
Philippines

The shattering of the myth of the 'independent' New People's Army

by Our Special Correspondent

Recent developments in the Philippines are shattering the myth that the communist New People's Army is a "home-grown" insurgency independent of the international Soviet irregular warfare apparatus. On Aug. 9, Stellan Hermansson, the head of the youth organization of the Swedish Communist Party, fled the Philippines while under indictment for giving aid and support to the NPA. Among other charges, he is accused of having turned over \$30,000 to the Alex Bancyao Brigade (ABB), the NPA's urban guerrilla unit responsible for assassinating "enemies of the people."

Meanwhile, documents captured by the Philippine Army in a raid on an NPA hideout in Manila revealed the international apparatus that has been providing monetary and political support to the NPA, channeled in part through a network of bank accounts and transport companies in Hong Kong, Singapore, and elsewhere.

Hermansson, along with a West German Protestant minister, Klaus Schmitt, and Antonio Bosch, a naturalized Filipino formerly from West Germany, were arrested June 8 while returning from a "visit" to an NPA guerrilla base outside Manila. They were later charged with having taken part in an armed attack on the village of San Francisco last February, where two village officials, including the mayor, were killed.

A look at the backgrounds of the three individuals will confirm that the Soviets have chosen to deploy their irregular warfare assets built up in Europe and the United States, assets associated with "liberation" ideologues among church circles, and their assets in the radicalized youth movement of Western Europe, particularly the so-called Autonomous groups, as well as their own Communist Parties in the West. These groups' acts of terrorism, violence, and sabotage often parallel and intersect Soviet and East bloc spetsnaz (special forces) operations targeted throughout Western Europe primarily against NATO military facilities and national electricity and transportation grids.

In the Philippines, this pattern is being mimicked with repeated terrorist attacks on American servicemen stationed at the Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base that have taken the lives of several Americans in the past year. Further, Soviet spetsnaz teams have reportedly penetrated the perim-

eters of these bases. Reports that the Soviets seek permission to set up a commercial shipping enterprise in the Philippines to service their fishing and commercial fleet have raised fears among Filipino and American military circles that the Soviets would use this as a base for espionage and spetsnaz operations, as they have done in Belgium and Spain, where such enterprises have been set up.

The mentality of common crime

Before going further, something must be said about investigative method. If one must be convinced of Soviet backing by a smoking Kalashnikov or the presence of Cuban advisers, one is missing the forest for the trees. In a sense, Soviet irregular warfare is premised on the two fundamentals of any other common criminal act: *motive*, and *modus operandi*.

Their motive is strategic: getting rid of American bases. Any strategic doctrine designed to counter the Soviet Union must ensure the ability to strike the Soviets at any point on their entire perimeter. This is indispensable to counter the Soviet advantage of striking at any point on the Eurasian landmass from internal lines of communications. Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base are key for the United States to deploy anywhere on the Asian continent, in an arc stretching from the Korean peninsula to the Persian Gulf. Their loss, coupled with a potential American strategic withdrawal from Western Europe, would leave the Soviets indisputably the dominant, if not ruling, power of the Eurasian landmass.

The Soviets take certain local problems into account—just as a bank robber, if he sees his target heavily guarded during business hours, is unlikely to enter through the front door at 11 o'clock in the morning, but might try tunneling into the safe from a nearby building. Filipinos, mainly Christian and often very Americanized, are averse to the dogmatic Marxist-Leninism of the usual Soviet-backed guerrilla armies. Another obstacle is physical. The Philippines, unlike other Soviet targets, is a nation of islands, hundreds of miles from the Asian continent. Shipment of heavy weapons required for a decisive civil war is quite impossible.

Thus, Moscow has chosen to act through proxies with a two-pronged operation, aimed at providing outside support

for the NPA itself and more broadly, spurring a basic shift of Philippine society and culture away from the United States and Westernizing ideals of progress, and away from the moral values of the Catholic Church.

The Swedish Communist

Stellen Hermansson, along with the other two suspects, was arrested on June 8, 1988 while returning from a "journalistic visit" to an NPA camp outside Manila. He was later positively identified as having taken part in an armed NPA attack on the town of San Francisco. Two rolls of film seized by the police following his arrest later revealed a picture of Hermansson in the NPA camp, brandishing a Browning heavy machinegun, complete with bandeleros of 50-caliber ammunition around his neck.

Also seized was his notebook, containing entries indicating clandestine meetings with urban guerrillas and the transfer of 200,000 Swedish kroner (\$30,000) to the Alex Bancyo Brigade (ABB), the NPA unit responsible for assassination of their urban-based enemies. Although he denied taking part in the San Francisco attack, he could not deny the other evidence, only saying its discovery was "unfortunate." He was later indicted for aiding and abetting the NPA, and, only after intensive pressure from the Swedish government, was he let out on bail. Although his passport had been seized to prevent him from leaving the Philippines, the Swedish Embassy, in an unprecedented move, issued him a new passport, enabling him to jump bail and flee the country.

Hermansson is no simple idealistic Communist. He is the head of the youth section of the Swedish Communist Party (VKP) and editor of their publication *Roed Press* (*Red Press*). Despite being reputed a "Eurocommunist" party, the VKP keeps excellent relations with the Soviet Communist Party. As a parliamentary party, its support of the shaky Social Democratic government of Sweden is crucial to the Soviet design of pushing Sweden further into the orbit of Soviet foreign policy objectives on Europe's northern flank. This dependence clearly secured the direct intervention of the Swedish government at the highest levels to secure his release.

Hermansson's *Roed Press* has published articles not only defending terrorist groups such as the Kurdish PKK, but openly calling for the use of violence in political campaigns, and giving instructions on how best to smash shop windows and most effectively to lie to the police. He personally was the leader of the violent demonstrations that met Nancy Reagan in Sweden in 1987.

This advocacy of violence coheres with orders coming from Moscow to the European Communist Parties to begin direct support of revolutionary violence, a shift signaled in the publications of the West German Communist Party (DKP), which despite its small membership receives \$30 million per year from East Germany. In an article authored by one Harald Projanskia, the DKP calls for open "dialogue" with the vio-

lent Autonomous Groups and the terrorist Revolutionary Cells, as long as their use of violence does not "contradict" their "anti-imperialist goals." This article appeared shortly after the Nov. 2, 1987 murder of two West German police officers by Autonomous rioters during demonstrations near Frankfurt, West Germany.

Hermansson's functioning as a courier of cash payments to terrorist assassin teams in Manila like the ABB, clearly fits with the above shift in the Soviet-led international communist movement.

The liberationist minister

The other two individuals arrested June 8 have similar credentials. Klaus Schmitt comes out of the liberationist left circles in the West German Protestant Church (EKD). The EKD has been the center of West Germany's "peace politics," which seeks a de facto neutralization of West Germany under Soviet inspiration. The theme of their annual Church Week exhibition was West German reconciliation with the people of the Soviet Union for the crimes of Nazi Germany during World War II. Among the hundreds of action groups present along with the DKP and Soviet and East European representatives, were 30 dealing with the Philippines!

Schmitt works for the Protestant missionary organization, Dienste in Übersee (Service Overseas) based in Stuttgart. In the Philippines he operates out of the Philippine National Council of Churches, which is part of the World Council of Churches. The WCC, through the membership of the Russian Orthodox Church, is used by the Soviets to run the peace movement and other "progressive" movements around the world.

While living in West Germany, Schmitt worked for the EKD's apparatus in Cologne which brought him into the circle of the Philippine Action Group and Philippine Information Center. All such groups are in direct contact with the NPA's National Democratic Front office in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The NPA's official representative is Luis Jalandoni, an ex-Catholic priest. The Philippine Action Group was founded by a group of leftist Protestant theologians. Although Schmitt is currently standing trial for the same charges as Hermansson, he was released on bail at the insistence of West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

The third individual arrested, Antonio Bosch, had been involved in left-wing politics for many years and is said to be a close friend of Klaus Schmitt's.

Schmitt and Bosch continue to stand trial and their case as of this writing is inconclusive. Nonetheless, the Filipino government is starting to release information on the massive international political and financial support being channeled into the NPA. In a statement in the Philippine press, Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus revealed that private Dutch organizations, NOVIB and the XYZ movement, had channeled millions of dollars to the NPA through financing 39 projects

of so-called Non-Governmental Organizations.

Documents seized by the Philippine Army in a raid on an NPA hideout revealed the massive international support apparatus. One document, "Report on International Solidarity Work—January 1986 to November 1987," details the network including numbers of "exposurists" or visitors to the NPA and their front groups, from 31 countries including Japan, United States, Western and Eastern Europe, totaling 1,753 individuals. No fewer than 69 organizations, ranging from left-oriented charities to the Japanese Communist Party, are listed as having funneled money into the NPA's coffers—among them, the Philippine Action Group and the World Council of Churches.

The same cache revealed that the NPA maintains a network of foreign bank accounts and shipping and forwarding companies in Singapore, Hong Kong, and elsewhere, where money from support groups, plus "protection" money from foreign multinational companies operating in the Philippines, is deposited. It is believed, but not confirmed, that one account is held at the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. Estimated at several million dollars, it is used to buy weapons and ammunition. Shipments are handled by the shipping and forwarding companies. It is even believed that many of the so-called "fisheries" projects financed by Western aid agencies are actually supplying boats to ship weapons.

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Assad weighs options for Syria's crisis

by Selim al Khodr

The silence coming from Damascus is deafening, it has been noted by intelligence observers. Indeed, who can cite any major statements from Syria's President Hafez al Assad or the numerous vice presidents, from Abdel Halim Khaddam to Rifaat al Assad, since Iran's decision to accept U.N. Resolution 598 in July?

In less than a month, Hafez al Assad, who likes to think of himself as a spider sitting in a middle of a web covering the entire Middle Eastern region, has seen many of his strings cut. He was not consulted by his Iranian allies on their decision to abruptly end the Gulf War, and was as taken aback as anyone. He was even less informed prior to Jordan's King Hussein's dramatic decision to renounce all claims to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Assad's pride may have been hurt, and badly, but this matters little in comparison to the full implications for Syria of these two moves. In a matter of a few weeks, close to eight years of an elaborately worked-out strategy whereby Damascus had established its position as the regional power-broker, will have come to nothing.

Twist in relations with Teheran

Of decisive importance is the end of the Gulf War. Though this does not put, at least not immediately, an end to the "strategic relationship" between Damascus and Teheran, it means the isolation of Syria. The relationship had a value when Iran was threatening the Gulf countries which, in turn, had to go to Damascus to convey their messages to Teheran. To play such a role, Syria has received no less than 4 million tons of oil from Iran since 1981, at a value of \$2 billion, much less than the market price, and more than five times less than the amount in blackmail money paid by the Gulf countries under the cover of "financial help to the steadfastness countries."

The Syrians did not miss the fact that one of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati's first gestures when he reached the U.N. headquarters in New York last month, was to meet with all the Arab ambassadors with which Iran does not have diplomatic relations. Velayati's message was simple: Iran has taken the "strategic initiative" of choosing peace, and is ready to establish a direct dialogue with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—no more intermediaries.