

Northern Flank by A. Borealis

The Palme biography's missing chapter

The just-published, first-ever biography of the Swedish premier deliberately omits any mention of Palme's Nazi family-tree.

On Oct. 11, a much-advertised biography of Premier Olof Palme was released in Sweden. Although Palme has played a key role in Swedish politics for at least 30 years, since his 1954 appointment as the personal secretary of his own predecessor as prime minister, Tage Erlander, no previous biography of Palme has ever been attempted.

Yet the present work, titled *Who is Olof Palme?*, doesn't go a long way toward answering the query posed in the title. Rather than listing here all the shortcomings of this first biography, we will merely outline the gist of the biography's missing chapter, that on Olof Palme's Nazi family tree.

This is not to say that the author of the biography, *Svenska Dagbladet* Deputy Editor-in-Chief Bertil Östergren, needs to be lectured on the matter. On the contrary, in a conversation with which this columnist has become acquainted, Bertil Östergren personally professed knowledge about Palme's Nazi roots, but in the same breath asserted that he would ensure that this knowledge never be made available to the Swedish public. With the release of this biography, the deputy editor of Sweden's most renowned conservative newspaper surely believes he has delivered on his vow to protect Palme.

While his current role as a Soviet asset is relatively obvious, the facts about Palme's Nazi connection are guarded like a state secret in Sweden; some of them were already published in this magazine over a year ago, on Oct. 18, 1983. Working backwards up the branches of Palme's family-

tree, the whole story begins with his mother, Elisabeth von Knieriem-Palme. Indeed, that Palme ever had a mother is a piece of information systematically suppressed in Sweden!

Olof Palme's father, Gunnar Palme, died in 1933, when Olof was six. His mother, Elisabeth von Knieriem, during the summers took the family to her grandfather's baronial estate in Latvia, in what is today the Soviet Union. It was then that one of Olof's uncles, August von Knieriem, became a new father figure to little Olof.

This uncle became the chief legal counsel of I.G. Farben, the infamous company that ran Hitler's Auschwitz concentration camp—a gigantic slave-labor operation in which the worn-out slaves were gassed and cremated *en masse*. After the war, Uncle August was tried at Nuremberg, of course. It was proven that he was one of the two high-ranking Farben officials to make personal inspections of that concentration camp.

Nonetheless, Uncle August got off the hook. The Nuremberg prosecutor, Judge Herbert, was disgusted at what he considered a massive miscarriage of justice. There was talk about cover-up of secret Farben deals involving, among others, Standard Oil and some top Swiss bankers close to the Nazis.

Uncle August, however, is but one of Palme's curious relatives on his mother's side. Uncle Ottokar von Knieriem played a key role in the attempt to whitewash Gestapo chief Himmler toward the end of World War II. The brains behind this plan was Walter Schellenberg, the head of Ge-

stapo counterintelligence (Sicherheitsdienst) and the boss of such nice fellows as Klaus Barbie, the notorious butcher of Lyon.

Working with Farben and royalist circles, Schellenberg's plan was to carry out a coup d'état against Hitler in 1945, in which Himmler would take over, strike a deal with the British, and restore the Hohenzollern monarchy in Germany.

The young Olof Palme personally participated in at least one meeting toward the end of the war, plotting aspects of the Schellenberg plan along with his uncle Ottokar von Knieriem, who was the Dresdner Bank representative in Stockholm; Felix Kersten, who was Himmler's masseur and liaison; and Hilel Storch, who later became the representative in Sweden of the World Jewish Congress.

The plot was to have Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross conduct a spectacular operation saving Jews from extermination in the collapsing Third Reich. Himmler's agreement to the rescue operation was to be used as proof of his not being complicit in the Nazi holocaust, for which the deposed Hitler was to be the scapegoat.

The main objective of the Schellenberg plan failed, and Himmler took poison to avoid capture by the Allies. Palme's career continued. Five years later, he was the deputy secretary of the International Committee of the Swedish Students' Association (SFS), traveling around the world to subvert the international students' movement. The SFS chairman at the same time was none other than Bertil Östergren, the author of the biography with a missing chapter!

Östergren writes about this period of cooperation with Palme: "I extravagantly used to say that he was my foreign minister." It's a small world, indeed.