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Policing of Political Protest. The Security Police's Control of the Extra-parliamentary Opposition in Sweden During and after the Cold War

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Abstract

Throughout history, those in power have monitored and exercised control over individuals and groups who have been perceived as representing some form of threat to their power. Irrespective of the system of government in place, political crime is a matter of central interest to a society's security police. Political crimes are often committed by extra-parliamentary groups or organizations. The focus of this paper is

how the Swedish secret police (SÄPO) have acted against what they have perceived as the extreme left, mainly anarchists and autonomists, during and after the cold war. Did SÄPO's perception of this part of the extra-parliamentary opposition change when the cold war was over in the early 1990s? Were these groups and individuals perceived as the new enemy in the threat vacuum that tempor-

arily arose in the aftermath of the cold war? Furthermore, had the new security concept that was introduced at that time any impact on SÄPO's activities?

KEY WORDS: Anarchists, Cold war, Extra-parliamentary opposition, Political crime, Political protest, Security police, Surveillance

It is widely known that during the four decades of the cold war, the perceived threats faced by the Western nations were primarily dominated by different shades of communism. Sweden and her security service were no exception to this, as can be seen from the findings of the extensive inquiry conducted by the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service (see e.g. SOU 2002:88; SOU 2002:89; SOU 2002:93). But even prior to the Russian Revolution, the 'threat from the East' had been an important factor in the discussion of perceived threats to national security. At that time, the Russian Tsarist empire represented a military threat, which was exploited by the Swedish military and by certain parts of the political establish-

ment (Åselius 1994). There was a fear that Russia had imperialistic ambitions towards Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia. Russian craftsmen travelling around in Sweden were suspected of being spies, and some of them were expelled from the country with no proof whatsoever of espionage. None of them were ever convicted. It soon became evident that these actions constituted an over-reaction and that they were a result of 'prejudice' and an 'extremely exaggerated imagination' (Hammar 1964:30–32). After the revolution of 1917, the communist Soviet Union became both a military and a political threat. The old arch-enemy turned up in a new wrapping. And with the exception of the Second World War period, communism remained the

number-one enemy for the subsequent 70 years (Mazower 1997:244).

One important difference between the threat posed by Tsarist Russia and that posed by communism was that communism did not represent a purely military-imperialist threat but also an ideological one. This was due to the fact that communism bore with it ideas that could spread within the borders of the country itself and could thereby lead to the emergence of an internal enemy. Consequently, dealing with the threat involved not only monitoring individuals suspected of crimes against national security but also combating a set of ideas. The significance of this line of reasoning increased dramatically in connection with the outbreak of the cold war at the end of the 1940s. During the cold war, the military threat was described in terms of the menacing 'Russian Bear', particularly by the military establishment (Wiklund 1997). For a long period of time, the gaze of the security police became fixated on the East.

This picture changed, however, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the totalitarian Soviet system. The significance of this shift for the work of the Swedish secret police (SÄPO) may be illustrated by a statement drawn from the security police's annual report for 1991/92, which notes somewhat laconically 'that the violently focused communist organizations in our country have become deflated' (SÄPO 1991/92:12). For the security police, then, these organizations no longer appeared to constitute a significant threat to the security of Swedish society. This led to what could be termed a temporary threat vacuum. The work of the security police became instead more focused on groups that were now viewed as compris-

ing the dominant leftist-activists, namely 'the groupings that call themselves anarchists or autonomist' (ibid.). It is the control exercised by the security police in relation to these primarily extra-parliamentary groups during the cold war and the decades immediately following its conclusion that constitute the focus of this paper. How were these groups perceived and described? Is it possible to trace any changes in the security police's documentation of these groups' activities that might serve to justify the increased attention that became focused on them at the beginning of the 1990s? Did they come to legitimize the continued activities of the security police? Furthermore, did the new, much broader, security concept that was introduced at the end of the cold war in some way influence the gaze of the security police in relation to this segment of the extra-parliamentary opposition?

Since the focus of interest is directed at SÄPO's perceptions of these groups' activities rather than on the groups' actual activities, I have first and foremost made use of documents from the SÄPO archive and official documents such as SÄPO's annual reports and the findings of public inquiries. Several of these last-mentioned publications, and particularly the extensive 2002 report from the Swedish Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service, also include source material from the SÄPO archive.¹ Although the public sources contain a surprisingly large amount of information on the security police's perceptions of anarchists and autonomists, the picture that emerges from such publi-

¹ For a review of the principal report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service and its seven research reports SOU 2002:87–94, see Flyghed 2011.

cations does not of course represent the whole truth about the real extent of SÄPO's monitoring activities. It is very likely that there is a substantial dark figure involved. In the same way as in previous works, however, I will be applying an 'at-least-this-much' perspective (Flyghed 2011). With this I mean that proceeding on the basis of the picture that emerges from these descriptions, we can assume that the actual level of monitoring and control was at least as extensive as that which is shown. In all likelihood, the actual extent of SÄPO's control activities will have been greater than that described, but it will not have been less.

The focus of this paper excludes extreme right-wing and pro-Nazi groups and is instead directed at what the security police have labelled the extreme left. The security police have primarily used this label to refer to those whom they have regarded as anarchists, syndicalists, and, during the latter part of the period in focus, those whom they refer to as 'autonomists'. Autonomism has more to do with an organizational principle than with a specific, unitary group with a common agenda. However, the autonomist groups have often included individuals whom the security police have viewed as anarchists and syndicalists. During the 1980s, an increasing number of groups with various political agendas started to organize themselves into networks of this kind. It is also worth noting that the autonomist groups may also include individuals with no ideologically left-wing motivations, not least among those individuals and groups that are active in the areas of environmentalist and animal rights politics. It can therefore be misleading always to equate autonomists with 'the left'.

The cold war period, the end of the 1940s to 1989/90

One of the research reports published by the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service (SOU 2002:91) notes that during the first decades after the Second World War, the security police did not show any major interest in the groups that they regarded as syndicalists. One major reason for this was that the syndicalist trade union organization—the SAC syndicalists²—was regarded as being 'reliably anti-communist and thus did not constitute a direct object for monitoring' (SOU 2002:91:307), although there were exceptions in the form of individual members from certain local syndicalist organizations who were active within the peace movement and who participated in anti-nuclear weapons actions (ibid.). The security police's appreciative assessment of the SAC's sceptical attitude towards communism may be viewed as a further indication of the powerful nature of the focus that SÄPO directed at communists and communism during the cold war period.

The anarchists were assigned a low level of priority by the security police throughout the period between the 1940s and the mid-1960s. While it is true that SÄPO did monitor certain activities during this period, as when the Stockholm anarchists arranged a writers' evening in 1954 with the so-called 'workers' writers' Jan Fride-

² The SAC syndicalists are a Swedish trade union that was formed in 1910 by individuals from the then Social Democratic youth movement, the Young Socialists, in opposition to the major reformist union organization the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO). The Young Socialists argued that a trade union organization must be independent of political parties, which was not the case with the LO, which was perceived as a tool for the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP).

gård and Moa Martinsson (SOU 2002:91:309),³ the security police documents show that SÄPO were of the view that ‘their membership numbers are likely to be insignificant’. The documents also show that SÄPO’s registers contained no information about anarchist associations. At the end of the 1960s, SÄPO files noted there was an anarchist association at Uppsala University (which they had seen from the university catalogue) and in 1969/70 they suspected that anarchists were behind a number of attacks against the Forensic Psychiatric Clinic in Lund (SOU 2002:91:310).

The picture changed somewhat at the beginning of the 1970s. Amongst other things this can be seen from a secret service directive that came into effect on 1 January 1971. At this time there were four anarchist organizations included on the list of organizations that SÄPO were to ‘focus special attention’ on (SOU 2002:91:311). These were the Association for Equal Pay, the Swedish Anarchist Association, the Anarchist Federation of Sweden, and the Anarchists in Sweden. I have not been able to find any written motivation in the security police archives for why these four organizations should have been included on a list of organizations that represented a danger to society, but one likely reason may be the participation of anarchist groups in the occupation of the Gamla Bro community centre in Stockholm in October 1970

(SOU 2002:91:312). The police stormed the premises and ejected all of the occupants, after which the building was closed. This led to four demonstrations over the subsequent weeks. The security police files contain descriptions of a couple of hundred youths shouting slogans such as ‘power to the people’ and ‘down with the police’ as well as descriptions of the youths acting like ‘a wild “mob” that howled as it moved through the streets of the city centre’ (SOU 2002:91:313). As a result of this, the security police felt that they had to stay abreast of the anarchists’ activities, which amongst other things resulted in the monitoring of the anarchists’ premises—although this did not last long since the Office of Public Buildings soon decided to close the premises down on the grounds that the building posed a fire hazard. Subsequent to this, the security police assessed the anarchists as no longer constituting a serious threat. Whether or not all four of the organizations mentioned actually engaged in concrete activities is unclear. However, the security police noted in a report from the second quarter of 1971 that ‘the anarchist activity appears to have somewhat increased’. As evidence for this statement, SÄPO refer to the fact that the word ‘Anarchy’ had been daubed on several buildings in Stockholm and that ‘anarchists in several places in the country participated in Red Front demonstrations on 1 May’ (SOU 2002:91:314). The security police apparently had a good knowledge of which individuals were regarded as anarchists, since they were able to distinguish these individuals from others who participated in these demonstrations. Alternatively, it is possible that SÄPO had made a general assessment based on cases where anarchist-related flags or

³ If nothing else is stated, the information from the security police’s archive is drawn from the research report *Hotet från vänster. Säkerhetstjänsternas övervakning av kommunister, anarkister m.m. 1965–2002* [The Threat from the Left. The security service’s monitoring of communists, anarchists and others], SOU 2002:91, which constitutes part of the inquiry conducted by the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service; see pages 305–385 in particular.

banners had been seen at the demonstrations.

In October 1971, the security police noted in their files that the Anarchist Federation of Stockholm had been formed and that it constituted a merger of a number of smaller groups. There were also anarchist organizations in Gothenburg, Lund, Växjö, and Malmö, but the security police's assessment was that these were often temporary organizations, and there was therefore no need to include them in the central security police register. The information relating to these groups was nonetheless recorded in full, however, but in what is referred to as the 'working register'. One of the general criticisms of the security police expressed by the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service related specifically to SÄPO's use of this type of register. The Commission states that SÄPO had consistently defined sensitive information as 'working registers' as a means of obstructing public insight into their registration activities. On occasions where the security police suspected that one of these registers might become subject to public scrutiny, they had simply introduced new registers with different names. Or they had continued to maintain their old registers despite legislation requiring the introduction of new, more closely regulated registers. This was the case with the so-called SÄPO register which was established in 1998, for example—a register that was only maintained by SÄPO for the sake of appearances because they were required to do so by law. The operational registers that were used in practice were, as had previously been the case, the central register and the security police's 'working notes' (SOU 2002:91:362). The security police's general view of the importance of registering political sympa-

thies may be illustrated by the following extract from a directive dated October 1953:

The register constitutes our memory. Let it know what you have collected. Notes kept in the desk drawer may possibly have enriched your own knowledge, but not *the knowledge of the division*. Make sure therefore that information is registered! It is only then that you improve the division's ability to answer the continuously recurring questions: Who is this and what is known about them? (SOU 2002:88:103–104; emphasis in original)

This represents a good description of the security police's view of their registration activities for the vast majority of the period examined.

During the 1970s, SÄPO monitored the anarchists only sporadically and then most often only in connection with demonstrations. As examples, the Commission of Inquiry mentions a demonstration against the actions of the British in Northern Ireland, the occupation of the British tourist office in Stockholm, and the demonstration held against the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in the summer of 1972 (SOU 2002:91:315). The information that was received during these kinds of occasions was 'saved in the generic file on anarchist activities that had been created' (SOU 2002:91:316). The security police also received information from foreign colleagues—for example they regularly received information from the UK on which Swedish citizens subscribed to the British anarchist press. In addition, there were also what have been termed 'intimate informants' (ibid.), a term which must refer to inside informants or individuals close to the anarchist organizations.

The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service noted that in October 1972 there were 36 individuals recorded as anarchists in SÄPO's registers. However, the registers contained no information about which organizations they might conceivably belong to (SOU 2002:91:357). In 1973, the government issued new regulations relating to the Personnel Background-Checks Ordinance, which amongst other things meant that anarchist organizations were no longer to be viewed as requiring special attention. However, SÄPO did not want completely to remove anarchists from the collection of political groups that would be monitored. The then head of SÄPO, Hans Holmér, argued for 'a looser formulation' that would also include 'the temporary anarchist groups', but this was rejected by the government (SOU 2002:91:317). However, this did not prevent individuals whom SÄPO regarded as dangerous from being 'treated separately and not as members of any particular organization' (ibid.).

'International terrorism'

At the beginning of the 1970s, SÄPO also began to take an interest in 'international terrorism'. One important incident in this area was the occupation of the West German embassy in Stockholm in April 1975 by six members from the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF). The occupiers demanded that 26 imprisoned RAF prisoners in West Germany would be freed, but the West German government refused. Shortly before midnight an explosive device detonated inside the embassy. The explosive charge was triggered by one of the occupiers probably by mistake, and large parts of the embassy building caught fire

shortly thereafter. All but one of the occupiers survived the explosion and were able to get out of the building. Those who were partly severely injured were arrested immediately by police and expelled from the country quickly. One of them later died due to his injuries; the other five got life in prison. According to the security police, this kind of international terrorism constituted part of the long-term goal of communist revolution. In a report from the fourth quarter of 1976, SÄPO wrote that: 'Lying behind this strategy will be the Soviet intelligence organization the KGB, which in order to avoid revealing its intentions is using the assistance of first and foremost the East German, Czechoslovakian, Cuban, and North Korean intelligence services' (SOU 2002:91:319). In the same year there was also a change in the organization's attitude towards the anarchists, as SÄPO realized that they had been removed from the confidential list of organizations on erroneous grounds. A security police memo stated that 'The anarchists *are* organized, and history can confirm their inclination towards acts of terrorism' (SOU 2002:91:319; emphasis in original).

SÄPO's interest in the anarchists intensified in connection with a police intervention against plans to kidnap the then Labour Market Minister Anna-Greta Leijon in April 1977. The motives behind the kidnapping were reported as being that Anna-Greta Leijon, as the responsible minister at the time of the attack against the West German embassy, had made the decision to extradite the German occupants of the embassy to West Germany, among them the one who later died as a result of his injuries. According to the security police, several of those involved in

the kidnap plans were members of anarchist circles and some of those convicted were also members of the syndicalist trade union organization. However, the primary focus of the security police's interest does not appear to have been directed at the syndicalist movement itself but rather at specific individuals.

Once the plans to kidnap Anna-Greta Leijon had been revealed, it became easier for the security police to acquire the necessary authorization for telephone taps. This resulted in taps being used in relation to, amongst others, anarchists suspected of membership of the Anarcho-Communist Organization. The same was true in relation to the editorial staff of the anarchist newspaper *Brand*. Taps were even placed on the communications of the National Association for the Humanization of Correctional Treatment (KRUM).⁴ 'In no case did the tapping of Brand, Krum and various anarchists' home telephones lead to any of the investigations conducted resulting in prosecution' (SOU 2002:91:323). The phone tapping did, however, produce information that found its way into the security police's registers.

It was also events in West Germany that led the security police, for a number of years starting in the autumn of 1977, to monitor the Association for a Libertarian Forum. The association had premises, which amongst other things contained a book-store. The security police argued that the Libertarian Forum might function as a recruitment base for Action-Group West-Germany. Several members of this

group participated in a demonstration that was held in Stockholm in October 1977 under the title 'German Autumn—Swedish Winter?' This was interpreted by SÄPO as 'a covert threat against Swedish society' (SOU 2002:91:320). The demonstration was scrupulously photographed by SÄPO. But there was also an informant who had provided SÄPO with information and who had stated that the group's aim was to express support for the imprisoned members of the Rote Armee Fraktion. The same source had also earlier provided information in connection with the arrest of those suspected in the kidnapping of Anna-Greta Leijon.

'Anarchist bohemianism'

Thus until 1987, the security police's interest in syndicalists and anarchists was at most moderate. One of the factors that contributed to this may have been what the security police regarded as the 'the woolly left'. SÄPO were of the view that the recruitment of anarchists primarily originated in a type of bohemianism that had been fashionable in parts of the anarchist movement. The following can be read in a SÄPO document on extremist activities from 1977:

Instead of attacking society, the bohemian slides out of it. That is, he lives without adapting to the values of society, but usually lives within society and first and foremost off society. The so-called 'woolly left' can be assigned to (SOU 2002:91:325) this group.

The security police estimated that this woolly left was comprised of approximately 4,000 people in Stockholm. Half of these could simply be ignored, since according to SÄPO they were people

⁴KRUM was an organization that existed in the years 1966–1984 with a view to engaging in advocacy to make the Swedish prison system more human, to reduce its use of punishment, and to influence politicians to reduce the use of imprisonment.

suffering from more or less serious mental and/or social damage (!). Thus 2,000 individuals remained, and on this basis SÄPO made some rather remarkable mathematical calculations. They argued that it was reasonable to assume that 2% of these people (i.e. approximately 40 individuals) could 'develop into operational terrorists'. SÄPO argued that a further 5% to 7%, 100–140 individuals, could be a part of service groups for the 'operational nucleus'. But the document contains no information about the basis on which these calculations were made. The gist of the document is nonetheless that, according to SÄPO, the 'woolly left' included 40 individuals who had to be regarded as a 'non-negligible threat'.

The security police's interest in the syndicalist trade union movement increased for a short period from 1979 onwards. At the organization's 21st congress in 1979, an anti-militarist committee was formed, and 'during the 1980s it was primarily this activity that interested the security police' (SOU 2002:91:379). This interest gradually waned, however, and SÄPO noted in their files that the SAC syndicalists acted 'with restraint and hardly in a more revolutionary fashion than the reformist trade union movement' (SOU 2002:91:309).

Another reason for the limited interest shown by the security police in the groups that constitute the focus of this paper was, according to one of their 'intimate and reliable sources', that the syndicalists in the SAC had attracted many anarchists and transformed them into 'pure syndicalists' who thus devoted themselves to more traditional trade union work. As had been the case during the 1950s, when the SAC were perceived as reliable 'communist-

swallowers', they thus continued to be viewed by the security police as an organization with a good appetite, although now it was anarchists that were on the menu, which led the security police to refer to the SAC in their documents as 'anarchist-eaters'. The only syndicalists to trigger SÄPO's interest at the end of the 1970s were the members of the local syndicalist organization in the town of Örebro, which was subject to phone-tapping since the local SÄPO office argued that the town's anarchists were in the process of 'building up an urban guerrilla'. Such a guerrilla force never emerged into the light of day, however.

Reversal, the scene starts to shift

While the security police had viewed syndicalists and anarchists as a 'relatively uninteresting phenomenon' (SOU 2002:91:328) during the first half of the 1980s, this perception changed in 1987 in connection with Nancy Reagan's visit to Stockholm and the formation of a group calling itself Commando Coca Cola. According to a SÄPO document entitled *Subversion*, similar groups were also started in other towns and cities—the *Husnallarna* in Gothenburg, *The Foxes* in Örebro, and *A Fighting Generation* in Lund. Common to these groups was that they directed their focus against the USA and companies with links to South Africa, first and foremost the petroleum company Shell. The journal *TotalBrand* functioned as a channel of communication. In these groups, the security police saw 'the contours of a new and militant anarchist movement', a movement with its roots in earlier occupations of buildings and which furthermore had contacts with the Danish BZ movement.

According to SÄPO, their fundamentally anarchist nature meant that they were loosely formed, 'but there is a clearly organized core' (SOU 2002:91:330).

The fact that the security police took the attacks on Shell seriously can be seen from amongst other things a document from the summer of 1988, which states that the actions against Shell petrol stations were to be viewed as 'a preliminary stage to traditional terrorism' (SOU 2002:91:368). It was particularly worrying that this was an international phenomenon. The armed forces also felt some concern, since in 1989 they had signed a contract with Shell for fuel deliveries. The security section of the office of the Commander-in-Chief noted that 'the autonomists' constituted those that for the moment constituted 'the greatest threat to society'. They stood outside all power structures and therefore often even refused national service (SOU 2002:91:369).

The actions conducted against Shell were compiled and published in the newspaper *Brand*. In order to attempt to trace who had carried out these actions the prosecutor, at the request of SÄPO, issued a decision allowing for the newspaper's mail to be intercepted. This decision was of course taken under conditions of intense secrecy. However, an anonymous postal employee sent a copy of the prosecutor's decision to *Brand*, which showed that it was not only *Brand's* post that was being read, since the decision related to a post office box that was used not only by the newspaper but also by several other organizations. This produced a massive amount of information for the security police. However, SÄPO did not only intercept mail and tap telephones in order to chart the 'autonomist network'. They also conducted monitoring of mobile phone traffic, cordless home telephones,

and pagers. No information is available on whether the security police conducted these particular surveillance activities themselves or engaged the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA) to do the work for them.

The period subsequent to the cold war

At an internal work meeting at the security police in 1990, eight points were listed regarding the future monitoring of the autonomist networks. In addition to the methods that have already been mentioned, SÄPO would participate at interrogations conducted by the regular police, use sources within the 'movement', take 'active measures', engage in long-term infiltration, and employ 'garbage collection' (SOU 2002:91:354). What the term 'active measures' refers to cannot be seen from the document, but it does state that garbage collection had been tested and had produced good results. SÄPO had gone through rubbish bags 'thrown out by anarchists', for example, in connection with the surveillance of the Café Autonom in Stockholm and had found a 'membership list and a sketch of a transformer' (ibid.). But 'intimate informants', i.e. individuals on the inside of the groups that SÄPO wished to monitor, and infiltration were also of significance. Infiltration can occur in two principal ways. In the one case an individual already in contact with SÄPO is asked by the organization of interest to become involved, which SÄPO would then recommend the individual to do. The second alternative is that SÄPO would send a person into an organization to collect information. SÄPO succeeded in using the second strategy during the 1990s, when a source had, over a long period of time, been

‘prepared in order to infiltrate militant autonomists’ (SOU 2002:91:356). The individual in question was trained by SÄPO and had also engaged in ‘extensive self-tuition based on Swedish and foreign material’. SÄPO also developed a credible background by having the infiltrator subscribe to suitable papers and participate in demonstrations and gatherings ‘so that his name and appearance would become known in the circles he was to infiltrate’ (SOU 2002:91:357). One of the documents in SÄPO’s archive shows that the infiltrator’s task was carefully to get close to individuals within this environment and to try and join one of the networks that existed in Sweden. In this way, SÄPO wanted to obtain information about the militant groups’ future aims and methods, as well as being able to use the infiltrator to assist in the identification of ‘militant autonomists’. In order further to strengthen the infiltrator’s credibility within the autonomist milieu, the individual also provided information on Nazis to the anarchist network, information that was in turn provided by SÄPO. One question that arises is to what extent the security police acted in the same way in connection with the infiltration of Nazi groups. Did they also pass on information on anti-fascists to the right-wing extremist White-Power milieu?

According to SÄPO, the actions against Shell reached a peak at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991. At this time, SÄPO counted 336 actions conducted against Shell in Sweden. Under the heading ‘The past year’ it was noted that ‘Groups referring to themselves as anarchists or autonomists have during the past year too staged a series of attacks against petrol stations. The stated aim has been to influence the targeted oil company, Shell, to abandon its involvement in South

Africa’ (SÄPO 1989/90:8). This is the first time that the label ‘autonomist’ appears in the official terminology of the security police. As early as the following year, however, SÄPO’s focus on anarchists involved in actions against Shell declined. This was a result of a general reduction in the number of attacks against the petroleum company. ‘The decline may be assumed to be due to developments in South Africa. These have led militant anarchists, both nationally and abroad, to alter their strategy. The continued struggle will, it is said, focus on multinational companies in general, whereas less emphasis will be placed on companies that are perceived as supporting the apartheid system.’ During the year, 10 or so investigations had been initiated into ‘suspects from the anarchist and autonomist groupings’, but none of these cases resulted in prosecution (SÄPO 1990/91:11). Even though there were no prosecutions, however, the investigations meant that information on the suspected individuals was recorded in the registers of the security police.

The Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service examined 19 cases of telephone tapping that were focused on individuals within ‘the autonomist networks’ from the beginning of the 1990s. The plausibility of the suspicions on which the telephone taps were based varied a great deal. In some cases, where the suspicions related to preparations to commit acts of sabotage against Shell, the Commission found these to be completely reasonable. In other cases, however, particularly when the phone tapping was motivated by suspicions of unlawful military activity, the grounds for the phone tapping were shaky to say the least. According to the Commission, in telephone taps that have been conducted

since the 1990s the stated suspicions of 'unlawful military activity' have in fact been a means of getting prosecutors and the courts to approve the clandestine monitoring of individuals who have been suspected of criminality involving violence, 'but where there is no lawful basis for the conduct of such monitoring on other grounds' (SOU 2002:87:25). None of these telephone taps resulted in prosecutions either. But the objective was not to provide corroboration of suspected offences. Instead the motive has in fact been to obtain something for which clandestine monitoring may not lawfully be employed, namely the systematic collection of so-called surplus information. These phone taps are used more or less exclusively as instruments of general surveillance, and not as a means of investigating crimes.

Unlike the communist organizations that had previously constituted the priority for the security police, these groups were not organized in fixed, hierarchical structures, but were instead loosely organized in what could best be described as networks. According to the security police, this made them difficult to define and identify and thus also more difficult to monitor. 'Contacts are maintained with like-minded individuals in a number of other countries, and the participation of Swedes has been noted at several international meetings abroad. At these meetings, guidelines have been drawn up for the continued struggle towards common goals' (SOU 2002:87:25). This quotation points to two principal conclusions. First and foremost, it shows, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the security police had worked together and exchanged information with their international counterparts. The security services of other countries have been

supplied with information about the individuals and groups that SÄPO have labelled anarchists and autonomists, and the Swedish security police have been supplied with information both about the activities of Swedish individuals and groups abroad, and also about foreign anarchists and 'autonomists' who have had contacts in Sweden. And in addition, Swedish and/or foreign security police organizations have employed informants/infiltrators and/or made use of tapping or bugging technologies, since they have clearly obtained information about what has been discussed at these international meetings.

SÄPO and anti-fascism

At the beginning of the 1990s, the interest of the security police shifted increasingly towards the monitoring of the anti-fascist groups that were becoming established around the country in response to an emerging neo-Nazi movement. As early as March 1990, the security police were present and photographing participants at a national anarchist meeting. They succeeded in identifying 43 of those present. The thing that particularly interested SÄPO was that the meeting had discussed violence and unlawful activities. A new organization, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), emerged for the first time in connection with the November 30th demonstrations⁵ in Stockholm in 1991. AFA stood for a confrontational and militant anti-fascism, which meant that they attracted SÄPO's interest from the start. In this connection, SÄPO received valuable information from

⁵ November 30th has been an annual meeting for nationalists and right-wing extremists to celebrate King Karl XII who died that date in 1718.

one of their infiltrators. As has been noted, the security police had succeeded in infiltrating the anarchist network, and this particular source was able to provide information both on the structure of the organization and on how AFA worked. It is not clear from the documents whether this was the same SÄPO-trained infiltrator described earlier or someone else.

During the following budget year (1992/93–1994/95) the security police's activities in the area SÄPO refer to as 'protecting the constitution' became focused on what they themselves regarded as 'anarchist movements'. It was also at this point that a more well-developed line of reasoning emerged regarding the anarchists' objectives. According to SÄPO, the anarchists focused their activities on society's public sector agencies, businesses, and organizations, and they engaged in violent activities with political overtones. 'With contempt for the rules of democracy they instead use criminal acts in order to influence conditions in society' (SÄPO 1992/93:13). The security police also stated that the anarchists had no ambition to establish political parties in order to 'influence society's development within the framework of our democratic systems' (SÄPO 1993/94:14). Since these extra-parliamentary forces would constitute 'a threat to democracy' if they were allowed to grow strong, there should be no doubt 'that one of SÄPO's tasks is to combat the phenomena that have been mentioned' (ibid.).

Civil disobedience

At this time the security police were faced with a new phenomenon in the form of civil disobedience activists who engaged in actions focused on amongst other things

environmental and defence policy. What was new for SÄPO was that these groups were now 'using criminal methods in order to give force to their opinions' (SÄPO 1993/94:13). SÄPO also noted that even though the 'perpetrators are driven by idealist motives', this could not of course be regarded as acceptable. SÄPO therefore increased their level of activity in relation to such individuals and groups. Several of the civil disobedience actions included participants who were members of various of Sweden's local syndicalist organizations.

In the mid-1990s, SÄPO noted that organizations and groups within the anarchist and autonomist networks were for the most part unchanged and that the central individuals were also largely the same. 'The extra-parliamentary activities that the anarchist/autonomist groups have engaged in over the course of the year have primarily been directed at the Sweden Democrats and the Yes-to-the-EU campaign. More or less all of the Yes-to-the-EU offices have had their premises vandalized at some point' (SÄPO 1994/95:14).⁶ The following year, SÄPO's description of its internal national security activities changed. Under the heading 'Protection of the constitution', the work of the security police during this budget year was described as having been exclusively focused on extremist right-wing groups. Thereafter 'extremist environmental activists' and anti-Shell actions were also mentioned, along with 'extremist vegans' who were fighting for animal rights (SÄPO 1995/96:18). By con-

⁶Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) is a political party to the far right. Their party programme has a strong emphasis on nationalism. In the 2010 general election, the Sweden Democrats crossed the 4% threshold necessary for parliamentary representation and won 20 parliamentary seats.

trast, no mention at all was made of anarchists and/or syndicalists. In 1997, however, anarchists and autonomists were mentioned once again in the section on protection of the constitution, and now in more well-defined terms. One reason for this was a new wave of actions against Shell, which this time was due to the company's oil extraction activities in Nigeria. SÄPO's counter-measures took the form of an increased number of telephone taps and an intensification of the work of charting the autonomist networks in Sweden. This was the first year in which the Syndicalist Youth Federation (SUF) was mentioned. According to SÄPO it was also first and foremost SUF, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), a group called People's Power, and militant animal rights activists who had distinguished themselves over the course of the year by engaging in 'various forms of externally focused activities'. SÄPO identified two central networks. The first comprised SUF and AFA, who were described as advocating 'unlawful extra-parliamentary methods' (SOU 2002:91:370). The second network was comprised of groups called the Field Biologists, the Young Greens of Sweden, the Young Left, Friends of the Earth, and the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League (SSU), which did not advocate unlawful methods. In addition, in the same year, the anarchist resistance group Social Ecological Action (SEA) had claimed responsibility for a number of attacks directed at work on a major new traffic route around Stockholm. 'These attacks have caused damage worth a substantial amount of money' (*ibid.*).

SÄPO's annual report for 1999 was the first to include information on the number of individuals employed by SÄPO. At this time, the SÄPO staff comprised a total of approximately 800, of which 16% worked

with the 'protection of the constitution', which would mean that there were approximately 125 individuals at SÄPO who worked full time with suspected political criminality (SÄPO 1999:12). Under the heading 'Contextual developments' the autonomist networks were described in the following way: 'The autonomists constitute a well-established generic term for primarily anarchist-oriented activists around the world who by means of, amongst other things, extra-parliamentary working methods engage in a range of political issues' (SÄPO 1999:16). As examples of issues of this kind, the report mentions racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism, and environmental and animal exploitation. Over the course of this particular year, however, SÄPO's 'constitutional protection' work was primarily focused on extra-parliamentary groups within the race-ideological environment, where the perceived threat had become more menacing in 1999. Over the course of the year, the active syndicalist Björn Söderberg had been murdered, two police officers had been shot dead in the village of Malexander, and a bomb had been exploded under a car belonging to two journalists who had written about right-wing extremism (SÄPO 1999:26). The perpetrators of the first two incidents were arrested and subsequently convicted. In all cases the attacks had been committed by neo-Nazis with links to the White-Power movement. According to SÄPO, however, extra-parliamentary activities with 'links to single-issue groups within the autonomist network [had] also been extensive over the course of 1999' (SÄPO 1999:32). Against the back-drop of the serious crimes committed by individuals linked to the White-Power movement,

SÄPO had nonetheless primarily been interested in monitoring 'the militant network Anti-Fascist Action (AFA)' (SÄPO 1999:33). SÄPO's annual report also referred to individual incidents such as attacks on the porn industry, a street party against the car culture organized by Reclaim the Streets in the centre of Stockholm, and animal rights actions conducted by militant animal rights activists, primarily in the form of the SEA.

Beginning in the year 2000, the SÄPO annual report 'Crime linked to the country's internal security' contains discussions of the definitions of central concepts such as anti-sexism, animal rights activism, anti-fascism, and the autonomist movement, as well as brief descriptions of the background and goals of the various groups involved. The autonomists are described as a 'generic name for a number of loosely comprised networks consisting of a large variety of groups and individuals', groups that have no fixed organizational structure but are rather governed in a non-hierarchical manner (SÄPO 2000:59). The thing that unites the individuals in this environment is an anarchist-oriented basic ideology and a desire to combat all forms of oppression, authority, and hierarchical power structures, which they largely view as being a product of centralized state power and the capitalist system. A strong distrust of established decision-making processes means that they advocate extra-parliamentary methods and in some cases these methods also include crime (SÄPO 2000:60).

Graffiti, vandalism and the EU

In 2000 the security police refined their position somewhat by noting that not all of

the crimes described 'in connection with the autonomist movement's extra-parliamentary working methods' had necessarily been committed by individuals with links to this movement, 'but rather may well have been committed by persons with no such connection' and that this was true first and foremost for 'the crimes described under the heading crimes involving anti-fascist elements' (SÄPO 2000:62). In order for SÄPO to count an act as anti-fascist 'the incident must indicate a general aversion towards xenophobia, racism or the values of the White-Power world, or have been directed at individuals or property that have been assumed to belong to the right-wing extremist milieu' (SÄPO 2000:83). In 2000, 230 anti-fascist offences were reported to the police, which represents a dramatic increase by comparison with the previous year, when the corresponding figure was 93. According to SÄPO, one major contributory factor to the increase was the occupation of a building in the town of Linköping and two Reclaim the City rallies, one in Stockholm, the other in Malmö. The most common type of offence by far, and the one that increased most, was graffiti and to some extent vandalism. These offences had primarily been directed at private individuals or premises. 'Slogans such as "Class Struggle", "Reclaim the City/Streets" and anarchist symbols were common' (SÄPO 2000:89). But it was not only incidents of writing in the form of slogans on walls and doors that were prosecuted in 2000. An article published in *Brand* under the title 'How to make a riot a success. From A to Z' was also reported to the Chancellor of Justice as a case of incitement, since it could be viewed as encouraging the use of violence against the

police. *Brand* was subsequently acquitted of the charges by the courts.

In 2001, Sweden held the presidency of the EU and hosted a summit meeting in Gothenburg in the summer. The presidency in general, and the EU summit in Gothenburg on 14–16 July in particular, had a major significance for SÄPO's work during the year. The demonstrations during the meeting were at times very violent and with great material damage as a result. The police responded occasionally harshly. For the first time in nearly 70 years Swedish police opened fire on demonstrators. One of the demonstrators was shot and received fatal injuries (Flyghed 2001; Oskarsson 2005). The turmoil during these days is reflected in SÄPO's statistics on reported offences. The events in Gothenburg are presented separately and show that these resulted in over 1,000 reported offences, almost 900 of which were reported by the police while 80 involved reports made against the police. During the remainder of the year, a total of 450 offences were reported with anti-fascist (269) and left-wing ideological (181) motives, which represented an increase of almost 70 reported offences by comparison with the previous year. Once again, however, it was primarily graffiti offences that accounted for the increase. 'The most common forms of graffiti included the anarchist-A, AFA, and a crossed-out swastika' (SÄPO 2001:67). On the other hand, the numbers of reported offences against Shell and animal rights offences declined by 120.

The EU summit led to an increase in the level of attention focused on anarchist and syndicalist groups since these included a number of individuals who were very sceptical about the EU. It may have been

as a result of an increase in the level of monitoring of anarchist-influenced networks that SÄPO in May 2001 'came across an internal AFA report from the national convention held in Stockholm in the spring of 2000'. The report described a number of different Nazi groups present in Sweden. According to the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service, the report was reminiscent 'in many ways of SÄPO's own periodical compilations relating to Nazi activities in Sweden' (SOU 2002:91:350). No description is provided of how SÄPO 'came across' this report, however. There are a number of possible ways in which this may have happened, but the most likely alternative is that one of SÄPO's informants had access to AFA material and provided them with the report. It cannot be ruled out that the similarities noted between the AFA report and SÄPO's own may in part be due to the fact that some of the contents of the AFA report were based on information that SÄPO had themselves passed on to the anti-fascists via their informant.

In 2002, the number of reported anti-fascist offences increased again. In addition, the preceding years' downward trend in the number of reported animal rights offences was broken, and the number of reported offences of this kind more than doubled. At the same time, although 2002 was an election year, and although the election included two parties with expressly xenophobic policies, SÄPO noted that these factors had not resulted in an increase in the level of activity. SÄPO identified just under 200 incidents in connection with the election, and the majority of these related to election posters having been torn down or pasted over. The

increase in reported anti-fascist offences continued in 2003. The size of the increase was largely the result of violent incidents associated with a small number of demonstrations and actions, at the same time as the level of confrontations with individuals from the White-Power movement remained high. SÄPO's annual report for 2003 notes that, as usual, monitoring had been maintained in relation to those autonomist and left-wing ideological groups that were prepared to use violence in connection with their political struggle. However, 'against the background of the autonomist milieu's reduced capacity to mobilize during the year, this work has required fewer resources than in previous years' (SÄPO 2003:38). This statement serves as testimony to the fact that SÄPO apparently had sufficiently good information about the autonomist milieu to be able to comment on their capacity to mobilize.

In 2004 and 2005, the security police noted a new left-wing extremist network, Global Intifada, which lay behind a dozen attacks during the two years in question. The first was directed at the so-called Israel Festival at the Nalen club and conference rooms in Stockholm in March 2004. Otherwise the security police noted that the number of reports relating to offences linked to the autonomist milieu declined substantially in 2004. In the spring of 2006, SÄPO monitored the so-called Invisible Party (*Osynliga Partiet*)⁷ campaign and noted that the autonomist milieu was behind it. 'Several groups and networks of the autonomous scene carried out

actions in the name of *Osynliga Partiet*' (SÄPO 2006:35). SÄPO conducted intelligence-gathering work throughout the lead-up to the general election in order to counteract the actions of the campaign, which was conducted by means of both peaceful and unlawful methods. A year later, Swedish anarchists were involved in the demolition of the Youth House in Copenhagen. In connection with this and also the G-8 summit in Germany in June of the same year, SÄPO reported that they had engaged in extensive collaborations with foreign security and intelligence services in order to chart the anarchist networks (SÄPO 2007:48).

Concluding remarks

As can be seen from the above, the Swedish security police have conducted monitoring activities in relation to that segment of the extra-parliamentary opposition that they have labelled autonomists and/or anarchists and syndicalists both during and subsequent to the cold war period. Their primary interest has been focused on the actions of these groups and individuals, whereas less interest has been focused on their political views per se. By contrast, the monitoring activities that the security police directed at various expressions of communism were not restricted only to the concrete actions that the groups and individuals in question were deemed capable of engaging in. The mere suspicion of being a communist was sufficient to legitimize the monitoring of a given individual; and this remained very evidently the case throughout the cold war period. When the intensity of the East–West conflict subsequently began to wane at the end of the 1980s, SÄPO noted that

⁷ The Invisible Party was launched by the autonomous scene in the spring of 2006. The intention was never to run in any of the national or local elections but to provide an umbrella for protests against the election campaigns.

‘the violently focused communist organizations ha[d] become deflated’ (SÄPO 1991/92:12). They no longer constituted a significant threat to the security of Swedish society. This led to the emergence of something of a vacuum in the perceived threat scenarios of the security police. When the formerly highly prioritized cold-war communist threat disappeared, the attention of the security police instead became focused on other groups and behaviours, which had previously been assigned a lower priority, even though they had been active to a certain extent. As SÄPO themselves state, their activities became increasingly focused on, amongst other things, what they now conceived of as the dominant forms of left-wing activism, namely ‘anarchists or autonomists’ (ibid.). However, this was not because these groups suddenly constituted a greater threat to national security than had previously been the case. According to SÄPO’s own documentation of the actions engaged in by this segment of the extra-parliamentary opposition, their activities have remained at a relatively stable level since the beginning of the 1950s. With some exceptions the activities in question have taken a relatively harmless form, which also has been noted by SÄPO. In the perspective of constituting a serious threat to the Swedish society, the actions they have been involved in have sometimes been quite trivial; that is, occupations of buildings, graffiti, and vandalism. As regards the period subsequent to the cold war, the Commission of Inquiry into the Security Service notes that it is questionable whether the autonomist milieu has in fact actually constituted a threat over the past two decades. This view is also supported by SÄPO’s own documents.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the security police’s assessment has been that Sweden’s extremist political groups, including the autonomist groups that constitute the focus of the current article, do not constitute a concrete threat to the Swedish system of government. According to the security police, then, the threat posed by these groups has not intensified since the end of the cold war. So why the increase in monitoring activities?

In this context it is worth considering the significance of the new concept of national security that was introduced in the aftermath of the cold war. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union the threat of military invasion lost credibility. The national security situation improved substantially with the end of the cold war and Sweden’s membership of the EU. Instead of being pleased about the emergence of a safer global situation, however, politicians and security analysts instead began to speak of ‘a broader threat’, and it became increasingly common to talk about threats and risks of a non-military nature. The Swedish government also felt that viewing ‘security in a purely military perspective constitutes an obsolete approach’ (Gov. Bill 1995/96:12:8). The security concept was instead expanded to include ‘everything that may affect our national security’. The military threats were replaced by considerably more diffuse concepts linked to criminality and other types of public order disturbances. The limits for what could be perceived as threatening were dramatically expanded. Paradoxically, then, the demise of the balance of terror did not produce a safer world. Instead it was said that the world

had become more insecure than ever, since the enemy could now attack from any direction. The threat posed by two arms-racing superpowers had hardly been given time to cool down before new threats found their way onto the national security agenda. In effect, instead of de-escalating the perceived extent of the total threat to national security, conceptualizations of national security were instead expanded to ascribe an increased level of severity to previously less significant types of threat. Threats that had formerly been assigned a low priority now made their entrance onto the national security stage, among them the autonomists.

When the security police ceased to perceive the communists as having 'violent propensities' towards the end of the cold war, the level of monitoring focused on this group declined dramatically. In parallel with this decline, the security police's interest in those sections of the extra-parliamentary opposition that constitute the focus for this article increased. This occurred in spite of the fact that there had been no shift in the activities of the latter groups which might reasonably have led to them being viewed as a greater threat to national security. No trace can be found in the security police's documentation of these groups' activities of anything that would reasonably motivate the increased monitoring to which they became subjected from the beginning of the 1990s. The security police's descriptions at least contain no strong suggestion of any qualitative difference in the threat these groups posed to the country's internal security between the period of the cold war and the period immediately following the cold war's conclusion. It therefore appears likely that these groups served to fill the vacuum that

emerged in the security police's threat scenarios once the communist organizations were no longer perceived as a high priority for SÄPO's monitoring activities. Thus the logic of the security police appears to be that new groups can always be given a higher surveillance priority in order to maintain continuity in the aggregate level of the perceived threat to national security. In the current case, the raising of the priority assigned to the groups in question was also facilitated by the expanded national security concept introduced directly following the end of the cold war. These extra-parliamentary groups thereby came to be assigned a significant role in the process of constructing a new 'enemy', which in turn served to strengthen the legitimacy of the role and activities of the security police. A little more than a decade later, however, this particular perceived enemy has once again been de-prioritized, with attention instead becoming focused on the global war on terrorism.

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