeitung*, launched the same charge against the EAP: “Police investigation is concentrated on extreme right-wing groups, among them the European Labor Party. . . .”

In their haste to launch the operation to “implicate” the EAP, the KGB made a telling blunder. The *Extrabladet* and *tageszeitung* articles both claimed to quote the Swedish daily *Expressen*, but they appeared on March 3, i.e., the day before *Expressen* published its own slander, March 4. The

Expressen article was written by **Leif Braennstroem**, who wrote:

"Certain of Saepo's [Swedish Security Police] terrorist experts think the murder of Olof Palme can be the work of a sympathizer of one of the identified terrorist or extreme right-groups in Sweden. . . . The Swedish organizations which are included are all extreme right organizations. . . . Nordic Reich Party EAP . . . known for hate propaganda against Olof Palme."

The same day, *Expressen* made its own blunder, publishing a "guest article" by Georgii Arbatov, who wrote:

"I don't know who murdered Olof Palme, but I know who hated him. He was hated, bestially hated, by those who cannot accept . . . what he spent his life for—peace and disarmament. . . . I saw . . . how hated he was by others. I have seen demonstrations by neo-fascists, seen hooligans curse him and threaten him. . . ."

From March 5 to March 13 inclusive, the EAP was not mentioned by name, but the Swedish press was filled with articles speaking of "groups which ran hate campaigns against Olof Palme"—the conditioning of the population for the next wave.

During this interim, however, on Thursday, March 6, an article appeared in the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, a Soviet journal unofficially directed by the KGB. The article put the Soviet government on record saying that Moscow knows—generically—who killed Olof Palme. The article was not written by a usual KGB journalist, but by **Vladimir Lomeika**, the Soviet Foreign Ministry's chief spokesman. Thus, it bore the official imprimatur of the Soviet government:

". . . The Ton-Ton Macoutes of the world's dark forces killed him. At this moment, we do not know the names of his assassins, but we know the handwriting of political assassination."

Literaturnaya Gazeta has a history of slandering LaRouche. In June 1983, KGB colonel and *Lit Gaz* "correspondent" **Iona Andronov** authored an article on the 1981 attempt to kill the Pope, insinuating that the Pope was a victim of a "CIA plot," which included LaRouche.

A Danish KGB cut-out

On Friday, March 14, the Danish afternoon tabloid, **B-T**, published an article by **Jan Soegaard**, headlined; "Olof Palme Killed by Communist Haters."

B-T's number-two editor is **Nils Norlund**, brother of the chief ideologue of the Danish Communist Party, **Ib Norlund**. Nils Norlund is married to the ex-wife of Socialist International chief **Willy Brandt**. *B-T*'s feature writer, **Jens David Adler**, is a member of the Pugwash Movement, the nuclear disarmament asset of Moscow in the West.

Had the article appeared in the DKP paper *Land og Folk*, it would have had no useful results for Moscow. The Kremlin used its Socialist asset, *B-T*, and the afternoon edition of the "respected" **Berlinske Tidende**, to launder the slander of the EAP into the West. The *B-T* article is the first article in

Western Europe "linking" the Palme murder suspect who had just been arrested to the EAP. The suspect's name had not been released by the police, nor by anyone else at the time. *B-T* wrote:

"The 35-year-old suspect is already known to Saepo. The reason was his connection to the extreme right-wing movement, EAP. According to sources inside Saepo . . . [he] had been a sympathizer of the EUP [sic] and worked . . . for the party . . . by writing articles for the party's pamphlets. In those, he was aggressive against Palme, and therefore was registered [by Saepo]. . . ."

The facts are quite contrary: The arrested suspect never worked for the EAP, never wrote articles "for the party's pamphlets." He signed a petition in December 1984, declaring himself a "member," and was expelled as a "member" in May 1985, after a conversation with an actual member in which it became clear that he was mentally unstable. In the interim, he had never attended any EAP meetings, or participated in party activities in any manner.

Over the weekend, the suspect's lawyer, one **Henning Sjostroem**, broke Swedish law by releasing to the press the name of the suspect, **Ake Viktor Gunnarsson**—a police informant sent to formally "join" the EAP for a short time. Sjostroem is not just any lawyer. He is widely touted as the leading lawyer for organized crime in Stockholm. His political connections, going back decades, link him to those circles in Sweden which, during the war, were pro-Nazi, and, in the postwar period, pro-Soviet.

The storm breaks loose

On Tuesday, March 18, the storm broke loose. The **Swedish Riksradio** (national radio) began the morning with broadcasts that the suspect is an EAP member, and filled their "news" with lurid details of "meetings of well-dressed people . . . both Swedish and foreign guests" at the suspect's home.

On cue, Sweden's leading daily, **Svenska Dagbladet**, that morning headlines: "Suspect Is a Member of a Political Sect." The authors were: **Richard Aschberg** and **Sune Olsson**. The key sentence, "In 1984, he was a member of the EAP, known for its campaigns against Olof Palme," was a perfect echo of the KGB slander guidelines. The authors added, "The suspect is known for his very clear anti-communist views." The article betrayed the next phase of the operation against the EAP, saying: "At the tax authority, [where party membership records are also kept] the suspect, along with 1,800 other persons, stands as a member of the EAP." This was a direct call for the police to "investigate" every legitimate EAP member.

That day, every Swedish newspaper was filled with slander articles:

Aftonbladet carried a photo from 1976, allegedly portraying an "EAP member" together with the arrested suspect, Gunnarsson, conducting "violent action" at a Swedish Social Democratic Party conference. The "EAP member" in the picture was actually an active member of the Social Demo-

cratic Party itself.

A local Joenkoepping paper carried a picture of an EAP member with an invented quote: "We are prepared to kill Palme."

Timed with this, Radio Moscow broke the silence on the matter imposed since the Arbatov statements, and declared in every foreign and domestic language broadcast that the "murder suspect was a member of the extreme right-wing European Labor Party."

The Swedish media barrage served as the trigger for reports sweeping across Europe throughout the day:

Denmark: *Extrabladet* continued to attack the EAP, but also quoted Swedish EAP spokesman Mike Ericson that Gunnarsson is not an EAP member. *B-T*, in contrast to all other Scandinavian papers, did not even mention the EAP in its coverage on Gunnarsson, saying only that in September 1983, he had visited Copenhagen and dropped off "propaganda materials of an extreme right-wing organization" at newspaper offices.

Germany: All regional radio stations and the two national TV channels covered the story.

France: The two radio channels, the state-owned **France-Inter** and the commercial **Europe-1**, reported that suspect Gunnarsson was a member of the "extreme right-wing" EAP. The original accusation was launched through AFP news agency. The second TV channel, **Antenne-2**, also followed the same line, calling the EAP "a fascist organization." The afternoon daily *Le Monde* also reported the alleged EAP membership of Gunnarsson, although more cautiously worded in their first edition. Their second daily edition carried the EAP's denial.

Italy: Italian TV and radio carried the accusations.

Britain: The "story" broke too late to get into the major European printed media of March 18—with one striking exception: the London **Times**. Author: **Christopher Mosey**, Stockholm correspondent. The London *Times* carries a front-page slander, with a picture of Gunnarsson, calling him a "member of the extreme right-wing European Workers Party."

On Wednesday, March 19, the disinformation storm hit nearly every European newspaper. At the same time, Radio Moscow launched the next public Soviet escalation, describing the "guilty party" as the "fascist European Labor Party, with its headquarters in West Germany."

Norway

Dagbladet, a left Social Democratic-run daily, with a long history of slanders against LaRouche, asserted that Lyndon LaRouche is the "leader of the Ku Kux Klan," publishing a picture of LaRouche, and a picture of a Klansman in white robe, claiming this picture is also of LaRouche.

Morgenbladet, author: **Berit Rekaa**, wrote regarding the chairwoman of the German EAP, Helga Zepp-LaRouche: "Officially she was born in Trier, West Germany [true], but . . . she originally was East German, which has been hid-

den." That article quoted a Norwegian supporter of the Heritage Foundation, **Bjorn Hallstroem**, calling LaRouche's organization, "national socialistic," and comparing LaRouche with Hitler.

Thus, the Moscow line that "EAP = fascist," is first conducted through the Heritage Foundation networks.

Vaerldensgang: This paper alleged that the "EAP attacks Russia" because Russia "is run by the Jews." In 1985, "LaRouche and his organization received 2.5 million Norwegian crowns from the CIA."

Germany

Frankfurter Rundschau, author: **Hannes Gamillscheg**, writes from Copenhagen: "The EAP. . . concentrated on political propaganda of the nastiest sort, and Olof Palme was their favorite enemy in Scandinavia. . . . The hatred, which they inflame, can seduce a psychologically unstable individual to action whose seriousness he cannot comprehend."

The more standard slanders used the "extreme right-wing" Second International line:

Sueddeutsche Zeitung ran a Reuters-Stockholm release basing itself on the *Aftonbladet* coverage of the day before, mentioning the "radical right" EAP.

Die Welt, DPA-Stockholm, referred to the "right extremist" EAP and to *Aftonbladet*.

Saarbrücker Zeitung, DPA-Stockholm, calls the suspect, "for many months a member of the Swedish section of the right-radical 'European Labor Party' which is active throughout all of Europe."

Thus, the German dailies with national circulation base their stories on Sweden's *Aftonbladet*, owned by the Social Democratic trade union organization, LO.

Italy

Unita, the Communist newspaper, no named author. Headlined: "Is the Killer of Palme a Hard-Core Neo-Fascist?" "He was an activist of the European Labor Party."

Il Resto del Carlino, a Bologna region newspaper; author asserted that he had attended "EAP meetings" where "Nazi songs were sung" and a "lot of beer and sausages were consumed."

Corriere della Sera, author: **Francesco Alonzo**, Stockholm correspondent, said the EAP is "a sect with very confused ideas."

Il Giorno, no author named, quoted *Svenska Dagbladet* on the "extreme right-wing" EAP.

La Repubblica, author: **Vincenzo Lanza**, Stockholm correspondent, cited Lyndon LaRouche, representing "an extreme right ideology." The EAP had waged a campaign of "defamation and verbal aggression" against Palme.

La Stampa, author: **M. C.** cited Gunnarsson as having been "a member of the extreme right-wing organization, the European Labor Party."

Il Giornale, author: **U. Tramb** cited the "extreme right-wing" EAP. France

Le Matin de Paris (Socialist)

"POE: a sect, a party, a leader," recalling the Nazi slogan "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer."

Le Quotidien de Paris stated that Palme had no enemies.

"This is why investigations oriented towards terrorist organizations [such gang, and the fascist-leaning sect known as the EAP."

Radio-France-International, the official radio station broadcasting over Africa and other French-speaking parts of the World, described the EAP as an extremist organization linked to the SAVAK, the Iranian secret services under the Shah, and claimed that all the EAP members were "trained as urban guerrillas" in America.

The following day, when Gunnarsson was released, one channel of France-Inter did not hesitate to imply that Gunnarsson had been released because he was *not* a member of the EAP!

Britain

London *Times*, author: Christopher Mosey, Stockholm correspondent, "Police are now investigating his [Gunnarsson's] links with the European Workers' Party, an extreme right-wing political group based in Wiesbaden, West Germany.

The London **Guardian** and **International Herald Tribune** run the Reuters wire from Stockholm.

The bubble bursts

On late Wednesday afternoon, March 19, the Stockholm police officially announce that no evidence exists that the arrested suspect, Gunnarsson, was involved in the murder of Olof Palme. The suspect is released, though now kept under close police guard, at a secret location. The effect is nearly instantaneous. Throughout Europe, the TV and radio drumbeat linking the EAP to the murder of Palme stops.

The European press of Thursday, March 20—south of Scandinavia—falls

- 1) no further mention whatsoever of the Palme murder case;
- 2) more commonly, straight news reporting the suspect's release for lack of evidence, with no mention of the EAP.

The major exceptions lie in Scandinavia. *Expressen* in Sweden, and *Morgenbladet* in Norway.

Expressen author Leif Braennstroem, who had launched Moscow's original campaign against the EAP, wrote:

"The investigators of the murder now penetrate deeper into the investigation of the European Labor Party. The criminal police have now seized the 1,800 membership list that the right-wing extremist party had filed with the tax authorities. . . . The interest in the EAP by the criminal police means that the investigation has been broadened." The article comes with two pictures; one of the police sequestering the list, and the second of the police scrutinizing pictures of EAP meetings.

Morgenbladet, no named author, headlined: "CIA Has Not Supported Lyndon LaRouche and His Movements." The

lead sentence: "The CIA has nothing to do with the extremist organization, the European Labor Party," citing a CIA spokesman.

In

"terrorists."

The French coverage, however, included the first objective reports:

Le Monde: The leading daily of France commented truthfully that Lyndon LaRouche and the POE (EAP) known for their campaigns against the Club of Rome and the Trilateral Commission; that the POE is known for its commitment to developing the Third World, and its policies make it "more left Gaullist than ultra-conservative." *Le Monde* also accurately identifies LaRouche and the POE as committed to seeing the SDI implemented.

Present, the conservative French daily, asked: "Is the EAP extreme right-wing? Let's have a closer look. . . . The Swedish press committed two errors. . . . Gunnarsson is no longer an EAP member, and the EAP is not extreme right-wing." In the just-concluded French elections, the EAP ran a highly publicized multi-racial slate. It also quotes Swedish EAP spokesman Mike Ericson, that the EAP had in the past uncovered and exposed "attempts by neo-Nazis to infiltrate the EAP," and that the international slander campaign against the EAP "results from Soviet sources." *Present* itself comments: "In West Germany, the Soviet Union has its best writers."

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