

## Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

### Two murders covered up in one year

*The untimely death of Sweden's War Materiel Inspector looks like another covered-up political assassination.*

**O**n Jan. 15, War Materiel Inspector Carl Algernon "fell" in front of a subway train during rush hour at the Stockholm Central Station. Only a few days from then, Algernon was to have been interrogated regarding illegal arms shipments to Iran by the large Swedish armaments producer Bofors.

After a long Navy career, crowned by his 1978 promotion to rear admiral and appointment as Chief of the Command Office of the Defense Ministry, since 1981, Algernon had headed the War Materiel Inspectorate of the Trade Ministry, whose function is to clear arms exports with respect to Swedish law. Recently, Algernon had come under fire as complicit in, or knowledgeable about, illicit Bofors arms exports to Iran and other countries.

After his death, the media gave eyewitness accounts detailing how Algernon was pushed before the train, followed by reports "establishing" that it was all a terrible accident, and that absolutely nobody had seen anything. The eyewitnesses, who all either retracted their stories or mysteriously failed to get in touch with police, included a group of children, a woman, a Swede who called the police from Turku, Finland to testify, and others.

"The police are very concerned to clarify the course of events in detail, so that the sensitive investigation cannot be put into question in the future by interests in Sweden or abroad," one Swedish daily circumscribed what was

clearly emerging as a political cover-up. Unavoidably, parallels were drawn to the murder of the late Prime Minister Olof Palme on Feb. 28, 1986. Not only are both murders surrounded by a thick veil of disinformation, but a strong Iranian arms shipment angle connects the two.

The illicit Bofors arms shipments investigated by Örebro County Prosecutor Stig L. Age, who was about to interrogate Algernon, include both outright arms smuggling and indirect arms shipments to countries who are officially banned from Swedish arms purchases, such as Iran, through third countries. During the last couple of years alone, at least half a dozen shipments of gunpowder and other explosives went from Bofors to Iran via Yugoslavia, East Germany, and West Germany, each shipment of about 150-200 tons. At least once, in 1985, 200 Bofors RBS-70 missiles were sold to Iran, via Singapore. Forty Bofors naval artillery guns were also sold to Singapore, a country which lacks the navy to use those guns itself.

A sophisticated ground-to-air missile system, the RBS-70, would be invaluable for Iran to counter Iraqi air superiority. Conversely, a halt of supplies of missiles and spare parts could be extremely damaging to Iran.

According to the French magazine *L'Express* in November 1986, Palme was murdered by Iranian killers in revenge for blocking arms shipments to

Iran. Such shipments reportedly were ready to depart from Swedish harbors, as an Iranian delegation visited Stockholm in early 1986 to lobby with Palme for their release. Pressured by peace groups for laxity regarding arms exports, Palme, the official United Nations mediator in the Iran-Iraq war, considered it incompatible with his "peace" image to release the arms shipments, once they had been exposed publicly. Shortly after the Iranian delegation returned to Teheran empty-handed, Palme was shot dead.

Bofors directors investigated for the Iran shipments have said that both Palme and Algernon knew about the shipments made via third countries. One Bofors source quoted in the Swedish daily *Expressen* on Jan. 27, said that the way the international arms industry operates and these particular weapons shipments were "something that the cabinet ministers have been aware of."

The same paper on Jan. 24 quoted a Swedish police source, saying that "the War Materiel Inspector of course knew very much about Bofors' business deals and plans. It is very likely that he also knew much about the complicated connections between the Bofors Group and the foreign manufacturers of war materiel."

According to informed sources, Swedish businessman Karl-Erik Schmitz, managing director and majority shareholder of Scandinavian Commodities AB of Malmö, southern Sweden, has been a front-man in the international deals to arm Iran.

Interviewed in November 1985, Schmitz said he had committed no crime and would seek further arms trade "if the price is right." He added that he "had no reason to think of export permits and such things. But you might also accuse the Swedish authorities of turning a blind eye when it was needed."