

An icy wind is blowing from Moscow to Stockholm

by Göran Haglund

The uncovering of hard evidence showing the Soviet Union was behind the Feb. 28, 1986 assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme has triggered a reaction from Moscow which is so brazenly harsh, that some Swedish officials are describing it as the worst crisis facing Sweden in the past 30 years.

In a Swedish television interview on Sept. 4, Soviet Ambassador Boris Pankin repeated Moscow's unconditional demand that the Swedish government issue an explanation for stories which began appearing in the Stockholm daily *Expressen* concerning the existence of tapes of a bugged conversation in which a Soviet embassy official demonstrated, at the very least, a foreknowledge that the assassination was about to occur. "We would like an official explanation for what happened last week," Pankin said, and Sweden must answer the anti-Soviet charges raised by "people who want to rekindle the myth of a Soviet danger to Sweden."

Three days earlier, Pankin had put forward his demands for the first time in an interview with the daily *Svenska Dagbladet*. "The allegation that someone in the Soviet Union knew that Olof Palme would be murdered is not only insane, but also indecent," Pankin said. Moreover, "If a Soviet diplomat has been bugged, it is a violation of the Vienna Convention. . . . If you can believe the press, there is a 'secret war' against Soviet diplomats and against diplomats from other socialist countries. Obviously, this is not without concern to me and my colleagues from socialist countries. It would not be bad to have an official explanation on this question."

Pankin's demands are certainly not to be taken lightly, since he is not just any Soviet ambassador. He holds the post of chief of the KGB's Disinformation Department, and has the rank of major general in the KGB. In those capacities,

Pankin played a key role in Moscow's heavy-handed disinformation campaign following the Palme murder, to twist the finger the other way so that it would point directly at Moscow's arch-enemy, Lyndon LaRouche.

Swedish government keeps mum

So far, the Swedish government has refused to take any official position on the new revelations. Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, interviewed on Swedish radio on Sept. 1, declared, "This is top secret. What I cannot comment upon on the Swedish press, I cannot comment upon for the Soviet ambassador—not even if it is mediated through the pages of *Svenska Dagbladet*."

This curious exchange of diplomatic notes via the mass media continued following Pankin's Sept. 4 restatement of Moscow's demand. In a featured interview in *Svenska Dagbladet*, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Pierre Schori flatly denied that the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO) had ever bugged any Soviet diplomat. But he did not say that the Soviet diplomat in question had not been bugged at all, perhaps by someone else. By his silence, he left open the possibility that some Swedish authority is still in possession of the tapes, which, according to some accounts, were made with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Below the headline, "The Soviet Diplomat Was Not Bugged by SÄPO," Schori insisted that bugging of foreign diplomats "is prohibited by the Vienna Convention. Period. . . . Sweden sticks absolutely to the Vienna Convention and to international law. You can never have any other opinion than that always maintained by Sweden. And there's nothing in the information which I have that would change this."

Asked for the sake of clarity, whether this meant that he

was “proceeding from the assumption that Sweden did not bug the Soviet diplomat,” Schori retorted, “Obviously.”

As these diplomatic exchanges were unfolding, the Swedish press continued leaking information about the political context in which the exposé of the Soviet role had been launched in the first place. The headline over a full-page, Sept. 2 followup article in the newspaper which started the exposé, *Expressen*, sets the tone: “The Truth behind Bugging the Diplomat: The Gravest Threat Facing Sweden in 30 Years.”

Citing military sources, *Expressen* writes: “For several years, important parts of the Swedish military defense have been the target of some sort of infiltration. The operation has been decided by the political leadership in Moscow, and is run by the military intelligence service GRU.” This is why, in 1985, the SÄPO began bugging the Soviet diplomat. The paper continues, “A military source today told *Expressen*: ‘The activity which lead to the bugging being done, is the worst thing which the nation of Sweden has been subjected to for 30 years, maybe even since World War II. . . .’ A SÄPO official deems the situation even more serious. He says: ‘If this activity could be proven, it would constitute sufficient reason for the Parliament to decide as quickly as possible to form a government of national unity. . . .’ The picture of this affair given by several more or less well-informed persons is that Sweden’s position as an independent democracy is seriously jeopardized.”

Another Soviet mole?

One of the several possibilities which have been successively mooted and then denied, is that SÄPO is on the tracks of some highly placed master spy, a “mole” within either SÄPO itself, the military command, or the political leadership of the country. Speaking against the likelihood of a well-placed mole within SÄPO, is the track record of successfully pinning down and expelling 20 East bloc intelligence officers since 1982, after a Soviet mole, Stig Bergling, who was arrested in 1979, had successfully paralyzed Swedish counterintelligence operations for 10 years.

Looking at Swedish politics and national security problems during the 1980s, a mole situated either in the military command or in the political environment of the government would seem more likely. Indications of the possible existence of a Swedish “Guillaume” or “Treholt” have been pointed to by more publications than one. Günther Guillaume was an East German spy who was working as a top adviser to Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt; his exposure in 1974 forced Brandt to resign. Arne Treholt, a Soviet spy working in a highly sensitive position within the Norwegian Social Democratic government, was uncovered in 1984.

Certainly, the existence of such a mole would help explain the innumerable mysterious incidents involving Soviet military moves in or near Swedish territory. In one case, a Soviet mini-submarine is trapped in a shallow bay of the

Swedish archipelago, but mysteriously finds a way to escape at exactly the moment when a temporary loophole is created. In another case, new submarine detection devices are destroyed immediately upon their installation. In a third, unannounced Swedish military maneuvers are the object of close scrutiny by drivers of East bloc trucks.

Sweden’s role in the Baltic

Given the persistent thrust toward appeasement of the Kremlin which has characterized Sweden’s official foreign policy for the the past decade, occasional traces of the work of a Soviet agent of influence are not entirely invisible in Sweden’s political life. Such influence may become crucial in the near future to Moscow’s plans for the Captive Nations of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, which lie not far from Sweden’s shores, since a leading concern in Moscow has been to slam the lid down on the nationalist ferment erupting there, without ruining Mikhail Gorbachov’s good will among the “useful fools” of the West.

Indeed, Pankin’s demands for a Swedish apology about evidence of Soviet involvement in the Palme murder have been coupled with implicit demands for Swedish cooperation in exercising restraint with the Baltic opposition. On this matter, Schori, in his *Svenska Dagbladet* interview, clearly signaled the Swedish government’s willingness to comply. Praising Gorbachov’s *perestroika*, Schori pledged not to “contribute to any separatism” in the Baltic states. “We have recognized the current situation”—i.e., the Soviet annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the framework of the Hitler-Stalin Pact—and although “a first step in the democratization of Eastern Europe” can now be witnessed, “the Baltic states are different and more difficult, since they are part of the Soviet federation.”

Although the Swedish government itself has by no means committed any offense against Soviet Baltic policy, the very existence of large and active Baltic communities in the neighboring Scandinavian countries—communities whose outlook meets with popular sympathy by virtue of long historical ties between the Baltic states and nations like Sweden—makes the Soviet bear glare suspiciously across the Baltic Sea.

A specialist on Soviet policy interviewed by *EIR* put it this way: “The same innate suspicion that governed Stalin’s behavior towards Scandinavia in 1939-40 has reemerged to create the current threatening Soviet policy today towards Scandinavia.” Moscow must necessarily complement its brutal policy against Baltic “separatism” with a tough posture against Scandinavia. “The Soviets are convinced that foreign forces from those neighboring countries with traditional historical links to the Baltic republics, are at least co-responsible for the Baltic national independence drive; and this innate suspicion has coalesced into a political offensive of intimidation, including even military threats against Sweden, Finland, and Poland.”