

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

The foreign ministry does it again

Three Swedish defense spokesmen are denounced in a memo for naming the Soviets the enemy.

In a Swedish foreign ministry memo leaked on Nov. 11, three prominent defense spokesmen are attacked as “renegades” and “lacking in judgment” because they had the gall to name Moscow the enemy and detail Soviet war preparations against Sweden. If exposing the Soviets is being a renegade, no wonder observers of politics in Stockholm are beginning to ask, “Whose side is the Swedish foreign ministry on?”

The three targets of the memo are Lt. Gen. Bengt Lehander, Col. Bo Hugemark, and the National Defense Research Institute (FOA) and its General Director Bo Rybeck. Authored by department counsel Katarina Brodin, a security policy specialist at the political department of the foreign ministry, the memo was addressed to the Prime Minister’s Office, Foreign Minister Sten Andersson, Undersecretary of State Pierre Schori, the defense ministry, the Commander in Chief and the Defense Staff, and several key Swedish embassies.

In a statement virtually endorsing the memo, Schori said, “Yes, of course I read the memo before it was sent out. We do not have the habit of sending out memos which I have not read.”

In the memo, Brodin is upset because Lt. General Lehander, the Commander of the Eastern Military District (including Stockholm), in a lecture at the Armed Forces Staff College, stated that it isn’t difficult to identify the anonymous “enemy” as the Soviet Union. Hugemark, the chief of the military history department of the Armed Forces Staff College, is ac-

cused of writing an article for the magazine *Vårt Försvar* (*Our Defense*), detailing the Soviet threat against Sweden. And Rybeck led a Sept. 28 FOA seminar, at which some “conservative” American guests presented their views of the Soviet threat to Sweden.

At the seminar, former Pentagon official Robert Komer, who served in the Carter administration, stated that there is, realistically, only one power which threatens Sweden and hypothetically could attack or invade it. He added that Sweden, in effect, is facing the same threat as NATO members Denmark and Norway.

Brodin complains that attending the seminar, where such terrible words were spoken, were representatives of mass media and the Swedish security political establishment, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, including from a number of East bloc embassies, but no official Swedish speaker. Brodin herself, however, was present, opposing Komer in the debate.

Attacking Colonel Hugemark, Brodin raved that “an active-duty Swedish officer finds it appropriate, and compatible with his role as a representative of the defense forces, to take pen in hand and publicly, and in great detail, discuss” how “the Soviet Union is going to wage war against Sweden to break the resistance—so fast that NATO won’t be able to intervene on Sweden’s behalf.”

Brodin asked: “What are we to believe about the cumulative effect of this kind of renegadism and lack of judgment? Could not the effect in the

end be the impression that Sweden is trying to sit on two chairs simultaneously, and that the Swedish policy of neutrality, when it comes down to it, is not so seriously meant?” Brodin asserted that a public discussion of various conflict scenarios could entail risks, if it prompts official spokesmen to speculate on the failure of the neutrality policy.

After the memo was leaked, an outcry erupted in favor of the officers. Colonel Hugemark said, “Renegadism is a term applicable in war, and means that a soldier is defecting to the enemy. Brodin is indicating that in some way, I am having a conspiracy with a foreign power. If said in the heat of a debate, I could have been indulgent toward such a statement. But when it occurs in a written foreign ministry memo which is distributed within the defense forces and the foreign ministry, it is serious and requires a clarification.” Hugemark added that “Brodin is trying to limit the freedom of speech.”

The Nov. 12 editorial of *Svenska Dagbladet*, the chief conservative daily, denounced the foreign ministry for trying to suppress public discussion of security policy. “It is possible that in the foreign ministry, one does not remember the article published in *Dagens Nyheter* in March of 1984, by *Izvestia* commentator Aleksandr Bovin. His chief message was precisely that the government must shut up the Swedish officers who are discussing submarine violations.”

Brodin, while sticking to her criticism, was forced to retract some of her provocative vocabulary, claiming she had not meant “renegadism” (Swedish: *överlöperi*), but “indiscretion” (*förlöperi*), hardly credible despite the collapse of literacy as a result of the Social Democratic education model.