

# Chapter 5 Non-terrorist crisis and major changes

## 5.1 Crisis case three: The murder of Olof Palme

### 5.1.1 The Night of the murder<sup>20</sup>

On Friday 28 February 1986 Prime Minister Olof Palme was shot dead on the sidewalk of Sveavägen in central Stockholm. Palme and his wife Lisbet were unescorted that night, having dismissed their bodyguards and telling them that they would not be needed any more that weekend. As the couple strolled down the major thoroughfare after a visit to the cinema, the perpetrator stole up from behind and fired two shots at close range. The first bullet hit the prime minister between the shoulder blades, smashing his spinal cord, aorta and windpipe. The second grazed Lisbet Palme's back.

The shots rang out at 11:21 p.m. The first police patrol arrived a few minutes later, alerted by a taxi driver. Their first sight of the crime scene was a man lying in a pool of blood, surrounded by about ten people. When the head of the patrol asked for information about the victim from what seemed to be his wife, she cried to him, "Can't you see who I am? I'm Lisbet Palme, this is my Olof, Prime Minister of Sweden!" For a split second, the chief inspector stood alone with the knowledge that the prime minister had been gunned down.

The fact that the prime minister had actually been shot caused something of a paralyzing shock within the police department. The Stockholm police com-

---

<sup>20</sup> This section builds, if not otherwise stated, on SOU 1987:14.

munication center became the hub of activity; as the crime had been committed in the heart of Stockholm, the search for the murderer was organized from there. It was also their duty to inform the Cabinet and the National Criminal Division of Palme's assassination, as the latter carried instructions on how to protect the 'quarter' (where the headquarters of the National Police Board and the Stockholm police are housed) and since Säpo was responsible for bodyguard activities.<sup>21</sup>

Almost everything that could go wrong did go wrong that night. It should be kept in mind that the murder took place late on a Friday night, on the last weekend of winter holidays for school children. Many Swedes, including vital decision-makers, were therefore on vacation and unreachable. Director General Holger Romander of the National Police Board as well as Stockholm Police Commissioner Hans Holmér and his second in command Hans Wranghult were all at different ski resorts in Sweden. At 11:30 p.m., less than ten minutes after the murder, the Stockholm police communication center staff was aware of the fact that it was the prime minister of Sweden who was the victim of the Sveavägen shooting. It was then no longer an 'ordinary' murder, but perhaps the most serious crime in Sweden for centuries. The perpetrator had to be caught as soon as possible in order to clear the fog around possible motives, further implications, etc. It was imperative to find out whether or not the shooting was an isolated event, if other persons needed protection, or if other counter-measures had to be taken.

The initial search efforts were marked by deviations from standard operating procedures. The roped-off area around the crime scene had been much too small, making technical evidence unlikely to be found as people began entering the area to toss flowers. Within ten minutes after the shooting, some ten police patrols were searching the surrounding area – but not systematically. Moreover, neighboring police districts were not alerted, and could not assist in the search effort. Off duty police officers who volunteered to assist were not made use of. Possible escape routes were not secured. Since the Stockholm police commissioner was on vacation and unreachable, his deputy Gösta Welander was called in. Arriving at around 12:30 a.m., Welander took charge but did not change how the search effort was organized. He prepared a nation-wide alert – sent out at 2:05 a.m. – that indicated two perpetrators, probably belonging to the Ustasja movement. Prior to the alert's transmission, Welander and the head of Säpo, Sven-Åke Hjälmsroth, joined several cabinet ministers and the Palme

---

21 As stated in the opening lines, Olof Palme had told his bodyguard earlier during the day that he would not need more protection that weekend. Palme had an agreement with Säpo, according to which he decided quite arbitrarily on his level of personal security. Palme was supposed to tell the bodyguards whenever he moved outside the 'triangle', consisting of his home, Rosenbad, and the Parliament, but this time he did not do so.

family at Sabbatsberg's Hospital, and then followed the ministers to a cabinet meeting at the chancellery at Rosenbad that started at 3:07 a.m.

An official at the chancellery was responsible for taking care of necessary duties during extraordinary events occurring on weekends. This person should continuously follow Swedish National Radio's news broadcast and be reachable by phone or beeper. In the case of an emergency, he or she should immediately go to Rosenbad and inform the head of security and his substitute, as well as the chancellery's press secretary. The justice minister and under-secretary of state should also be contacted, and if necessary, military headquarters should be informed. However, the official on duty the night of the Palme assassination had been dining out, and was returning home on the subway – where his beeper did not work – when the alarm was sent.

The question for the Cabinet, which gathered at Rosenbad, was whether it was constitutionally functional. This was the first test to the order of succession since the creation of the new constitution in 1974. Regulations existed, but legal expertise was required. However, the Cabinet Office's constitutional adviser, who was also its head of security, had recently passed away and had not yet been superseded (Eklundh 1999). Under more normal circumstances, the parliamentary Speaker would have dismissed the Cabinet and asked its members to continue holding their offices in a caretaker capacity. It so happened, though, that the Speaker was on vacation in Spain and could not fulfill this task until 11 a.m. on 1 March, when he was flown home. Ingvar Carlsson took charge of the caretaker Cabinet during the night, an act that – whether constitutional or not – was never subjected to criticism.<sup>22</sup> Beside constitutional issues, security concerns and the need for bodyguards were discussed. Welander and Hjälmroth updated the Cabinet on the ongoing police efforts; their presence at Rosenbad meant that the highest-ranking police commanders available were not involved in the search operation. It should be also noted that the head of the National Criminal Division was never contacted, leaving the task of reinforcing the protection of police headquarters unfulfilled (Tommy Lindström 1998).

After having driven like a “car thief”, Stockholm police commissioner Hans Holmér returned from his interrupted vacation at 10:50 a.m. on Saturday 1 March and took charge of police efforts (Holmér 1988). The crisis that never occurred—a possible *coup d'état*, or, less dramatic, a succession disorder—was over and the crisis that never ended—including erroneous ‘main leads’ and severe tensions between various actors and organizations in both the judicial and political spheres alike—had just begun (Eklundh 1999).

---

<sup>22</sup> The executive committee of the social democratic party chose Ingvar Carlsson as candidate for the post as party leader unanimously already on 1 March, and Sweden got a regular government on 12 March, with Ingvar Carlsson as Prime Minister.

### 5.1.2 The subsequent search organization

A managerial group was set up quite spontaneously during the first weekend of March. Besides Holmér, it included a number of other senior staff from the Stockholm police force and the National Police Board, mainly police chiefs. Apart from them, two officials from the justice ministry were assigned to the managerial group as observers. Within this group, Holmér created an inner circle, the “Brain Trust” – a forum to formulate tentative thoughts and play devil’s advocate to one another’s favorite hypotheses (Åsheden 1987).

Holmér approached the investigation from the motive side, which appeared unorthodox for experienced murder investigators, who are accustomed to finding the motive in the technical and circumstantial evidences (Krusell 1998). Anything from a single madman to an international terrorist organization was interesting for the managerial group. A dilemma for Holmér and the managerial group was however the absence of an obvious motive; one seemed no more prominent than another.

The growing amount of information, tips and testimonies seemed to the Brain Trust to indicate that the deed had been carefully planned. In order to encourage people who might know anything about the assassination to come forward, Holmér and Wickbom (the Justice Minister) decided to offer 500,000 SEK for any tip that led to the capture of Palme’s murderer. This course of action was quite unique for Sweden.

On 2 March, Säpo wanted to tap the telephone of Miro Baresic, who killed the Yugoslavian ambassador to Sweden in 1971 and was serving time in a Stockholm criminal institution. Chief prosecutor K-G Svensson found not a shred of suspicion against Baresic and declined this request. However, by that night, someone close to the justice minister called Svensson and reported that the Cabinet had decided to tap Baresic’s telephone, based on a provision in the Law on Correctional Treatment in Institutions (SOU 1999:88 pp. 557–559).

Some initial – and crucial – positioning by key actors defined the second phase of this crisis. The managerial group, and Holmér personally, had taken the preferential right of interpretation. In a way, his close connection to the Cabinet entitled him and his managerial group to this privilege. The ‘normal’ murder investigators and the prosecutor’s office were already at this stage positioned at the periphery of the decision-making hub.

### 5.1.3 Main suspects and organizational breakdowns

A 33-year-old with no previous convictions became the first main suspect in the Palme murder investigation. The chief prosecutor took him into custody when the police presented evidence that strengthened the suspicions against him.

However, before court proceedings were supposed to start, chief prosecutor K-G Svensson realized that the evidence presented to him by the police was manipulated in the sense that it was not complete. He then had to release the suspect (K-G Svensson 1998). This was the deathblow to Holmér and Svensson's relationship. Holmér visited the director of the Stockholm Prosecution Authority and asked him to replace Svensson. On 21 March, the director decided not to meet Holmér's request (Åsheden 1987: 59-67).

Relations between police leadership and the chief prosecutor deteriorated in April. The 33-year-old was still under investigation, even if prosecutors became increasingly less interested in that case. Holmér and his staff however insisted on conducting a large number of line-ups, which Svensson denied with respect to the primary suspect because of the extended amount of time it would take. He took the list of names the police had produced and pointed out eleven witnesses who should be subjected to a police line on 28 April. According to Svensson, his decision regarding the line-ups with the eleven witnesses was not final. He would evaluate them after they had been carried out, and decide whether or not more line-ups were needed (KU 1986/87:33 p.149). Prosecutor General Magnus Sjöberg explained to Svensson that he might have to overrule his decision on the amount of line-ups. After the initial line-ups, Svensson decided that another eleven witnesses would be called in for additional line-ups, this mostly because he wanted to avoid a confrontation with the managerial group (Ibid.).

At a meeting with the justice minister, Holmér and Svensson reported on their different points of view, which almost entirely concerned the number of line-ups. Svensson found them rather useless and stated that the eleven additional line-ups were the last ones, and thus his final decision on that matter. Holmér stressed the importance of exhausting this 'main lead' and thus urged for more line-ups. Justice Minister Wickbom expressed support for Holmér's position. Wranghult (1998) reveals that neither he nor Holmér at this stage thought that the 33-year-old had anything to do with the murder, but that he was hiding something. The following day, Sjöberg overruled Svensson's decision. Svensson was present, but did not object (Sjöberg 1998).

Holmér found the situation intolerable and paid a visit to the director of the Stockholm Prosecution Authority on 1 May, who decided to replace Svensson and take over his duties. Svensson would remain the prosecutor in the case of the 33-year-old (SOU 1987:72). Before this, however, on 29 April when Sjöberg officially handed in his decision to overrule Svensson regarding the line-ups, Svensson explained to Sjöberg that he was not able to pursue his prosecutor duties under the current circumstances. Svensson contended that the way Holmér organized the investigation did not derive from realistic assumptions and in fact wanted the managerial group to be dismissed and replaced by the

police that he normally worked with, i.e. police officers and not police jurists (KU 1986/87:33 p.152).

After two months the relationship between the managerial group and the public prosecutors collapsed. However, history repeated itself only a few months later. After suspicions against the 33-year-old were dismissed, the managerial group focused their interest on the Kurdish Labor Party (PKK). They had been interested in PKK from the beginning of the investigation, but from late spring/early summer 1986, it came to be *the* main lead.

Holmér and the managerial group planned a major series of arrests on a large number of PKK members in January 1987. When preparing and implementing the operation, problems in terms of cooperation occurred between the managerial group and the new prosecutors. The latter thought that the managerial group was too optimistic regarding the validity in its findings, and complained about not being sufficiently informed. After the arrests – which were postponed ten days because of the cooperation problems – the prosecutors set the Kurds free the same day (20 January 1987). The managerial group found that to be a rash decision. The severe cooperation problems and personal tensions between police and prosecutors made it impossible to continue the murder investigation. The Cabinet therefore decided on 5 February 1987 that the National Prosecution Authority would lead the investigation and that the National Criminal Division would lead the search efforts (SOU 1987:72).

## 5.2 Policy change patterns

During the extended period described above, many missteps made within the Swedish criminal justice sector can be discerned. The underperformance of the Stockholm police during the night of the murder – in terms of both search efforts and their procedures in sounding the alarm that Palme had been shot – as well as the slow reaction of other actors, gives witness to a non-functioning crisis preparedness system. The organization of the subsequent search for the murderer and further efforts to solve the Palme assassination reveal even more profound problems in the sector. In June 1986 the Cabinet decided to appoint a commission consisting of legal experts – the so-called Jurist Commission – to look into the Palme murder investigation. A parliamentary commission would follow up on the conclusions of the Jurist Commission. The two commissions chose to investigate the eleven months described above, i.e. the period in which Holmér was in charge of the Stockholm police and headed the murder investigation (SOU 1987:14; SOU 1987:72; SOU 1988:18). Several other commissions and committees were appointed in the end of the 1980s. A Säpo Committee presented a report in July 1988 (SOU 1988:16), a one-man investigation presented in January 1989 a report on Säpo's threat assessments prior to

the Palme murder (SOU 1989:1), and another one-man investigation reported in April 1989 on Säpo's working methods (SOU 1989:18). In 1990 the Säpo committee presented its final report (SOU 1990:51). A terrorism legislation committee presented a report on the Terrorist Act in 1989 (SOU 1989:104).

Most policy ideas concerning counter-terrorism were therefore the product of commissions that carried out inquiries into specific events. These were related to terrorism legislation, a reform of Säpo, and the creation of an anti-terrorist police force. We will follow these three policy issues below.

### 5.2.1 A permanent Terrorist Act: A policy innovation

The Terrorist Act – established in response to the 1972 Bulltofta skyjacking – went through changes in 1976, after which the parts of the law related to deportation and refusal of entry into the country were transferred to the Aliens Act. The Special Investigations Act, which allowed police to use coercive measures against people who had not yet committed crimes, still existed in the form of an emergency powers act, which was renewed on a yearly basis by Parliament. Until 1989 Parliament sanctioned governmental propositions to prolong the Special Investigations Act.<sup>23</sup>

Both the Jurist and Parliamentary commissions paid attention to the laws aimed at preventing acts of terrorism. Since they centered on the Palme murder, their analyses of the legal framework focused on its bearing on such situations. The Jurist Commission found that terrorism-related sections of the Aliens Act did not allow for the deportation of terrorists who were believed to be a threat only to their country of origin, i.e. that they could only be deported if they were believed to commit terrorist acts in Sweden. They also pointed out that the Special Investigations Act – at least with regard to bodyguard protection – only applied to foreigners who, despite being classified as potential terrorists, had a right to reside in Sweden (SOU 1987:14 pp. 132–133). The parliamentary commission did however not see a need for changing the existing terrorism legislation (SOU 1988:18 pp. 162–175).

In 1988 the Cabinet appointed a parliamentary committee called the Terrorism Legislation Committee to scrutinize existing counter-terrorism legislation. According to the Cabinet's instructions (1988:49) to the committee, an overhaul was needed because of the criticism that the existing terrorism regulations had received during the 1980s, both in terms of its effectiveness and the legal rights of the individual. But before the committee presented its report, the Cabinet proposed instituting a new Aliens Act (Proposition 1988/89:86), which required the changing of the Terrorist Act. The main idea was to remove

<sup>23</sup> For a complete reference list of propositions and considerations of the justice committee, and government decisions, see 1988/89:JuU 12, p. 3.

terrorism-related sections of the Aliens Act and insert them into the Special Investigations Act. The new law should also become permanent. In terms of substantial changes, the proposition suggested that foreigners, even if they had received permanent residence permits, should be subject to deportation if they were classified as terrorists. If a presumptive terrorist had the right to asylum, the Cabinet could after court proceedings place restrictions on his or her freedom of movement (so-called municipality arrest). Presumptive terrorists could also be subject to coercive measures based on grounds not otherwise permitted by the Law of Legal Procedures or the Aliens Act (Ibid.). The new Terrorist Act (SFS 1989:530) was in effect from 1 July 1989.

The parliamentary Terrorism Legislation Committee presented its report in December 1989 (SOU 1989:104). They agreed that there was a need for a coherent terrorist act like the one that had been established earlier that year. However, the committee proposed a number of changes to it. First, the organizational requisite should be discarded. As it was, two conditions needed to be met for a presumptive terrorist to be deported or refused entry into Sweden – a personal and an organizational. A person needed to be associated with a group that was known to perpetrate acts of terrorism outside its country of origin (the organizational requisite) and he or she also had to be personally suspected to having such inclinations (the personal requisite). The committee found the organizational requisite superfluous, and that it unnecessarily singled people out on the basis of association. Such suspicions could also follow them to other countries, making deportation much more difficult. The committee further suggested that the Terrorist Act did not need particular paragraphs on refusing entry to foreigners, since those were covered in the Aliens Act; the Terrorist Act should only cover deportation. The committee wanted to strengthen the Terrorist Act to make it possible to deport foreigners whom one could suspect were preparing to carry out terrorist acts anywhere in the world, and not only on Swedish territory. Finally, the committee wanted to change the conditions for presumptive terrorists residing in Sweden under the right to asylum. Coercive measures, such as restrictions of a person's freedom of movement, should only be valid for three years. A court decision could then prolong such measures for additional three-year periods. This suggestion was based on the assumption that a presumptive terrorist's inclination to commit terrorist acts would typically abate over time.

The Cabinet essentially accepted the suggested changes put forth by the Terrorism Legislation Committee (Proposition 1990/91:118). However, the Cabinet proposed that restrictions regarding place of residence, accommodation and work place applicable to presumptive terrorists whose deportation had been denied should be abolished. Such persons should instead be obliged to check in with the police on a regular basis (Ibid.: 41-46).



The proposition together with the motions it had generated was taken up on 7 May 1991 by the Parliament Justice Committee (1990/91:JuU29), which suggested making only small semantic edits to the original proposition such as changing the name of the proposed “Law on Special Control of Certain Aliens” to “Law on Special Control of Aliens” (Ibid.: 35). Only representatives of the left and environmentalist parties had reservations against the committee’s decision (Ibid.: 36-44). On 28 May 1991, the parliamentary Speaker informed the Cabinet that Parliament accepted the proposition, as edited by the Justice Committee. The Law on Special Control of Aliens (SFS 1991:572) went into effect on 1 July 1991.

The patterns of change in terrorism legislation that took place between the 1986 Palme murder and 1991 can be characterized as policy innovation interspersed by instrumental adaptation. The intermittent Terrorist Act of 1989 was an instrumental adaptation insofar as it was required for changes in the Aliens Act. It was however much in line with the intent of the upcoming 1991 Terrorist Act. The incentive for the legislative overhaul was reportedly criticism of the old legislation (Directive 1988:49). In terms of content, the new legislation implied innovation insofar as it received permanent status and wider applicability, but also more restricted investigative means.

### 5.2.2 Säpo scrutinized and reorganized: A policy innovation

The Jurist Commission set up after the murder of Olof Palme heard during its inquiry process voices of dissent that thought that Säpo should not be responsible for counter-terrorism activities. Such issues should instead be transferred to local or regional police (SOU 1987:14 p. 127), according to the dissenters, since normal criminal activities typically preceded acts of terrorism. For example, terrorists need to rob banks to get money to buy weapons. The fight against terrorism would supposedly be more effective if local law enforcement, i.e. the Stockholm police, had all responsibility for counter-terrorism. Furthermore, Säpo was reluctant to provide information to local police that they considered vital in combating terrorism (Ibid.).

The Jurist Commission rebuffed these arguments. In their estimation Säpo was more suitable in taking the lead on counter-terrorism activities in Sweden, considering the international characteristics of terrorism and terrorist networks. The commission did not find it realistic to place a national issue in the hands of a local authority, let alone several local authorities. But it urged Säpo to become more transparent, as vital information needed to filter down to local law enforcement to a greater degree (Ibid.: 126-131). The parliamentary commission also commented on the role of Säpo, but had the same assessment as the jurist commission: Säpo was the best suited for being responsible for coun-

ter-terrorism. The Parliamentary Commission referred changes regarding Säpo to the parliamentary Säpo Committee, which had been up and running since 5 November 1987 (SOU 1988:18 pp. 155–162).

On 6 October 1987 a former Säpo employee, Stig Bergling – who had been serving a lifetime sentence for espionage since 1979 – escaped during a leave from prison. As a consequence, the Cabinet assigned National Police Board Director General-designate (from 1 January 1988) Nils Åhmansson the task of scrutinizing police organization and to also present suggestions for responding to surprising events (Åhmansson 1987). With especially the Palme murder in mind, Åhmansson saw the division of labor between the local police and the National Police Board as problematic. He specifically found the fact that the National Police Board could not take command over operations of national interest from local police without governmental intervention unfortunate. Such authority should be included in the regulations governing the National Police Board (Ibid.: 38-44). Åhmansson also drew attention to the relationship between Säpo and the ‘open’ police (i.e. the local and regional police organizations, and the non-secret parts of the National Police Board), suggesting that local and regional police should be required to inform Säpo of events and threats suspected of being terrorism related. Säpo should in turn provide better information to local and regional police regarding facts and tendencies within the terrorism domain. He also proposed that bodyguards – who at the time were working for either the Stockholm police or Säpo – be transferred to the National Police Board, or at least that the National Police Board took charge over the training of all bodyguards in order to prevent different professional cultures from developing (Ibid.: 45-52).

Also in the wake of the Bergling escape, the Cabinet appointed Carl Lidbom as head of a committee to scrutinize Säpo. Lidbom was the architect of the first Terrorist Act in the early 1970s, and from 1982 served as the Swedish ambassador to France. Apart from Lidbom, MPs of all parties in Parliament (with the exception of the Communists) participated in the committee, which began work on 5 November 1987.

The report presented by the Säpo committee in July 1988 proposed two significant changes related to the leadership and oversight of Säpo. The latter suggestion grew out of the observation that the Cabinet in particular did not fully exert control allowed for in the constitution. The parliamentary representatives of the National Police Board, the Parliament Justice Committee, the Cabinet, the justice ombudsman, the attorney general and the prosecutor general all already exerted control over Säpo to one degree or another. The Säpo committee’s suggestion was to strengthen the powers of these already existing oversight bodies. They also highlighted the need for the Cabinet to provide clearer instructions to Säpo with regard to priorities among Säpo’s different subunits

(counter-espionage, counter-terrorism, counter-subversion, and protection of government officials and the royal family). These instructions should then be subject to additional thorough follow-ups. But since Säpo – whose operations needed a higher degree of flexibility in relation to the amount budgeted for their various priorities– could not be monitored the same way the regular police were, the committee suggested that the National Police Board's non-police (mostly parliamentary) representatives carry on continuous informal deliberations for monitoring purposes. With regard to the subject matter, the Säpo Committee advocated that the instructions should be firmly established within parliamentary structures. The leaders of the parties represented in the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs (i.e. all but the Communist/Left and Environmental parties) should have a say in their formulation (SOU 1988:16 pp. 194–199).

The need for increased oversight of Säpo activities called for, according to the committee, a somewhat new type of Säpo leadership. Säpo's need for firmer leadership could be achieved by the appointment of a qualified individual to head a public service department. This new post could be one step below the Director General. The Säpo chief was traditionally recruited from within the law enforcement establishment and ranked as head of the department. The Säpo Committee recommended that Säpo continued to exist as a department within the National Police Board, but that its director should be given a higher position. According to the committee, the head of Säpo needed to have a broader understanding of security policymaking in general and be adept at communicating with Cabinet representatives. The suggestion was also based on Säpo's international contacts and the department's importance for Sweden's security, as well as the potential for intrusion into the legal rights of the individual, all which made Säpo's mission the subject of debate. However, the new powers of the Säpo chief would not reduce the authority of the Director General of the National Police Board, who would remain the head of all under-departments, including Säpo (SOU 1988:16 pp. 200–201).

The Säpo Committee, like Åhmansson (1987), made the observation that bodyguard issues were spread between Säpo – which was responsible for the protection of government officials and the royal family, the Stockholm police – who provided security for diplomats, and a bureau within the National Police Board that coordinated the protection of foreign visitors. The committee suggested that Säpo should have a more comprehensive responsibility for all bodyguard concerns. The committee also wanted bodyguard issues within Säpo to be more closely related, in organizational terms, to counter-terrorism activities (Ibid.: 187-189).

A scandal related to the Palme murder investigation was uncovered in the summer of 1988. A Säpo investigation had secretly run parallel to the Palme group (which superseded the managerial group headed by Holmér) that con-

tinued following the PKK lead. This group consisted of two PKK experts from Säpo and Ebbe Carlsson, Geijer's press secretary in the 1970s, who was at this time a publisher and close friend of the Justice Minister, Anna-Greta Leijon. Leijon had sanctioned their activities and National Police Board Director General Åhmansson was informed. The scandal was called the Ebbe Carlsson affair and gave rise to a new commission. Was there reason to believe that information or warning signals about the murder of Olof Palme existed within Säpo prior to the murder? On 25 August 1988, the Cabinet appointed county governor (of Jönköping) Gösta Gunnarsson to investigate what assessments Säpo had made on the threat against Palme and how these had been communicated to him (SOU 1989:1 pp. 9–10). Gunnarsson stated in the opening of his report presented in January 1989 (Ibid.: 7):

In my assessment whether or not any concrete threats against Olof Palme prevailed in the time preceding the murder, I begin by stating that any circumstances of such kind – that it was obvious that his safety was endangered – did not prevail.

Suspicious cultivated by Ebbe Carlsson and possibly the Cabinet that initiated the investigation were not supported. Säpo was, however, criticized on a few points. Through wire-tapping, Säpo knew that PKK members spoke of an imminent "wedding" – which was a code word for murder – and that the target could be the Swedish Cabinet. The PKK had however never committed a murder in Sweden outside its own organization, i.e. to PKK defectors. Had Palme been informed of this, he would have perhaps not gone out without bodyguards. There was an agreement between Palme and Säpo saying that Palme should have constant protection, except for the triangle marked out by his apartment, the Parliament building and the chancellery, as well as his summer residence on the island of Fårö. Palme therefore broke this agreement by not informing his bodyguards of the cinema visit on 28 February 1986. Säpo's standpoint had been to not impose personal security upon anybody against his or her will. This should not have, however, prevented them from informing Palme on security-related intelligence (Ibid.: 25-29).

Gunnarsson also pointed to a sloppiness regarding Säpo's translations of tapped telephone calls. His investigation found a considerable number of tapes with not yet translated conversations in Kurdish and delayed translations of Turkish. Säpo had problems recruiting reliable translators, but Gunnarsson concluded that the delay was not acceptable (Ibid.: 37-40).

In February 1989, the Cabinet presented a proposition (1988/89:108) regarding the aim, direction and organization of Säpo, which drew upon the various commissions directly related to the Palme murder (SOU 1987:14; SOU 1988:18; SOU 1989:1), the Åhmansson report (1987) and the Säpo

Committee (SOU 1988:16). The proposition essentially followed the suggestions presented by the latter, which had in turn incorporated the ideas of the other reports (except SOU 1989:1). It was important to the Cabinet that the Säpo Committee had been unanimous in its recommendations. Most of the proposed changes did not need a parliamentary decision, meaning they could be implemented as early as 1 July 1989.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the Cabinet proposed keeping Säpo as a department within the National Police Board, where it would continue to be in charge of counter-espionage, counter-terrorism, counter-subversion and security protection (e.g. bodyguard activities). Bodyguard activities performed by the Stockholm police should be transferred to Säpo. The Cabinet should further give clearer and continuous instructions to Säpo regarding the prioritization of their activities, necessitating Cabinet consultations with the leaders of parties represented on the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs. Säpo should be led by a higher-ranking civil servant (one step below Director General level) than before. The board of the National Police Board should be given the task of monitoring Säpo's implementation of Cabinet instructions. In order to professionalize Säpo and mitigate sectarianism, specialists from outside law enforcement should be recruited and the circulation of personnel between Säpo and the 'open' police should be facilitated (Proposition 1988/89:108).

The proposition was given to Parliament on 9 February 1989 and was discussed together with the motions it had provoked (1988/89:Ju21) by the Parliament Justice Committee on 9 May. For the most part, the motions came from Left and Environment party MP's who resented the fact that they were excluded from insights into Säpo. The Justice Committee as a whole however supported the proposition.

In April 1989 Lidbom presented his one-man investigation (SOU 1989:18), which dealt with the working methods of Säpo. Lidbom found that Säpo performed activities, such as bugging, that were constitutionally questionable. However, he traced these practices to weak leadership. Neither the Director General of the National Police Board nor the head of Säpo had much influence on Säpo operations. Instead, dedicated deputy directors – for whom constitutional concerns had been secondary at best – had ran the show for a long time. Just as Lidbom was about to present his report, Sune Sandström – who had succeeded Hjälmroth as head of Säpo in 1987 – chose to resign. The suggestion of appointing a person qualified to head a civil service department could therefore

---

24 The two exceptions were the suggestion to give the National Police Board authority to take command in incidents over the local police, when required with reference to the national interest, which needed an adjustment to the Police Act. The second was related to the law on public employment, which needed adjustments to facilitate circulation of personnel between Säpo and the local police.

be realized. Mats Börjesson became the first head of a more independent and open Säpo. He was in fact given the title of Director General.

Lidbom's critique paved the way for radical changes in Säpo's internal regulations. In the early 1990s new procedural rules replaced a complex system of internal instructions. The documentation of decisions was improved, and from fiscal year 1989/90 a public version of the annual report has been published (SOU 2002:87 p. 63). In 1990 connections between Swedish communist organizations and the Soviet Union and its satellite states disappeared, leading Säpo's counter-subversion unit to be transformed into a unit for the protection of the constitution. As this unit realized its shortcomings in analyzing developments within extremist parties, a civil analysis group was established in 1992 to increase analytical capacity (Ibid.: 63-64).

The change patterns with regard to Säpo can be characterized as policy innovation. Driven by an intention to come to terms with an organization that had been subject to severe criticism and could not be surveyed by the Cabinet, the changes also implied a new leadership structure and new means to monitor and follow up on political instructions.

### 5.2.3 Time ripe for policy innovation on anti-terrorist policing

Just like after the West-German embassy drama in 1975, the Stockholm police took the initiative after the Palme murder to produce a report, which was presented to the National Police Board on 26 November 1986. The report concluded that the Stockholm police was not prepared to meet the challenge of terrorism. Shortcomings in training and equipment were likely to prove fatal in the event of a terrorist attack (SOU 1988:18 p. 177). These observations were in keeping with what the National Police Board had pointed out in 1980 and 1982, when it had scrutinized safety at nuclear power plants.

In January 1987 a conservative MP raised a motion (1986/87:Ju208) urging that an anti-terrorist police force to be set up. When the Parliament Justice Committee handled the motion (JuU 1986/87:23 p. 20), it was left with an inconclusive reference to the ongoing Jurist Commission and work that was carried out by the National Police Board. However, the Justice Committee stated that it could not sanction a self-contained police force, as was suggested in the motion.

On 27 April 1987, the Jurist Commission presented its first report dealing with the night of the murder. The commissioners devoted the concluding chapter to the protection of public persons and the combating of terrorism (SOU 1987:14 pp. 107-136). More in passing, they called attention to the fact that the existing Special Response Units were incapable of handling a severe terror-

ist assault of the type experienced at the West German embassy in 1975 (Ibid.: 131).

The subsequent parliamentary commission, with a more policy-oriented approach, picked up on the issue of the insufficient assault capacity of the police that the lawyers in the Jurist Commission left open (SOU 1988:18 pp. 175–203). They recommended creating an anti-terrorist police force.

The commission made four main arguments for setting up an anti-terrorist police force (Ibid.: 178-180). First, the frequency of terrorist acts perpetrated around the world was continuously increasing, raising the likelihood of terrorism taking place in Sweden. Not least were nuclear power plants mentioned as vulnerable and potential terrorist targets. Second, inadequate training and equipment would put the security of police officers dealing with a terrorist assault at risk. Third, Sweden's ratification of various international terrorism-related conventions obligated Sweden to also effectively act against terrorists. Foreign governments might otherwise insist on having their police forces operate inside Sweden. Such situations could cause unnecessary conflicts with other states. Fourth, being less prepared than neighboring countries would create an incentive for terrorists to attack targets in Sweden.

The parliamentary commission proposed creating a force of about 50 officers that would be organized under the Stockholm police, but detached from the existing Special Response Units. One-third of the time they would be training (during which they would also be on standby in case of emergency), the rest working with other Stockholm police district units. According to the commission, the force would have one commander who would be subject to Cabinet confirmation to guarantee political control of the unit's deployment (Ibid.: 187-194).

The suggestion put forth by the parliamentary commission was circulated for consideration to some thirty public authorities in the judicial sphere. Only three opposed the idea of an anti-terrorist police force altogether. Most agreed on having the Cabinet decide on its deployment for each individual case, which would ensure political control over its operations. When dealt with at the Chancellery, some issues regarding organization and costs were in need of further analysis, for which reason the matter was referred to the National Police Board. The National Police Board was tasked with analyzing these questions in August 1989, and delivered a report that October. According to the instructions given to the National Police Board, they were supposed to use the parliamentary commission's suggestions as a point of departure. In terms of organization, the National Police Board suggested that an anti-terrorist police force be established only in Stockholm, separate from the existing Special Response Units, and comprised of 53 officers. The force should only perform other police work 20 % of the time. While the parliamentary commission's policy suggestions were

on remittance in 1988, the National Police Board proposed reinforcing the Special Response Units of Sweden's three largest cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö). In the fall of 1989 they instead suggested a special unit be set up in Stockholm, which was in keeping with the parliamentary commission's proposal but at odds with statements made by the Parliament Justice Committee in 1987 (Proposition 1989/90:100, appendix 15).

When the Cabinet presented its budget proposition for 1990/91 (1989/90:100), the arguments for setting up an anti-terrorist force were identical to those made by the parliamentary commission. The Cabinet suggested that a force of about 50 men be organized in the Stockholm police district, but separate from the Special Response Units. The force would train half the time, during which it should be prepared to act if the Cabinet so decided. The rest of the time the officers should perform normal police duties.

Only two motions in Parliament objected to the Cabinet proposition (Motions 1989/90: Ju211 and Ju233). The former, authored by a faction of the Communist party, cited negative international experiences with the kind of police force proposed by the Cabinet; similar forces in other countries had been rather counterproductive and caused more violence than necessary. The latter motion written by a Social Democratic party faction opposed a militarization of the police. Both motions called for decentralized, but specialized, training of ordinary officers in a number of police districts, especially those encompassing nuclear power plants. The Parliament Justice Committee did not comply with these motions, instead approving the Cabinet proposition (1989/90:Ju27).

On 25 April 1990, Parliament discussed the police budget (Protocol 1989/90:109 § 6). The issue of an anti-terrorist police force was brought up and criticized by only one Communist and one Environmental MP. The communist wondered why the Cabinet had argued that the proposition was in keeping with what the Parliament Justice Committee had concluded in 1987, when they in fact had two different views over the organization of such a force. The social democratic representative avoided a discussion of the anti-terrorist force by ignoring the questions. The debate was instead between the social democrats and the three non-socialist parties, and exclusively on the need to recruit more police officers. When it was time to vote (Ibid. § 11), the suggestion by the Justice Committee – which was essentially the same as the governmental proposition on the anti-terrorist police force – won by 258 to 38. In June 1990, the Cabinet made the decision to create the anti-terrorist police force.

The anti-terrorist police force was supposed to be fully operational by spring 1991. In its first years of existence, it faced two important challenges. The first was related to recruitment. By the end of 1992, only 32 out of 156 applicants had passed the rigorous tests to join the force (Flyghed 2000: 152). The second was motivational. Since terrorist incidents did not occur, the force was never



used. The Cabinet did not call on the force for other severe incidents that were not terrorism related, and their lack of utilization caused frustration among the staff with some quitting as a consequence (Ibid.).

In 1996, the social democratic Cabinet suggested in the budget proposition (1996/97:1) that the anti-terrorist police force be integrated with the Stockholm police Special Response Units. The Cabinet proposed (1997/98:1) the following year to relinquish its unique right to command the force, and suggested that the National Police Board, on the authority of a regional police chief, could also make use of the force.

The creation of an anti-terrorist police force and the subsequent developments around it can be characterized as a policy innovation followed by another policy innovation. The creation of the anti-terrorist force implied both new intention and new programmatic means. The subsequent changes may seem like instrumental adaptations, but since the original concerns over creating the force had been about how it should be used (i.e. only during terrorist incidents, or for other difficult police missions as well such as prison riots and hostage situations), the later changes implied new intentions. They also involved new means, since the chain of command was transferred from the political to the operational level.