

Northern Flank by A. Borealis

Palme's 'conservative' mirror image

The defense spokesman for Sweden's opposition Moderate Party turns out to be a mere echo of the Prime Minister.

Since Sweden's socialist prime minister is titular head of the Soviet-run Palme Commission on disarmament, there is little basis for hope that Sweden will join in or support President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative to render nuclear missiles obsolete. It should not be astounding, therefore, that some U.S. officials cultivate relations with such opponents of Palme as Carl Bildt, the defense and security spokesman for Sweden's "conservative" Moderate Party.

Supported by some 30% of the electorate according to recent polls, the Moderates have become by far the largest of the three non-socialist opposition parties challenging Palme's rule this election year.

Bildt and the Moderates, one would think, represent the hope for a pro-Western government and the possibility of restoring Sweden to the role of NATO's unofficial northern flank. One might think this unless one listened to a Feb. 2 call-in talk show featuring Bildt, broadcast by the Moderate's own local radio station in Stockholm.

Bildt told one worried caller that he had no objections at all to the Swedish premier's chairmanship of Georgii Arbatov's international disarmament commission. On the contrary, Palme being on board the commission was rather advantageous to Sweden, Bildt claimed, as Sweden could use the occasion to forward its points of view to the Russians. The caller didn't seem too convinced.

Another query phoned in to the

talk show concerned the bloated staffs at the Soviet embassy and consulates in Sweden, personnel which the caller suggested were there to run Soviet espionage activity in the country—"Couldn't the Soviet diplomatic representation be cut down to size?"

No, Bildt told the astonished listener. Rather, one has to understand that the Russians indeed *must* keep many intelligence agents at their embassy because they have a different political system than we do: Unlike Western diplomats, Bildt reasoned, the Soviets cannot trust what's in the Swedish press. Therefore, they have to find out everything for themselves!

One listener asked what Bildt's view was of the so-called "Star Wars" program of President Reagan. Palme was certainly deeply opposed to it. The caller also asked why Bildt had stated that the Soviet cruise missile that flew over Norway "did not concern Sweden." The listener concluded with the rather rude question: "Is it permissible for a Swedish politician to be as cowardly as you are, Carl Bildt?"

Bildt's spontaneous reply was: "Yes, it is fully possible."

Realizing after a moment's reflection that the question might have been intended as an attack on him, Bildt asked angrily, "Are you from the European Labor Party?"—the LaRouche co-thinker organization in Europe. The astonished caller asked back, "What's the ELP, and what does that have to do with it?"

"I guess no," Bildt said, and then stated again that political cowardice

must be permissible, as no policeman had shown up to arrest him for the offense.

Bildt turned to the SDI, and stated that the proposed systems of defense against nuclear attack, already becoming "the largest research program in history" in the United States with a five-year, \$26 billion budget, "is and remains a technological impossibility." Such weapons are "enormously advanced and fantastically costly. . . . They are a number of generations into the future." Moreover, a defensive shield against nuclear arms would "have troublesome consequences for Europe."

Down to the last detail, his statements were those of Moscow, and of Olof Palme.

Asked whether Sweden ought not to accept the U.S. offer to neutral states that they, too, be defended by the SDI shield, Bildt professed not to know about any such offer.

Bildt grew extremely agitated when the caller suggested that Sweden deploy neutron weapons to protect its borders. "The neutron bomb is an H-bomb," he proclaimed, and "it is not considered a serious defense by anybody"—except by the Russians, whose ground forces could not move an inch in the face of an N-bomb defense.

Finally, an ELP spokesman did call in to the show, to correct several factual errors committed by Bildt. The Moderate defense specialist conceded, "Yes, you people of the ELP usually do have the technological details straight."

With such "opposition," Olof Palme should be a shoe-in in the next elections—but then, would it make any difference if the Moderates won?

As for U.S. officials' choice of interlocutors, we must ask: What makes talking to Carl Bildt useful? Why not get Moscow's line straight from the Kremlin, or from Olof Palme?