

## Swedish police chief covers for Olof Palme's killers

by Göran Haglund

A scandal unprecedented in legal annals broke May 16 in Sweden as Stockholm Chief Prosecutor K. G. Svensson, the prosecutor in charge of the investigation into the murder of Olof Palme, in a detailed press release, swung the full authority of his office behind strong charges of political tampering and fraud against Stockholm Police Chief Hans Holmer, who heads the police search for the murderer.

Although Holmer, and not Svensson, is responsible for the miscarriage of justice now unraveling, Svensson announced his resignation from the Palme murder case, implying that backing for Holmer from the Social-Democratic government made it impossible for him to carry on his responsibilities in the case. According to sources, Holmer, whose entire bureaucratic career has been based on the color of his party sympathies, has aided the government in ignoring the leads pointing to Soviet authorship of the assassination.

As the prosecutor in charge, Svensson's overall leadership over Holmer's investigation is established by Swedish law. But Svensson was prevented from the outset from exercising this leadership by Holmer's lawless usurpation of extraordinary police powers. Sharply denouncing Holmer's political interference and "attempts to exert pressure on the prosecutor through various channels," Svensson has not yet named the high government officials known to have backed Holmer's power grab.

Decisions by Holmer that have struck traditional police officers as incompetent in the course of the investigation, appear in new light when viewed as attempts to lead the investigation astray, away from serious hypothesizing re-

garding the assassins of Palme; and instead as attempts to run a vendetta against domestic political opponents of the Social-Democratic regime.

### Obsession with Gunnarsson

It was Holmer's obsession with constructing what he termed "a chain of circumstantial evidence" against 33-year-old Viktor Gunnarsson, Holmer's prime and only suspect in the case, that both focused the search away from more fruitful avenues of investigation and was exploited to try to implicate the European Labor Party (EAP) in Sweden, based on Gunnarsson's alleged affiliation with the EAP. The EAP had previously gained considerable influence as a result of its campaign for neutral Sweden to join the Western alliance, contrary to the pro-Soviet policies of the Social Democrats.

Acknowledging the professional bankruptcy of Sweden's largest ever police investigation, which occupied the undivided attention of Holmer's 300-man team for two-and-a-half months, Svensson officially announced the end of the investigation of Gunnarsson, "as the investigation does not provide any basis for the assumption that [Gunnarsson] has had anything to do with this crime."

In his six-page press release, Svensson detailed how he personally had been misled by Holmer's task force, which ran the police search, into believing that there was a case against Gunnarsson, a case which was fabricated by the police group around Holmer (see fact sheet, below).

Although the Holmer-Svensson conflict arose early in March, it became acute no later than March 19, when Svens-

son first ordered Gunnarsson released, upon discovering the fraudulent nature of the evidence cooked up by Holmer. After this, Holmer wanted Svensson sacked.

Svensson continued restraining Holmer's efforts to conduct innumerable meaningless witness encounters with Gunnarsson, including "witnesses" who declared they had never seen the face of the person to be identified. An enraged Holmer then had Justice Minister Sten Wickbom—through his undersecretary—get National Chief Prosecutor Magnus Sjöberg to overrule Svensson in favor of Holmer.

Sources in the prosecutor's office report that Holmer then decided to get Svensson fired, before he could officially put an end to the Gunnarsson investigation, something which Svensson had planned to announce during the week of May 20. News of this attempt by Holmer reached Svensson on May 16, prompting Svensson to move preemptively the same day to end the Gunnarsson track, denounce Holmer's methods, and resign in protest.

### Investigate Svensson's charges

Visibly caught off-guard, Holmer himself, as well as Wickbom and Sjöberg, refused comment, as Gunnarsson's lawyer called for all three to resign. After regaining its composure, the government announced that it would immediately appoint a commission of inquiry, which had been planned for this fall, and Sweden's chancellor of justice—the highest judicial official of the country, empowered to sue judges and other high public officials—said he would investigate Svensson's charges.

Several police sources characterized Svensson's move as a total collapse of the investigation. "It is the wrong man who is leaving. Holmer instead ought to have left the leadership job," a highly placed police source said. "Among individual police officials participating in the investigation, Svensson enjoys a lot of confidence. He is a very competent jurist. And he is honest."

Concerning Hans Holmer, several leading investigators from the very start have been strongly critical of his way of interfering with the work. "His way of interfering with things has done incredible damage to the investigation," one police source said. Noting how Holmer personally committed himself to the view that Gunnarsson was the murderer, one source said: "He refused to accept the view of the investigators that suspicion against [Gunnarsson] was being weakened."

Replacing Svensson as prosecutor in charge of the case will be his immediate superior, Stockholm High Prosecutor Claes Zeime, who is the boss of the Stockholm Office of the Public Prosecutor, and is considered "more reliable" by the regime. Asked by media what makes him so sure he will not have the same "cooperation difficulties" with Holmer as Svensson did, Zeime replied: "I have been the chief of this office for seven years. During that time, I have been in touch continuously with Hans Holmer. We know each other well and have so far never had a quarrel."

Zeime admitted that his taking charge had already been

decided upon on May 12—four days before Svensson resigned—and announced that Svensson's decision to end the investigation of Gunnarsson is not unchangeable: "If new preconditions are added, nothing prevents me from ordering a new arrest."

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## Fact Sheet

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# Police chief assailed for political tampering

In a six-page press release May 20, Stockholm Chief Prosecutor K. G. Svensson systematically shows how the police evidence against Gunnarsson does not stand up to rigorous examination:

- **Police evidence 1)** Gunnarsson had been seen, on two separate occasions, near the scene of the crime, behaving suspiciously.

Svensson shows how the witnesses, a taxi driver and two women, had all been shown photographs of Gunnarsson by the police before the encounters were conducted which led them to identify him. In the case of the taxi driver, the oral police briefing of Svensson, which led him to decide on March 17 to press charges against Gunnarsson, was "incomplete and misleading, due to serious mistakes in the work of the police."

Contrary to the Rules of Court, the encounter between Gunnarsson and the taxi driver was conducted unbeknownst to Svensson, and, despite language problems, without employing an interpreter. The taxi driver was also asked leading questions.

After discovering all this on the morning of March 19, Svensson withdrew the charges against Gunnarsson, and ordered him released immediately. This interrupted a wave of international slanders trying to implicate the European Labor Party (EAP) in the Palme murder, based on Gunnarsson's alleged affiliation with the EAP.

- **Police evidence 2)** Literature seized from Gunnarsson showed his hostility to Palme.

This represents no basis for prosecution, Svensson points out.

- **Police evidence 3)** Statements by Gunnarsson about Palme being on the "death list," etc.

According to the police briefing to Svensson, one witness had heard Gunnarsson say by phone that Palme is on the death list, and that blood will flow in the streets of Stockholm. When Svensson finally got the transcript of this testimony, it rather showed Gunnarsson warning that *the Russians* will kill Palme!

The witness told the police: "Then the 33-year-old spoke