

# Chapter 4 Terrorism crisis and the absence of policy change

## 4.1 Crisis case two: The seizure of the West-German embassy

### 4.1.1 Background

After the capture and imprisonment of the RAF hard core in June 1972, second generation West-German armed activists focused entirely on freeing – or at least improving the captivity conditions for – their predecessors. They tried to put a positive spin on their cause, and sometimes pursued hunger strikes. In November 1974 detainee Holger Meins starved himself to death. Some considered him a martyr; in fact several thousand people attended his funeral (Aust 1990; Becker 1987). For the second generation of RAF, Meins' "martyrdom" was the last straw: Their new strategy would be to take action outside West Germany. An RAF lawyer, Siegfried Haag, traveled to Stockholm in December 1974 to establish contact with sympathizers to the left of the Communist Party. That same month they helped organize a demonstration outside the West-German embassy, protesting so-called "isolation torture" used in West-German prisons (Frånstedt 2003; Axman 2004). Court proceedings were due to begin in May 1975 against imprisoned RAF extremists, who sent clear signals through their lawyers to supporters on the outside: act now and act fast (Aust 1990).

Säpo continued to wire tap individuals within certain communist factions, in particular the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (KFML(r)) (SOU 2002:87 pp. 295–300). The courts permitted these wire tapping activities on the basis of ongoing pre-investigations on subversive activities, e.g. espionage. Säpo archived surplus information in fake “informant” folders, as if people within these circles themselves reported their comrades to Säpo (Ibid.).

In the early spring of 1975 Säpo learned through wire tap that some Swedish KFML(r) activists were in contact with West-German members of RAF. Based on incoming information, Säpo suspected that the West-German Stockholm embassy was a potential target (Frånstedt 2003). Deputy director Frånstedt visited the embassy to inform the ambassador and the head of security on the intelligence Säpo had picked up. A week later he learned that the embassy staff had called the *Bundeskriminalamt* and that they had decided to bring the issue up in the coming year’s budget talks (Ibid.).

According to the Terrorist Act, coercive measures could be taken against individuals linked to Cabinet-listed terrorist organizations. In the spring of 1975 only the Croatian Ustasja, the Palestinian Black September and the Japanese Red Army Faction were listed. Suspicions that RAF was planning an action against the West German embassy in Stockholm made Director General Carl Persson call for a meeting with minister in charge of the Terrorist Act Anna-Greta Leijon, and security experts from both the police and military. It was decided at the meeting that the question of putting RAF on the Cabinet’s terrorist list would be further investigated. As far as they knew, RAF had no record of operating outside West Germany (Persson 1998; Leijon 1991; Frånstedt 2003).

#### 4.1.2 The siege begins

At about 11:30 a.m. on Thursday 24 April 1975, a group of six RAF terrorists began their action at the West-German embassy in Stockholm. In line with RAF tradition, they named the action in commemoration of a for them fallen hero, *Kommando Holger Meins*. They infiltrated the premises in three groups under the pretext of more or less legitimate errands. Within 20 minutes the Swedish police had been alerted, and by a few minutes after 12 p.m. the first patrol was at the scene. By that time, the terrorists had occupied the top floor of the building and taken 13 embassy employees hostage. However, the police did not know the number of hostages, who the intruders were and how many they numbered, or what they wanted. When the first policemen tried to go up the stairs, they were met with submachine gun fire. They retreated and waited for reinforcements on the first floor (Stockholm police 1975a).

### 4.1.3 Dilemmas

The first issue the police had to deal with was whether or not to evacuate the embassy premises. When all but the top floor had been secured, the police established a command group on the first floor and the building became increasingly crowded with officers. The terrorists demanded they leave the embassy, or a hostage would be shot. Between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. the terrorists called the police four times; they also had West-German military attaché von Mirbach shout down to the police on the floor below. But the police decided to not evacuate the building under the pretext that they had not received any orders from the Swedish or the West-German Cabinets to do so. They were uncertain of the legal status of the embassy and did not take the threat seriously. In the telephone contacts, the police had been told that the terrorists had 15 kilos of TNT, which they threatened to detonate if the police tried to storm the top floor. They were also informed that the occupation aimed at freeing “political prisoners” from West-German prisons.

At 2 p.m. military attaché von Mirbach was shot five times and pushed down the staircase, where he wheezed and bled profusely. The terrorists threatened to throw hand grenades if the police tried to fetch him. Only at this point did the command group begin discussing the pros and cons of leaving the building; but they needed to know what the West German Cabinet wanted. Five minutes after the shooting, decision makers in Bonn wanted the police to remain in the building, but half an hour later they asked them to evacuate. During the evacuation, the terrorists allowed the police to fetch the dying military attaché and also released one hostage with a written proclamation. By 3 p.m. the police had vacated the embassy.

At this point it became clear that there was nothing the Swedish authorities could do to satisfy the terrorists. Their demands were entirely directed to the West-German government. They wanted no less than 26 RAF prisoners freed before 9 p.m. and brought to Rhein-Main airport for further transportation. They should each be given \$20,000 and the Swedish ambassador to West Germany should accompany them. If these demands were not met, one hostage would be executed each hour beginning at 10 p.m. If the police tried to storm the embassy or attack it with gas, they would detonate the explosives.

A crisis cabinet gathered at the chancellery that included Prime Minister Palme, justice minister Geijer and director-general Carl Persson. The Stockholm police commissioner, who had been at the embassy between 2-3 p.m., delivered the terrorists’ proclamation. The effort to resolve the situation became a diplomatic challenge. Would the West German Cabinet comply with the demands? Were they willing to negotiate at all? What signals would the Swedish Cabinet send their West German counterparts?

In Bonn, the crisis plan “BM” [for Baader-Meinhof] was activated, bringing together a large group of cabinet ministers, opposition leaders and regional governors. They decided to meet at 4:45 p.m. (Sievers 1976). Before the West German crisis cabinet gathered, the federal justice minister ordered a delegation consisting of *Bundeskriminalamt* investigators, cabinet representatives and relatives of the ambassador to fly to Stockholm (Ibid.). The *Luftwaffe* aircraft that later landed in Stockholm also brought a group of about 20 specially trained and equipped police from GSG 9 (Krusell 2004).<sup>14</sup>

The crisis cabinet in Bonn had decided early on that it would not release any prisoners – the hard core of RAF was among the 26 prisoners that Kommando Holger Meins wanted released. The Swedish crisis cabinet received the message at 5:30 p.m., but Prime Minister Olof Palme chose to interpret it as merely a preliminary decision and told his West German counterpart to return when the final decision was made. He also informed him that the Swedish police had very limited resources for resolving the situation by force, and that the Swedish line would be to negotiate for a safe conduct out of the country if the West German Cabinet did not comply with the terrorists’ demands (Peterson 2002: 180). Carl Persson and the Stockholm police commissioner told the Swedish Cabinet that they were not willing to risk the life of Swedish police officers by ordering them to storm the embassy – they had not been permitted to train or equip for this type of situation prior to the siege (Persson 1990: 258).

Meanwhile outside the embassy, a group of ten Swedish police officers were ordered to prepare for an assault. The next-door Norwegian embassy was prepped for medical treatment and observation posts were set up at the nearby British and American embassies. The only contact with the terrorists was maintained by the ambassador’s wife, who lived at the embassy annex (this is also where the police command had relocated after the evacuation). She pleaded in vain to be exchanged for her husband who was in poor health.

At 8:30 p.m. West German Chancellor Schmidt called Olof Palme to tell him that the crisis cabinet in Bonn had made a final decision not to meet the terrorists’ demands, and that the embassy’s extraterritorial status was invalidated. The Swedish Cabinet and police henceforth owned the situation. An infuriated Palme lost his head and cried to Carl Persson that he must do something – they could not just let the terrorists kill a hostage every hour. Persson made sure the assault group got access to teargas. He was not optimistic over the prospects of a successful attack, but he had to do something (Persson 1990: 258-259). Other senior police officials were incredulous as well, especially when they saw inexperienced officers training outside the embassy grounds (Welandar 2003; Frånstedt 2003). After the West Germans placed responsibility on the Swedish

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14 Krusell worked with the Stockholm police and met the West-Germans at the airport. It is however not clear who ordered the GSG 9 group to come to Stockholm.

authorities to solve the hostage situation, justice minister Lennart Geijer headed to the embassy (Persson 1990: 259).

The ambassador's son (landing in Sweden at 7:20 p.m. on the Luftwaffe flight) arrived before Geijer at the embassy annex, where he spoke directly to the terrorists. He held out a promise – which he claimed came on the authority of the crisis cabinet in Bonn – that the West German Cabinet would comply with their demands. The Swedish justice minister was therefore not taken seriously when he arrived at the embassy shortly after and told the terrorists that the West German Cabinet would *not* comply with their demands and they only had the Swedish Cabinet to negotiate with from then on. At 10:15 p.m. the representative from the West German Cabinet (also arriving in Sweden at 7:20 p.m. but initially taken to the chancellery) joined Geijer at the embassy annex to negotiate with the terrorists. As he spoke to one on the phone, the terrorist declared that they would not compromise and said, “now we just shot commercial attaché Heinz Hillegaard.” The government representative could hear the shots, and the observation post at the British embassy saw the execution take place.

The shots rang out at 10:20 p.m., and the police counted on having an hour before the next murder. While final preparations for storming the embassy were being made, justice minister Geijer informed the police that the assault had to be delayed since the West German Cabinet had not yet approved. Five minutes before the next shooting was expected to take place – at 11:15 p.m. – the terrorists announced that they would release three hostages with a new proclamation. The crisis managers outside the embassy saw this opening as perhaps a chance to resolve the stand off; the proclamation, however, was simply a repetition of the terrorists' previous demands.

As it turned out, the Swedish police's assault capacity was never tested. At 11:46 p.m. the explosives detonated and the top floor of the embassy caught fire. The seven remaining hostages managed to get out of the burning building. Of the six terrorists, one died and five were caught by the police.

The following day, the Terrorist Act – which was meant to be used to deport (or deny entry to) people whom the police suspected could commit politically motivated crimes before they were committed – was put to the test. Now terrorists had already taken hostages, killed two people and occupied an embassy. The Cabinet had strong incentives to extradite them instead of initiating legal proceedings in Sweden, fearing retaliations and new hostage situations in attempts to get the terrorists out of Swedish prisons. Carl Lidbom – the Terrorist Act's architect – claimed there were no legal grounds for deporting the terrorists. Lawyers working for Anna-Greta Leijon – the minister in charge of the Terrorist Act – thought differently: The terrorists could hypothetically escape from prison and commit politically motivated crimes, and therefore the law applied. In

addition, all other ministers (except Lidbom) were eager to get the terrorists out of the country as soon as possible. West German authorities were willing to receive them, and the same night four of the five were flown to Düsseldorf. The fifth was too severely injured to leave hospital and was transported to West Germany a few days later, where he died within a week from wounds caused by the explosion.

The ending of the embassy drama was met with relief on both the Swedish and West German sides. Olof Palme said in a press conference less than two hours after the explosion that it was a relatively happy ending, given the circumstances. And he thanked in particular the Swedish police for their efforts. He also said that it was impossible to fully prevent acts of terrorism from happening, unless a police state was created (Swedish Television: Extrarapport 1975-04-25). In the West German *Bundestag* Chancellor Schmidt praised the Swedish Cabinet and police for their handling of the situation. The twelve-hour siege, he claimed, was the most critical test to the rule of law in the history of the young West German state (Dagens Nyheter 26/4/1975).

For the Stockholm police, however, the embassy drama was something of a wake-up call. Their ability for operating in this kind of situation had proven to be deficient. With the pre-investigation of the terrorist crimes shifted to West German authorities, the Stockholm and national police had time to evaluate their performance.

For Säpo, though, the investigation was far from over with the deportation of the terrorists. During the day that the embassy was occupied, someone had left written proclamations at three news bureaus (DPA, AFP and Reuters) stating the terrorists' demands. Säpo and the Cabinet feared that RAF had sympathizers or members on the streets of Stockholm, which is why the deportation was so urgent for the Cabinet (Leijon 1991: 151). But the notes at the news bureaus together with the intelligence buzz – which in hindsight could have been related to the embassy occupation – made Säpo believe in a Swedish link. The terrorists must have had logistical assistance from the Swedish extreme left in carrying out the attack (Frånstedt 2003). Säpo's investigation would continue for almost two years, and lead them into a conspiracy of a totally different nature: Operation Leo.

## 4.2 Policy change patterns

The embassy drama was indeed a major crisis for the Swedish government and the Swedish police. But as indicated by the title of this chapter, the crisis as such did not translate into any significant changes in Swedish counter-terrorism policy. We will here follow the development of terrorism legislation and the broader Swedish police reforms – including how police assault capabilities

were treated in that context – as well as developments within Säpo. The reform of the Swedish police and the instrumental adaptation of Säpo were clearly not related to the embassy drama; the change patterns and their motives are however presented to give a more complete picture of developments that had a bearing on the subject matter.

#### 4.2.1 Terrorism legislation: A symbolic gesture

The Terrorist Act – or the law on special measures to prevent certain acts of violence of an international nature (SFS 1973:162) – remained an emergency powers act during its existence and therefore had to be renewed on a yearly basis. However from 1 January 1976, the law split into two parts. The main part of the law, with some amendments, was integrated into the Aliens Act of 1954 (SFS 1954:193), which was reformed in 1980 (SFS 1980:376). The parts that were not integrated into the Aliens Act related to special investigative and coercive measures. These parts were henceforth referred to as the Special Investigations Act, or the law on coercive measures for investigative purposes in certain cases (SFS 1975:1360). This law was a new emergency powers act and that needed to be renewed every year.

In its annual review for renewing the emergency powers acts, the Parliament justice committee without exception requested Parliament to approve them. The annual parliamentary decisions demonstrate a stable and overwhelming support for these laws (with the exception of Communist MPs, who usually voted against them).

Political debate over the emergency powers acts was animated, with broad-based support for them sometimes slipping. Upon closer look, it was not only the Communists who argued against them; some Social Democratic, Liberal and Center Party factions were also skeptical. The mere fact that these laws were not made permanent attests to their break from Swedish legal traditions.

The prolongation of the Terrorist Act was up for discussion on 13 May 1975 (protocol 1975:78 § 6), only a few weeks after the drama at the West German embassy. The Cabinet had proposed prolonging it until the end of that year, since the labor ministry was working out amendments to the law that should be presented during the fall. Anna-Greta Leijon, the assistant labor minister, presented Parliament with the prospect of imparting a personal prerequisite to the special coercive measures included in the law: ‘guilt by association’ should as far as possible be eliminated. This swayed the Liberal party into supporting the prolongation, despite the fact that they had decided to vote against any prolongation at their 1974 party summit (*ibid.*). One Communist MP reminded the Cabinet that significant parts of Social Democratic grass root organizations opposed to the law, including the Stockholm branch of the party (*ibid.*).

The conservative chair of the Parliament justice committee, Astrid Kristensson, criticized the proposed softening of the Terrorist Act, since it would make it easier for terrorists to reside in Sweden. She further lamented the Cabinet's generally soft attitude towards terrorism, and insinuated that a special operations police unit for such incidents should at least be taken into consideration (*ibid.*). With reference to the recent attack on the West German embassy, a Liberal MP pointed out the toothlessness of the law, which apparently had not stopped terrorists from entering the country (*ibid.*).

During the fall of 1975, the Cabinet proposed transferring the parts of the Terrorist Act having to do with deporting or extraditing potential terrorists to the Aliens Act. It was also contended that the sections related to special coercive measures formed a law unto themselves, the above-mentioned Special Investigation Act (Proposition 1975/76:18). On 12 December 1975, the proposed changes were subject to parliamentary debate and voting (Protocol 1975/76:44 § 10). All parties, including the Conservatives, approved the personal requisite, which was included in the governmental proposition. The reason for the Conservative shift was that Säpo reportedly had in fact followed the personal requisite since the time of the law's institution in 1973 (*Ibid.*). The proposed change was hence more in keeping with reality. The Communists welcomed the personal requisite, but were suspicious of Säpo's methods. Even if the personal requisite meant that affiliation with an organization was not enough for being subjected to the law – concrete evidence in each individual case was required – it was still unclear to them what this “concrete evidence” implied. Based on what information could a person be judged to be a terrorist? (*Ibid.*).

The main concern for MPs during the debate revolved around the legal rights of the individual. On the one hand, the main argument for transferring parts of the Terrorist Act to the Aliens Act was that the threat of terrorism could be regarded as constant. The law therefore deserved a permanent status. This point was not controversial. On the other hand, the Special Investigations Act could not be transferred to the Code of Judicial Procedure, since the level of suspicion (and thereby burden of proof) for potential terrorists was lower compared to cases of already perpetrated crimes. A fusion would imply too great of an infringement on the Code of Judicial Procedure. The Special Investigations Act remained an emergency powers act. In other words, the mandate given to Säpo to encroach upon the privacy of foreign residents could not be made permanent; it needed to be assessed on an annual basis. Upon voting, Parliament passed the Special Investigation Act and the additions to the Aliens Act by an overwhelming majority (Protocol 1975/76:44 § 10).



After the partition of the law, only the Special Investigation Act was up for annual parliamentary decisions.<sup>15</sup> Debate faded, and passage of the law became increasingly unnoticed each year. The changes that terrorism legislation underwent in this period can be characterized as symbolic gestures, since they implied new intended policy goals but no new program means. The implementation phase had preceded the political codification.

#### 4.2.2 The national police: Policy innovation

The national police experienced its first review between 1975 and 1979. Already when the police were nationalized in 1965, it had been explicitly understood that the organization would need to be continuously reviewed. On 26 June 1975, the Cabinet assigned an expert commission the task of scrutinizing the police. The commission's work was based on the Social Democratic platform and vision of how the police could better meet the needs of society (Nygren 2004) in a world that had changed greatly in the past ten years. The police had to adjust to the realities of 1975 (SOU 1979:6 pp. 33–37).

When justice minister Geijer presented the Police Commission, he did not mention the recent seizure of the West German embassy. Rather, he focused attention on other problem areas, such as the need for better cooperation between the police and other social authorities and organizations dealing with youth activities, social work, non-institutional care, etc. The commission was also to find means of enhancing police-public relations. The much-appreciated neighborhood police should therefore be examined along with alternative solutions for strengthening mutual understanding between police and citizens. Other topics the commission was to investigate were the recruitment of police officers (especially women); police community outreach activities should be evaluated and solutions for making these services better match societal needs should be found; police academy education should better correspond to developments in society; the relationship between the local, regional and national police should be assessed with the intention of decentralizing authority that need not be centralized (and vice versa) (SOU 1979: 6, pp. 33–37). It can be inferred from the tasks the justice minister assigned the commission that the Cabinet saw public confidence in the police as the main challenge at hand; service-minded officers working preventively and close to local communities represented the ideal police force for the initiators of the 1975 Police Commission.

Terrorism and the law enforcement challenges it posed were only mentioned in a four-sentence paragraph:

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<sup>15</sup> The Aliens' Act was reformed in 1980, but the infused parts of the Terrorist Act remained unchanged, to some extent because they were interrelated with the Special Investigations Act (JuU 1979/80:1y).

A particular problem is the police activities related to very severe incidents, e.g. acts of terrorism and hostage takings. The experts should analyze the organizational and technical problems that such occurrences may bring to the fore. When working out their suggestions, the experts should throughout strive to increase the influence of public representatives at all levels of the police. They should also consider how a strengthened influence of public representatives could be arranged in the recruitment process (Ibid.: 37).

In late December 1978 the Police Commission presented its report (SOU 1979: 6) called *Polisen* [The Police], which contained a comprehensive review of organizational, functional and principal aspects of the Swedish police. The commission made a wide range of suggestions and recommendations, with two recurrent themes: decentralization and legitimacy. The former implied changes in the chain of command as well as delegation of power on a more structural level. The latter stressed the need for a higher degree of transparency, implying both codetermination and greater public (by political representation) oversight of police work. Questions of legitimacy were salient even during discussions on what the limitations of police work should be. The commission also brought attention to the need for a Police Act, since at this time no such legal basis for police authority existed in Sweden. Unlike the legal rights of citizens – which were guaranteed by the 1974 Constitution – police powers were only based on regulations that are by definition inferior to law.

In April 1981 the Cabinet established a working committee to prepare the implementation of decided reforms – mostly from the 1975 Police Commission – regarding police duties, organization, education etc. The working committee carried on until 1989 and produced an abundance of reports for the Cabinet and Parliament to take a position on. Most importantly, the committee presented a suggestion for a Police Act, which went into effect on 1 October 1984 (SFS 1984:387).

Even though it took until the mid-1980s for the changes proposed by the 1975 Police Commission to take place, they must be regarded as policy innovations. They were based on a new political vision of the Swedish police and implied new program means, not least in terms of the distribution of power. However, the embassy drama and acts of terrorism in general did not leave much of an imprint on the change patterns, although there was no lack of effort in improving police assault capacity as we will see in the two next subsections.

### 4.2.3 Stockholm police Special Response Units: Routine maintenance

The Stockholm Police Board launched an initiative to increase their preparedness for severe situations in the fall of 1975. An internal evaluation of their performance during the embassy drama resulted in harsh criticism. The police were improperly equipped, and the gear they did have was poorly designed or the officers did not know how to properly use it, which led to unnecessary injuries. Tactical training was also lacking, and police leadership at the embassy had been overlapping and unorganized (Stockholm police 1975b). The scathing evaluation led the Stockholm Police Board to produce a report on reforming the Stockholm police's two Special Response Units in terms of organization, education and equipment. This report was presented on 16 September 1975 to the National Police Board who in turn established a working group on 10 December 1975 to further investigate its content. The issue was submitted to the Cabinet on 25 January 1976, with the National Police Board in support of the proposals put forth by their Stockholm counterpart.

The 1975 Police Commission was asked by the Cabinet on 13 May 1976 to prioritize a fast study of the report, dealing with severe incidents such as hostage takings, acts of terrorism, violent crimes and natural disasters. The Stockholm police Special Response Units and the Stockholm subway police were to be the subject of additional scrutiny. The commission's recommendations differed from those of the Stockholm Police Board, whose main objective was to merge the two Special Response Units and increase the personnel of the single unit from 80 to 124 specially trained officers.

The 1975 Police Commission concluded that the type of incidents referred to by the Stockholm police were not limited to the capital, and affected all levels of law enforcement: local, regional and national. The commission therefore referred organizational matters to the main inquiry and narrowed the special assignment to deal only with educational matters (Ds Ju 1977: 2).<sup>16</sup>

In January 1977, the Police Commission presented a memorandum with the results of their special assignment (Ds Ju 1977: 2) that took a rather defensive attitude towards police reform. As mentioned above, the commission did not touch upon organizational matters. Nor did it suggest any changes in tasks or command structures. In terms of training, the commission stressed the importance of the following subjects: correct behavior, psychology and psychiatry. The additional training for the Special Response Units could not come at the expense of the training of other units within the police district. In addition,

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<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the suggestions by the Stockholm Police Board related to the subway police were also referred to the main inquiry, since the suggestions were only of organizational character (Ds Ju 1977: 2).

the commission recommended that the two existing Special Response Units be enlarged by 20 (from 40/40 to 50/50) in order to be operable on a twenty-four hour basis (Ibid.).

For the expert police advisers engaged by the commission, the recommendations appeared meager, even disappointing. They therefore attached a special remark to the memorandum on behalf of the Stockholm Police Board and representatives from the police union with whom they had been in contact. In clarifying their position, they stated that the commission's recommendations only partially fulfilled their requirements for achieving secure working conditions for police and meeting public demands on what the police should be able to cope with (Ibid.).

In the government budget proposition (1977/78: 100, appendix 5), justice minister Sven Romanus carried on a rather lengthy discussion and account of various aspects of the Special Response Units that had been discussed since 1975. For the time being, the coalition government agreed with the commission's special assignment report.

In December 1978 the Police Commission was about to finalize its report. The adjusted regulations for the Stockholm police's Special Response Units, which were of primary importance to the special assignment report of 1977 (Ds Ju 1977: 2), had not yet been implemented. Due to rumors of the "new police capacity", a parliamentary hearing took place on 18 December. Justice minister Romanus reassured the uneasy questioners that the adjusted regulations regarding the Special Response Units would be in strict keeping with what the Cabinet and Parliament had decided in 1977, that implementation would take place by February 1979, and that he would monitor the process closely (Protocol 1978/79:57 § 13).

#### 4.2.4 The Special Response Units and "the atom police": Routine remains

In the second half of the 1970s, a growing public concern for the environment brought the issue of nuclear energy to the fore, and to some extent replaced the social concerns of the New Left. For the police, the task of maintaining law and order became more complicated since nuclear energy protesters, besides organizing large demonstrations in cities, often aimed at obstructing the transport of hazardous material (Nylén 2004).

Since Sweden does not produce nuclear fuel, it has to be imported. This is also the case for many other countries dependent on nuclear energy. Due to increasing security problems related to nuclear fuel and waste transport, a convention on nuclear safety was ratified by Sweden in 1977 (Ibid.).

In order to meet the requirements of international obligations, the Swedish police started to work out suggestions for enhancing security at nuclear reactors (Nylén 2004). They turned to the Danes, Norwegians and Finns to hear how they solved security issues at high-risk facilities. Even though the international obligations had been established between industries, the police realized that they at some point would have to increase their preparedness. In March 1979 a working group within the National Police Board was established. By coincidence, this was the same month as the most high profile nuclear accident the world had known to that point – the meltdown at the Three Mile Island power plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA (Ibid.).

The working group's objective was to estimate police needs for storming a power plant in the event of such a facility being occupied by a hostile group. An estimate on the needs for operative police preparedness related to other criminal acts was also to be made (Svensk Polis 5/1980).

In May 1980 the project team presented its results that recommended: the creation of a special assault force within the Stockholm police's Special Response Units; a doubling of Special Response Unit staff; strengthening leadership for the assault force; additional – and more specialized – equipment should be procured; airborne transport of the Special Response Units should be arranged; and the education for this team should be extended and specialized (Svensk Polis 5/1980).

On 27 May 1980, this initiative was discussed in a plenary session of Parliament (Protocol 1979/80:153 § 4). The conservative justice minister (since the 1979 general elections) Håkan Winberg answered questions from Socialist and Communist party representatives. He did not want to discuss details of the National Police Board's report, since it was referred to the Cabinet for consideration. Socialist MP Arne Nygren reminded Parliament that the idea behind the initiative was not new; it had in fact been lingering since 1975, and the 1975 Police Commission had opposed the kind of organization that the police now wanted to launch. The Communist representative warned that the forces the proposed police force was modeled on – the Norwegian Delta Force and the West German and French "Atom Police" – had not limited their duties to what they were created for. They were also used in normal crowd control operations.<sup>17</sup>

In August 1980 the Cabinet proposed (1980/81:13) some general guiding principles for police reform (i.e. for the 1981 working committee mentioned above). A section was dedicated to counter-terrorism and law enforcement during very difficult situations (Ibid. 129-132). In that respect the proposition

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17 Lars Nylén claims that the "normal crowd controlling" in West Germany and France were related to transportation of nuclear waste and located to nuclear power plants (Nylén 2004).

leaned on the conclusions of the 1975 Police Commission (Ds Ju 1977:2) as well as recent governmental and parliamentary decisions. However, it emphasized decentralization as the overall goal. The newly launched National Police Board recommendation regarding the Stockholm Special Response Unit and the potential threat of terrorist attack on nuclear power plants was discussed only briefly. The recommendation should be treated in normal sequence.

This meant the budget proposition (1980/81:100 appendix 5) came first. In principle the justice minister found it important to have a police capacity capable of handling the challenges posed by terrorism. However, he was not prepared to support a special unit exclusively for this purpose; under normal circumstances, officers comprising such a team should patrol with ordinary police. The Cabinet should assign the National Police Board to further investigate how police preparedness for serious criminal assaults could be organized in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The investigation should be carried out keeping in mind the prevailing personnel limits in the three districts (Ibid., 34-35). The parliamentary justice committee had no objections on that front (JuU 1980/81:33).

On 15 March 1982, the National Police Board presented its report "Polisiär beredskap vid vissa allvarliga brottsliga angrepp" (Police preparedness at certain serious criminal assaults) (RPS 1982). The report was far less ambitious than the original suggestions, recommending, for instance, that the Stockholm police's Special Response Unit should be increased by only 35 officers (compared to the initial proposition of a 100 % increase).

The Social Democratic party returned to power after the general elections of September 1982. In their first budget proposition (1982/83:100, appendix 4), justice minister Ove Rainer referred to the poor economic situation in rejecting National Police Board recommendations (Ibid. p. 45).

After almost a decade on the policy agenda – a period that also included the embassy drama – the police capacity for handling terrorist attacks had not significantly improved. The decade can be described as "routine maintenance" for the Stockholm Special Response Units.

#### 4.2.5 Operation Leo, the Bergling affair and instrumental adaptation of Säpo

The drama at the West German embassy was the last large-scale manifestation of terrorism on Swedish soil to date. But terrorists continued to operate or reside in Sweden. Less than two months after the drama, two members of the Japanese Red Army Faction were deported from Sweden after having mapped out the Lebanese embassy in Stockholm and its personnel (Axman 2004). What Säpo did not know at that point was that a former member of the West German

2 June movement, Norbert Kröcher, resided in Sweden. Kröcher had planned to kidnap Anna-Greta Leijon, the Swedish minister responsible for the deportation of Kommando Holger Meins. Together with a group of 15–20 people, he mapped out Leijon's life, equipped a gas-proof "people's prison", and amassed explosives to be used at a Jewish center and at the offices of Stockholm tabloid newspaper *Expressen*, unless the government complied with his demands. His goal was the release of the embassy hostage-takers from West German prisons and a ransom of one million U.S. dollars in exchange for Leijon's freedom (Stockholms tingsrätt 1978; Svensk Polis 4/1977; Hederberg 1978).

By pure coincidence, when staking out a potential Swedish link to the embassy drama, Säpo spotted peripheral members of the Kröcher gang in April 1976. In January 1977 Norbert Kröcher himself was identified, and the plot against Anna-Greta Leijon uncovered through extensive wire-tapping. On 1 April 1977 the gang was arrested, and in the days that followed Kröcher and five other foreigners were deported. Criminal proceedings were initiated against 14 Swedish citizens (Stockholms tingsrätt 1978; Hederberg 1978). None of the persons arrested for participating in the plot could be tied to the embassy drama. The Kröcher affair was nevertheless a huge success for Säpo.

The satisfaction did not last long. Suspicions had long existed within Säpo that one of their own, Stig Bergling, was a KGB agent. But it took until 1979 before suspicions materialized into proof. The public unmasking and legal proceedings were labeled the Bergling affair, with the culprit receiving lifetime imprisonment. More importantly, Säpo experienced a period of reform, not least since many of their secrets had been sold to foreign powers (Forsberg 2003: 324–327). Measure were already taken by 1978 – with strong suspicions of Bergling in mind – to make infiltration more difficult. After the Bergling affair, old cases were evaluated by Säpo staff, which could see that after World War II the agency had primarily worked with the ambition of revealing and prosecuting those who resorted to espionage. Much less energy had been devoted to preventing such crimes in the first place. After the Bergling affair, Säpo reoriented their efforts towards prevention (Ibid.). The Bergling affair also caused the Cabinet to appoint a commission comprised of lawyers that presented two reports (Ds Ju 1979:18 and Ds Ju 1980:2). This official inquiry, however, did not interfere with the instrumental adaptations undertaken by Säpo. When organizational matters and routines were discussed in the reports, reference was instead made to the ongoing internal reforms (Ibid.).

After the Kröcher affair, the Swedish terrorism scene was rather uneventful. But in June 1984 a Kurdish refugee who had been a leading member of the PKK (Kurdish Labor Party) was shot dead in Uppsala by a member of his former organization. In November 1985, another PKK defector met the same fate in Stockholm. To some extent these murders had similarities with the

Ustasja crimes committed in the early 1970s. Sweden had once again become a battleground for a conflict originating in another part of the world.

Incidences of terrorism – or close calls – in Sweden after the embassy drama were relatively speaking infrequent, while surrounding areas saw an upsurge in terrorism. In Western Europe terrorist incidents reached an average of 101.6 per year between 1968 and 1974, increasing to an annual average of 251 for the period 1975–1985 (Chalk 1996: 173).<sup>18</sup> Arguably, only the more conspicuous incidents received public and media attention in Sweden, but Säpo monitored the development closely, especially with regard to organizations that could be feared to harm Swedish interests abroad or use Sweden as a platform for their activities.<sup>19</sup>

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18 If the years 1968–1970 are excluded, the annual average of terrorist incidents in Western Europe between 1971–1974 was 142,25 (Chalk 1996: 173).

19 Säpo communicated statistical accounts to the government, which they in turn referred to when proposing to prolong the emergency powers act (see e.g. Proposition 1985/86:31 pp. 6–7).