
Sweden

Blackout shows threat to national security

by Clifford Gaddy in Stockholm

In the early afternoon of Tuesday, Dec. 27, a fault in a transformer station northwest of Stockholm short-circuited the station and led to a total electrical blackout of the greater part of the national power grid. Parts of Sweden remained without power for up to 24 hours. This most serious power failure in Swedish history occurred at a time when Sweden's vulnerability to the Soviet Union is a major issue.

Yet the first published report that the Swedish blackout may have been due to sabotage appeared in Italy, not Sweden. The Milan daily *Corriere della Sera* carried statements from high-level Swedish citizens "who wished to remain anonymous," emphasizing the disastrous effects of the blackout, which downed defense systems, nuclear power plants, computers—everything that is necessary to protect Sweden from military attack.

Inside Sweden, the authorities and the media stuck to the story that the blackout was due to "excessive wear" on a disconnecting switch located outdoors, at the remote Hamra transformer station. The station itself was one of the most important in Sweden; according to one newspaper account, its very location was a military secret before the power failure.

The suspicion of sabotage was foremost in the minds of most Swedes during the hours of darkness following the shutdown. Spontaneous reactions ranged from the little boy on a Stockholm street asking "Mommy, does this mean the Russians are coming?" to immediate emergency measures by military personnel on duty.

Even though Swedish newspapers avoided the sabotage question, hardly any editorial commentary failed to mention that the blackout proved how easy it would be to shut down the entire Swedish power grid in one blow. Typical was the editorial in the Stockholm daily *Expressen* the day after the blackout: "Sabotage the right transformer station, and Sweden lies there paralyzed and dark. This is a haunting perspective."

Norwegian saboteurs uncovered

There is no question that the capability for carrying out such sabotage exists. Earlier last month, the Norwegian se-

curity police announced that they had conducted a four-year investigation into the "Achilles Division," formed in the late 1970s. Plans by the group to destroy 35 power stations in Norway were uncovered. According to one high-level Norwegian strategist, initial 1979 reports on the Achilles group showed that they "definitely had ties to the Soviet Union. According to the reports I saw, they were financed and trained by the Soviets and had allegiances in beliefs to the U.S.S.R."

The source described Achilles as a "saboteur" group against industrial targets. "They were particularly created for actions against the power sector, especially hydro-power. They were preparing for these operations all across Europe, but particularly in countries where hydro-power is important, which is what made Norway so concerned at the time."

The strategist had no corroboration of links between the Achilles Division and current reports of elite Soviet commando squads, known as "Spetsnaz," being activated for sabotage operations in Sweden, but he stated: "Contingency plans for these things exist, and in time of war we in Scandinavia are early on the firing line."

On Dec. 21, the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia* reported the story of the Achilles Division in bold type on its front page—very uncharacteristic for the Russian newspaper—claiming that the fact that the Norwegians had taken four years to produce information on the group is a demonstration of their ineptitude. The *Izvestia* piece ended with a quotation from the Norwegian paper *Aftenposten* that the Achilles group "shows that we are not immune to terrorism."

Earlier last month, British and French intelligence sources reported that Spetsnaz commandos had been put into place in sensitive points in Sweden. At the same time, the Swedish armed forces have recently formed special "anti-Spetsnaz" units in the Air Force, whose task is to prevent sabotage of Sweden's network of secret fighter bases. Official manuals addressed to Swedish troops have carried a series of articles on Spetsnaz, warning personnel to be on the watch.

An article in the Dec. 30 London *Times* by terrorism specialist Brian Crozier, entitled "Who's Next for Soviet Killer Squads?" commented, "It is generally known that sabotage of a country's power grid would be a top priority for Spetsnaz units. The authoritative report on Spetsnaz, carried in the July issue of the *International Defense Review*, lists as priority tasks for Spetsnaz: 1) assassinations of leaders, 2) destruction of nuclear missiles, 3) sabotage of command centers, 4) destruction of air and naval bases, and 5) "Disruption of the enemy's power system, the most important targets being power stations, oil and gas storage centers, pipelines, electricity power lines, and transformer stations."

In a discussion with *EIR*, a West German strategist pointed out that a power blackout similar to Sweden's occurred just before the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He proposed that the Swedish blackout be seen in the context of Soviet efforts to "secure their northern flank," in preparation for a major military move in coming weeks on the Central European front.