

The CIA and Radio Nord

Simon Matthews

In Jan Stocklassa's *The Man Who Played With Fire: Stieg Larsson's Lost Files and the Hunt for an Assassin*, reviewed in this issue of *Lobster*, Alf Enerström is named as one of a group of people suspected of being behind the assassination of Swedish PM Olof Palme. In that narrative, the Swedish actress Gio Petré has a minor part as the partner of Enerström whom, it turns out, was formerly her doctor. As part of the process to provide a briefing format for others to follow his own research, Stieg Larsson had written up brief profiles of the main antagonists. In the one covering both Enerström and Petré he noted how 'Enerström has been called the biggest Palme hater in Sweden' and that 'together they traveled throughout the country spreading propaganda against Palme'.

Enerström was probably borderline mentally ill and, when his son was taken into care in 1976, Enerström believed that Olof Palme was personally responsible. A vast and expensive campaign of propaganda against Palme was launched in the Swedish papers with full-page adverts denouncing the Social Democrat party and its leader.¹ This undoubtedly contributed to Palme's defeat at the ballot box that year but the claim, from Enerström and Petré, that they and they *alone* were the ones who had defeated the Social Democrats was as ludicrous as the claim that they had been solely responsible for that party's previous election success (when Enerström and Petré had, of course, been campaigning *for* the SD).

It appears that the post-1976 Enerström was (like Victor Gunnarsson, his alleged co-conspirator in the killing of Palme) associated with Lyndon La Rouché's European Workers Party and, via that, made allegations in the 80s that Palme and the Swedish Social Democrats were funded by the Soviet Union.

The mention of Petré and the passing references in the text to well-heeled individuals who fundamentally disliked the Social Democrats – and the strong hints throughout the Stocklassa book that the CIA stood, ultimately, behind the

¹ See chapter 15 of Matthew Sweet, *Operation Chaos: The Vietnam Deserters Who Fought the CIA, the Brainwashers, and Themselves* (London: Picador, 2018). This is available at <books.google.com>. This was reviewed in *Lobster* 77 at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster77/lob77-operation-chaos.pdf> >

Palme killing – reminds me again of Radio Nord and the role played by film producer Jack Kotschack in its operation. In 2009 this was considered, very briefly, in *Lobster* 58.²

At that time relatively little information could be gleaned from research (on-line or otherwise) about Radio Nord and Kotschack. Its origins, however, remain clear: it was funded by 'a group of businessmen in Dallas', the leading figures being Gordon McLendon and Clint Murchison Jr. It broadcast between 1960 and 1962 from just outside Swedish territorial waters. According to the website Offshore Radio Museum:

'American financial backing for the project was not actually secured until January 1960 and at the same time Jack Kotschack was appointed General Manager of the planned new station. Gordon McLendon agreed to act as a consultant, strictly on a non-payment basis for fear of jeopardising his ownership of US radio stations, while fellow Dallas businessmen Jim Foster and Bob Thompson provided finance to launch the station . . .

A flag and registration for the station's ship (which at that stage had not even been obtained) was arranged as the result of various meetings in America and Nicaragua. President Samoza [sic: Somoza] of Nicaragua personally agreed to register the station's ship and provide a flag for her to fly in return for the project's American backers completing some land purchases in Nicaragua.'³

The same report goes on to state:

' . . . The Texas millionaires who financed Radio Nord intend to launch one transmitter in Cyprus and one in Beirut. Kotschak has been offered a partnership but has not yet accepted . . . '

Interestingly, the Radio Nord engineering staff included John Mullaney, credited as 'US Navy in Washington'. According to his colleague Ove Sojstrom on 14 April 2007:

'This American John Mullaney, he was the expert and he had constructed a pair of broadcasting ships that the Americans used to broadcast the Voice of America. I think that one of them was broadcasting in the eastern Mediterranean and the other somewhere else.'⁴

² In my 'The devil has all the best songs: reflections on the life and times of Simon Dee' at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster58/lobster58.pdf>>.

³ <<http://www.offshoreradiomuseum.co.uk/page33.html>>

⁴ See <<https://tinyurl.com/r92e2m2>> or <http://jvnforg.dreamhosters.com/radiohistoria/gm/audiolab/ovesjostrom_20070414_after-chat_translated.text.in.english.htm>.

In the last decade more information has appeared about Kotschack, who was born Saloman Kotschack in Helsinki (then part of Tsarist Russia) in 1915. He fought in the Finnish army, against Russia, in the Winter War of 1939-1940 and the Continuation War 1941-1944, moved to Sweden in 1944 and later travelled widely in the US where he became a business associate of Milton Reynolds. By 1954 he was back in Sweden, working as a film producer, which he continued to do through to the 70s.⁵ His US business colleague, Milton Reynolds (1892-1976), made a fortune from the manufacture of ballpoint pens, including one which could write underwater.

He was also a keen aviator and purchased a US war surplus B-26 Invader bomber in 1947. Having already 'set a record for flying around the world in 78 hours and 55.5 minutes', Milton Reynolds along with his friends Bill Odom and Tex Sallee went on a mysterious 'aviation adventure' in 1948. Using Reynolds' innovative ballpoint pens as a means of gaining entry to the country, the three visited China on what was, ostensibly, a business trip. During their time there, however, the three took off several times from Chinese airfields without authorisation and/or on unannounced trips. Of the final unauthorised take-off, Odom would later say, 'We were either going to Tokyo or to jail'. They did, indeed, reach Japan, where 'Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the military governor, refused Chinese demands to return the crew and plane'. The rumour amongst the Reynolds family was that they had been 'looking for evidence of Chinese nuclear tests for the U.S. government'.⁶

The Reynolds family have to be slightly mistaken, however, because in 1948 Reynolds would not have been checking for any sign of a *Chinese* nuclear test. (The Chinese civil war was on-going and would not be determined finally for a further year, after which China would be in no position to commence a nuclear weapons programme for at least a decade.) He might, though, have been asked to check for signs of a *Soviet* test. The arrest and conviction in the UK of Alan Nunn May in 1946 proved that UK and US nuclear secrets had been passed to the Soviet Union. The Western powers assumption would have then been that a Soviet bomb of some description, based on what May had leaked and the Soviet use of captured German scientists, might be imminent.

The use of a B-26 to carry out this mission is of interest. The B-26 would subsequently become first choice for the CIA in its many covert operations, seeing service in Indonesia 1958-1959, Cuba 1961, the Congo 1964 and Biafra

⁵ Kotschack's films included a couple of popular dramas set on the Finnish front in the 40s.

⁶ See the page '*Tex Sallee and the Reynolds Chinese Expedition*' at <<https://tinyurl.com/rq9nuvc>> or <<https://familyconnectionsblog.wordpress.com/2016/06/10/tex-sallee-and-the-reynolds-chinese-expedition/>>

1967. Reynold's B-26 ended up in Iran in the mid 70s, where it was impounded after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Much of the above is culled from the internet, and the internet is not often a fully reliable source. But it can provide guidance. In this case, from material now accessible, it seems that Reynolds received clandestine payments for many years from the CIA. Reynolds was also a close business associate of Kotschak, who in 1960 became general manager of Radio Nord, owned by Gordon McLendon. To this we can add what was already in the public domain in 2009: McLendon in turn was a friend of David Atlee Phillips (a significant figure in the CIA 1950-1987); and, prior to Radio Nord, had given Phillips assistance in establishing clandestine 'pro-democracy' broadcasting stations in Latin America. (Altogether, the CIA and Cuban exiles operated 'about 40 stations in five countries around the Caribbean'.⁷)

Given all the above, the case for Radio Nord – ultimately – being operated by the CIA looks quite solid. And the reason for their doing so is partly answered in the Stocklassa book.

⁷ <<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/bay-of-pigs/propaganda.htm>>