

# ALL QUIETED ON THE WORD FRONT



*Notes on the abuse of power and  
the stifling of dissent by Swedish “progressives”*

AL BURKE

NORDIC NEWS NETWORK

## ALL QUIETED ON THE WORD FRONT

### Attack of the Zarembites

3

The most important alternative to Swedish mainstream media provoked a furious backlash when it challenged the conventional wisdom on the Balkan tragedy that has been used to justify “humanitarian warfare”. The initial broadside of the mainstream assault, fired by a journalistic attack dog named Zaremba, triggered a chain of events that has exposed the sorry state of democracy and public discourse in Sweden.

### A Simple Tale of Good and Evil

10

At issue is a complex history of many centuries which has been distorted into a simple morality tale that begins only recently, and justifies the demonization of the Balkan ethnic group which has been most afflicted during modern times. This version of reality is enforced by a battalion of thought police who strive to protect the Swedish populace from “freedom of expression which is used to confuse us”.

### Out of Control

18

The leadership of the grassroots organization under attack, Ordfront, first defended its magazine’s right to publish dissenting views, but then capitulated to the mainstream mob. That decision led to a rare rebellion among the membership, a majority of which voted to repudiate the capitulation and related actions. The leadership responded by organizing a coup against the democratic majority.

### Coup Accompli

37

By a variety of means including suppression of debate, a McCarthyesque scare campaign, and an unholy alliance with the mainstream media, the Ordfront leadership succeeded in pulling off its coup. The consolidation of the coup has thus far proceeded with little resistance.

### O Sweden, Where Art Thou?

47

Among the factors contributing to the scandal are a regression from the politics of Olof Palme to those of his current successor, the complex nature of the Balkan conflict, and a culture of consensus which induces a trained incapacity to cope with such fundamental violations of democratic process as the Ordfront coup. The mild and co-operative withdraw in passive resignation, while the domineering and manipulative turn the nation into a moral swamp and intellectual backwater. But it is a human dilemma which is not limited to Sweden.

### Endnotes

60

### Appendix

62



Cover: Arundhati Roy graced the cover of *Ordfront Magazine's* April 2004 edition. But two months later, when she and several other well-known authors expressed their concern about the state of free expression within the organization, their open letter was suppressed by the Ordfront leadership and the mainstream press; see page 31.

## ATTACK OF THE ZAREMBITES

FOR THE PAST CENTURY OR SO, Sweden has been widely regarded as an oasis of rationality, social justice and enlightened foreign policy in a world plagued by pernicious dogmas, gross inequity and appalling international crimes. Among other things, it has been admired for its independent approach to global issues, based on principles of solidarity and human dignity, and its consistent opposition to abuses of great power.

That was especially the case during the period when Olof Palme dominated Swedish politics as Social Democratic prime minister or opposition leader. His eloquent denunciation of the war of aggression against Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam provided inspiration to the anti-war movement and, as a corollary, led to the suspension of diplomatic relations with the United States of Richard Nixon (who honoured Palme by referring to him as “that Swedish asshole”).

In a fairly typical assessment, Warren Witte of the American Friends Service Committee, once observed that, “Sweden has long provided the U.S. peace movement with moral leadership, a sense of hope and an invaluable alternative to the often short-sighted and militaristic policies of our government. I think particularly of Olof Palme’s entirely correct criticism of the Vietnam War and Sweden’s emphasis on the issue of equity in ‘north-south’ relations— an area in which our own government has stubbornly persisted with narrow, self-serving and often aggressive policies.”

But much has changed in Sweden since Palme was assassinated in 1986. His current successor as Social Democratic prime minister, Göran Persson, has transmuted Sweden into a vassal state of the U.S. empire. That reversal is reflected in the mainstream press which, in its reporting on global issues, functions more or less as a cog in the U.S. propaganda apparatus. [For details, see endnote 1.]

There is little to choose from otherwise. Among the parliamentary parties, only the marginal and chronically fragmented Left (former Communist) Party offers a consistent alternative to Persson’s abject foreign policy.

The alternative press is generally as insignificant as one would expect in a country with a population of only nine million.

The one promising alternative to the mainstream press has been *Ordfront Magazine*, whose circulation increased from a few thousand in the 1980s to roughly 30,000 in 2004. That may not seem like much; but proportionately it is a much larger than the circulation of analogous publications in larger countries, such as *The Nation* in the United States or *The New Statesman* in the United Kingdom.

### *Democracy and free expression*

The magazine is one main component of a non-profit organization called *Ordfront*, which means “Word Front”. The other two components are a book-publishing division and an adult education network entitled “Democracy Academy”. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote democracy and free expression and, in particular, to provide a forum for the discussion of information and ideas that are ignored or suppressed by establishment media and institutions.

Although there is no explicit ideological stance, both the magazine and the organization as a whole are widely regarded as left-oriented. Subscription to the magazine confers membership, and the majority does appear to qualify for the “leftist” label— which in Sweden may be applied to everyone from Marxist-Leninists to right-wing Social Democrats such as Prime Minister Persson.

Due to the rapid expansion of *Ordfront Magazine’s* readership, it was beginning to offer a moderately influential alternative to the establishment consensus. It is likely, for

example, that it played a small but significant role in Swedish voters' rejection of the European Monetary Union in a referendum held in September of 2003 [2].

But less than two months after that display of enlightened citizenship, the mainstream media launched a concerted attack on Ordfront, setting off a chain of events that has left deep divisions among the membership and compromised the integrity of the entire organization. In the process, the organization's leadership has betrayed fundamental ideals of democracy and free expression, and has grossly abused its power in order to fend off the inevitable revolt of outraged members. For that purpose, it has formed an alliance of convenience with none other than the mainstream media.

The following account of those events contains numerous details which, at first glance, may seem extraneous; But especially for those who are unfamiliar with the events in question, that background information is essential to an understanding of the issues and the kinds of behaviour involved.

It should also be noted that I am not a neutral observer, having played an active (but marginal) part in efforts to preserve the integrity of the organization and its stated ideals. However, it would be difficult to find anyone in Sweden who has followed developments from the start and remained neutral. In any event, the principal arguments of the opposing side in the controversy are presented here, in most cases with direct quotations. For anyone who wishes to check the accuracy of the quotations or pose other questions, a list of relevant names and e-mail addresses is included as the final item of the Appendix.

### *Unconventional wisdom*

The Ordfront scandal is an unpleasant business which says much about the current state of Swedish society and its presumptive intelligentsia. It began quietly enough in the summer of 2003, when *Ordfront Magazine* published an interview with Diana Johnstone which focused on her book, *Fools' Crusade*, a devastating and well-documented critique of the conventional wisdom on the most recent Balkan wars (see "A Simple Tale of Good and Evil", page 10), and the interview conducted

by managing editor Björn Eklund elicited strong reactions, both positive and negative.

"Finally", wrote one reader, "after a long period of lies— or at best, silence— something sensible has been written about NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia." Another wrote that, "I almost choked on my morning coffee. A truth other than the prevailing one was allowed to pop up. Wow!"

Others were highly critical. "In your wild charge against America and your blind attempt to nail the U.S.A.," read an accusation directed at Björn Eklund, "you run roughshod over thousands of human beings who in fact have suffered, and you belittle their suffering in a way that is shameful." A paediatrician who had worked with victims of the war in Bosnia recounted his grim experience and angrily cancelled his subscription: "I want to be liberated from my membership immediately, so that I do not have to feel ashamed the next time the magazine drops into my mailbox."

### *Delayed attack*

One positive and four negative letters were published in the following two issues of the magazine, along with responses by Johnstone and Eklund who attempted to clear up some of the more glaring misconceptions. Eklund noted, for example, that the interview included several references to the suffering which undeniably did take place. Johnstone explained at some length why the iconic massacre at Srebrenica, which she has never denied, was far from the simple incident that has been repeatedly invoked by the mainstream media.

In a separate note, Chief Editor Leif Ericsson pointed out that, "Over the years, *Ordfront Magazine* has published many articles on the wars in former Yugoslavia, several of which have painted a picture that differs from that of Diana Johnstone. With controversial issues, it is important that divergent views can be presented and tested in open debate."

And that was the end of it. . . until a month or so later, when a university student, having decided that the Johnstone interview was an abomination, urged the editors of *Dagens Nyheter's* culture/debate section to do something about it. They responded by launching an attack on Ordfront, ensuring a disgraceful

*The Ordfront scandal began quietly enough in the summer of 2003, when the magazine published an interview with Diana Johnstone which focused on her book, Fools' Crusade, a well-documented critique of the conventional wisdom on the most recent Balkan wars. The headline is a play on the Swedish verb, "to lie".*



outcome by delegating the task to Maciej Zaremba, a sort of journalistic attack dog whose previous targets have included Sweden's general-welfare system and its once enlightened foreign policy.

U.S. foreign policy is evidently much more to Zaremba's liking, and he appears to have little sympathy for anyone who opposes it. He once used the pages of *Dagens Nyheter* (abbrev. "DN") to characterize Ben Linder, the cheerful solidarity worker who was mutilated and murdered by CIA-contras in Nicaragua, as an "odd duck" and nothing else. As far as Zaremba was concerned, that was the sum total of what DN's readers needed to know about the presumptively misguided young man from Oregon.

Zaremba's method is based largely on distortion, innuendo, false or misleading citations, highly selective evidence, and other standard tools of the eager propagandist. The results are usually so warped that it is not at all certain that he can be held responsible for them. But the editors who have unleashed him on an unsuspecting public certainly can; in this particular case, their names were Lars Linder and Ola Larsmo.

Naturally, Zaremba has received several distinguished awards for his service as a teller of bold truths. Among the truths with which he favoured DN's readers in the initial attack, published on 3 November 2003, were that: "Ordfront denies genocide in the Balkans [headline]. . . . It has been possible to read such articles [as the Johnstone interview] for years

on the web sites of Serb fascists. . . . The article consists mainly of an interview with a certain Diana Johnstone. Do not the advocates of those who perpetrate genocide also have the right to tell their stories? . . . Ordfront must be aware that, apart from the violation of press ethics, the article was a gross offence to all the victims of massacres and rapes in the Balkans, comparable in its impact on the survivors with denial of the Nazi Holocaust. . . . Ordfront must know that the information it published was false. . . . [Ordfront] now allies itself with the fascist Left, commits an outrage against the war victims, and risks being sued for defamation. The readers protest, but the magazine sticks to its guns."

Zaremba's piece was illustrated with a famous/infamous photo of what has been described as a "concentration camp" at Trnopolje. Since the propaganda usage of that photo was one of the issues addressed in the Johnstone interview, Zaremba struggled to document its authenticity. This was done by impeaching an article in *Living Marxism*, an entirely unrelated British journal which had refuted the concentration camp interpretation, based on the reporting of a German journalist. Zaremba wrote that a British court which awarded a fatal libel judgement against "Ordfront's source" (it was not) found that the photo had not been misinterpreted. (In fact, the court actually confirmed that it had been, but ruled that *Living Marxism* could not prove its assertion of *intent* to deceive and was therefore liable for damages.

(For more on the case of *Living Marxism*, see Appendix, item 1.)

The non-existent connection with *Living Marxism* provided Zaremba with an excuse to find Ordfront guilty by association with other standpoints he attributed to that British journal: “Child pornography and propaganda in favour of violence should be permitted in the name of freedom, but not gun control. That women are stoned to death in Nigeria for adultery should be accepted, because to criticize Africans would be imperialistic. Also, the best way to put Africa’s economy in order would be to sell the entire continent to international corporations.”

What do *Living Marxism*, death by stoning in Nigeria and child pornography have to do with the Johnstone interview? Not a thing.

Zaremba also cited critiques of *Living Marxism* by George Monbiot and Ed Vulliamy to support his case, while interpreting Doris Lessing’s and Noam Chomsky’s statements in support of the magazine’s right to publish as *ipso facto* confirmation of its wickedness.

The attack concluded with a quotation of Andras Riedlmayer: “Frozen in time, like an insect trapped in amber by reflexes from the Cold War, the unreformed Left remains fixated on NATO and western imperialistic warmongers as the only threat to humanity which it is prepared to resist. . . . Fifty years after World War II, the Left in its living death is no longer able to identify either fascists or genocides as its enemies.” (Retranslated from the Swedish.)

### *Desired effect*

In short, a typical Zaremba job— malicious and grossly misleading. Those readers who were familiar with his noxious tendencies no doubt recognized the pattern and shrugged it off as more of the usual.

But it appears that the average reader seldom pays attention to by-lines, and few seem aware of the depths to which the once fairly respectable *Dagens Nyheter* has sunk in recent years. It is as though people were still reading the U.S. weekly, *The New Republic*, without having noticed the ugly transformation it has undergone since Martin Peretz took over. (Not so incidentally, Swedish public television’s premier news magazine has referred

to *The New Republic* as “the established and respected voice of the left wing in U.S. public debate” and “one of President Bush’s toughest critics”.)

Accordingly, Zaremba’s diatribe had the desired effect. Otherwise sensible people swallowed the smelly thing whole, without so much as wrinkling a nostril or raising an eyebrow. It may be assumed that many of Ordfront’s roughly 30,000 members were among those affected, but not all were impressed.



*Maciej Zaremba*

According to Björn Eklund, “Most of the reactions that came into Ordfront were critical of Zaremba or positive toward my interview. The reactions in some media were hysterical, but Ordfront’s members seemed to take it calmly.” That was

only a small sample, of course; the reaction of the membership as a whole was not known.

There was certainly cause for concern, as DN continued to whip up hysteria. An editorial published three weeks after the initial attack explained that the main problem was “a small group of people and their nostalgia for the days of the Vietnam War. That period, so simple in memory, when the U.S. represented all evil in the world, when U.S. imperialism was the framework within which everything in the world could be observed and understood.” It was essential, argued the anonymous editorialist, to get rid of everyone associated with *Ordfront Magazine* who was critical of U.S. war policy and imperialism, and who “was not able to keep on course in public debate”.

Possibly by pre-arrangement, DN’s cries of outrage and offended decency were taken up by most other major media, including the so-called and highly influential public service TV and radio. The hunt was on.

### *Appropriate response*

The initial reaction of Ordfront’s leadership to all this was precisely what it ought to have been— to defend the magazine’s right and responsibility to publish unpopular views,

## 'The definitive work on the Balkan wars'

### *Canadian law professor's view of Diana Johnstone's book*

... For the Left, Kosovo was the "good" war that Clinton fought for human rights. For the Right, despite some chafing at the time about bombing Christians on behalf of Muslims, Kosovo is the handy precedent for bypassing the authority of the United Nations. . . .

The weapons of mass destruction fiasco has turned Iraq into yet another 'humanitarian war', leaving only Iraqi freedom as a justification, even though the Iraqis seem to think freedom is now a question of ridding themselves of the American occupation. So, even though it's impossible to write fast enough to keep up with American war-making, Diana Johnstone's account of the Balkan Wars, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*, is very timely. It is also a very remarkable book. . . .

The book is an antidote to hawks of the both the Left and Right, because their enthusiasm for military interventionism, despite the huge price in life and limb, is shown to have depended on a string of myths adding up to a simplistic 'Good vs. Evil' characterization of the Balkans worthy of George W. Bush's speech-writers. A 'Nazi equation' in which the Serbs were the Nazis and the Muslims the Jews so that the only solution was the one that just happened to best suit the various hidden agendas of the NATO countries, namely war against the Serbs.

Johnstone does not so much demolish the myths as hold them up for a patient, serious examination that leaves one wondering how anyone could have got away with selling them in the first place: the myth of the Serbs as the inventors of 'ethnic cleansing'; of the Serbian Academy of Sciences' Nazi-style elaboration of the 'theory' of ethnic cleansing; of Milosevic's 'notorious' racist speech at Kosovo Polje; of the campaign for a 'Greater Serbia'. Recently in *The Nation*,

Milosevic was once again accused, this time by Samantha Power (who won a prize for her book on genocide), of having been 'responsible for some 200,000 deaths in Bos-nia.' Johnstone does a superb job in the delicate task of unpacking the meagre evidence for claims like this, or more general ones of 'genocide' and 'Holocaust' in both Bosnia and Kosovo. It's a delicate task because anyone who dares to question these things is inevitably branded a Holocaust denier, even though it's a grievous insult to the victims of the real Holocaust to use the word to describe even the wildest claims the have been made about the Balkan Wars. . . .

It's hard to come away from this book without the conviction that the Serbs were as much sinned against as sinners and that the West was highly complicit in the many sins on both sides. Only a vast and complex public relations campaign could have made the world think otherwise. This involved the usual cast of PR firms deployed to great advantage to make the anti-Serb case, but also an ambitious new breed of NGOs, the American group Human Rights Watch, for example, French and American *intellectuels engagés*, and venerable institutions such as the UN Secretariat. . . . Johnstone's analysis of the disgraceful behaviour of the International Criminal Tribunal for the 'former Yugoslavia' is so incisive for a non-lawyer as to make a lawyer blush. . . .

*Fools' Crusade* is not only the definitive work on the Balkan Wars, it is also an inspiring example of how to rescue truth from the battlefield when it has become war's first casualty, an important lesson these days.

*Excerpts from review of Fools' Crusade in the Canadian Jewish Outlook, Vol. 42, No. 1, Jan./Feb. 2004, by Prof. Michael Mandel, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Canada*

and to accuse *Dagens Nyheter* of attempting to stifle debate. These and related self-evident points were made by Chief Editor Leif Ericsson, Chairwoman Christina Hagner and Executive Director Gertrud Åström. But they were also careful to distance themselves from the interview with Diana Johnstone, referring to “serious flaws” that were never specified.

Of course, this only stimulated *Dagens Nyheter* to further excesses, including yet another lengthy diatribe by Zaremba which concluded with the pronouncement that, “Freedom of expression is not a goal in itself”. He would later expand on that theme in a revealing radio interview (see p. 15).

Other media chimed in on the same wave length. Public television’s “Culture News” programme, for example, broadcast a report on the controversy which was so blatantly biased and intellectually dishonest that it might have been comical were it not for the gravity of the issues involved (see “Immoral Journalism”, p. 13).

The role of the indignant man of honour in this spectacle and others like it was eagerly played by Gellert Tamas, an Ordfront author and charter member of the “bombing leftists” who have dominated the Swedish public debate on the Balkans. The “Culture News” editor, Peter O. Nilsson, is associated with the more noisome of the two major evening tabloids, *Expressen*, which has long striven to discredit Ordfront and is owned by the same media conglomerate as *Dagens Nyheter*. It is all rather incestuous. (For additional examples, see Appendix, item 1.)

### Capitulation

Meanwhile, by her own account, Chairwoman Hagner was under siege by the predatory press in one of its feeding frenzies. Other sources close to her have said that she was also subjected to a sort of shunning process by indignant colleagues at her place of work, the Swedish chapter of Save the Children. Leif Ericsson was (not for the first time) being called upon to do the decent thing and resign as publisher and chief editor of the magazine.

Clearly, the situation called for steady nerves and stout hearts, as *Ordfront Magazine’s* editorial advisory board tried to impress upon Ericsson at an emergency meeting. But the

very next day, he capitulated to the journalistic mob, announcing on the main private television channel that he had now read *Fools’ Crusade* and regretted publication of the interview. This was followed by a statement of regret in *Dagens Nyheter* which asserted that, “Johnstone is telling lies”. Rebuttals by Johnstone and Prof. Edward S. Herman were refused by DN’s editors (see Appendix, items 2 – 4).

The board of directors followed Ericsson’s lead in the name of the entire organization, proclaiming in an open letter that “it was wrong to publish the interview with Diana Johnstone. We feel that the article was not adequately documented and was too uncritical toward her point of view.” The vote was unanimous; but three board members later claimed to have consented under duress in order to prevent an even more ignominious statement from being issued.

### Double standard

In what was to become a consistent pattern, no examples of the allegedly inadequate documentation were provided by the board. Furthermore, the implicit norm that everyone who is interviewed in the magazine must be subjected to some sort of adversarial process was clearly an *ad hoc* construction: No such rule has ever applied to any other author, before or since. Subsequent to the Johnstone interview, for example, Leif Ericsson conducted a lengthy interview with George Monbiot (a writer approved by Zaremba) which was every bit as “uncritical”; but there were no complaints and, when the glaring double standard was pointed out, it was simply ignored.

Norm or no norm, there was hardly any need to “balance” the viewpoint of Diana Johnstone with yet another recitation of the USA/NATO propaganda which has dominated news reporting and public debate in Sweden from the start of the Balkan wars. Björn Eklund’s accompanying text explained that the interview was intended as a response to that propaganda. Such responses were (and are) so rare that many readers, as noted above, were delighted that one had finally appeared in *Ordfront Magazine*.

An unusually large number of members reacted strongly to both the witch hunt of the mainstream press and the capitulation of the



Ordfront leadership. A statement of protest signed by 39 writers and other interested parties (myself included) was circulated within the organization, and worried reactions streamed in from the provinces. The impression was widespread that the leadership had betrayed Ordfront's most fundamental principles—its very *raison d'être*—by meekly submitting to the media mob.

But Chief Editor Ericsson and the board refused to admit error and declined to open a dialogue with worried and disgruntled members. Then the two junior editors of the magazine were laid off on purported grounds of economic necessity—an explanation that was inevitably greeted with suspicion, given the timing and context of the dismissals, plus the fact that they came with no prior warning. Their immediate superior, Björn Eklund, was not consulted as prescribed by Swedish labour market norms and Ordfront's professed ideals.

That left Eklund and Ericsson to produce a monthly magazine of considerable length, circulation and quality. When the trade publication of Swedish journalists asked Eklund about the feasibility of the new regime, he noted that it would be difficult to maintain the magazine's quality with such a minuscule staff. He also intimated that the dismissals had a political dimension. For that hardly surprising assessment, he was accused of "disloyalty" and issued a formal warning by Executive Director Gertrud Åström.

Now it was Eklund's turn to be shunned, by his fellow workers at Ordfront—around 35 altogether in the administrative, book publishing and adult education departments—and a consultant was called in to investigate the distressed work environment. According to Eklund, the interview sample was drawn up by Åström and consisted almost entirely of individuals from other divisions who were mobbing Eklund, while excluding nearly everyone who had worked with him on the magazine, several of them for ten years or more.

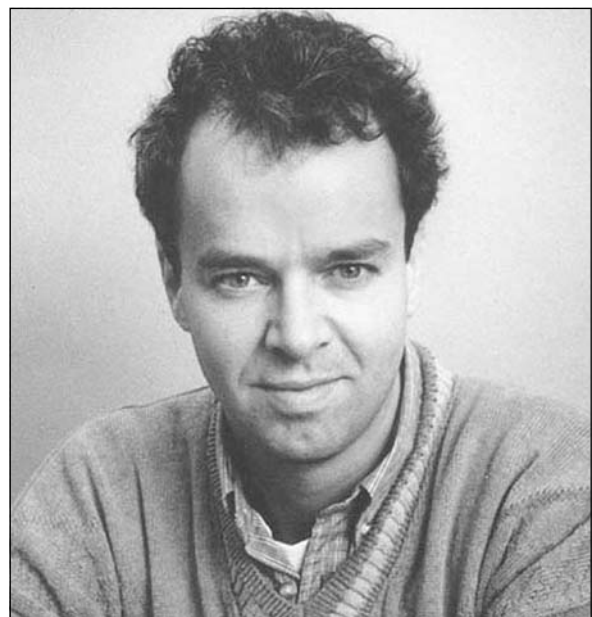
Of the eight people who Eklund named as references, only one was interviewed and her (positive) comments were omitted from the written summary of the "findings"—which was written by Åström, not the consultant. She included only the negative opinions attributed

to five individuals who, she asserted, had complained that he was difficult to work with. The object of their alleged displeasure was not granted an opportunity to respond to the accusations against him.

But even within that highly skewed context, employee relations were apparently not as strained as Åström made them out to be. On the basis of subsequent conversations with the interviewees, Eklund states that, "One of them, a person with whom I had previously worked closely almost every day for seven years, said that she had told the consultant that she had experienced our co-operation as positive. Another reported saying that she had me to thank for everything she had learned about her job." None of this was mentioned in Åström's written summary or during Eklund's discussions with Åström and the consultant. (The consultant has declined an invitation to comment on this account of the proceedings.)

The whole business thus appears to have been a charade, and the consultant duly recommended that Eklund should be got rid of. (He also recommended the departure of Ericsson; but that has yet to occur.) The reasons cited by Åström in her dismissal notice were "disloyalty" and "co-operation difficulties".

Not surprisingly, Åström long refused to make her written account public, on the grounds that Eklund's dismissal had become the subject of legal proceedings—even though he declared his willingness to have it released.



*Björn Eklund*

Finally, over a year later, it was made available for scrutiny in connection with an appeal of the dismissal which is scheduled to be heard this October in Sweden's Labour Relations Court (see page 59).

From the documentation submitted to the Court, the case against Eklund appears to be based largely on petty, mean-spirited gossip by individuals who in most cases have had limited experience of working directly with him— but who are in various ways dependent on Åström and Ericsson. By comparison, writers and others who have worked with Eklund for many years have unanimously attested to his excellent qualities as an editor and as a human being (no dichotomy intended).

All of this took place at the end of 2003, and it naturally caused great turmoil within the organization. Of course, the level and intensity of concern was greatest among those who had been most actively involved— as book authors, contributors to the magazine, members of local chapters, etc. But that was only a minor portion of the total membership. Nobody knew what the majority of the roughly 30,000 members knew and felt about these developments.

For the moment, at least, Ericsson, Hagner and Åström were in control of the magazine, the administrative apparatus and the money. In addition, having confessed the error of their ways and having joined the attack on both Johnstone and Eklund, they could now rely on the support of their new or rediscovered allies in DN, public broadcasting and most other mainstream media.

The growing opposition within Ordfront had no such media channels at its disposal. But alarmed and outraged members throughout the land, having been denied the possibility of constructive dialogue with the increasingly autocratic leadership, began to meet and discuss the crisis among themselves. This was labelled as "factionalism" by Åström and Hagner.

Prior to these developments, the involvement of Chief Editor Leif Ericsson in the magazine's production had been somewhat limited. His main contributions had consisted of an occasional veto and the odd article on a subject of special interest to him. One such

was the plight of a lawyer and fellow "bombing leftist" who was sentenced to prison for misuse of funds in connection with a Swedish aid project in Brazil. Ericsson published several bizarre defences of his comrade in bombs— in the process exposing the organization to the risk of a potentially devastating libel suit by maligning the Swedish woman who had blown the whistle on the financial irregularities. Fortunately for him and Ordfront, she did not pursue the matter.

Now, Ericsson asserted his authority over the magazine and began to use it as a platform from which to continue his assault on Diane Johnstone and to justify his capitulation to the media mob. The January 2004 issue featured a lengthy special section with several articles supporting Ericsson's perspective on the Balkan wars. It was introduced with a two-page photo spread depicting grieving relatives of victims of an alleged massacre at the Kosovo town of Racak, and yet another evocation of Nazi genocide: "Not since the Holocaust and World War II has Europe been devastated by such brutality as the systematic ethnic cleansing and persecution of several million people in former Yugoslavia."

### *One man's "common narrative"*

The featured item of the special section was Ericsson's essay, "Denying Guilt", in which he called for agreement on a "common narrative [of the Balkan wars] . . . Such a narrative makes reconciliation possible. It becomes a common memory of mankind, which can help us understand ourselves and how we can avoid similar human catastrophes" (see Appendix, item 5). Needless to say, the common narrative he seemed to have in mind for everyone was something very like his own. Ericsson also expounded on the same theme in a page three editorial.

Ironically, the cover story was an homage to Sara Lidman, a wonderful and recently deceased Swedish writer who, for her eloquent denunciations of the Vietnam War, South African *apartheid* and other abominations, had often been subjected to the same kind of abuse that has been heaped upon Diana Johnstone— although her words were never censored or suppressed in the same fashion.

Johnstone's rebuttal came two months later, but was tucked away at the back of the book under the nondescript heading, "Debate", along with a piece by Edward Herman and yet another rejoinder from Ericsson. Both Johnstone's and Herman's rebuttals were truncated; readers were referred to a web site for the rest (see Appendix, items 6 – 7). This time, there was no front-page announcement, no special box on the contents page, no page three editorial, no two-page photo spread, etc.

Ericsson also refused to publish Björn Eklund's rebuttal of the charges against him. "So, in the publication that I had served for sixteen years," observes Eklund, "I was not granted a single opportunity to respond to all the accusations against me."

With publication of his "Denying Guilt" edition, Ericsson declared that the "debate" was concluded in the magazine, but that Ordfront was planning a seminar at which the issues would be further discussed. No such seminar ever took place.

In April of 2004, Ericsson announced his intention to resign as publisher and chief editor at the end of the year, thereby eliminating the main source of the conflict for which Eklund had ostensibly been fired. But as writer Eva Moberg has observed: "Clearly, it was more important to get rid of Eklund than to solve the problems at the workplace."\*

When he shut down the debate in the magazine, Ericsson left unpublished a number of letters and essays that had been submitted by various members and writers, including several long-time contributors. With all established channels blocked, these and related

---

\*Eva Moberg was a long-time contributor to *Ordfront Magazine* and a member of its editorial advisory board, which unanimously supported Eklund and publication of the Johnstone interview. The board was disbanded after the special annual meeting in September 2004 because, as Ericsson explained, "What is the point of having an advisory board if all it ever does is criticize everything I do?"

---

*"In the publication that I had served for sixteen years, I was not granted a single opportunity to respond to all the accusations against me."*

— Björn Eklund

---

materials were published on the web site of writer Erik Wijk, which served as a sort of public archive for the debate. Informal e-mail groups coalesced, small groups of concerned individuals and some local Ordfront chapters held meetings to discuss the issues. In these and other ways, a diffuse and unco-ordinated opposition began to form.

The annual meeting, which according to Ordfront's by-laws, is the organization's "highest decision-making body", promised to be an interesting event. Nothing if not consistent, *Dagens Nyheter* and kindred media attempted to influence the outcome by running a spate of worried analyses in the days running up to the meeting.

Gellert Tamas was allotted the better part of a full page in DN to reiterate his indictment against Eklund and Johnstone, warning the complacent that, "Since only some 80 of Ordfront's 30,000 members usually participate [in the annual meeting], there is a real risk that a few dozen Johnstone supporters will succeed in pushing through their line. . . . The question is whether Ordfront is to be a broad, open, searching, progressive, radical force or if the organization will be taken over by dogmatists in whose black-and-white world complex issues such as the wars in former Yugoslavia shall be decided by the establishment of a single right and correct ideological stance. If the latter faction wins, Ordfront's existence is probably at stake. And it will not only be Ordfront's members and staff to feel sorry for, but also in a wider sense a defeat for freedom of expression."

All that and more, without the merest hint of irony or self-awareness.

## A SIMPLE TALE OF GOOD & EVIL

THE FORMER NATION of Yugoslavia was a federation based on a delicate balance of ethnic groups which have been plaguing each other for centuries, often as a direct or indirect consequence of intervention by great powers such as the Ottoman and Habsburg empires.

The most horrendous episode of modern times was the slaughter of a million or more Serbs and members of other ethnic groups during World War II by Croats, Muslims and Albanians allied with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Not surprisingly, the historical memory of that genocidal process— many of the survivors are still alive— is as crucial for Serbian psychology and politics as is the Holocaust for the Jewish people.

That and other disturbing memories were inevitably aroused when Yugoslavia began to unravel following the end of the Cold War. Once again, the intervention of external powers played an important role. Among the first to intrude was Germany, which sought to re-establish its influence in the region and in so doing helped to revive the Croatian *Ustasja*, a terror organization that had committed the worst offences against the Serbs during World War II.

### *As predicted*

Succumbing to heavy pressure from Germany, the European Community recognized the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in January of 1992. Predictably, and as widely predicted, that decision set loose the dogs of civil war. Sweden's consent to the unanimous decision was granted by the government of Carl Bildt, a Conservative who would later serve as the EC's envoy in a largely futile attempt to clean up the awful mess that he and his colleagues had helped to make.

The United States, apparently motivated by a desire to ensure the dissolution of Yugoslavia, also invested substantial economic and military resources in Croatia. It would later do the same in the provinces of Bosnia and Kosovo, supporting terrorists and instigating

secession in a way that it would never tolerate, for example, in the state of California with its growing population of legal and illegal Mexican immigrants. The U.S. sabotaged one peace agreement for Bosnia, and purposely designed another for Kosovo so that the central government of Yugoslavia would be forced to reject it— thus providing a pretext for the USA/NATO war of aggression. [3]

### *Demonization process*

All of this and more was added to the volatile mix of ethnic tensions and regional conflicts in Yugoslavia, ensuring and severely aggravating the civil wars that raged throughout the 1990s. Atrocities were committed on all sides, and it remains far from clear who did what to whom, and to what extent.

Very little of this complex story has been thoroughly conveyed to the outside world. As so often in the past in other settings, most of the news from the Balkans has originated with the propaganda agencies of the Western powers, often assisted by public relations firms such as Ruder Finn, and filtered through their mainstream media. What has emerged from that process is a simple tale of good and evil, with the Serbs cast in the role of bad guys and other ethnic groups— Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo-Albanians, in particular— as more or less hapless victims.

The demonization of the Serbs was accomplished with the endless repetition of a few basic themes. One linked the Serbs rhetorically with Nazi Germany. Especially useful for that purpose was the massacre of several thousand Muslim men at the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, an undeniably terrible event that was endlessly cited as "the worst crime in Europe since the Nazi Holocaust".

Likewise, Yugoslavia's President Slobodan Milosevic was portrayed as a Hitler-like figure bent on establishing an expansive Serbian empire by means of systematic terror and "ethnic cleansing".

There is a cruel and obvious irony in this dramaturgy, given that it was the Serbs who were the principal victims of the atrocities committed in the Balkans by Hitler's Nazis and their allies among other Balkan ethnic groups.

### *Neglected crimes*

Conversely, abuses committed against Serbs by the designated victims have been downplayed or ignored. Thus, the first and only genuine ethnic cleansing to take place in the region, that of an estimated 250,000 Serbs from the Krajina area of Croatia, has seldom been mentioned and even less often treated as a significant event. That was also the journalistic fate of the prelude to the Srebrenica massacre—a series of murderous raids on nearly 200 Serbian villages in the surrounding area, conducted by Muslim forces from the shelter of Srebrenica. The crimes of the dictatorial Franjo Tudjman, the democratically elected Milosevic's counterpart in Croatia, as well as the depredations of *Ustasja* terrorists were treated with a discretion appropriate to clients of the United States and Germany.

With some variations and the usual honourable exceptions, this was the general impression of the Balkan wars conveyed by Swedish mainstream media, including the two most influential—the public broadcasting system and the daily newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*. Those two sources are roughly comparable to England's BBC and the United States' *New York Times*, but probably even more influential within their limited spheres due to a dearth of alternatives.

To note but a few examples: Swedish public radio habitually referred to Milosevic as "the man who started four wars", apparently all by himself. Public television's most respected news reader, Claes Elfsberg, led off a discussion of the impending USA/NATO bombing by posing the question: "What else to do [except bomb] when Milosevic refuses to sign the peace agreement?" (This was a reference to the so-called Rambouillet Accord

which, as U.S. officials have admitted, was specifically designed so that Milosevic would be forced to reject it.)

*Dagens Nyheter's* coverage of the Balkans was conducted mainly by Christian Palme, a distant relative of Olof Palme who was christened with the same first name but changed it in order to avoid what he regarded as troubling confusion. No-longer-Olof Palme has written that, since childhood, he has been consumed by a sort of holy rage against the injustices of the world; and in Slobodan Milosevic he appears to have found a suitable object for his righteous vengeance. His account of Milosevic's entrance into the kangaroo court at The Hague [4] reads like a scene out of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, complete with a withering glance of the demon's evil eye which sent shivers down the spine of the intrepid reporter from *Dagens Nyheter*.

This is the kind of stuff that consumers of Swedish mainstream news have been fed for the past decade or so, and it has been reinforced by the ignorant or disinformative pronouncements of Prime Minister Göran Persson who can usually be relied upon to say nothing that might displease the U.S. government—although his foreign minister did once complain that the bombing of Belgrade came too close to the Swedish embassy and broke a few windows.

### *Thought police*

There were some exceptions, of course. Sweden is blessed with a number of journalists and academics who are well-versed in Balkan history and politics. Through their efforts, alert readers and listeners were able to catch an occasional glimpse of the complexities obscured by the simple morality tale spun by the mainstream media.

By and large, however, the news from the Balkans was controlled by a corps of well-placed, self-appointed thought police who kept to the basic script and were quick to pounce on anyone who strayed from the designated path—the path that led straight to the illegal bombing of Yugoslavia, and from there to the "preventive" wars of aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq and whichever targets are next on the list.

Among those who have felt the wrath of

the thought police is Saam Kapadia, a reporter with Swedish public television who visited Bosnia with a colleague in 2001 (i.e. after the shooting had stopped) and readily gathered “information of which I, as a media consumer, was not aware. . . . Our report showed that there were preceding events which, given the terrible logic of the war, could explain the Serbs’ criminal actions in Prijedor”.

Although the report emphasized that those explanatory events could not justify the crimes that followed, “The result was a storm of criticism and the filing of complaints with the Swedish Broadcasting Commission [a journalism review board]. We were accused of being historical revisionists, of running the Serbs’ errands, and told that we had dishonoured the memory of the victims.” The same themes would later be employed in the attack on Ordfront.

### *Peculiar logic*

Among the most outraged was *Expressen*, a (by Swedish standards) odious tabloid owned by the same media conglomerate that possesses *Dagens Nyheter*. An *Expressen* editorial posed the question: “Do the Swedish TV reporters mean to say that the massacre of 7000 men at Srebrenica is less serious because they had participated in nightly raids on Serbian villages in the surrounding area?” Rather an odd question in the circumstances, which were that the offending report had not even mentioned Srebrenica, and explicitly rejected the exculpatory logic of *Expressen’s* rhetorical question. (Note: The exact number massacred at Srebrenica remains uncertain. But any doubts, no matter how well-founded, are invariably attacked by the thought police as the work of “historical revisionists. . . deniers of genocide”, etc.)

“Two months later,” notes Kapadia, “the attack continued when *Expressen* devoted its debate page to a lengthy indictment in which we were lumped together with all sorts of so-called historical revisionists.” Given the source, such criticism must be regarded as a probable sign of integrity. Kapadia notes, however, that Swedish public TV’s own coverage of the Balkan wars had been generally inadequate. [5]

The editor of *Expressen’s* culture/debate section is Per Svensson, one of the most

fanatical of the thought police, who employed similar illogic in the subsequent attacks on Diana Johnstone and Björn Eklund. An *Expressen* editorial writer, Anna Dahlberg, has accused a Social Democratic MP of acting as “Milosevic’s mouthpiece” because she, almost alone among her colleagues, dared to question the conventional wisdom on the Balkans.

A different sort of sanction appears to have been applied to Fredrik Braconier, for many years the chief foreign affairs expert of Sweden’s second most influential newspaper, the conservative daily *Svenska Dagbladet*. Throughout the Cold War, his perspective on events almost always coincided with that of the United States. But for some reason, he began to deviate from that pattern when the Balkan wars broke out. He was one of the few mainstream journalists, for example, who wrote of the nocturnal raids on Serbian villages that preceded the Srebrenica massacre. Not long afterwards, he was moved to a more subordinate position in the financial section and has not been seen in his former area of expertise since.

As for the thought police, there is nothing to indicate that they are united by any deeper purpose than to combat the forces of evil which they feel entitled to identify, and to support wars of aggression by the United States in such noble causes— all in the name of human rights, and in disregard of international law. Their motives appear to be rather diverse, and almost certainly have more to do with assorted personality traits than with any coherent ideology. Christian Palme has his holy rage to grapple with. Per Svensson and Maciej Zaremba, to judge from their written and spoken words, suffer from limited and/or impaired mental capacity.

Reporter Kjell-Albin Abrahamsson, who has accounted for the worst excesses of Swedish public radio, gives every appearance of being a self-inflating buffoon whose primary journalistic ambition is to dispense what he evidently regards as clever remarks. Reporting on the show trial of Slobodan Milosevic, for example, he noted that the former Yugoslavian president intended to call a large number of supporting witnesses, adding gratuitously that, “It is not known whether Björn Eklund will be among them.”

Whatever the emotional and intellectual problems involved, they have not hindered a

number of such people from rising to lofty positions within Sweden's most influential mass media. In the case of the Balkan wars, they have consistently misled and misinformed their audiences, and perhaps themselves. It is a journalistic calamity that has been noted by many, including Brigadier Bo Pellnäs of the Swedish army, who has served in the Balkans as an observer and peace negotiator for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Pellnäs's analysis, which corresponds quite well with that of Diana Johnstone, highlights the uncritical acceptance of propaganda by mainstream media to justify flagrant violations of international law, with the war against Serbia as a prime example.

"It would also appear," he writes, "that Swedish media have raised surprisingly few questions about all this. Their great willingness to accept and pass on U.S. (and, later, Swedish) government claims that the war against the Serbs was a response to the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo-Albanians ought to be rather embarrassing for a number of Swedish editors."

That assessment is part of a remarkably frank critique of the USA/NATO war against Yugoslavia and occupation of Kosovo, which appeared in by far the most influential debate forum in Sweden—the commentary/op-ed section of *Dagens Nyheter*. [6]

Given that sort of prominent display, in combination with the brigadier's impeccable credentials and extensive first-hand experience, one might assume that his demolition of the conventional wisdom would have had an invigorating effect on public debate. But it passed with barely a ripple of attention—due perhaps in part to the fact that it came rather late in the game, i.e. in February of 2004.

But the main reason for the seemingly inexplicable lack of interest was that the most important channels of debate have remained largely under the control of individuals who have too much to lose—politically, professionally and psychologically—from an open and honest discussion of the issues.

And so, the good brigadier's analysis was "killed with silence", which in Sweden is a prevalent and usually effective technique for disposing of disagreeable intelligence.

## Immoral Journalism

---

Among the media attacks on Diana Johnstone and Ordfrent were at least two reports broadcast by the "Culture News" programme of Swedish public television, which is required by law to remain impartial when dealing with controversial issues. In this case, however, its reporting was entirely one-sided; only the views of the misinformed or the disinforming were presented.

They included Slavisa Slucur who was described as a Serbian Social Democratic member of parliament in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Having read a translation supplied by Johnstone's critics, he observed: "It is very immoral to pick a couple of details from the war and try to prove that everything that has been said about the war is a lie. . . . What I find encouraging is the reaction this article caused in Sweden in your media. The good, healthy society always has to react to this kind of journalism and this kind of distorting of the facts."

Also permitted to speak was Gellert Tamas, a Swedish writer published by Ordfrent's book division, who explained that there was no longer any doubt that the Serbs had committed genocide (a concept which he later equated with both "ethnic cleansing", and "crimes against humanity"). Among other things, Tamas claimed that "the Bosnia-Herzegovinan government has acknowledged that [the Serbian military campaign in Bosnia] was a planned genocide". This was said to be an acknowledgement by Serbs; but Bosnia-Herzegovina is a Muslim-Croat entity. He probably meant the Bosnian Serb Republic; however, there is no record of that government making any such admission. [7]

Whatever the facts of the case, it was all made to look and sound very convincing in "Culture News". Tamas concluded by likening Diana Johnstone with historical revisionists who deny the Nazi Holocaust: "Her line

of reasoning is identical. It is precisely the same arguments. One gets stuck on details and uses them as a pretext for [asserting that] nothing happened.”

These and similar statements were accompanied by scenes of intimidated horror in what was presumably Bosnia, although no details were given. The last word went to Mr. Slucur and was illustrated by the crown of a human skull protruding from the ground somewhere.

In response to a complaint about the extreme bias of this segment, editor Peter O. Nilsson replied:

“What we tried to do was to follow up the debate by letting two people with different backgrounds comment upon it.”

If Johnstone or someone familiar with her work had been allowed to speak, the audience of “Culture News” would presumably have learned that, far from comprising “a couple of details”, *Fools’ Crusade* is based on a large body of well-documented information from a wide variety of sources.

Nor has Johnson ever claimed that “nothing happened”, or attempted “to prove that everything that has been said about the war is a lie”. That ought to have been apparent from a reading of the scandalized interview in *Ordfront Magazine*: “Of course there were abuses in Bosnia and Kosovo,” she was quoted as saying. “but outrages were committed by all sides. In order to gain control of territory,



*Gellert Tamas*

the one side tried to expel the other. These were very serious and unfortunate events.” (See also Appendix, item 6.)

In any event, the stated intent of the book is not to catalogue and apportion guilt for the horrors that inevitably took place once the dogs of war were set loose. Rather, it is primarily concerned with the origins and driving forces of the Balkan wars— the political, economic, cultural and geopolitical context. “The objective is not to recount the whole story (impossible in a book of this length), but to put the story in perspective,” explains the introduction.

Among other things, that meant analysing the propaganda campaign used to demonize the Serbs and justify the USA/NATO war of aggression. Hence, the furious response of those who, like Gellert Tamas and his friends in public broadcasting, have helped to spread that propaganda. As Björn Eklund observed in his interview with Diana Johnstone, “So many people have invested so heavily and for so long in the conventional wisdom on the wars that every questioning of them is perceived as a threat— to credibility, careers or prestige.”

That has been more than amply demonstrated by the assault on *Ordfront*. The examples of *Dagens Nyheter*, “Culture News” and many others like it all serve to support Mr. Slucur’s contention that, “The good, healthy society always has to react to this kind of journalism and this kind of distorting of the facts.”

Alas, his approbation is misplaced, as there is no reason to be encouraged by the reaction of the Swedish mainstream press. On the contrary: Its behaviour in this affair is a clear indication that there is something about the current state of Swedish society which is neither good nor healthy.



## ‘She questions NATO policy in the Balkans’

---

*Zaremba and Ericsson explain the need to support preventive wars of aggression and to protect Swedes from “freedom of expression which is used to confuse us”*

One of the few exceptions to the mainstream media’s assault on Diana Johnstone was a programme of media news and analysis which is a regular feature of Swedish public radio. In early February of 2004, Maciej Zaremba, Leif Ericsson and other interested parties were interviewed by Björn Kumm, a widely respected journalist of the old school— i.e. with extensive knowledge and experience of foreign policy issues, and a willingness/capacity to cope with their complexities.

Although the programme’s audience is only a fraction of that exposed to the widespread attacks on Johnstone and Eklund, it did provide a public forum in which some of the principal actors in the drama displayed their modes of thought. The following are excerpts from responses to the interviewer’s questions and observations (*in italics*).

*Last summer, Diana Johnstone was interviewed in Ordfront Magazine by its managing editor, Björn Eklund . . . Then nothing happened, and then again nothing happened. But three months after publication of the interview, there began what in media circles is usually referred to as a “drive hunt” . . . In the ensuing debate, Dagens Nyheter refused to publish a number of contributions. In a second article, Maciej Zaremba explained that freedom of expression is not unconditional or self-evident.*

*Zaremba:* [My second article] was a reaction to the editors at Ordfront who defended publication of the Johnstone interview with the argument that it is important to have a diversity of voices. I don’t think it is enough to say that it is important to have a diversity of voices. As so well-formulated in our constitutional law, the function of freedom of expression is to enable citizens to become enlightened and well-informed. Thus, a freedom of expression which is used to confuse us contradicts the purpose of freedom of expression.

*Who decides if it confuses us?*

*Zaremba:* I think that is something which every well-read citizen can do. If there is a finding of genocide by the Hague Tribunal which can be read on the Internet, and it says in *Ordfront* that no one has been found guilty of or even investigated for genocide, then it is a lie that is so blatant and easy to check that one can say that it is intended to confuse— or at least has the effect of confusing. Maybe there was no intent. Maybe it was just ignorance or stupidity, I don’t know. [Note: Here, again, Zaremba distorts Johnstone’s position. What she actually wrote about the Hague Tribunal and the question of genocide can be read in her book, *Fools’ Crusade*.]

*But it is preferable not to publish certain contributions to the debate because they might confuse people?*

*Zaremba:* No, but let’s keep to the subject. Of course, I would never have published the Johnstone interview if I were the responsible editor. Likewise, I would never publish an article which stated that the Chernobyl accident never took place. All newspapers receive numerous texts of this type from confused people every day. We do not publish them in our newspaper. This is not a print shop. Our task is to assess the quality of what we publish, and for which we also assume responsibility. Space must also be provided for upsetting interpretations and events. But when it comes to facts, one must be very strict. In my view, one may not publish facts that are untrue and present them as true.

*“Very strict”, says Maciej Zaremba. After several weeks of devastating attacks against the editors of Ordfront Magazine, the criticisms had an effect. The magazine’s chief editor, Leif Ericsson, published an apology with extensive self-criticism in*

*Dagens Nyheter*. . . . How would you summarize Diana Johnstone's argument?

*Ericsson*: She has written a book in which she questions NATO policy in the Balkans, which eventually led to several military interventions. She states that much of the picture that has been painted in the Western press is false, and is intended to legitimate NATO's policy. That is how I interpret her standpoint.

*Is it wrong to say that?*

*Ericsson*: What I think is wrong is. . . on a number of points. . . I have not closely analysed all of her arguments, and there are certainly grounds for some of them. I have focused on 5-10 main points, including what she has stated about the massacres at Racak and Srebrenica, and about the Hague Tribunal and some other points, and have concluded that she suppresses a large number of facts which speak against her standpoint.

*Does she deny [the massacre at] Srebrenica?*

*Ericsson*: She expresses herself in a rather slippery fashion. . . . She says that Srebrenica has been used *only* to exaggerate and to justify the NATO attack, and that no one has been interested in finding out who were killed [at Srebrenica]. That sweeping statement is completely wrong, for there are incredibly many organizations which have worked year after year to trace victims and find relatives and survivors. [Note: The reader is advised to compare Ericsson's interpretation with what Johnstone actually wrote in *Fools' Crusade*. See also Appendix, item 4.]

*So, she does not question that a massacre occurred at Srebrenica?*

*Ericsson*: No, she does not. But she has a tendency to constantly reduce the number of victims. . . .

*Did you [Zaremba] know of Diana Johnstone prior to this affair?*

*Zaremba*: I had heard the name. She is part of some sort of international Balkan revisionist network. You can surf the Internet, via Serbian web sites or these British revolutionary Marxists. . . .

*Have you read her book?*

*Zaremba*: No!

*You say that with great emphasis. Do you recoil from touching it?*

*Zaremba*: Her interview [in *Ordfront Magazine*] is enough to know where she stands, what she means to say.

*Where does she stand?*

*Zaremba*: She has decided to show that there was no reason to intervene in the Balkans. I'm guessing as to how she thinks. And the rest merely follows from that standpoint, which is primary. It is all based on the notion that the United States, Great Britain—the imperialistic powers, as they are called—cannot under any circumstances carry out a reasonable or humanitarian military action. If they send their troops somewhere, it must be the devil's work, it must be an expression of imperialism. That is the point of departure. Therefore, it is necessary to prove that none of the grim events in the Balkans have taken place. I think it is completely transparent in the interview. That is roughly how it is done.

\* \* \* \* \*

Also interviewed in the same programme was Sören Sommeliuss, culture/debate editor at a medium-size daily newspaper, who has long experience of the Balkans and written several books on related issues:

*Interviewer*: One of several whose contributions have been rejected in the storm that followed Maciej Zaremba's first article is Sören Sommeliuss, who at least got to write something in his own paper, Helsingborgs Dagblad.

*Sommeliuss*: I think that it has been an utterly deplorable debate. It is pitiful when two of Sweden's leading culture/debate sections, those of *Dagens Nyheter* and *Expressen*, allow only one point of view in the discussion of an extremely important issue, and more or less reject outright all other perspectives on the Yugoslavian wars.

*Your own submissions have been rejected. . .*

*Sommelius:* . . . By all of the Stockholm dailies. I am, after all, someone who has followed events in Yugoslavia throughout the 1990s. I also reviewed Diana Johnstone's book in *Helsingborgs Dagblad* last July, and felt that it was an important book— especially important, given that NATO's bombing in Kosovo in 1999 was portrayed as a so-called humanitarian intervention, as the good war that would be followed by new good wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. If one is to understand the new world order after the end of the Cold War, with the U.S. as the only superpower, it is important to study what happened in Yugoslavia in 1999 when NATO went in. Johnstone does not possess the final truth, but she has written a book that presents arguments and a line of reasoning in a very competent manner.

*But it has been said that she denies that genocide has taken place in Yugoslavia.*

*Sommelius:* That is not my impression. . . . In my view, she absolutely does not deny that outrages have been committed by Serbians. But she places them within a context; she provides a comprehensive picture. In the Yugoslavian wars, everything was connected. . . . It

had to do with politics, economics, history, outrages committed during World War II. . . . It is no coincidence that the [Bosnian-Serb] camps at Trnopolje and Omarska were located near Jasenovac, which during World War II was a horrific concentration camp run by the [Croatian] *Ustasja* fascists. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

THE RADIO PROGRAMME had no discernible effect on the one-sided public debate. But it did lead to the selection of Björn Kumm to write the foreword to the Swedish version of *Fools' Crusade*, in which he observed:

"In Sweden, historical memory is light as a feather. Kilometres of news columns have been devoted to the wars in what is now called former Yugoslavia, but the perspective has been very short. Antagonisms within the region have been described as though they emerged from a vacuum when the Cold War, already shrouded in memory, came to an end. The 'evil' in the human spirit was seen as the origin of the conflicts. . . .

"Diana Johnstone has done something unforgivable— she has complicated that picture."

## OUT OF CONTROL

PRIOR TO ORDFRONT'S annual meeting of 2002, Chairwoman Christina Hagner published the following exhortation in the magazine: "In a democratic movement, it is essential that the decisions which are made actually reflect members' views; otherwise, they will sooner or later turn their backs on the organization. And without its members, Ordfront is nothing. . . . We have tried to make our annual meetings exciting, interesting and enticing; but so far, those efforts have not had any effect on the number of participants. That so few members attend the annual meeting means, at best, that members are largely satisfied with the organization; I hope that is the case. At worst, it means they do not believe that they can have any influence, and therefore decline to attend."

From that point of view, the 2004 annual meeting was an answer to a chairwoman's prayer. Whereas attendance in previous years had normally been at the level of around 30-40, some 200 members showed up this time. Oddly or symbolically enough, the meeting was held at the headquarters of the Bonniers publishing conglomerate whose holdings include *Dagens Nyheter* and *Expressen*.

Most likely due to the unusually large attendance, the meeting was somewhat disorganized— but only somewhat, and mainly toward the end when the allotted time had already been exceeded by several hours and important matters remained to be dealt with. Otherwise and as usual, the well-mannered Swedes comported themselves reasonably and democratically, despite an occasionally heated discussion.

One source of confusion was the failure of the nominating committee to present its candidates for the board of directors by the deadline specified in the by-laws, i.e. three weeks prior to the meeting. That has been the rule rather than the exception, but the customary lapse would later be cited as grounds for nullifying the proceedings. Since the committee was dominated by supporters of Ericsson, Hagner & Co., that was an unusual instance of Swedish *chutzpah*, or of the pot calling itself black.

According to one member of the nominating committee, the main reason for the delay was its determination to persuade Hagner to continue as chairwoman. She was said to have been reluctant, due to the unpleasantness surrounding the Johnstone interview, but finally consented on the day before the meeting.

It was no doubt a comfort to Hagner that a large majority of the board candidates put forward by the nominating committee could be counted upon as allies. The opposition that had formed in reaction to the submissive behaviour of the old board had proposed other candidates, but none of them was mentioned by the committee. It was therefore necessary to nominate them from the floor, a common practice that was nonetheless challenged on technical grounds that were readily dismissed by the majority. The disappointed minority, the Ericsson-Hagner faction, would later characterize the election of five floor nominees to the 18-member board as a "coup".

### *Baffling incomprehension*

Naturally, the debate centred on the events surrounding the Johnstone interview, including the dismissal of Björn Eklund and his two colleagues in the editorial department. In perhaps some of the harshest terms ever heard from the mouths of Swedes, whose speech normally tends to the diplomatic, the leadership's capitulation to the mainstream mob was denounced as a betrayal of Ordfront's most essential function— to promote and defend freedom of expression, especially on behalf of controversial and unpopular ideas.

The lengthy parade of speakers who hammered in that theme included ordinary

members, representatives of local chapters and a number of prominent figures including several well-known Ordfront writers. Most of the speakers emphasized that they were not defending Diana Johnstone's analysis or the interview with her in the magazine. Indeed, several made a point of expressing their disapproval (again, without specifying the grounds for disapproval).

### *Principles reaffirmed*

The general drift of the arguments is reflected in Motion 16, which was approved by a sizeable margin and concludes: "It is the opinion of the annual meeting that it was wrong of the organization's board to repudiate publication of the interview with Diana Johnstone. In keeping with the organization's stated purpose, the board should instead have defended the provision of a public space for critical debate on controversial issues." (For the complete text of the motion, see Appendix, item 8.)

The capitulators had very little to offer in their defence, and what they did say tended to confirm the general impression. Hagner and a few members of the old board openly acknowledged that they had succumbed to the media pressure. But they apparently expected their audience to accept that as a valid reason. The attitude seemed to be: "Of course we caved in. After all, we were under a lot of pressure, what with reporters constantly pestering us on the telephone and writing nasty articles about us, work mates giving us dirty looks, etc."

They did not appear to grasp why so many members were distressed or outraged by their submission on behalf of the entire organization. This baffling incomprehension, whether genuine or disingenuous, would persist long afterward and contribute to the weird happenings that followed the annual meeting.

The other main item on the agenda was the dismissal of the editorial staff, which was widely interpreted as directly related to the Johnstone controversy. The economic rationale for laying off the two junior editors was questioned, and the reasons given for Eklund's dismissal— "disloyalty" and "co-operation difficulties"— were rejected as unfounded, punitive and hypocritical.

It was pointed out that the annual meeting of 1997 had awarded Ordfront's Democracy Prize to three ambulance drivers who had also been dismissed for "disloyalty" when they criticized their private-sector employer.

In her statement explaining why the prize was awarded to the ambulance drivers, Chairwoman Hagner had written that they "have with great courage defended freedom of expression and the right to express criticism at the workplace. . . . They have also focused a spotlight on the clearly undemocratic condition that employees' freedom of expression shall be regarded as a favour granted by the employer only when it does not conflict with the demand for loyalty".

Citing these brave words, journalist Dan Josefsson observed that, if Ordfront were to go ahead with the dismissal of Eklund on the stated grounds, it would be honour-bound to revoke the Democracy Prize to the now certifiably disloyal ambulance drivers and apologize to their employer for the misguided criticism. [8]

### *Bad sort of fellow*

Once again, the leadership's defence of its actions was less than convincing. Executive Director Gertrud Åström, who had formally wielded the axe, assured those present that Eklund was, indeed, a bad sort of fellow— but regretted that she was prevented by legal considerations from discussing the nature and extent of his transgressions.

Åström was firmly supported by a protégée, the manager of the book club who asserted that she and others had found Eklund to be a very difficult person to work with. But, again, no concrete examples of his alleged disloyalty or social impediment were provided.

The insinuations of Åström and the unsubstantiated complaints of her angry young subordinate were emphatically contradicted by a number of writers and editorial staffers of both genders who over the years had worked closely with Eklund. They all attested to his exceptional competence, both social and professional.

The main justification for the dismissal of Eklund and his colleagues, however, was that there was no need to provide one. It was argued

that such decisions were purely administrative matters and no business of the annual meeting. That argument was rejected by reference to the by-laws which state that the annual meeting is the organization's "highest decision-making body", without exception. There is no modifying clause stipulating that the meeting is supreme, except in matters deemed by the executive director and/or chairwoman to fall solely within their spheres of authority.

In addition to the by-laws, there are formal guidelines which proclaim that, "Ordfront is characterized by an open and searching attitude. . . . Freedom of expression has always been one of Ordfront's defining issues, and Swedish legislation on free expression is among the most far-reaching in the world. But despite the formal right to express oneself, much of Swedish society is silent. It is a silence that needs to be broken. Greater attention must be paid to this growing silence and the lack of worker influence at Swedish workplaces."

### *Heart of the matter*

Thus, the issue of Eklund's dismissal went to the heart of Ordfront's principles and purpose, as subsequently pointed out by Christina Garbergs-Gunn, a board member who was not able to attend the annual meeting: "This is not about an isolated personnel matter, but an important question of principle which deeply concerns Ordfront's fundamental purpose, i.e. to contribute to critical and independent thought, to promote democracy, to protect human rights and, not least, to defend freedom of the press and the right of free expression."

An overwhelming majority of those who spoke at the meeting shared that view and were highly critical of the leadership's handling of the two main issues— the capitulation to the mainstream press, and the seemingly arbitrary dismissal of (especially) Eklund.

In response, the leadership generally sidestepped the issues by changing the subject or complaining of unfair treatment. Several supporters defended Hagner by praising her sound fiscal management— as though that somehow outweighed the little matter of betraying the organization's basic ideals. It was

the sort of praise which, in other contexts, has been bestowed upon Mussolini for the punctuality of Italian trains, or upon Pinochet for the Chilean economy which began to boom after the United States stopped assaulting it. [9]

Echoing Zaremba, a former board member named Edna Eriksson argued that there are limits to free expression which may not be crossed, as (implicitly) in the case of the Johnstone interview. Ingegärd Waarenperä, a founding member who also happens to be a reporter with *Dagens Nyheter*, accused the gathering of "demonizing" the board, thus rendering it incapable of providing effective leadership.

A board member named Staffan Myrberg, who is purported to be some kind of journalist, liked the sound of that and launched into a series of whining self-justifications, in the process displaying an impressive failure to grasp the complexities of the Balkan wars or the arguments of Diana Johnstone— neither of which was on the meeting's agenda.

In the end, all of these entreaties and lamentations failed to persuade a majority of the delegates, who voted by a substantial margin to adopt the motion condemning the leadership's capitulation to the media onslaught. A large majority also voted for a motion which: rejected outright the notion of "disloyalty" as grounds for the dismissal of any Ordfront employee; rescinded the dismissal of Björn Eklund; and instructed the new board to investigate the accusations of "co-operation difficulties" made against him.

### *Out of Control*

As noted, the new board included five members from the "opposition" who, together with the three holdovers from the old board who had reluctantly consented to its discredited decisions, formed a fragile majority of one or two votes.

The opposition's candidate for chairperson was withdrawn as a gesture of reconciliation and good will, after Hagner had assured the meeting that she would devote herself to healing any wounds left over from the conflict and earnestly co-operate with the new board, whatever its composition.

On that harmonious note, Hagner was re-elected by acclamation— and then proceeded

to fire off a discordant acceptance speech in which she declared that her handling of the Johnstone/Eklund controversy was entirely free of error and, confronted with the same type of situation again, she would behave in exactly the same way. She expressed strong disapproval of the decisions that had just been made, regretted the departure of supporters on the old board, and expressed doubts that she would be able to work with the new one. "I am very worried about the future of the organization and my ability to function properly as chairwoman," she forewarned.

The next day, in the pages of *Dagens Nyheter*, Hagner launched what was to become a sustained attack on the democratic majority. "I think the annual meeting got completely out of control," proclaimed Hagner in DN—with a style of argument similar to that of Henry Kissinger when he explained that the removal of Allende was necessary in order to "rectify the irresponsibility" of the Chilean people in electing him.

Hagner shifted the focus to a theme that would prove to be useful in the ensuing efforts to wrest control of the organization from its highest decision-making body: "I feel enormous solidarity with Ordfront's personnel, who today are extremely unhappy over the decisions that were made. . . . I can resign tomorrow, in a month or a half-year from now if looks as though the situation is becoming impossible."

In a small leftist weekly she asserted that the meeting was packed by a Stockholm-

based cultural elite loyal to and mobilized by Björn Eklund, implying that the decisions reached were therefore suspect or illegitimate. Naturally, this theme of an "arrogant cultural elite" imposing its will on the salt of the earth—shades of Nixon's "silent majority"—was then parroted by her soulmates in the mainstream press.

Chairwoman Hagner also suggested that conciliatory gestures by the "cultural elite" were not to be trusted. Asked by the weekly's reporter if the fact that she was unanimously re-elected as chairwoman did not indicate a willingness to compromise, she replied: "I don't know what it indicates. You will have to ask them."

Needless to say, Ericsson, Hagner & Co. had laboured to mobilize their own sympathizers, and had far greater resources at their disposal to do so—not only those of the Ordfront organization, but also of their allies at *Dagens Nyheter* and other powerful media who published agitated pre-meeting alarms about the impending disaster, in an obvious attempt to influence the outcome.

In any event, attendance at the annual meeting was five times greater than normal, precisely because ordinary members from all over the country were so concerned about the decisions of the leadership that they were willing to sacrifice a day or more for a journey to Stockholm. A large contingent from Göteborg travelled the breadth of the country to be there. There was at least one member from the northern city of Umeå, near the Arctic Circle.

*Chairwoman Hagner once lamented, in Ordfront's magazine, the typically low turnout at annual meetings. But when five times the usual number of members chose to participate in 2004, the outcome was not to her liking. The voters had "got out of control", she proclaimed, and set about organizing a coup against the democratic majority.*



## Var med

DET BÖRJAR DRÄ INOP SIG till Föreningen Ordfronts årsstämman välkommen att säga sitt, både om det är som varit ekonomiskt avseende ett ödesår. Det var det första året som storsäljande deckare av Henning Mankell. Mot alla olyckskorpar klarade vi det. Nu går vi vidare.

På de följande sidorna finns föreningsstyrelsens försliden och begrundna om det är just detta som du anser att er du det så kom till stämman och stöd förslaget, tycker alternativ. I en demokratirörelse som Ordfront är det liv verkligen motsvarar medlemmarnas uppfattning, anna eller senare vända föreningen ryggen. Och utan sina me

På förra årets stämman reste några deltagare frågan om vi i praktiken står för de värderingar som vi förespråkatska som vi i våra publikationer och i andra samman jag tycker det, men är förstås helt fel person att uttala tillgång till mer information än någon annan medlem osv. Visst finns det brister och Ordfronts maskineri är inte behöva vara. Men för den som är villig att engagera sig tande i Ordfront. Då kan man förändra det man inte är

Vad gäller Ordfronts inre demokrati har jag grubbat av föreningens 30.000 medlemmar och de som vill

***“Appalling demolition of decisions made in good democratic order”***

Due to the actions of the board following publication of Björn Eklund’s interview with Diana Johnstone, I became actively involved in Ordfront for the first time. Went to the annual meeting, listened and stayed almost to the end. From having been a contributor and reader, I had become an active member of the organization— an involvement which has now become the object of insulting texts that I have read!

I was very pleased by the calm and rational atmosphere of the annual meeting, and by the fact that so many participated. So admirably patient everyone was in conducting the lengthy meeting. How well the association democracy functioned—

an organizational knowledge and wisdom that has been developed over centuries by founders of folk movements, union activists, advocates of democracy. It is a democratic process that has often been ridiculed as “association Sweden”, and which now is also being attacked from within ORDFRONT!

So now the leadership of this important and excellent organization is demolishing, in the most appalling manner, the decisions made in good democratic order! Remember what it was that triggered this conflict!

— Torsten Jurell, *illustrator/author*

The most brutally frank condemnation of the former board was delivered by a chap from Norrköping, some 100 miles to the south. Etc., etc.

Such facts did not get past the watchdogs of the mainstream press, however. Swedish public radio, probably even more influential than *Dagens Nyheter*, placed itself at the disposal of the offended leadership. It broadcast at least two lengthy segments which faithfully reproduced the management’s line, while totally excluding the democratic majority.

In one segment, Gertrud Åström related that she had received some very unpleasant threats via e-mail and telephone prior to the annual meeting: “We have our eyes on you, something might happen to you”, that sort of thing. She allowed that none of the threats came from the dreaded “cultural elite”. But the implication was nonetheless clear: Those opposed to her, if not directly guilty, had allied themselves with some very nasty types— a classic smear technique.

The reason for Björn Eklund’s dismissal was now delicately referred to as “personal work-related reasons”— presumably because that formulation sounded more neutral and less suspicious than “disloyalty” and “cooperation difficulties”.

Åström and the reporter explained at some length that the decision to protect the worker’s

rights of Björn Eklund was. . . a devastating attack on workers’ rights. The entire remainder of the Ordfront staff, it seemed, was fairly paralysed with anxiety over the possibility that a future annual meeting might arbitrarily order the dismissal of some hapless employee.

“We are going to fight this!” proclaimed the belligerent Åström, in much the same strident tones with which she had vainly attempted to enlighten the annual meeting. “We will not submit to this!”

One subject that did not come up during Åström’s radio performance was her other job as head of a public inquiry. She had her own office, telephone and e-mail address, within the government. It is as though the chief executive of *The Nation* or *The Progressive* had a well-paid consulting job with an office in the White House.

In short, the methods chosen by the Ericsson/Hagnerites to “hold Ordfront together” were not quite what the democratic majority had envisioned when it re-elected Hagner in the spirit of reconciliation which she then refused to acknowledge.

After the first week of the anti-democratic offensive, Ordfront author Bim Clinnell posed the obvious question: “How in the world is it going to be possible to have confidence in a chairwoman who vilifies the organization’s annual meeting and attacks employees, board



members, and members in the media, or a chief executive who proclaims in the media that she is not going to accept the decisions of the annual meeting?"

### *Voiceless majority*

The answer, while equally obvious, did not seem to matter very much. For, the democratic majority was given virtually no opportunity by the mainstream media to explain its position or refute the preposterous accusations made against it.

Otherwise, it would have been possible to explain that Åström's line of reasoning had been presented to the annual meeting and been rejected—because it was clearly Åström and associates who had violated the rights of at least one and possibly other employees, and had done so in such a way as to make a mockery of Ordfront's professed ideals. It could also have been noted that, according to the by-laws, the annual meeting is the organization's highest authority— not Åström, Hagner and/or Ericsson.

But since no one from the majority was allowed to be heard on that or numerous other occasions, that sort of information was never conveyed to a wider audience. Coverage of the Ordfront scandal by the mainstream press was even more restrictive and one-sided than its highly selective coverage of the Balkan wars.

Consequently, the intransigent leadership was able to mount a coup against the democratic order which the by-laws ordain. It was a coup conducted with the complicity of the same mainstream media that had launched the attack against Ordfront in the first place. In other words, Ericsson, Hagner & Co. not only capitulated— they joined the enemy, eagerly accepting its support for their revolting project and taking the resources of the organization with them.

Given Hagner's words and actions before and during the annual meeting, these developments should have come as no great surprise. But for the trusting, conciliatory Swedes who had re-elected her to the post of chairwoman, the bizarre events following the meeting came as a rude awakening.

One of those who felt betrayed was Eva Moberg, the writer and editorial board

member referred to above (see p. 9). Ten days after the annual meeting, she noted that Hagner had promised to co-operate with the new board and work for reconciliation, but: "We were totally bamboozled! So it was just a trick. How else to explain your ploys in DN and *Flamman* [the leftist weekly], with a total arrogance for the membership and a strong determination to run over their recommendations. . . ."

"In *Flamman*, you proclaim that the annual meeting's decisions do not reflect what Ordfront stands for. The 89 members who voted yes for Motion 18 were manipulated by some writers who spoke in their own interest. I can only interpret that as a sign of a lack of arguments, in combination with extraordinary contempt for the delegates and their judgement. . . ."

"According to what logic is the staff portrayed as the party under attack? Who is it that is scaring them? . . . Why is the staff so frightened of the annual meeting's majority? Its intent was to protect one staff member from dismissal and prevent a deterioration of the magazine's quality. It was a unique decision; but to the extent that it has wider application, it would be to provide extra protection for the staff against unfair dismissal. . . ."

"The only option available to the indignant executive director [Åström] is to shift attention to the problems of the workplace, and we should therefore not be surprised if those come to be portrayed as even more frightening and fateful. At this point, I am prepared for anything."

### *Desperate measures*

It soon became evident that the Ericsson/Hagnerites were, indeed, capable of just about anything. A professor of *commercial law* from the Swedish equivalent of the Harvard Business School was enlisted to produce a negative judgement on the proceedings of the annual meeting. He claimed to have been commissioned by Ordfront to review the propriety of the meeting, but no one among the leadership would admit to having done so. It was not until weeks later, after the damage had been done, that Åström assumed responsibility for hiring the willing academic— who delivered an opinion that was full of errors and was

evidently based on hearsay from his clients. Among other things, he falsely stated that nominations to the board from the floor of the annual meeting are disallowed by Ordfront's by-laws— a misconception that could easily have been corrected by reading them.

Another serious error, he asserted, was that the motion to withdraw the dismissal of Björn Eklund had been fundamentally altered during the annual meeting. In fact, the alteration was a mere formality to reflect a change in circumstances: Whereas the original motion referred to the *warning* issued to Björn Eklund (for his responses to questions from a trade journal; see page 7), he had been *dismissed* by the time of the annual meeting. Accordingly, the meeting voted without much ado to update “warning” to “dismissal”. That was sufficient grounds for invalidating the meeting, reasoned the hired professor, and it was an argument that would be oft-repeated by Hagner and associates during the months ahead.

As one member of the new board pointed out, acceptance of such a principle “would nullify the national conventions of all parliamentary parties and labour unions. . . . A large portion of the decisions made at Ordfront annual meetings of previous years would also be invalidated.”

Another line of attack was launched by Ingegärd Waaranperä and Edna Eriksson (see above, “Heart of the matter”) and a third malcontented member, who together filed a motion in a district court for nullification of the annual meeting. Among other things, they complained that the nominating committee had not submitted its recommendations three weeks in advance as stipulated in the by-laws, and that some of the new board members had not been nominated by the same deadline. In fact, those names had been submitted in good time, but the pro-Hagner nominating committee had declined to mention them. As for the failure to present its recommendations in time, that has long been the rule rather than the exception. In any event, the annual meeting is empowered to waive such requirements, and did so in this case as so often in the past.

In the midst of all this, the new board met for the first time and was presented with seventeen pages of primarily legal text which only some of the members had seen in advance.

The others were told by Chairwoman Hagner that they had ten minutes in which to read and digest the document, after which she expected the new board to declare itself invalid and allow the old one to continue in its place until a special annual meeting could be held.

Two hours of heated discussion then ensued— until it was pointed out that, if the new members of the board had not been properly elected, then neither had Hagner nor the organization's two auditors. Only then did Hagner concede to a vote on the board's right to exist, which was confirmed by a margin of 8-6. Most of those who voted against were holdovers from the old board.

---

*The by-laws empower the auditors to call a special meeting, presumably in the event of a dire economic emergency. But that clause was now put to use in order to enable a coup to be carried out.*

---

Apart from defending her own position, Hagner evidently conceded because her strategy depended on validation of the two auditors, who had been persuaded to demand a special annual meeting in September. Claiming to base their judgement on the mysterious professor's erroneous opinion and the court action of Waaranperä & Co., the auditors ruled that key aspects of the annual meeting were invalid.

The main purpose of the special annual meeting would be to (a) reconsider Motion 18 which rejected the rationale for the dismissal of Björn Eklund, and (b) elect a new board. The auditors claimed to be especially concerned that decisions of the annual meeting exposed the organization to the risk of liability for damages— as the legal action of Waaranperä & Co. had conveniently demonstrated.

The by-laws empower the auditors to call a special meeting, presumably in the event of a dire economic emergency. But that clause was put to use in this case in order to enable the management's coup to be carried out.

Observing these manoeuvres with mounting stupefaction was Margareta Norlin, the first recipient of Ordfront's Democracy Prize and one of those elected to the board (as a substitute) against the wishes of the nominating

committee. "I have been active in voluntary organizations for forty years," she wrote afterward, "but I cannot recall anything like what we are now experiencing— that a minority obstructs the outcome of a well-attended annual meeting on the basis of a formal error which they themselves committed! Christina Hagner said, herself, during the meeting that the nominating committee's failure to present its recommendations in time is rather the rule than the exception. . . .

"For myself and many others, it is positively frightening that such methods can be applied in the 21st century— that a small self-appointed group, including representatives of competing mass media, attempt by every possible means to obstruct Ordfront's most well-attended annual meeting ever. That they are then backed up by an essentially united front of Swedish media is even more chilling. And when the same media impose a blanket of silence on the protests of internationally renowned figures such as Noam Chomsky, John Pilger and Arundhati Roy [see "Unmentionable authorities", p. 30], one begins to wonder how thick the McCarthyesque climate in Sweden can become."

### *Acts of vandalism*

Norlin's concerns were reinforced by Anders Björnsson, a former Ordfront chairman and a historian whose journalistic credits include editing the commentary/op-ed page of Sweden's second-most influential newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet*, the traditional voice of the Conservative Party and the business establishment:

"A number of functionaries and former functionaries," observed Björnsson, "feel that their good names, positions, personal honour and credibility have been publicly called into question, and rightly so: In every case, they have only themselves to blame. I have never before experienced or heard of such a democratic calamity in connection with a voluntary organization as this one. Not even when the Swedish Left was most infected with Stalinism. . . did anyone dare to behave in such a manner. . . .

"I plan to attend the special annual meeting, but I will do so only— please note, *only*—

---

*"I have never before experienced or heard of such a democratic calamity in connection with a voluntary organization— not even when the Swedish Left was most infected with Stalinism. . . . The behaviour of Ericsson, Waaranperä, Hagner, etc. will be regarded as acts of vandalism."*

— Anders Björnsson,  
former Ordfront chairman

---

for Björn Eklund's sake. How is it possible that someone, whose professional competence and personal devotion is beyond question, can be treated in such a brutish and denigrating manner? The issue that the auditors and the quasi-expert [i.e. the professor of commercial law] have seized upon. . . does not in any way justify this special annual meeting. . . .

"The actions of those [who have founded the annual meeting] are unprecedented. They will most likely be recorded in the annals of organizational law and procedure as reprehensible. The behaviour of Ericsson, Waaranperä, Hagner, etc. will be regarded as acts of vandalism."

In any event, the vandalism produced the desired result and a special annual meeting (henceforth referred to as the "coup meeting") was scheduled for 4 September 2004. It required no great powers of perception or prediction to foresee what would happen next. As I noted in a memo dated 21 June:

Based on their behaviour to date, I would expect the anti-democrats to pursue a strategy which includes some or all of the following elements:

- use their willing accomplices in the mainstream press to mount a fresh propaganda campaign, this time against the forces of darkness that would inflict the likes of Diana Johnstone and Björn Eklund upon an intellectually defenceless Swedish public
- portray themselves, again with the help of the mainstream press, as a courageous band of the righteous, struggling nobly against the selfsame forces of darkness

- exploit the resources of the Ordfront organization to further their cause
- try to pack the special meeting with supporters, partly by signing up new like-minded members. No doubt the democratic forces will do the same, so it becomes a question of who can muster the most troops.

Thus, the crucial question is how successful the anti-democrats will be in exploiting the far greater resources at their disposal in order to curry support among the Ordfront membership (that the general public will be spoon-fed their point of view is a foregone conclusion).

And that was pretty much how it played out. Theoretically working to the advantage of the democratic majority was the behaviour of the leadership and the old board, which was so disgraceful that it had provoked an unprecedented turnout at the annual meeting. Among those who had forcefully defended freedom of expression and workers' rights on that occasion were numerous prominent figures, including several well-known authors of Ordfront books and articles. These and related factors indicated at least a potential to mount an effective defence against the attempted coup.

But there was no organized opposition in place to marshal that potential—none had ever previously been needed. As noted by Anders Björnsson and others, it was an unprecedented situation, and it left much of the democratic majority disheartened and flabbergasted. What to do, how to do it and, in the face of such dreadful behaviour, why bother?

The Ericsson/Hagnerites, on the other hand, were clearly determined to hang on to power by whatever means, and were well-equipped to do so. Among the resources at their disposal were: control of the Ordfront apparatus, including the money, the office staff, the magazine and other communication channels; the totally biased support of mainstream media; and friends in high places (as demonstrated by Gertrud Åström's association with the Persson government).

This may be contrasted with the meagre resources of the democratic majority which, apart from one or two small leftist weeklies,

was denied access to the media "debate" that spluttered during the summer months. For the most part, the democratic forces were relegated to an e-mail forum where the discussion was often lively and informative; but the number of participants was no more than 100, if that.

It would have required an energetic, well-organized effort to overcome the enormous disparity in resources, but no such effort materialized (see, "Passive majority", p. 35).

The strategy adopted by the coup makers was to divert attention from the central issues of the annual meeting, all relating to Ordfront's stated ideals regarding freedom of expression. Those issues were obfuscated by a counter-attack based on the notion that the "opposition" (as the majority was labelled) was dominated by a cabal of doctrinaire leftists who were plotting to take over Ordfront. If they were allowed to succeed, the story went, they would conduct a purge of the not-disloyal staff, impose a rigid dogma of some unspecified but implicitly communistic nature, ruin the finances, and ultimately destroy the organization.

### *"Appalling rhetorical Left"*

This theme was developed by Leif Ericsson in the only and conservative newspaper of Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, a daily which is also owned by the Bonniers conglomerate. He explained that the conflict had, in fact, nothing to do with the specific, concrete and often quite eloquent arguments presented by speaker after speaker at the annual meeting. Rather, "The appalling Left that we had during the 1970s, which sneered at democracy and human rights as *bourgeois* artifices, has been resurrected. . . . If the 'rhetorical Left' gets the upper hand, the open Ordfront that I know will disappear."

Neither on this nor any other occasion did Ericsson or his associates specify which individuals comprised the "appalling rhetorical Left" of his anxieties. But it may be inferred that among them were the Ordfront writers who had criticized the capitulation to the mainstream press and the spurious grounds for Björn Eklund's dismissal. They were people like Eva Moberg, Margareta Norlin and many others with whom Ericsson had collaborated

for decades without detecting their subversive tendencies. Apparently, it was not until their outraged reaction to the sorry events preceding the annual meeting that he became aware of their true, appalling natures.

In short, Ericsson's allegation was absurd and totally unfounded— pure McCarthyism, as many noted at the time. What made it especially absurd was the fact that, if anyone involved had earned the labels he so groundlessly applied, it was the Ericsson/Hagnerites. This was pointed out by writer Bim Clinell, in response to a discredited member of the old board who had noted with alarm that, "... he had seen— horrible thought!— several members of the old Swedish Communist Party [SCP] at the annual meeting!!!! So did I!!! For example, I saw Leif Ericsson, a very active SCPer in the old days. Yes, those were the days when he, working at Ordfront's print shop, printed the October Publishing Company's works in praise of Mao, Lenin, Stalin and all the rest. And I saw Christina Hagner, who of course had a leading position in the Stockholm Kampuchea Association, which supported Pol Pot, during the latter half of the 1970s." The litigious Ingegärd Waaranperä has a similar past.

This may help to explain why Ericsson remained mostly out of sight during the months leading up to the coup meeting. Gertrud Åström also receded from the limelight, leaving it mainly to Chairwoman Hagner to proclaim and promote the anti-democratic position. This she did with considerable energy, self-assurance and public-relations skill. Anyone not familiar with the facts of the case would probably have been inclined to believe her.

### *Cheap trick*

One of Hagner's first tactical manoeuvres following the annual meeting was an attempt to discredit two prominent Ordfront writers who had played leading roles in defending freedom of expression and the worker's rights of Björn Eklund. This made them presumptive members of the "appalling Left" conspiracy that was out to subvert the organization. But they were widely respected, and therefore capable of influencing opinion in ways inimical to the coup makers' purpose.

One of them was Maria-Pia Boëthius, who

had donated many long hours of her time to promote Ordfront by travelling throughout the country to speak to local groups. For these and other valuable services, she was awarded— or so she was led to believe— an honorary membership in grateful appreciation.

Another who had been given the same impression was journalist Dan Josefsson, also a recipient of Ordfront's Democracy Prize who once distinguished himself by refusing to accept the "Journalist of the Year" award from the Bonniers publishing conglomerate that owns *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen* and much more.

---

*The McArthy-esque charges were most applicable to those who tossed them about. Leif Ericsson had been an active member of the Communist Party, and Christina Hagner had been an ardent supporter of Pol Pot.*

---

This meant that the two were no longer required to pay the annual membership fee— or so they thought. But they thought wrong, according to Chairwoman Hagner, who accused them of having infiltrated the annual meeting, delivered fiery speeches and voted under false pretences. Maria-Pia Boëthius then reminded Hagner of the honorary membership, but the indignant chairwoman was having none of it. She kept harping on the subject, insinuating that Boëthius and Josefsson were too miserly to pay their dues like decent folks, and insisting that they had been unauthorized to participate in the annual meeting.

This prompted Josefsson to recall that, "My portrait has been used in advertising for Ordfront at the Göteborg Book Fair, blown up large alongside such people as Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and John Pilger. I have been called upon to serve as moderator of Ordfront's big media seminar, and I have spoken to local Ordfront groups around the country. There have been many such talks.

"It is not nice to take back gifts retroactively because one no longer agrees with the recipient's point of view. For that is how bad it is. If Maria-Pia Boëthius and I had stood up at the annual meeting and delivered fiery speeches in favour of Björn Eklund's dismissal,

and for the re-election of the old board, this discussion would never have taken place. It is being conducted, for want of arguments, by a chairwoman who obviously cannot tolerate being criticized at the annual meeting despite the fact that she was unanimously re-elected."

Hagner eventually dropped this line of attack, which may have done her cause more harm than good. But it illustrates the depths to which she was willing to stoop; and she had much greater success with other stratagems.

### *Expensive trick*

Hagner's most effective move was a surprise propaganda attack launched a few weeks before the coup meeting, following a suggestion by the board's democratic majority that both sides in the controversy present their arguments and points of view in a joint mailing to the entire membership. Hagner rejected the idea on the grounds that such a mailing would be too heavy a burden on a budget that was already strained. Then, without informing the board, she went to Executive Director Åström who handed over a large sum of money for a letter to the membership which presented only Hagner's views.

Naturally, her message consisted largely of doubtful propositions and false or misleading statements. It included, for example, a theme that had become one of her favourites— that the annual meeting was only a "temporary gathering" and therefore not entitled to make decisions that extended beyond its period of existence. But since that period was less than 24 hours, the application of such a principle would not leave much for the meeting to decide. It would also disqualify the vast majority of decisions by all democratic bodies, as they too are "temporary gatherings" of varying duration. In any event, the annual meeting appoints a board of directors to ensure the implementation of its decisions.

An absurd argument, in other words. But it was repeated so often with such a show of conviction that it may have influenced some members.

Hagner also claimed that the coup meeting was necessitated by irregularities in the annual meeting— that the wording of Motion 18 had been altered during the meeting, that the nominating committee had presented its

### *"There is no conspiracy"*

There is no sect, no conspiracy, there are no infiltrating leftists from a "socialist magazine", no advocates of genocide. There are no secret meetings to plot the "takeover" of Ordfront. The only thing that unites "us" is that we are deeply concerned about the dismissal of Björn Eklund and the future of *Ordfront Magazine*, quite apart from our other associations. All who have expressed themselves in this matter have done so independently— not for any cabal, because the alleged cabal is a media construction and a notion which the Ordfront staff has clearly been force-fed.

— *Maria-Pia Boethius,*  
*Ordfront member and author*

recommendations too late, and that several new board members had been nominated from the floor. (For the truth of these matters, see pp. 18 & 24.)

Concerning the dismissal of Björn Eklund, the letter stated that his labour union had decided not to challenge the decision in the Labour Relations Court. That was not true; the case is scheduled to be heard in October of this year. It also claimed that the dismissal was a purely administrative matter, ignoring its significance for Ordfront's stated ideals (see Christina Garbergs-Gunn's response, below).

But the main purpose of the coup meeting, according to Hagner, was to elect a new board, which she claimed was in danger of being taken over by a radical Left with ties to a "socialist magazine". This leftist conspiracy posed a clear and present danger to the basic ideals of Ordfront, suggested Hagner. "One of the things that has contributed to Ordfront's growth," she wrote, "is the fact that we have been radical without limiting ourselves to 'the Left' in any of its forms. We are supported by a much wider range of interests than that. Of course, leftist voices have an important place in Ordfront, but only as some among many voices."

Hagner wrote that this alleged conflict between a doctrinaire Left and the broader perspective which she sought to preserve

was of long standing and paramount significance—in which case one would have expected it to be mentioned at the annual meeting. But it had not been, for the simple reason that it did not exist and had nothing to do with the vital issues that *were* discussed.

**Falsehoods rebutted**

These and other falsehoods were addressed in a response by board member Christina Garbergs-Gunn: “In a letter dated 9 August, mailed out by Christina Hagner without the board’s knowledge and at a cost that probably exceeds 100,000 kronor, there are a number of statements that require rebuttal. . . . The discussion surrounding Björn Eklund is not about a dismissal due to redundancy, but a dismissal based on alleged disloyalty. That is a serious charge and, in my view, an offence to an individual who has energetically worked for Ordfront for over twenty years.

“It is against that treatment which many have reacted, not least because it is Ordfront’s stated purpose to defend freedom of expression and the press. Christina Hagner does not mention this in her letter. . . . Two other board members and myself opposed the decision [when it was announced] two weeks before the annual meeting. In addition, two absent members would have done so if they had been present. Thus, the old board was divided on the issue. That is not mentioned in Christina Hagner’s letter.

“Another item of disinformation is Christina Hagner’s statement in her letter that Björn Eklund’s union has decided not to pursue the matter in the Labour Relations Court. . . . If Christina Hagner had contacted the union or Björn Eklund, she would have certainly learned that the case was indeed being pursued.

“Neither does Motion 18, in my view, deal with an isolated personnel matter, but with an important question of principle which is strongly related to Ordfront’s entire purpose. . . . It is a question of Ordfront’s credibility—the Ordfront which has declared that its purpose is to work in the traditional spirit of Swedish adult education for the development and strengthening of democracy, for the protection of human rights, for the establishment of consideration and solidarity as guiding principles for societal development.

That is why it is essential to defend freedom of expression and of the press.”

Garbergs-Gunn also refuted other Hagner accusations, including the alleged plot by “leftists” to take over the organization. (See Appendix, items 9 – 10, for the texts of the two documents.)

Although it was a powerful antidote to Hagner’s well-financed propaganda, only a few of Ordfront’s roughly 30,000 members got to see Garbergs-Gunn’s response; it was circulated via e-mail to, at best, a hundred readers.

**Inducing hysteria**

Caught in the middle of all this was the Ordfront staff, which was whipped into a state of anxiety with alarming visions of the purge and economic collapse that would surely follow a successful *putsch* by the “appalling rhetorical Left”.

If the conspirators succeeded in their plans for conquest, warned Chairwoman Hagner, Executive Director Gertrud Åström would declare herself unable to continue and, “One of the many consequences of putting Ordfront in a director-less condition would be



“Important letter about the special annual meeting” was the heading of Chairwoman Hagner’s costly and deceitful message to Ordfront members.

that important creditors would call in their loans, with an acute liquidity crisis as a result. Another is that several key Ordfront employees have given notice that they would quit if Gertrud is forced [sic] to leave."

Lasse Lindström, the not-disloyal union shop steward, chimed in: "There is a risk that an indeterminate number of employees would end up on the street."

### *Fevered imaginings*

Such pronouncements had no discernible basis in fact, but they had the predictable and doubtless intended effect of inducing something like a group psychosis among the employees, whose anxieties were then used as a weapon in the propaganda campaign. Since most ordinary members could sympathize and/or identify with the plight of pawns caught up in a power struggle, it was an effective device for compounding the anticipated sins of the alleged conspirators: Not only would they impose their unspecified but presumably evil dogma on Ordfront publications and destroy the organization, they would also inflict the cruelties of unemployment and financial ruin on the hapless personnel.

These fevered imaginings were reflected in the utterances of Jan-Erik Pettersson, head of the book-publishing division. "That I am to be got rid of has been a goal from the start," he accused one of the implied conspirators. It was a baffling assertion, to say the least, as Pettersson's stewardship of the book division had never been an issue. (It probably should have been, as he had rejected Diana Johnstone's book for publication on the basis of unspecified flaws— apparently on the advice/instructions of Leif Ericsson at a time when neither of them had read it.)

Pettersson kept a low profile throughout most of the conflict, but went public with his concerns shortly after the annual meeting with an interview in the book-publishing trade journal, *Svensk Bokhandel*, of which he is a former chief editor.

"It was a bewildering meeting," he confided to his successor. "The new board says that the publishing division will continue to operate as usual. But we probably have a stormy period ahead of us, so we are going to need support from the outside world. It is

important, for example, that all members remain and that none of our authors leave us."

According to the article, "Pettersson is also worried that word will start to spread that Ordfront is on the way to becoming a sect, in which case things could become tough for the publishing division. But even though the opposition [sic] won at the annual meeting, there are not many who support it in the book division or among the staff, in general.

"There are two things which, I feel, are very important to point out," said Pettersson. "One is that no one in the publishing division supports this faction, or whatever one may call it. The other is that we plan to continue working with the books that we have previously decided upon. And we will follow the publishing policy that we have. We shall not comply with any new situation in the organization."

It was a curious declaration of defiance, inasmuch as no one on the new board had made the slightest suggestion for changing any aspect of the book division. It is also rather unusual for an employee to tell a board of directors that he has no intention of following its directions— apparently in the firm belief that he can get away with it. And, in fact, he did: There was no response of any kind from the new board.

The non-response to Pettersson's outburst provided an illuminating contrast with the Ericsson/Hagnerites' treatment of Björn Eklund, as the latter pointed out: "What Jan-Erik Pettersson did in *Svensk Bokhandel* is a direct parallel to what I did when I publicly criticized the personnel cutbacks at *Ordfront Magazine*. One possible difference is that I never even suggested that I might obstruct a decision by Ordfront's leadership. Another is that, whereas my publicly expressed criticism contributed strongly to my dismissal for disloyalty, it is very unlikely that even a hair of the publishing chief's head will be touched. For that, I am glad."

### *Unmentionable authorities*

Following these developments from across the Atlantic in the United States was Edward S. Herman, a distinguished author and professor of economics who was interested in both main aspects of the case— the attacks on Diana



## ***“We strongly support the democratic majority”***

We have been informed that the head of Ordfront’s publishing house has expressed concern that the majority of the recent annual meeting and the new Ordfront board, by insisting on the right of Diana Johnstone to be heard, may jeopardize the willingness of good writers to work with Ordfront. In fact, the opposite is true.

We regard Diana Johnstone’s *Fools’ Crusade* as an outstanding work, dissenting from the mainstream view but doing so by an appeal to fact and reason, in a great tradition. But whatever opinion one may have of that book, there are more fundamental issues at stake, namely freedom of expression and the right to express dissenting views. We strongly support the democratic majority of Ordfront’s recent annual meeting for voting to reassert those principles, and to repudiate their abandonment by the organization’s leadership in response to a propaganda onslaught by mainstream Swedish media.

It is that onslaught and the leadership’s submission to it which we find reprehensible. We wish to make it clear that, only to the extent that Ordfront’s publishing house associates itself with such unprincipled behavior, would we be inclined to terminate our relationship with the organization.

*Arundhati Roy*

*John Pilger*

*Noam Chomsky*

*Michael Albert*

*Tariq Ali*

*David Barsamian*

Johnstone, and the fundamental issues of democracy and freedom of expression. Having learned (from me) of Jan-Erik Pettersson’s published anxieties about the threatening “sect” and so on, Herman organized a public statement by a number of Ordfront’s international authors, in support of the democratic majority.

The signatories were among the most well-known among Ordfront’s stable of authors, their works and reputations forming a key element of its profile as an important publisher of progressive literature. But Ericsson, Hagner & Co. dismissed their statement in a reply signed by Gertrud Åström: “It seems to be based on a serious misunderstanding. . . . I deeply regret that somebody has supplied You with disinformation in the obvious purpose to harm Ordfront’s good reputation.”

As I was the principal source of the information in question, I invited Åström “to point out the disinformative bits. Of particular importance, of course, is my translation of Motion 16 from the annual meeting. That, in itself, suffices as a basis of information for

most of the points taken up in the authors’ statement.” (See Appendix, items 11 – 12.)

I never got any response to that invitation. In fact, Åström and her associates pretended that they never received it. Months later, they were still referring to an unknown “someone” who had supplied the authors with disinformation in an effort to harm the organization. That weird unawareness enabled them to continue complaining about the offending behaviour, while sparing them the inconvenience of confronting the accused and demonstrating the validity of their accusations. (See Appendix, item 13.)

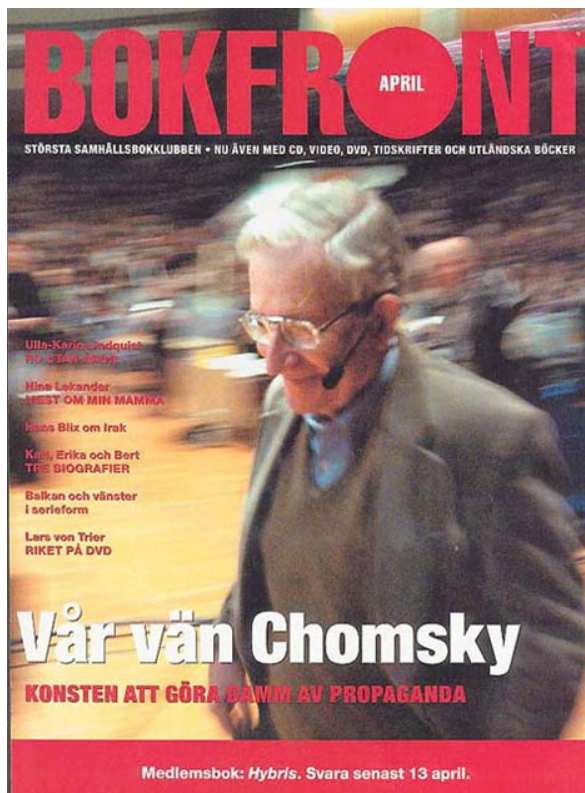
As for the authors’ statement, it never reached the bulk of the membership. Leif Ericsson refused to publish it in *Ordfront Magazine*, and it was ignored by the mainstream media. It appeared only in a couple of leftist weeklies with a combined circulation of several thousand.

Thus, of all the writers published by Ordfront, the one who has been granted space to influence the membership and the general public is Gellert Tamas, a “bombing leftist”

who has systematically disseminated falsehoods about Diana Johnstone, Ordfront's democratic majority and the Balkan tragedy. Meanwhile, some of the most knowledgeable and widely respected writers of our time have been censored by their Swedish publisher and the mainstream media on a matter of crucial importance which they are eminently qualified to discuss.

### *Distinguished dupes*

In these and other ways, debate was stifled and manipulated during the weeks leading up to the coup meeting on 4 September 2004. On the day before, *Dagens Nyheter* published a full-page public appeal— co-authored by Tamas and signed by 26 prominent figures, including writers, politicians and educators— urging support for the Ericsson/Hagnerites in their struggle against “the Eklund group”, as the democratic majority was designated.



Noam Chomsky was featured on the cover of this publicity brochure from Ordfront's book division. The headline reads, “Our friend Chomsky: The art of turning propaganda into dust”. But that friendship was evidently not strong enough to ensure that Chomsky's joint statement with several other Ordfront authors would be conveyed to the membership (see page 31).

Entitled “Break Ordfront's Vicious Circle”, the appeal was a catalogue of distortions, half-truths and outright falsehoods. For example, it stated that the Johnstone interview had “provoked a storm of criticism, both within and outside the organization”— neglecting to mention that it had also received strong support, and that the “storm of criticism” had itself been sharply criticized by the majority of Ordfront's annual meeting. It was also asserted that Diana Johnstone had questioned the occurrence of the Srebrenica massacre, which of course she had not. Other false or misleading statements and insinuations:

*The conflict caused by “the Eklund group” threatened to destroy the organization.*

Fact: The conflict was caused by the refusal of the coup makers to accept the decisions of the annual meeting's democratic majority.

*The conflict began with publication of the Johnstone interview.*

Fact: The Johnstone interview did not become a major issue until several months after publication, with the media onslaught and, most especially, the capitulation of the Ordfront leadership.

*Almost 5000 members have quit the organization— an unprecedented number— most likely due to publication of the Johnstone interview.*

Fact: An even greater number left the organization during the preceding year (2002) and the turnover during 2003 was in line with the general trend of recent years. No effort has been made to determine the reasons for the departures. But to the extent that they had anything to do with the Johnstone interview, it was just as or even more likely due to dissatisfaction with the behaviour of Ericsson, Hagner & Co.

*By ordering a fresh inquiry into the reasons for Björn Eklund's dismissal, the annual meeting bypassed the law on workers' rights.*

Fact: The decision was fully compatible with workers' rights, as confirmed by Eklund's labour union, and actually added another layer of protection for employees subjected to unfair dismissal.

### DISTINGUISHED DUPES

On the day before the coup meeting, Dagens Nyheter published a full-page appeal in support of the Ericsson/Hagnerites. It was co-drafted by Gellert Tamas and signed by the following 26 representatives of the Swedish intelligentsia, none of whom has responded to invitations to discuss the document's false or misleading statements:

Fanny Ambjörnsson, soc. anthropologist  
 Ulf B. Andersson, journalist  
 [co-author of appeal]  
 Percy Bratt, lawyer,  
 former Ordfront chairman  
 Eric Blix, journalist  
 Mustafa Can, journalist  
 David Ericsson, writer, chauffeur  
 Göran Gunner, scientist  
 Maja Hagerman, writer  
 Thomas Hammarberg,  
 human rights activist  
 Christer Hellmark, graphic designer,  
 founding member of Ordfront  
 Kristina Hultman, writer,  
 vice-chair of Democracy Institute  
 Lars Ingelstam, professor, writer  
 Anna Koblanck, journalist, writer  
 Anita Klum, human rights activist  
 Bo Lindblom, writer, public debater  
 Valborg Lindgårde,  
 Head of Royal Inst. of Technology  
 Sven Lindqvist, writer  
 Lars Sjunnesson, comics illustrator  
 Arne Ruth, journalist  
 [former debate/culture editor at DN]  
 Stefan Sundström, musician  
 Agneta Stark, professor of economics  
 Anders Sundelin, reporter  
 Maria Söderberg, photographer  
 Gellert Tamas, journalist, writer  
 [co-author of appeal]  
 Maj-Britt Theorin, former member  
 of Swedish and EU parliaments  
 Ola Wong, journalist, writer

*The board candidates who support Eklund are planning a purge within the organization.*

Fact: No such plans ever existed. On the other hand, the Ericsson/Hagnerites conducted a coup against the board elected at the annual meeting by making unauthorized decisions regarding dismissals from and appointments to key positions. (See Appendix, item 10.)

*The "Eklund group" had done nothing to allay the anxieties of the Ordfront staff.*

Inasmuch as those anxieties had been incited by the coup makers, it was rather up to them to undo the damage. For their part, leading spokesmen for the democratic majority repeatedly emphasized that they had no intention of changing the organization's structure, operation or personnel.

*Those opposed to the Ericsson/Hagnerites seek to impose an ideological dogma on Ordfront.*

Fact: Although this accusation was made repeatedly throughout the propaganda campaign, not a single example or other shred of evidence was ever presented; and apart from titular figure, no one in the so-called "Eklund group" was ever identified. Accordingly, this accusation has been properly described as an exercise in McCarthyism. As documented in the preceding pages, it was actually the behaviour of the Ericsson/Hagnerites which was characterized by dogmatic ardour, censorship and suppression of debate.

*The annual meeting was only a "temporary gathering" and therefore had no lasting validity.*

Fact: With this argument, any voting process could be declared invalid, including the one that the signatories were attempting to influence.

Needless to say, the appeal made no mention of the real reasons for the opposition to the Ericsson/Hagnerites— their capitulation to the media mob, their betrayal of Ordfront's democratic ideals, and their abuse of power in order to retain it.

But none of this prevented the 26 representatives of the Swedish intelligentsia from lending their names to the deceitful document, including several who certainly should

## CLASSIC SIDESTEP

### *The problem of Philip Knightley*

In the spring of 2004, Ordfront's book division published the revised Swedish edition of a standard reference on war propaganda, Philip Knightley's *The First Casualty*. The agreement to do so was no doubt reached some time prior to the controversy over the Johnstone interview and its aftermath. But the book's appearance just when the conflict was raging presented Leif Ericsson and his partners in censorship with a dilemma.

For, Knightley's classic work offers strong support for the analysis of Diana Johnstone and a withering critique of the sort of war propaganda dispensed by Ericsson and his allies at *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen*, etc. The same is true of the foreword by John Pilger, one of the Ordfront authors who signed the open letter that Ericsson suppressed.

Much of Pilger's foreword is devoted to the propaganda used to justify the war of aggression against Yugoslavia. For example: "Since NATO conquered Kosovo, no place on earth has been investigated so thoroughly by forensic experts, not to speak of the 2700 media people. Nevertheless, the head of the Spanish team of forensic experts who were connected with the international war crimes tribunal, Emilio Perez Pujol, has indignantly protested that he and his colleagues had become part of 'a semantic pirouette of the war propaganda apparatus, because we have not found any— not one— mass grave.' . . . Did NATO's bombs fall on innocent people to the sound of journalists banging the drums of war?"

Knightley's answer to that question is a resounding affirmative. "The images conjured up by the British government to demonize the Serbs", observes Knightley, "were fetched from England's finest hour, World War II. The Serbs were Nazi thugs, out to commit genocide. Milosevic was likened to Hitler. Words like 'Gestapo', 'ovens à la Auschwitz' and genocide were employed. . . . The propaganda worked. It usually does."

Knightley also describes how the few journalists who dared to challenge the conventional wisdom were savaged by colleagues and warmongers alike: "If one expressed so much as the slightest doubt about the latest tale of atrocities, or gave the slightest indication that one disagreed with the government's policy in Kosovo, one was regarded as virtually a traitor."

Knightley concludes that mainstream media coverage of the war against Yugoslavia was characterized by, "Lies, manipulation, biased reporting, propaganda, sheer fabrication, distortion, buried information, slanted news and gullibility."

(Excerpts translated from the Swedish edition.)

This was certainly not the sort of message that Ericsson and his comrades in bombs wanted to disseminate. What to do? Simple: As far as possible, avoid any mention of Kosovo. Thus, the book's original subtitle, "The war correspondent as hero and mythmaker from the Crimea to Kosovo", was abbreviated in the Swedish edition to: "The war correspondent as hero and mythmaker". Likewise, the publicity for the book concentrated on the Persian Gulf War, with little or no mention of the more recent and (for Ordfront) far more topical war against Yugoslavia.

Oddly enough, *Dagens Nyheter* chose to review the book, and in highly favourable terms. But it employed the same diversionary tactic, extolling Knightley's analysis in the case of the Persian Gulf War while avoiding his equally devastating critique of the propaganda used by, among others,

have known better. In fact, at least one of them has admitted that she was misled about the contents of the appeal and the facts of the case. That is Maj-Britt Théorin, a left-wing Social Democrat associated with the spirit and policies of Olof Palme, and a sharp critic of Göran Persson's betrayal of those ideals. [10] But despite that acknowledgement, she has refused to withdraw her endorsement, or in any other way atone for this violation of principles that she has always professed to hold dear.

Another very strange figure to be seen in such company was Thomas Hammarberg, an otherwise dedicated and consistent advocate of traditional Swedish foreign policy who is currently head of the Olof Palme International Center. Three other well-known Social Democrats who, wittingly or not, betrayed their self-professed ideals by allowing their names to be used for such a purpose were writer Sven Lindqvist, economist Agneta Stark [11] and Prof. Lars Ingelstam, an expert on technology and social change.

The signatories for whom Björn Eklund had postal addresses were given an opportunity to reconsider their positions when he subsequently mailed them a detailed analysis of the errors in the appeal and invited them to a continued dialogue. Not one replied.

#### CLASSIC SIDESTEP (cont.)

*Dagens Nyheter* to justify the war of aggression. The gross inconsistency between DN's assault on Diana Johnstone and its reverent treatment of Philip Knightley, despite their similar analyses, was pointed out to the relevant editorial personnel. But consistent with their general pattern of behaviour, none of them replied (see Appendix, item 14).

By such means, the potentially disturbing influence of the revised classic was limited to the relatively narrow circle of individuals who actually read it, and no politically incorrect questions or conclusions which they may have derived from the experience were allowed to contaminate the ethically cleansed pages of *Ordfront Magazine* or *Dagens Nyheter*.

#### *Passive majority*

Against all the manoeuvres of the coup makers and their well-placed allies, the democratic majority could offer little resistance. To the extent that there was any plausible opposition, it consisted largely of the eight members who comprised a slender majority of the new board. With one or two exceptions, however, they were unable or unwilling to organize an effective response to the coup that was launched the day after the annual meeting with Hagner's broadside in *Dagens Nyheter*.

No doubt this was due in large part to the sheer anomaly of the thing. As former chairman Björnsson noted, the blatantly unethical conduct of the anti-democrats was "unprecedented"—not only within Ordfront, but in Swedish organizational life, generally. Few among the democratic majority were prepared for anything like it, and their elected representatives on the board were not disposed to agree on an appropriate response, if any.

One or two members of the board majority did attempt to mobilize resistance. Others chose to believe that it was possible to reason with the coup makers and avoid an unpleasant conflict, despite the rapidly accumulating evidence to the contrary. Few seemed to feel that the situation called for any special effort or attention. One key member, for example, disappeared and remained incommunicado for three crucial weeks. Another decided to go ahead with a planned holiday rather than postpone it long enough to participate in a fateful board meeting.

The timing of events probably helps to explain the paltry response: The crisis unfolded during the summertime, when the living is supposed to be easy—"sacred" is a term that survivors of the long, dark Scandinavian winter often apply to their summer holidays. Also, some may have wished to avoid being accused of participating in a "radical conspiracy". That sort of risk is aggravated by the culture of consensus which imbues Swedish society in general, and grassroots organizations in particular (see "The holy spirit", p. 55). But since they were accused of conspiring, anyway, there was not much to gain from complaisant disarray. One may as well be hanged for a thief as a beggar.

Whatever the reasons, the board majority

remained unco-ordinated and more or less inert throughout the summer “campaign”. Meanwhile, the Ericsson/Hagnerites were attending to the business of propagandizing the membership and lining up votes for the coup meeting.

In this, they were largely unopposed. When, for example, Hagner ambushed the majority with her deceitful letter to the membership (see “Expensive trick”, p. 28), no demand was made for equal resources to distribute a rejoinder. According to one insider, it was felt that no response was necessary because most recipients were sure to see through Hagner’s propaganda— although how they were supposed to do that without access to alternative sources of information was never explained.

One or two individual members did try to mobilize resistance and inform the membership. But as noted, the resources available to them were very limited, and most of their presumptive allies on the board did not share their sense of urgency.

As a result of all this, the information available to the vast majority of members consisted of that provided by the anti-democrats in the Ordfront leadership and the mainstream media. The one partial exception was a guide to the coup meeting that was distributed several weeks in advance. It included brief presentations and statements of the various candidates to the board, along with an account of the conflict by a “neutral observer” which did little to counteract the far more extensive propaganda of the coup makers— and nothing to expose their abuses of power and democratic process. That may have something to do with the facts that the neutral observer, Lars Truedson, supported Zaremba’s attack on the Johnstone/Eklund interview and appeared to share the coup makers’ view of democracy. Of the democratic majority, he wrote: “Despite their majority on the board, we can for the sake of simplicity continue to refer to this disparate group as the opposition.” Note also that the label of “disparate group” suggests, correctly, something quite different than a conspiracy.

## COUP ACCOMPLI

OVER 600 MEMBERS SHOWED UP for the coup meeting on September 4th, tripling the exceptionally large turnout in May. There were three main items on the agenda: to confirm or reject the annual meeting's demand that Björn Eklund's dismissal be reconsidered; to repeat the election of the board's chairperson and one-third of its members, plus substitutes; and to decide whether or not to replace the two auditors who had legitimated the coup by calling the special meeting.

The annual meeting's rebuke of the leadership's capitulation to the mainstream media was not formally on the agenda, which meant that the original source of the conflict was not to be openly discussed. But it was hovering in the atmosphere, having formed the basis of the coup makers' perfervid alarms about the imminent takeover and destruction of the organization by a conspiracy of the "appalling rhetorical Left". The anxious appeal by leading citizens in *Dagens Nyheter* the day before had warned of just such a catastrophe and, as the participants filed into the meeting hall, they were greeted with great mounds of that and related propaganda.

Needless to say, the board majority had made no similar preparations. Nor had it arranged for the programme to take account of the enormous imbalance in the information supplied in advance to participants. It had been suggested that the majority insist on leading off the meeting with a suitably lengthy response to Hagner's deceitful letter and all the rest. That suggestion was ignored.

### *Mere formalities*

Instead, Hagner got to lead off with yet another lengthy exposition of her views. This time, with the objects of her professed anxiety present and able to respond, she adopted a more restrained approach. Her main argument was that the annual meeting had exceeded its authority by interfering in a purely administrative matter, thereby causing great anxiety among the staff, threatening the viability of the entire organization, imperilling its finances, etc.

She emphasized that it was crucial to maintain the established order of Swedish labour relations, which prescribe that conflicts are first and foremost to be resolved by negotiations between employers and the affected unions. She did *not* mention that Björn Eklund's union had expressed approval of the annual meeting's decision.

Hagner's approach had the effect of diverting attention from the fundamental issues of democracy, freedom of expression and the abuse of power—a discussion of which would hardly have benefited the coup makers—to mere organizational formalities. Apart from its diversionary function, Hagner's formalistic approach was no doubt reassuring to anyone in the audience who might have been less compliant if informed or reminded of what she and her collaborators had been up to during the preceding months. Listening to her in the absence of prior information, one would never have imagined that the barbarians had been said to have entered the temple and were on the verge of destroying it.

There was no rebuttal by the board majority, of course, and not much of a debate by the assembled throng. The agenda had been constructed to benefit the coup makers, and so many wanted to comment on the motions under consideration that the time allotted for each was successively whittled down to one minute. Even so, there were long queues of disappointed speakers who did not manage to reach the lectern before debate was cut off.

Under these conditions, there was scant opportunity for enlightenment. The "debate" was so constricted, rushed and incoherent that it could have little influence on anyone's

conception of the issues. In all likelihood, most people voted on the basis of the understandings which they brought to the meeting, and it soon became evident that the coup makers had been more effective at mustering support than the annual meeting's democratic majority had been.

On the most important issue— whether to confirm or reject the right of the annual meeting to compel a reconsideration of Björn Eklund's dismissal— the Ericsson/Hagnerites won by a vote of 336 to 273. A slate of board candidates associated with Hagner was elected by a slightly smaller margin; and so were the compliant auditors who had called the meeting.

The winning/losing margin, decided by the votes of just over thirty individuals, could well be explained by any of several factors. Among them were: Hagner's deceitful letter to the membership; the propaganda of the mainstream press; the public appeal in *Dagens Nyheter* on the eve of the meeting; the coup makers' control of Ordfront's resources; and the generally feeble response of the board's democratic majority.

As if that were not enough, the anxiety-ridden staff of about forty employees had actively recruited friends, relatives and acquaintances. "In the weeks prior to the meeting on September 4th," relates Bim Clinell, "I ran into some twenty friends and acquaintances that had been contacted by Ordfront staffers who had told them terrible things about the dangerous opposition that was threatening Ordfront's very existence."

Each of these factors by itself was probably sufficient to account for the voting margin. Taken together, it is remarkable that it was not much greater.

### *Consolidating the coup*

The one surprise of the coup meeting was the rejection of Christina Hagner's attempt to continue as board chair. Elected instead was Stefan Carlén, a widely respected left-wing Social Democrat and chief economist of a major labour union. He is also a leading figure in the broad-based movement to limit further transfers of national sovereignty to the European Union, and played a key role in a successful referendum campaign against joining the European Monetary Union (EMU).

It is not clear why Hagner was abandoned by a decisive portion of those who had followed her line in the voting on other matters. Most likely, it was a combination of respect for Stefan Carlén and the realization that Hagner was not very well-suited to heal the wounds of the conflict in which she had been one of the chief protagonists.

### *Saddled chair*

In any event, it was far from certain that the new chairman would be able to do much about the mess he inherited from his predecessor. Although Carlén was the candidate of the annual meeting's democratic majority, he was saddled with a board dominated by supporters of the coup. Of the fifteen members, only three holdovers from the old board could be regarded as potential allies.

Whatever the intentions of the new chairman, the coup makers were clearly determined to consolidate their re-established power by conveying an impression of normalcy and bold new initiatives. Three months after the coup meeting, Ordfront's 35th anniversary was celebrated with festivities in the apt venue of Stockholm's Theatre Bar. Among the more prominent celebrants was Gellert Tamas, one of the chief prosecutors of the incitement against Diana Johnstone and Björn Eklund.

The ethically challenged Tamas was also chosen to exalt the 35th anniversary in the magazine, and has been appointed to its new editorial advisory board. This suggests that he has become a fixture at Ordfront, and will no doubt be keeping a sharp lookout for any signs of deviation from his zealously guarded version of the truth. It may also be assumed that the new set of advisors will not commit the error of their predecessors, of whom Leif Ericsson had lamented, "What is the point of having an advisory board if all it ever does is criticize everything I do?"

His legacy thus ensured, Ericsson finally resigned from the post of chief editor at the end of 2004 (but stayed on as an "assistant" editor until May of 2005). Among the morsels of wisdom dispensed in his farewell editorial were the following: "The giants that controlled the media in the 1970s are even more powerful today. . . . Surprisingly, leftists are



not especially interested in democracy. . . . The previous year was a tumultuous time for Ordfront. But we stood the test. That may turn out to be important for social radicalism in Sweden. . . . Throughout the mainstream media, there is a love-hate attitude toward Ordfront because we are free, and do what they are not able or allowed to do. . . . Recently in *Dagens Nyheter*, a reviewer expressed the wish that *Ordfront Magazine* become the powerhouse of societal debate in Sweden. Sounds like a good motto."

### *Power source*

Ericsson might have added that Sweden's most powerful mainstream medium was the source not only of an electrifying new motto for Ordfront. It was also from *Dagens Nyheter* that Ericsson and associates recruited his successor as chief editor, a relatively young man named Johan Berggren. At DN, Berggren had concerned himself primarily with matters of light entertainment, and he lacked important qualifications specified in the job description. But he does possess at least one valuable attribute: His mother is a close friend of Gertrud Åström

As noted by Bim Clinell, "In her book, *Klass, är du fin nog?* [Social/School Class, Are You Fine Enough?], Anneli Jordahl describes what she calls the 'media aristocracy' that she encountered during her time at *Dagens Nyheter*. She refers specifically to Johan Berggren as an example— someone who is related to the Bonniers clan [whose media conglomerate owns DN]. . . . But she adds that many among the 'media aristocracy' are, of course, also talented and competent. . . .

"Since I have worked for a quarter-century in [another] media concern where nepotism flourishes, I found it not entirely without interest that Johan Berggren's mother and Gertrud Åström have worked together and have been close friends for years. Since, in addition, it appears that the position of chief editor had been sought by a large number of highly qualified journalists, of which several had the specified merit of long experience with editing 'heavier' material, I recognized the phenomenon from my experience of the other media concern where incomprehensible appointments are often made."



*In his farewell editorial, Leif Ericsson reflected upon such phenomena as the lack of interest in democracy and the steadily growing power of media giants.*

At the very least, it is an irony of ironies that the mainstream medium which led the assault on Ordfront, and which belongs to the most gigantic of the media giants whose continuing expansion was noted with dismay in Ericsson's swan song, has supplied the "radical alternative" with its new chief editor. At worst, it signals the totality of Ordfront's capitulation.

That issue has been pointedly raised by another disaffected member, journalist Bo Modén: "When the debacle at Ordfront reached the point where the entire editorial staff was purged, Ordfront members understood that DN wanted to silence debate. Does Bonnieresque blue blood flow through the veins of Johan Berggren? Why, of course it does: He is a member of the clan. Thus has this [allegedly] 'superb' journalist of noble birth descended from the Parnassus of power, from *Dagens Nyheter*, and in his goodness has taken upon himself the idealistic task of serving as the spokesman of the hoy poloy. . . .

"Well, let's hear what it is about Johan Berggren's journalism that has been so superb. DN is the Voice of Washington's most important

outlet in Sweden. It has been an uncritical megaphone for all the propaganda and lies of the Bush junta which led to the war of aggression in the Balkans, and the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. . . . Has Johan ever presented a serious critique of DN's foreign affairs reporting?"

The answer to that question is no, of course. Modén concluded his observations with a quote from John Swinton, *New York Times* chief of staff during the 1950s, regarding the journalistic profession: "We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We are the jumping-jacks; they pull the strings and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities and our lives are all the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes."

It is, of course, too early to assess the likelihood that *Ordfront Magazine's* new chief editor will ever get around to criticizing the Bonnier clan's flagship newspaper for its complicity in U.S. foreign policy. It is also far from certain that he is free to do so. Although formally retired from the post of chief editor, Leif Ericsson remains at *Ordfront* in some vague capacity, his patriarchal presence no doubt looming large over his green successor.

### *Lest we forget*

Ericsson's lingering influence is apparent in the July/August 2005 issue of the magazine which, in concert with the mainstream media in Sweden and elsewhere, included a retrospective article on the Srebrenica massacre. Not surprisingly, it generally avoided facts and explanations that do not conform with the Ericsson-Tamas doctrine on the Balkan wars. For example, although the article included the testimony of two Serbian survivors of the war, it made no reference to the murderous raids by Muslim forces on nearly 200 Serbian villages which preceded the massacre, or the far more devastating ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Krajina— which easily competes with the Srebrenica massacre for the title of "the worst crime against humanity in Europe since World War II" (see below).

There was also a more nuanced report on the trials of Slobodan Milosevic at the Hague Tribunal. But the headline was, "The Judgment that Everyone Is Waiting For", and it was made clear that "everyone" is not waiting

for a verdict of innocent. The article concluded with an expression of anxiety by one observer that Milosevic might die before he receives his just desserts, i.e. to be found guilty of genocide.

The politically correct attitude toward all this was spelled out in a lengthy essay on "The Anatomy of Denial" by Ulf B. Andersson, a bombing leftist who co-authored (with Gellert Tamas) the grossly misleading appeal of "distinguished dupes" in *Dagens Nyheter* on the eve of the coup meeting. Using the self-genocide committed by Cambodia's Khmer Rouge as his centrepiece, Andersson laboured to equate deniers and apologists of that and similar tragedies with "those Leftists who are trying to rewrite the history of what happened in the Balkans".

Given the context, there was a presumably unintended irony in Andersson's analysis which included such observations as: "There was a strong group pressure within the [Swedish] Left to see something good in Pol Pot, and it was difficult to dare to go against the stream and disagree." One of those who had succumbed to and/or created that pressure was none other than Christina Hagner—a name that was conspicuously absent from Andersson's dishonour roll of the wayward and benighted. Another oddity is that Andersson supported his discussion of the Khmer Rouge genocide with the writings of Philip Knightley and John Pilger, both of whom fall within his category of those who are "rewriting the history of the Balkan wars" (see "Classic Sidestep", p. 34).

### *Exorcising Eklund*

But no matter. The object of the exercise was obviously to exorcise the spectres of Diana Johnstone, Björn Eklund and their ilk from the pages of the magazine, and no petty hobgoblins of consistency could be allowed to interfere with that purpose. It is unlikely to be the last effort of the sort, especially if such people continue to question the simple certitudes of the bombing leftists. Editor Berggren implied as much in his page three editorial. Against the risk that anyone might miss the point, he wrote:

"That the stigma of genocide-denial and conspiracy theories stemming from former

In this publicity notice, *Ordfront Magazine's* new chief editor, Johan Berggren, invokes the names of Arundhati Roy and other writers to underscore his proud claim that, "We can view things without consideration to big media concerns, parties or other old bastions of power. We stand free". Other watchwords, he declares, are "strengthened democracy, humanism and freedom of expression".

**SVERIGE ÄR ETT LITET LAND.** Men en stor, fördjupande, aktuell och oberoende månadstidning har vi. I *Ordfront* magasin fortsätter Sverige och världen bortanför nyhetssändningarna, och utan att doppas i ledarsidornas tankesmedjegröt.

Vi agerar på uppdrag av våra ägare; 25 000 medlemmar, enade kring fördjupad demokrati, humanism och yttrandefrihet. Vi kan se på saker utan att behöva ta hänsyn till stora mediekoncerner, partier eller andra gamla maktbastioner. Vi står fria.

Läs satir som biter alla maktens händer och fötter den kommer åt. Läs de nya, unga korrespondenterna som berättar om världen som de ser den, där de bor: Ola Wong i Shanghai, Zac O'Yeah i Indien, Carolina Jemby i Sydafrika. För att nämna några.

Läs orädda journalister och skarpa tänkare och visionärer från hela världen – som Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, Andreas Harsono – som inte köper någon som helst form av fundamentalism.

**JOHAN BERGGREN**  
Nybliven chefredaktör på *Ordfront* magasin



managing editor Björn Eklund's article [i.e. the interview with Diana Johnstone] has already been removed from *Ordfront* is nothing more than a devout but vain hope. The article mixed theory with reality to such an extent that it came to deny genocide. It is true that former chief editor Leif Ericsson apologized publicly. It is also true that *Ordfront* has since published several factually irreproachable articles on the Balkan wars [see Appendix, items 5 – 7], and that we now have a new editorial staff. But yet. . . . A trademark is a trademark."

However, proclaimed Berggren, it is not to "cleanse the trademark" that the current issue of the magazine included articles on Srebrenica massacre, etc. "Rather, it is because the worst crime against humanity in Europe since World War II was committed ten years ago at Srebrenica. Because the trial of State Villain Milosevic is unique. Because it is interesting to try\* to explain the denial that follows every genocide, not least in order to learn something, perhaps. 'Never again!' was the cry in 1945. Yet it does happen, again and again. How is that possible? I believe that one can approach an answer to that question by scrutinizing the psychological mechanisms of denial."

"Neither do we write of Srebrenica because the massacre occurred ten years ago. Or,

\*The printed text actually reads "give up" or "go without" (*försaka*), but Berggren probably intended to write "try" (*försöka*). Note also that, in the same manner as Gellert Tamas, he confuses "genocide" with "crime against humanity"—two quite distinct concepts in this context.

yes—perhaps a little for that reason. *Ordfront Magazine* does not stand completely free from the anniversary mania that seems to have afflicted the media this year." This acknowledgement of limited freedom provided a useful contrast to the proud claim of Leif Ericsson in his farewell editorial ("We are free, and do what they are not able or allowed to do"). It was certainly more truthful.

### *Indecent pot shot*

But there is nothing good to be said of Berggren's gratuitous pot shot at Björn Eklund which, even by the abysmal standards of the new *Ordfront*, is singularly unkind. It evokes the famous plea of attorney Joseph Welch to the eponymous Senator McCarthy: "Is there no decency?"

For one thing, Eklund was the guiding spirit of the magazine during the period when its circulation rose from 4000 to 30,000. Consequently, much of the credit for the "trademark" that Berggren is so anxious to protect is due to Björn Eklund (even though the latter probably did not think in such terms). It is unlikely that Berggren would have bothered to apply for his present position if the circulation were still around 4000; and it remains to be seen whether the trademark will be as worthy of protection when he moves on (or back to DN, as seems likely). The initial indications are not encouraging.

Another indecent aspect of Berggren's stigmatizing swipe is that it continues a shameful pattern. Based on gross distortions of what he and Diana Johnstone have actually

written, Eklund has been subjected to repeated vilification in the mainstream press, and in the magazine that has so clearly benefited from his management, without the right of rebuttal. Berggren seems bent on continuing in the same abject spirit until he is satisfied that the Ordfront “trademark” is restored, and possibly thereafter. Given the style of journalism that has now become the norm at Ordfront, it is not unthinkable that, in years to come, the dreadful spectre of Björn Eklund will be conjured up whenever it may be useful for some editorial purpose.

Berggren also uses the occasion to answer those who have questioned his appointment. “I do not have secret orders from *Dagens Nyheter*, as some nutters have suggested.” This is a *non sequitur*, of course. Influence in journalistic circles is seldom exerted by means of direct orders: Editors usually understand what is expected of them, although they tend to protest that they understand no such thing. At one level of awareness, they may even be telling the truth; for, as John Pilger has explained, the behaviour involved is usually “not conspiratorial, but often unconscious, even subliminal”. [12]

### *Question of influence*

Apart from Berggren’s evident lack of prior interest in and experience of serious issues, the principal questions that have been raised about his appointment relate to the possibility or likelihood that, in exercising his editorial duties, he may be influenced by his background and contacts within the spheres of *Dagens Nyheter* and the Bonnier family. They are the same kinds of questions that would inevitably arise if, for example, a minimally qualified relative of Rupert Murdoch were to become editor of *The New Statesman*, or an offshoot of the Sulzberger family tree were recruited from the entertainment section of the *New York Times* to become editor of *The Nation*.

Berggren’s personal connections with *Dagens Nyheter* are openly on display in the magazine: As one might expect, the new lineup of writers includes several from the DN stable, including a few who signed the public appeal on the eve of the coup meeting. Nothing strange or underhanded about that; it is perfectly natural for any editor to draw upon his own circle of friends and colleagues.

Hence the concern about the origins of the new chief editor.

Another contributor who has been granted ample space in the magazine is Lars Truedson, the “neutral observer” who was assigned by the coup makers to devise the account of the conflict which was distributed to the membership prior to the fateful meeting in September of 2004 (see p. 36).

---

*The coup makers and the mainstream press may rest assured that the reins of Ordfront Magazine are now securely in the hands of someone who, subliminally or otherwise, understands what is expected of him and is eager to “cleanse the trademark” of impure thoughts.*

---

As for the question of subliminal influence, Berggren’s page three editorial seems to provide a clear answer. After observing that “a trademark is a trademark”, he writes: “Suspicion remains, fading slowly. Several more or less well-known writers lie in wait amongst the rushes. Eyes will be upon us for a long time to come. In recent weeks, for example, there have been no fewer than three critical articles in DN’s debate/culture section about [an article in a previous edition of the magazine which challenged the mainstream media’s rosy view of Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution”]. I will not get mixed up in that debate here. But nevertheless— three!”

However one may choose to interpret this excerpt, it can hardly be regarded as a declaration of independence. Indeed, it would be difficult to contrive a more apt illustration of “unconscious and subliminal” influence than this seemingly ingenuous disclosure. For, while protesting that he does not “take orders” from *Dagens Nyheter*, editor Berggren documents how heavily it weighs (“three!”) upon his editorial thoughts— apparently unaware that he is doing so.

This is the well-connected young man who feels himself qualified and called upon to instruct Björn Eklund in the ethics of journalism, genocide and quite possibly a great many other things. It would appear that the coup makers and the mainstream press may rest

assured that the reins of *Ordfront Magazine* are now securely in the hands of someone who, subliminally or otherwise, understands what is expected of him and is keen to “cleanse the trademark” of impure thoughts.

### *Demoralized democrats*

Thus far, the consolidation of the coup has proceeded without a hitch. Despite the coup makers’ hysterical alarms about a conspiracy of dangerous radicals, the democratic majority was never very well-organized, and it was left demoralized by the outcome of the special meeting in September.

A few months afterward, a small contingent of the more active gathered informally to mourn the death of reason at *Ordfront*, but there was no discussion of a possible strategy for revitalizing the organization. Some were still bewildered by the outcome. “We had the best arguments!” they persisted, apparently having failed to grasp the extent to which their sensible voices had been drowned out by the propaganda of the Ericsson/Hagnerites and the mainstream media. Nor was there any acknowledgement that the democratic resistance could have been more vigorous and better co-ordinated.

One or two mourners declared that the anti-democrats “must not be allowed to get away with it!” But that thought was not matched by any notable proclivity for action. To the few suggestions of appropriate measures, such as organizing for the annual meeting in 2005, the immediate reaction was, “Ah, what’s the use? Even if we manage to succeed, they’ll just do the same thing all over again.” This sort of passive resignation is fairly typical of decent folks in Sweden, and follows logically from the non-confrontational precepts of “the holy spirit of co-operation” (see p. 55).

Possibly because there is no practical alternative to *Ordfront*, some former critics have chosen to co-operate. The most influential of these is probably Dan Josefsson, who has resumed writing for the magazine and also serves on the editorial advisory board, alongside Gellert Tamas and other supporters of the coup. Josefsson’s participation is doubtless of great legitimating value, as he is a well-known journalist with a reputation for independence, and was one of the most ferocious critics of the

Ericsson/Hagnerites at the annual meeting in 2004. On that occasion, he stated that no self-respecting journalist would be willing to work with *Ordfront Magazine* if Björn Eklund’s dismissal were not rescinded. Something has obviously changed since then.

It is not known what the general membership thinks of all this. There have been numerous cancellations, but of course no figures have been published. A mass exodus is unlikely, since only a small proportion of the total membership has been fully informed about the nature and extent of the scandal.

Several authors have severed their connections with the book division. These include Maria-Pia Boëthius, who announced her decision the day after the coup meeting. Among other things, she explained: “As I see it, the book division should have taken a completely impartial position [in the conflict]. But that has not been the case. I cannot work with a publishing house that has actively opposed Björn Eklund’s right to say whatever he wants, or with a mobbing bureaucracy of some thirty individuals who assert that they will BE **UNDONE** if one among them is not dismissed. . . . Can it be that we are on the way to developing a McCarthyesque climate in this country— even in the medium that we, ourselves, finance on behalf of free expression?”

### *Delicate subject*

Another departee is Bim Clinell who has noted that, of the Swedish authors listed in a marketing brochure from 2003, not one remains with *Ordfront*. This is obviously a delicate subject— so much so that the management has been less than candid about it. In answer to a member’s question at the 2005 annual meeting, it was falsely stated that only Maria-Pia Boëthius had left.

Of course, there are still Swedish writers who are willing and perhaps even eager for their books to be published by *Ordfront*. But the main attractions of late have been such well-known international figures as Seymour Hersh and Tariq Ali, whose continued presence in the *Ordfront* line-up sends a reassuring signal. A well-functioning book division, or the appearance of it, is a key component of the consolidation process— although it is likely that some of those involved would

prefer not to lend their names to that purpose. Tariq Ali was among those who joined Arundhati Roy in signing the open letter to Ordfront that was suppressed by the coup makers (see p. 30). Seymour Hersh has written elsewhere that, "It turns out that our democracy is much more fragile than we think. We are in peril." He was referring to the current situation in the United States; but his words have obvious relevance for the organization that publishes his books in Sweden, and where it is no longer a question of mere peril.

### *Under the carpet*

Also contributing to the consolidation process is Stefan Carlén who, since his election as chairman at the coup meeting, has made no visible attempt to address the damage to the organization resulting from the violation of its basic principles by the Ericsson/Hagnerites. On the contrary, he has actively participated in the ongoing efforts to sweep the scandal under the carpet.

This is probably because he feels that there is no alternative. Any serious attempt to address the issue would inevitably rekindle the conflict and almost surely leave the organization weaker and more divided than it already is. It may be assumed that the coup makers and their supporters would not sit idly by and allow their handiwork to be undone. A reignited conflict would also make heavy demands on the time and energy of Chairman Carlén who, as chief economist of his labour union and a leading EU sceptic, already has plenty to keep him busy.

Another likely factor is that he is extremely mild-mannered, even by the placid standards of Sweden. Confrontation and conflict are not terms that one readily associates with Stefan Carlén, and it is doubtful that he has ever uttered a harsh word about anyone or anything, at least in public. His temperament is better suited to the gentle tasks of peace-making and reconciliation, and that is reflected in his conduct as chairman to date.

Essentially, he is doing what his predecessor promised to do at the 2004 annual meeting. But Christina Hagner chose the path of domination over reconciliation, making the past year's distasteful and unnecessary conflict inevitable. It is difficult to see how that



*"Seymour Hersh: The journalist who is not spoon-fed by power" is the main heading of this recent publicity brochure from Ordfront's book division.*

sorry history can be ignored without further compromising the integrity of the organization and its ideals. That is the fundamental dilemma confronting Chairman Carlén, who appears to have resolved it by adopting a strategy based on historical amnesia.

That is clearly the strategy favoured by his colleagues on the board. Following the coup meeting, only three of its fourteen ordinary members were associated with the annual meeting's democratic majority. All three have since resigned in evident displeasure with the general trend of things, and have not been replaced. As a result, Carlén is now virtually surrounded on the board by individuals who supported the coup and are in no state of mind to question it. They are not even prepared to acknowledge a decision of the annual meeting that was not considered at the coup meeting. In early 2005, the board was asked to respond to the following statement:

"Motion 16 which was adopted by the annual meeting, and which criticized the leadership and the [former] board's public apology for

the Johnstone interview, must serve as an important guideline for Ordfront's activities in the future." (For the text of Motion 16, see Appendix, item 8.)

Board members were invited to agree, disagree or, if they preferred, formulate their own interpretations. Two of them replied that this and several other statements on related matters were unworthy of response. "The questions [i.e. statements] are very slanted," complained one, and was seconded by the other who added that, "The character of the 'questionnaire' does not seem very serious to me, and hardly contributes to a nuanced discussion."

A reminder that they were welcome to formulate their own, presumably less slanted and more nuanced viewpoints yielded no further response. But one substitute board member did take the trouble to explain his position: "It is not possible to answer the question [i.e. the statement regarding Motion 16]. Dualistic. It leads to a black-and-white style of thinking which hinders the continued work and traditional independence of editorial departments."

It would thus appear that the future of Motion 16 is uncertain. But it is evident that the present board, with the possible exception of the chair, disapproves of the motion which includes a principled defence of free expression and insists that the Ordfront leadership must never again capitulate to media pressure as it did in the case of the Johnstone interview.

With such a board, the continued presence of the autocratic Gertrud Åström and Leif Ericsson, a membership indoctrinated with the propaganda of the coup makers and the mainstream press, and his own predilections, it is perhaps not surprising that Chairman Carlén has chosen to serve as the confidence-inspiring spokesman of the new Ordfront—while systematically avoiding the troublesome issues raised by the behaviour of the Ericsson/Hagnerites.

The effect, if not the intent, has been to legitimate the coup—an effect that is all the greater, given that Carlén is widely respected and was the "opposition" candidate.

By the time of the annual meeting in May of 2005, things seemed to be pretty much under control. The restoration of Ericssonian

order was reflected in the fact that only 39 members showed up—a return to the low level of participation which former chairwoman Hagner used to lament before she discovered, to her obdurate dismay, that more voters do not necessarily mean more supporters.

The shrunken assembly dutifully approved the first reading of revisions to the by-laws which seem designed to ensure that there will be no repetition of the nasty outbreak of democracy which occurred at the 2004 annual meeting. Whether or not the new rules will pass the second and final hurdle at next year's annual meeting depends, of course, on whether any significant resistance to the coup emerges from the membership. It is already rather late and, for the reasons noted above, another revolt of the masses is unlikely.

In short, the recent experience of Ordfront suggests that it may be appropriate to amend Abraham Lincoln's famous dictum on democracy, as follows: "Provided that the flow of information can be controlled, you can fool most of the people most of the time."

### *Grim reckoning*

As the first anniversary of the coup meeting approaches, the outcome of the conflict within and surrounding Ordfront includes the following elements:

The conventional wisdom of the Balkan wars, based largely on USA/NATO propaganda, is now more firmly entrenched than ever. Not even the first-hand testimony of Brigadier Bo Pellnäs (see page 13), which basically confirms the analysis of Diane Johnstone, has been able to penetrate the dense shield of ignorance, stupidity and disinformation surrounding the "common narrative"—as evidenced by *Ordfront Magazine's* and the mainstream media's one-sided orgy of remembrance on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

The dozen or so editors who control most of the information and ideas filtered through the mainstream media have demonstrated their power and eagerness to punish those who dare to provide alternative perspectives. In the fate of Björn Eklund, journalists at all levels have received a pointed lesson in the perils of nonconformity. In the very different fate of

Maciej Zaremba, they have received a lesson in the career benefits of mean-spirited, intellectually dishonest attacks in support of the conventional wisdom.

A briefly successful attempt to defend Ordfront and its principles against such attack has been overturned by a band of anti-democrats with such means as misuse of the organization's by-laws and funds, abuse of legal process, suppression of debate, the complicity of distinguished dupes, scare propaganda in alliance with the media responsible for the original attack, etc.

Disgruntled minorities in other organizations have thereby been provided with a successful example of how to reverse democratic decisions of which they disapprove.

The original issues of war propaganda, free expression and resistance to pressure from the mainstream media have been successfully obscured by a McCarthyesque scare campaign against a conspiracy of "radical Leftists" which never existed.

An indeterminate number of members have left the organization in despair and/or disgust at the betrayal of Ordfront's ideals. The great majority remain uninformed about the nature and extent of that betrayal.

A number of Swedish authors have ended their associations with Ordfront's book-publishing division. But it continues to issue the Swedish editions of works by respected international authors, whose good names are thereby helping to legitimate the coup.

The majority of Ordfront employees, whose numbers correspond to roughly one-tenth of one per cent of the membership, have willingly served as pawns in the scare campaign against the non-existent conspiracy of radical Leftists. As a result of the successful coup, they are now even more vulnerable to the whims of Executive Director Gertrud Åström, with the patriarchal Leif Ericsson lurking nearby. Also, having themselves participated in a mobbing process against a colleague, they are presumably anxious to avoid a similar fate. The pressure to conform and ingratiate has increased.

The coup makers' capitulation to the mainstream press is now more or less complete, with a new, compliant chief editor imported from the source of the original attack.

The consolidation and legitimation of the coup against Ordfront's democratic majority is nearly complete, reducing the value of its stated ideals to practically nothing.



## O SWEDEN, WHERE ART THOU?

TO ADMIRERS OF SWEDEN who have witnessed the Ordfront scandal from abroad, it has come as something of a shock that such things could happen in a nation which they had previously regarded as a source of inspiration.

"I remember Sweden as a country which, thanks to the acts and principles of Olof Palme, was a beacon of peace and resistance to imperialist aggression," observes Diana Johnstone. "It is a matter of consternation to see that, today, Sweden is being led into conformity with U.S.-NATO aggressive ideology— not only by right-wing media such as *Dagens Nyheter*, but also, sheepishly, by the chief editor of a supposedly alternative Left magazine. Bringing Sweden firmly into what I call the 'imperial condominium' appears to be the real purpose of the extraordinary campaign against my little book."

Prof. Edward Herman has referred to "the betrayal of the Palme tradition", and six international writers published in Sweden by Ordfront were sufficiently concerned about developments to issue a statement in defence of "freedom of expression and the right to express dissenting views" (see p. 31).

Things have certainly changed since Palme was eliminated nearly two decades ago. How much of that can be explained by his death and how much by the spirit of the times is subject to the eternal speculation about the relative significance of heroes vs. history. But there is no doubt that Palme was an exceptional political leader and human being, nor that he contributed a great deal to the esteem in which Sweden is still held in most parts of the world.

However, perceiving Sweden through the prism of Olof Palme is somewhat like trying to understand South Africa on the basis of Nelson Mandela's life and example. There were certainly a great many Swedes who felt that Palme did not represent them; he was the most intensely hated public figure in Sweden's modern history.

Palme's politics of solidarity and social justice naturally offended the right, including

some right-wing Social Democrats. But during the 1960s and '70s, when Mao and Pol Pot were in vogue, he was accused of being soft on capitalism and U.S. imperialism. A popular protest chant during the early stages of the Vietnam War referred to Palme as a "lackey of LBJ" (U.S. President L.B. Johnson). In light of the foregoing, it will probably come as no surprise that among his critics was Ordfront's Leif Ericsson who, as recently as a few years ago, could still be heard denigrating Palme's politics and personality.

But Palme was also admired and even loved by a large segment of the population, including most of the Centre-Left and a lots of folks not easily categorized. Eventually, he even won the grudging acceptance of many from the remoter regions of the Left, especially after he provoked the Nixon administration into breaking off diplomatic relations, with his denunciation of the infamous bombing of Hanoi during the Christmas season of 1972. Spoken from his kitchen table at home, Palme's succinct commentary was as follows:

It is important to call things by their right names. What is happening now in Vietnam is a form of torture.

There cannot be any military motives for the bombing. Military spokesmen in Saigon have denied that any build-up is taking place in northern Vietnam.

It can not reasonably be attributed to any Vietnamese obstinacy at the negotiating table. As the *New York Times* has pointed out, resistance to the agreement reached in Paris in October is coming primarily from President Thieu in Saigon.

What is being done is to torment human beings, torment a nation in order to

humiliate it, force it into submission with brute force.

The bombing is therefore an evil deed.

Of such there have been many in modern history.

They are often connected with names—Guernica, Oradour, Babi Yar, Katyn, Lidice, Sharpeville and Treblinka.

Violence has triumphed. But the judgement of posterity has fallen heavily on those who were responsible.

Now there is yet another name to be added to the list:

Hanoi— Christmas 1972.

### *Expediting torture*

Swedish prime ministers do not talk like that anymore. Instead of condemning various forms of torture, Palme's current successor condones or helps to expedite them. Among other things, Göran Persson has justified the bombing of Belgrade (provided no windows are broken at the Swedish Embassy) by spouting the aggressors' propaganda. More recently, he has attempted to soften the image of the current White House bomber by reporting that, despite all the unkind things said and written about him, President G.W. Bush is really quite intelligent and a swell guy to pal around with in the Oval Office.

The essence of Persson's foreign policy was most succinctly expressed in a statement he made five years ago: "You know how it is: When the big guys call, one is eager to do one's bit." One of the bits done by his government for the big guy in the White House has been to allow U.S. agents to enter Swedish territory and cart two political-asylum seekers off to Egypt to be tortured in the name of the "war on terror". [13] One of the alleged desperadoes was so obviously undangerous that not even the notoriously arbitrary Egyptian authorities chose to detain him after his obligatory period of torture and incarceration. The other victim was found guilty of something or other in a star chamber procedure and has been swallowed up by the Egyptian gulag.

Naturally, Persson and associates first tried to cover up this gross violation of Swedish and international law, in the process lying

to the Swedish people and the relevant U.N. officials about the facts of the case. Then, when the scandal was disclosed, they tried to justify their complicity by saying that the Egyptian government had promised not to torture the abductees— a transparently lame excuse that has been condemned by Amnesty International and others.

Now, having been caught bloody-handed, they insist that it was the only proper way to deal with such dangerous fellows, and that they are prepared to do the same again in similar circumstances.

In order to justify such policies as complicity in torture and the war of aggression against Yugoslavia, Palme would have had to reject everything for which he stood. But for Persson, there is no such problem: By virtually all accounts, he has never stood for anything in particular, especially in matters of foreign policy. [14] The declining trajectory from Palme to Persson probably goes a long way toward explaining the noxious atmosphere in which the Ordfront scandal has festered.

### *Elevated discourse*

By the force of his intellect, knowledge and eloquence, Palme elevated public discourse in Sweden to a level not experienced before or since. In so doing, he expanded the boundaries of debate to include space for information and ideas which, from another source, might have easily been savaged or dismissed as extreme. He was, after all, the leader of the country's largest political party, one that had dominated national politics for so long that it had come to be regarded by many as part of the establishment.

With Palme, it became possible to question the behaviour and motives of the Western powers with relative impunity. This no doubt influenced the practice of journalism. It is easier to challenge the reigning superpower's war propaganda when the person occupying the bully pulpit of the prime minister's office is doing the same thing. That is also likely to affect the calculations, subconscious or otherwise, by which editors set priorities and sort the news that's fit to print from the unfitting.

The reverse is also true, of course: Specimens such as Zaremba, Tamas and Ericsson naturally thrive in the deep soil of ignorance,

disinformation and fealty to the United States which Prime Minister Persson has so amply fertilized.

The implications of all this for recruitment, survival and advancement within the journalistic profession are fairly obvious.

This is not to suggest that the prime minister has the sole power to set the agenda and parameters of debate in Sweden. As elsewhere, the process is dialectical, with the balance of power and influence shifting in relation to a wide variety of factors and events that are often unforeseen. Recently, for example, the public images of Persson and his foreign minister were severely tarnished when the mainstream press tore into them for allegedly failing to respond with sufficient alacrity to the plight of Swedish tourists affected by a devastating tsunami along the coasts of South-east Asia. (Compared with the tidal wave of negative publicity arising from that natural disaster, the amount of media attention and concern devoted to the government policy of expediting torture has been a drop in the ocean.)

Nevertheless, the glaring contrast between Olof Palme and Göran Persson indicates that the personal interests and attributes of the country's foremost political leader can have a profound influence on the nature and substance of public discourse.

The obvious question is: How did Sweden regress from Palme to Persson? But it is beyond the scope of this discussion to attempt an answer. [15]

### *Balkan complex*

The influence of prime ministers and their governments is especially great with regard to questions of foreign policy, as they are entrusted with the crucial task of maintaining relations with the outside world and are generally assumed, often correctly, to possess superior knowledge of such matters. Much the same applies to the mainstream media, if for no other reason than that they have far greater resources at their disposal than do average citizens, who naturally tend to be more concerned with issues closer to home.

Accordingly, when governments and the mainstream press adopt a common perspective on a question of foreign policy, alternative

---

*“And so, wrote Rebecca West, the visitors returned home, each clasping to his or her bosom a favoured Balkan folk group that was suffering and innocent, constantly abused but never harming another.”*

---

viewpoints are seldom greeted with widespread enthusiasm. The more complex the issue—the more time and mental energy required to understand it—the greater the inclination to rely on the authorities who are supposed to know about such things.

This common syndrome has considerable relevance for the issue that gave rise to the Ordfront scandal. The complexities of Balkan history and politics have been confounding outside observers for a very long time—a fact pointed out by journalist Björn Kumm, who in his introduction to the Swedish edition of Diana Johnstone's “scandalous” book, *Fools' Crusade*, cites the experience of the British writer, Rebecca West:

“When West visited Yugoslavia in 1936, she correctly observed that all of the ethnic groups living there seemed to be at each other's throats. But her humanistically inclined and reformist countrymen, who often journeyed to the Balkans in order to determine who was plaguing whom, were no more willing than today's polemicists to accept such a complicated view. And so, wrote Rebecca West, the visitors returned home to Great Britain, each clasping to his or her bosom a favoured Balkan folk group that was suffering and innocent, constantly abused but never harming another.”

The same simple-minded tendency can be observed in Leif Ericsson, Gellert Tamas and other bombing leftists, whose dogmatic pronouncements and condemnations reflect an unwillingness and/or inability to consider the Balkan tragedy in other than black-and-white terms. This is a well-known trait of authoritarian personalities, of course.

Whatever the source of the problem, they have fastened on a conception of the most recent Balkan wars which happens to coincide with the propaganda of the United States and its European allies. According to the black-

and-white scenario, the Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovo Albanians were the “suffering and innocent”, while the Serbs were the evil ones. The Croatians were assigned a minor, almost invisible role— in itself a major propaganda triumph, given the extent of the crimes they carried out with the large-scale economic and military assistance of the United States and Germany. [16]

This basic perspective has been etched into the public consciousness by Sweden’s mainstream media and bombing leftists, using such standard devices as the constant repetition of a few simple slogans such as: “Milosevic, the man who started four wars. . . . Srebrenica, the worst crime against humanity since World War II” and the need to bomb Yugoslavia “in order to stop genocide and ethnic cleansing”.

The conventional wisdom had become solidly entrenched in Sweden by the time Björn Eklund’s interview with Diana Johnstone appeared in *Ordfront Magazine* in the summer of 2003. It is thus hardly surprising that the interview triggered such a furious reaction from those who had most to fear from a more complex perspective on the Balkan reality. Nor is it difficult to understand how unsuspecting media consumers, including many *Ordfront* members, could have been beguiled by the simple tale of good and evil with which they have been indoctrinated during the past decade or so.

### *Rare rebellion*

More surprising, and encouraging, is the fact that so many *Ordfront* members— at the risk of being stigmatized for aiding and abetting genocide-denial and such like— reacted so strongly in defence of open debate and the right of free expression. A clear majority of the 2004 annual meeting denounced the media onslaught against the Johnstone interview and rebuked the leadership for capitulating to it. Such rebellions are rare in Sweden, and the Ericsson/Hagnerites were clearly unprepared for the breadth and intensity of this one.

The outcome of the annual meeting and the respectable showing of its democratic majority at the coup meeting suggest at least some potential for reversing the coup. But for that to happen, it will be necessary for the democratic forces to cast off the social-

psychological restraints of Sweden’s deeply embedded culture of consensus long enough to restore order.

### *Irrational vein*

As previously noted, the reaction of the democratic majority has thus far been characterized by resignation and withdrawal. This is no doubt due in part to sheer bewilderment and dismay at the behaviour of the Ericsson/Hagnerites. As former *Ordfront* chairman Anders Björnsson observed, “Not even when the Swedish Left was most infected with Stalinism did anyone dare to behave in such a manner”.

At one point, when the coup makers had worked themselves into a particularly fevered pitch, some among the democratic majority began to speculate— only half-jokingly— whether the next phase of the increasingly bizarre drama would include guns and shooting.

In short, the scandal has disclosed a deep vein of irrationality in Swedish society which has come as something of a shock to many, if not most, of those who are fully aware of the facts. It would appear that, despite their country’s peaceful history and the esteem in which it is held beyond its borders, at least some Swedes are subject to much the same ills of the mind and spirit that trouble the other peoples of the world.

There is certainly nothing unique about the behaviour of the coup leaders— although the underlying motives are, as usual with human beings, somewhat obscure. Those of Leif Ericsson are probably most susceptible to educated guess. The only founding member who has remained through thick and thin, Ericsson is credited by many with having made a vital administrative contribution to *Ordfront*’s survival and its current state of relative prosperity. In any event, he evidently feels that he owns a proprietary interest in the organization, and was mightily alarmed when some aspects of it appeared to slip out of his control at the 2004 annual meeting. Hence, the desperate— and for the time being, at least— successful struggle to reassert his patriarchal authority.

The motivation of chairwoman Christina Hagner is more difficult to divine. Prior to the Johnstone-Eklund controversy, she had few

critics and numerous admirers for her efforts on behalf of the organization. Of course that changed when she launched the attack on the annual meeting's majority and took the visible lead in the coup. Aghast at the ugly transformation, several members noted a resemblance to Margaret Thatcher—a suggestion which provoked outrage among Hagner's remaining supporters.

### *Unfair comparison*

The comparison probably was unfair—to Mrs. Thatcher. For, although she may have wanted to from time to time, England's "Iron Lady" never trampled on democratic principle and process to the extent that Hagner has done. Thatcher did not, for example, ever attempt to nullify an election on the grounds that five times the normal voter turnout was not sufficient to confer legitimacy, that those who did vote had not properly understood the issues, had "got out of control" and elected a bunch of people to Parliament whom "I am not certain I can work with"—and, in any event, merely comprised a "temporary gathering" that would not have to take responsibility for its actions and could therefore be dismissed.

The most likely explanation for Hagner's eager participation in the coup is that she was personally offended by the annual meeting's rebuke of her and her associates' capitulation to the mainstream media. That is the interpretation of, among others, journalist Dan Josefsson who has referred to "a chairwoman who obviously cannot tolerate being criticized at the annual meeting despite the fact that she was unanimously re-elected." Replacing the democratically elected intruders on "her" board with like-minded souls may have provided a means to restore her wounded dignity and confirm the wisdom of capitulation.

The third figure in the coup triumvirate, Gertrud Åström, has also astonished former supporters, by demonstrating a previously unsuspected enthusiasm for ruthless conduct. As with Christina Hagner, wounded pride is a likely factor: The 2004 annual meeting's emphatic rejection of Åström's fabricated grounds for the dismissal of Björn Eklund—"disloyalty" and "co-operation difficulties"—was an affront to her dignity that she was

manifestly unwilling to tolerate. It has also been suggested that her intimate relations with the right-wing Social Democratic government may have played a role. Åström was appointed to lead a public inquiry into gender issues, and has recommended the establishment of a new government agency which she presumably would not object to leading as the first director-general of gender equality.

Given such connections and possible ambitions, it is not unthinkable that Åström has been serving her friends in high places by helping to stifle what used to be the most important progressive voice in Sweden—one that had been highly critical of Göran Persson and his government.

One intriguing explanation for the strange behaviour of the coup makers—in particular their totally unsubstantiated claims of a phantom cabal of radicals threatening to take over Ordfront—is that many of them are reformed veterans of the lunatic Left of the 1960s and '70s. That description applies to Hagner, Ericsson and Ingegärd Waaranperä, the litigious DN journalist (see p. 24). It also applies to Maciej Zaremba and to Olle Sahlström, the most prominent of the coup-supporting board members elected in September of 2004.

The theory is that, having in middle-age joined polite society, they have been battling



*"Come along to the future. Ordfront—the movement for the new era" is the somewhat obscure message of this publicity notice featuring the smiling face of Gertrud Åström.*

with their inner demons from the past by projecting them in some strange and destructive way upon the democratic majority which dared to challenge their embrace of USA/NATO propaganda, their submission to the mainstream press, etc. That explanation may appear a bit weird; but it is certainly no weirder than the behaviour in question.

With regard to the other parties to the coup, their apparent motivations are recognizable from similar events in other parts of the world. The bombing leftists and the thought police of the mainstream media were anxious to protect the conventional wisdom of their devisement from the threat of alternative perspectives on the Balkan tragedy. Many of the leading citizens who endorsed the coup appear to have done so on the basis of personal loyalties: Some were old friends of Leif Ericsson and chose to assume that he was in the right; others were proselytized by people they trusted and lent their names to the coup without much thought, reflection or willingness to rectify their error.

As for the Ordfront members who formed the majority of the coup meeting, it is likely that most of them were more or less innocent victims of the propaganda campaign conducted by the coup makers and the mainstream press. But their susceptibility to that propaganda was conditioned by Sweden's culture of consensus (see "The holy spirit", p. 55).

### *Parallel means*

Needless to say, the foregoing assortment of conceivable explanations hardly conveys the full range and complexity of the mental and social processes involved in such a human drama. It is intended merely as an initial, tentative response to the question: How could such things happen in Sweden? Part of the answer seems to be that the Swedish population includes a number of people who behave as humans everywhere tend to do when confronted with challenges to their power, perceived economic interests, self-images and cherished notions of reality.

Whatever the actual thoughts and motives of the coup makers and their supporters, they have all contributed in various ways to a democratic calamity that includes several parallels with the U.S. presidential campaign that was taking place around the same time.

One similarity is the evident belief of the "winners" that the ends justify the means. As U.S. Vice President Cheney has reasoned: "Principle is O.K. up to a certain point, but principle doesn't do any good if you lose."

In both campaigns, the justifiable means included scare propaganda about a vaguely defined threat, labelled "terrorists" in the United States and the "appalling rhetorical Left" in Sweden—except that there was a far more solid basis for the former anxiety than for the latter.

---

*"It is the old practice of despots, to use a part of the people to keep the rest in order. And those who have once got an ascendancy and possessed themselves of all the resources of the nation, their revenues and offices, have immense means for retaining their advantage.*

– Thomas Jefferson, 1798

---

In the United States, the henchmen of draft-dodger Bush launched a massive smear campaign which portrayed challenger Kerry as a liar who acquired his military honours under false pretences and, much worse, had mendaciously accused his comrades-in-arms of war crimes. Everything about the smear campaign was a lie. But it was effective, since the issues had been obscured and falsified to such an extent that a significant portion of the voting public was easily misled.

Something quite similar occurred in Sweden, where the coup makers and their allies accused the "opposition" (i.e. the annual meeting's democratic majority) of threatening Ordfront's commitment to democracy and freedom of expression, its editorial integrity, the occupational and emotional security of its workforce, etc.

In fact, these were all misdeeds which the coup makers had committed. But they were able to smear the "opposition" with their own transgressions by exploiting their superior propaganda resources, including those of the mainstream media. Their dominance in that regard was nearly complete—far greater than the comparative advantage enjoyed by the Bushites. In both cases, however, the result

was a disinformed electorate—a precondition for the dismaying outcomes.

There are other parallels, as well. But these should suffice to indicate that the democratic process in Sweden is very much in peril, and not only within Ordfront. The same tendencies have long been evident in national politics and, ironically enough, they have been frequent objects of critical comment and analysis by Ordfront.

The decline of democracy in Sweden has been especially evident in connection with the surrender of national sovereignty to the European Union. Confronted with widespread scepticism about that ongoing process, the political and economic elite has resorted to threats, lies and manipulation to prod the electorate along the one true path. By such means, they managed to shift public opinion long enough—only for a few days—to win a 1994 referendum on EU membership.

But despite an unrelenting barrage of pro-EU propaganda, much of it dutifully and often subtly conveyed by the mainstream media, the scepticism remains. In 2003, it was expressed in the rejection, by a surprisingly wide margin, of membership in the European Monetary Union. [17]

### *Disenfranchising the disobedient*

The conclusion drawn by Prime Minister Persson from that setback has been to disenfranchise the Swedish people with regard to similar issues. He has stubbornly rejected all demands for a referendum on a proposed constitution whose acceptance would constitute a giant step toward the EU's transmogrification into a "United States of Europe".

Although it constitutes a much more far-reaching question than the EMU, Persson has justified its removal from the reach of the electorate by proclaiming that the ca. 450-page document merely codifies and streamlines existing laws and regulations—a falsehood which is preposterous even by his highly flexible standards. (Among many other things, the constitution compels adoption of the EMU and would thus nullify the Swedish referendum on that issue.)

Not even the rejection of the proposed constitution by large majorities in French and Dutch referendums appears to have altered

Persson's resolve. Along with most other representatives of the EU elite, he has refused to declare the thing dead—even though rejection by any one member-state is supposed to be fatal, according to the declared ratification procedure.

The usual procedure in such cases is to make the wayward citizens—in this case, the French, the Dutch and perhaps others to come—vote again until they get it "right". Needless to say, no vote *in favour* of a proposal submitted by the EU elite has ever been subjected to the same repetitive treatment.

The anti-democratic nature of the EU project has been elucidated by Nils Lundgren, a Social Democratic economist who became so disaffected with the Persson government's autocratic policy that he joined other interests to form a new party for EU sceptics, the *Junilistan* ("June List"). Founded in February of 2004, just four months later it received an astounding fourteen per cent of the vote in the EU parliamentary election. To illustrate the democratic absurdity of the elite's reaction to rejection of the EU constitution by the French and Dutch, Lundgren devised the following thought experiment:

Imagine that a centre-right coalition wins the national election next autumn and that all the news media, all the editorial writers and all the political analysts describe this as a historic setback for Sweden and 'the Swedish project'.

Imagine that all the commentators ask what went wrong, and assert that the majority must have based their votes on something other than the real issues, and that the election outcome therefore cannot be interpreted as requiring a change of government.

Imagine that political scientists and jurists openly discuss the constitutional possibilities for compelling a new vote or other means of circumventing the election outcome. Imagine that the highest public officials give assurances that 'the Swedish project' remains on track and will not be affected by the election.

Imagine that business and union leaders express their support for the Social Democratic government and demand that the political leadership not be

influenced by the election outcome. Imagine that a Social Democratic information minister is celebrated by all because she promises to produce a 'Plan D', a state-financed propaganda campaign designed to keep the Social Democrats in power.

How would the outside world look upon such a process? Obviously, it would conclude that Sweden is not a democracy, but is instead ruled by a Social Democratic elite. . . . This is exactly how things have worked in the EU until now.

The establishment is shaken and is manoeuvring to foil the will of the people. And where are the watchdogs who are supposed to keep an eye on the elite and reveal its tricks? . . . Where are the independent writers and analysts in the Swedish press? Have we seen any stimulating analysis or debate on public TV? Nix. The watchdogs sing with the angels and howl with the wolves. . . ." [18]

This is an accurate analogy of the EU political process as it has thus far been conducted in Sweden and other member-states. It also corresponds, in nearly every respect, with the manner in which the Ordfront coup was conducted— which is all the more incongruous, given that the organization's magazine, books and study circles have been condemning such anti-democratic behaviour for over a decade.

Of particular concern has been the gross imbalance of resources available to the opposing sides of the EU debate. But the far greater imbalance in favour of the Ordfront coup makers did not appear to trouble them in the least; on the contrary, they shamelessly exploited it. It all serves to illustrate how quickly disgraceful conduct can become acceptable when one's own perceived interests are at stake.

More generally, Swedish democracy displays much the same tendencies that have been noted in other parts of the world, including single-issue politics, the steadily growing influence of money and media, and a decreasing willingness of the citizenry to endure the discipline and disappointments of the democratic process.

For example, young people often complain that they are not represented in decision-making bodies. But many of those who are elected— usually with the support of older folks— quit their posts after a year two on the grounds that public service turned out to be less enjoyable than they had imagined, that their ideas and proposals are not immediately embraced, etc. Instant gratification appears to be a requirement of modern democracy in Sweden, as elsewhere.

Misconceptions about the nature of the process have become so widespread that a political scientist was recently moved to remind his fellow Swedes that no guarantees of victory or entertainment are included. "Democracy requires good losers," explained Peter Esaiasson. "Chew on that for a moment. It is self-evident, yet seldom mentioned. Who wants to be a loser when every entertainment programme on TV is all about winning? . . . Quite simply, we have unrealistic expectations. . . ."

"Regardless of how active people become, or how well the public discourse functions, many citizens are going to find themselves on the losing side. . . . Losers who cry foul and refuse to accept an outcome can always find some formal reason for doing so." [19]

That, of course, is precisely what the Ericsson/Hagnerites did when they failed to get their way at the 2004 annual meeting.

### *Little resistance*

Despite their blatant abuses of power and democratic process, the Ordfront coup makers have encountered very little resistance. With few exceptions, the majority of the board elected by the 2004 annual meeting offered scant opposition to the domineering tactics of Chairwoman Hagner and her supporters. The coup implemented in September of 2004 has been greeted largely with silence, submission and withdrawal.

Something similar has occurred in the Social Democratic Party (SDP), where Göran Persson and his supporters have eliminated all but a few token EU sceptics from key positions. That is why he prefers to relegate decisions on crucial matters like the EU constitution to the parliament, where he is able to rely upon "his" contingent of MPs to vote—



together with their colleagues in the centre-right parties— against majority opinion, if need be to satisfy the wishes of the elite. The quiet purge of “Palme Social Democrats” has been, if anything, even more thorough.

The transformation of the SDP has not taken place without internal criticism and tension, of course, and there is occasional limited defiance of the leadership on isolated issues such as the EMU. But there has never been any serious challenge to Persson’s rule. The disaffected tend to withdraw quietly— in some cases to other parties, more often to a state of inertia.

### *The holy spirit*

This is how such matters are usually dealt with in Swedish society which, despite numerous and possibly increasing deviations, is still characterized by a culture of consensus that remains especially strong in grassroots organizations such as Ordfront is supposed to be. Central to that cultural complex is the notion of *samförståndsandan*, which translates literally as “the spirit of co-operation”. But that fails to capture the moralistic overtones of the concept, which is sometimes referred to sardonically as “the *holy* spirit of co-operation”— a more accurate expression of its essence.

By engendering cohesion, the holy spirit is widely credited with having made an indispensable contribution to the historically great success of the Swedish labour movement— including what used to be its Social Democratic Party— and thus to the development of the renowned Swedish model and its associated foreign policy. Among other things, it has given rise to a rather special climate of debate and public discourse, based on a remarkably diplomatic style of speech whose function is to smooth over the sharp edges of discord and facilitate consensus.

This approach to human relations functions quite well, at least in Sweden, when everyone involved is on more or less the same wave length. But within an organizational context, it places heavy demands on the leadership to be alert and sensitive to the views of the membership, while at the same time resisting the temptation to exploit the high level of trust implicit in the spirit of consensus. For their part, the grassroots must take the trouble to make

their views and wishes known— otherwise there is not much to which the leadership can be alert and sensitive.

These conditions posed few serious problems in the early history of the labour movement and the SDP. The primary goals were crystal clear and were pursued within a perspective that was shared by leaders and the grassroots. But, as indicated in the foregoing discussion, it is no longer so simple. Control of the party apparatus and financial resources has been captured by a right-wing faction that has accommodated the party to market liberalism and U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile, consistent majorities among SDP voters and the entire populace have retained the values of genuine social democracy and global solidarity.

What happens when such a fundamental difference in perspective arises? In the case of Sweden’s SDP, it has thus far worked like this: The minority in the leadership attempts by all available means to impose its views on the majority which, instead of resisting, observes the compliant etiquette of the holy spirit— at least outwardly. The principal options are to agree, quietly disappear, or stay on and carp about the leadership behind its back.

### *Polite silence*

There are endless examples of this syndrome. For example: At a public meeting during the EMU referendum campaign, a Social Democrat complained bitterly about a talk delivered to her local party association by a leading figure in the government. “He told us about all the advantages of the EMU,” she related. “But I don’t think there was a single person in that room who believed a single word he said.” Asked whether anyone had expressed disagreement or posed a critical question, the answer was as simple as it was predictable: “No.”

There are also well-spoken, self-assured Social Democrats who express devastating criticism of the leadership in private. But when they encounter the objects of their displeasure on TV and in other public settings, their criticism is usually expressed so mildly and obliquely, if at all, that it is virtually impossible for the uninitiated to detect. Typically, such encounters conclude with an outright lie of the sort, “We are really in basic agreement

on the issues.” As a consequence, observers are left un- or misinformed about the depth and nature of disagreements which do exist, and isolated with any misgivings of their own.

Among other consequences, the potential for opposition is constricted, since even those who are best qualified to lead it are often reluctant to do so. This may be due partly to internalization of the culture’s non-confrontational precepts, and partly to the anticipated disapproval of others. Even those who privately share critical views may turn against anyone who disturbs the holy spirit by expressing them in public; and no one who takes such a bold step can rely on support from the like-minded.

---

*In numerous ways, the culture of consensus provides a framework within which a minority leadership can impose its will on the majority with relative ease. The democratic dialogue is attenuated, and misguided policies may never be subjected to question or review.*

---

In these and other ways, the culture of consensus provides a framework within which a minority leadership can impose its will on the majority with relative ease. The democratic dialogue is attenuated, and misguided policies may never be subjected to question or review. Meanwhile, the leadership can lull itself into an illusion of general concord that does not exist, and dismiss any flurries of disagreement that may arise as the mischief of “divisive factions”. The latter rhetorical device has frequently been employed by Göran Persson & Co. to silence unwelcome majority voices within the SDP— a party which Persson, himself, has done more than anyone else to divide.

It is probably safe to assume that such processes operate for the most part at a subconscious level. But it is far from inconceivable that they may sometimes be employed in a manipulative fashion. Even in such cases, however, there is always an element of mutuality for which the grassroots share a measure of responsibility. Otherwise, the holy spirit of co-operation becomes an excuse for submissive or cowardly behaviour.

The decline of democracy within the Social Democratic Party is of general concern, since it has dominated national politics for the past half-century, and has been the driving force in the construction of the Swedish model which has so many admirers around the world. But the problems engendered or aggravated by the culture of consensus are not limited to the SDP. In much the same way and with the same impunity, the leaders of the centre-right parties have all acted to limit the opportunities and influence of EU sceptics, for example.

Economist Carl Hamilton has railed against the same tendencies in the embrace of market liberalism by Swedish elites: “It is a bloody failure of Swedish democracy that the leading strata— in the academic world, at the Central Bank and in the government— have all pulled in the same direction which, at least in hindsight, has clearly been disastrous. . . . [This tendency] has become much worse in recent years and, with the EU ‘convergence criteria’ that have delivered such a hard blow to democracy, the important decisions are no longer made by Swedish assemblies. . . .

“But things were not all that great in the past, either. For there has always been a consensus culture in Sweden which is bloody unpleasant. Anyone who stands out or deviates from the norm is punished terribly hard. There is no appreciation of anyone who stands out from the crowd; it is not seen as having any value, but is instead regarded as sabotage.” [20]

This hard judgement is more applicable to some contexts than to others. But it is certainly relevant to the problems that throb at the heart of the Ordfront scandal.

### *Return to normalcy*

Given the cultural imperatives of the holy spirit, what is most remarkable about the short-lived rebellion of the Ordfront majority is not that it fizzled out after the 2004 annual meeting, but that it happened in the first place. Such events are rare in tranquil Sweden, and the fact that this one occurred at all testifies to the depth of the leadership’s betrayal.

Correspondingly, the successful coup and the passive response to it can be regarded as a return to Swedish normalcy. A protracted conflict has been avoided and that, it would appear, is more important than anything else.

The subtle traces of the holy spirit can be discerned in many aspects of the drama, for example in the panicky, outraged response of the Ericsson/Hagnerites to their rebuke by the 2004 annual meeting. Since those who occupy positions of trust in Sweden are not accustomed to such forthright criticism, there is a certain experiential basis for the notion that it could only be the work of some “divisive faction” which does not know how to behave properly.

### *Psychic insulation*

The effect is to insulate leaders psychologically against the need to consider the possibility that they may have acted improperly. Thus, a Christina Hagner can openly admit caving into media pressure in violation of Ordfront’s most sacred principles and, with what appears to be genuine incomprehension, fail to grasp why any of the members should object.

In this, she could rely on the reflexive support of anxious souls who become uneasy at the threat of conflict which is always implicit in any sort of challenge to those in power. In Sweden, that typical primate behaviour is augmented with a sort of first-strike capability. The general, unspoken rule is that it is permitted to violate the etiquette of consensus as long as one is the first to do so. But it is not permitted to *react*, for that might lead to an escalating dispute. It is a virtue to silently tolerate bad behaviour; and anyone who fails to do so is at risk of being firmly rebuked for being “bitter”— a sanction which in most cases is sufficient to restore the consensual order. Public discussions typically include one or more self-appointed consensus police who leap to squelch the first sign of conflict.

Adherence to the standard etiquette varies widely, of course. But it is sufficiently widespread and deeply held, especially in grass-roots organizations, that it is ignored at peril. An analogy can be drawn with the influence of formal religion on U.S. politics: One may not believe in a biblical god, but it is much easier to get elected if one pretends to do so. The difference is that there is usually no need for pretence in Sweden, where most folks truly believe in the holy spirit of co-operation (and not without reason, as noted below).

The effect of all this is to strengthen the normal advantages of incumbency, while constricting the potential for effective opposition. The inherent logic of the consensus culture is to trivialize and normalize even the most outrageous conduct, especially if the perpetrators occupy positions of trust. And the greater the outrage, the greater the likelihood that an appropriate response will be interpreted as “bitter” and divisive.

The dilemma is particularly acute if, as in the case of the Ordfront scandal, only a small minority is fully informed. In such circumstances, it is almost inevitable that the uninformed majority will gravitate to power, and that many will be disturbed and/or irritated by criticism of the leadership. This goes a long way toward explaining the feeble or non-existent response of the (2004) board majority to the domineering antics of Chairwoman Hagner, and the mood of hopeless resignation that has facilitated the ongoing consolidation of the coup.

### *Trained incapacity*

In short, the holy spirit of co-operation induces a trained incapacity to cope with the less savoury aspects of human behaviour which, even in the best of worlds, express themselves from time to time. There is no provision for confronting and dealing with violations of the norms, since the culture of consensus is based on a Rousseauian conception of human nature in which everyone is assumed to be fundamentally good.

The recent histories of Ordfront and the Social Democratic Party suggest that some modification of that comforting premise may be in order. But it is far from certain that either organization or the world at large would be better off if the good people of Sweden were to abandon their stubborn faith in humanity. For, that faith and its associated spirit of co-operation are central to the much-admired Swedish model of society and the enlightened foreign policy associated with Olof Palme.

Notwithstanding the problems and limitations outlined above, public discourse in Sweden tends to be more reasonable and civilized than in more quarrelsome societies. Minor irritations and disagreements are less

likely to escalate into needless, enervating disputes: Daily life offers countless validations of the proverb, "A soft answer turneth away wrath". And most people everywhere would probably agree that co-operation is preferable to discord.

The problem arises when, as in the case of the Ordfront coup, fundamental principles are violated. Of course, it is not always a simple matter to distinguish the fundamental from the inconsequential. But such is life, and the necessity of making such distinctions is inescapable.

The question for devotees of the holy spirit thus becomes: Is there any principle that is worth the trouble of internal conflict? On the evidence, the answer would appear to be no—not democracy, not freedom of expression, not global solidarity, not the taboo against torture, not Sweden's 200-year tradition of neutrality, not international law, . . . not anything.

The mild and co-operative withdraw in passive resignation, while the domineering and manipulative turn Sweden into a moral swamp and intellectual backwater. It is a state of affairs reminiscent of that evoked by Yeats nearly a century ago:

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

### **Restoration**

To the extent that the foregoing analysis is correct, the prospects of restoring genuine democracy and open debate in Ordfront, or in Swedish society generally, would appear to be quite slender. At the very least, it would require that genuine democrats become far more active and *assertive* than they have been in the past. That is a very big "if"; the innate inertia of the Swedes is a massive force that has frustrated more than one worthwhile initiative.

## **Ordfront's "total concession" to Björn Eklund**

A few days before publication of this account and one month before the case was due to be heard in Sweden's Labour Relations Court, it was reported that Ordfront had agreed to pay heavy damages to Björn Eklund in compensation for his dismissal on the highly dubious grounds of "disloyalty" and "co-operation difficulties" (see pages 7-8 & 19-20). The figure cited, SEK 695,000, is by Swedish standards unusually high for such a case.

According to the labour union attorney representing Eklund, "This is a very advantageous settlement for Björn. He receives as much compensation, or more, as he would have in the event of a victory in court. The agreement can only be interpreted as a total concession by Ordfront. . . . The settlement is a great victory not only for Björn, but as well for everyone eager to defend the right to criticize one's employer. To that category previously belonged Ordfront—a circumstance that has made this case quite absurd. In pursuing Eklund's case, I have had much use of formulations from Ordfront's own by-laws and decisions by its annual meetings which comprise a passionate defence of free expression, even at private places of employment."

Eklund has also expressed satisfaction and stresses that the agreement does not

include any restraints on continued discussion of the Ordfront scandal: "I do not intend to be silent about Ordfront's mistreatment of me nor the betrayal of its own ideals.

"My dismissal was politically motivated, and clearly was related to the criticized interview with Diana Johnstone. That will be made evident by a variety of means."

The costly settlement and the implicit admission of error is the first serious impediment to the ongoing consolidation of the coup. It is more than likely that Ordfront's leadership will attempt to sweep this unpleasantness under the carpet along with all the rest, and that it will be assisted in doing so by its collaborators in the mainstream press. But it is not entirely certain that such a strategy can succeed.

Nevertheless, it is almost certainly worth an attempt. One reason for that has been suggested by Bob Musil, former head of the U.S. branch of the international network of physicians which received the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize: "For those of us who struggled against the Vietnam War, Palme's open criticism was extremely helpful. . . . When one considers the enormity of the destruction and suffering that the U.S. was causing throughout Southeast Asia, no criticism could possibly be too harsh. It is especially significant when it comes from the leader of a respected country."

There is, if anything, an even greater need for such critical leadership today; and the values that formed the basis of Palme's foreign policy are still deeply rooted in the Swedish population. In terms of what the majority of Swedes want and are willing to support, there is no insurmountable obstacle to the restoration of Palme's style of politics. And there is certainly no widespread opposition to genuine democracy or freedom of expression.

What has been lacking is insight, determination and leadership, and the holy spirit of co-operation has tended to impede all three. It will not be possible to cope with aberrations such as the Ordfront scandal unless the culture of consensus is modified to include provision for recognizing and responding effectively to the violation of norms and the abuse of power. That, in turn, requires the adoption of a somewhat less innocent conception of human nature.

It is a humanistic dilemma which is not limited to Sweden, of course. Frances Moore Lappé has developed a related theme in an exhortation to U.S. progressives who despair at the relentless advance of the dark forces responsible for President G.W. Bush:

The radical Right plays by different rules. . . . In 2000, leading Republican Congressman, Majority Whip Tom DeLay distributed a pamphlet to all his Republican colleagues entitled *The Art of Political War: How Republicans Can Fight to Win*. Its author, David Horowitz, writes, "Politics is war conducted by other means. In political warfare you do not fight just to prevail in an argument, but to destroy the enemy's fighting ability. . . . In political wars, the aggressor usually prevails."

[Conservative guru] Richard Viguerie could not have described the Right's Machiavellian outlook more succinctly, speaking about the vicious pre-election attacks on Kerry: "I just wish [Bush] could have done a little bit more [against Kerry]. I thought it was just great. And we're not gonna play, Bill, by the liberal establishment's rules. They say, 'This is acceptable and this is not acceptable.' Those days are gone and gone forever."

. . . The Left must get much better, not just at placing its issues in a compelling moral frame, but at exposing and holding the radical Right accountable for its lies and deception, without— and here is the tricky part— making those who have been manipulated feel ridiculed and put down. [21]

The title of Lappé's essay, "Time for Progressives to Grow Up", seems equally apropos to the genuine Swedish variety of progressive, as well. Those who are members of Ordfront now have an opportunity to provide a useful example by holding the coup makers— Right, Left or Centre— accountable for their lies and deceptions, and in so doing restore the integrity of the organization.

Whatever the outcome of such an effort, it could well have wider relevance. For, the Ordfront scandal displays in microcosm the same types of misconduct that are evident in many other contexts. A serious attempt to rectify such problems would, at the very least, help to illuminate their nature and origins. If successful, it would likely provide some guidance and encouragement to others confronted with similar difficulties.

One final consideration of no little import: Despite the dismal trend outlined in the foregoing pages, Sweden remains a comparatively egalitarian society with a well-educated population, the majority of which hold values that are consistent with the positive image of their country around the world. If it is not possible to restore democracy here, then where?

— Al Burke  
September 2005

## ENDNOTES

1. For details on Persson's submissive foreign policy and its reflection in Swedish news media, see:
  - "Collateral Damage" at: [www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/damage.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/damage.htm)
  - "The Word from the White House" at: [www.nnn.se/abf/abf.htm](http://www.nnn.se/abf/abf.htm)
2. The referendum on Swedish membership in the European Monetary Union is reviewed at: [www.nnn.se/n-model/eu/eu.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/eu/eu.htm)
3. USA/NATO activities in the Balkans are described in many sources, including Diana Johnstone's book, *Fools' Crusade* (Monthly Review Press, 2002). See also TFF's series of articles on former Yugoslavia at: [www.transnational.org](http://www.transnational.org)
4. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has been the subject of withering criticism by numerous legal experts, including eleven from Canada, Spain and the American Association of Jurists whose brief against the Tribunal is available at: <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/icty.htm>  
See also: Appendix, item 4; and *How America Gets Away with Murder*, by Michael Mandel (Pluto Press, 2004). According to Mandel, a Canadian professor of law, Diana Johnstone's "analysis [in *Fools' Crusade*] of the disgraceful behaviour of the International Criminal Tribunal for the 'former Yugoslavia' is so incisive for a non-lawyer as to make a lawyer blush'."
5. Kapadia, Saam. "Att tiga är också propaganda", *Årsbok 2002: Kriget & Sanningen*. Stockholm: Publicistklubben. 2002.
6. Brigadier Pellnäs's commentary is available in English at: [www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/kosovo.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/kosovo.htm)
7. Gellert Tamas has not responded to a request for documentation of the alleged acknowledgement of "planned genocide".
8. In a not entirely unrelated case, Josefsson's programme of media criticism was cancelled by public TV after he provided the head of the news division with an opportunity to make a public fool of herself in an interview concerning alleged ethnic discrimination in the hiring practices for which she was responsible.
9. Due to a peculiarity of the Swedish mind which is related to the consensus culture discussed later in the text ("The holy spirit", p. 55), it is necessary to point out that this sentence does *not* equate Hagner with Mussolini or Pinochet. It refers to the *style of argument* by which violations of norms are ignored or excused on the basis of "efficiency", sound fiscal management, etc.
10. For examples of Maj-Britt Théorin's criticism of Prime Minister Persson's foreign policy, see: [www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/damage.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/foreign/damage.htm)

11. Agneta Stark's endorsement of the appeal involved a conflict of interest, in that she had sat on the Ordfront board which had approved Björn Eklund's dismissal. In effect, she was urging the coup meeting to restore a decision in which she had participated—but without mentioning that fact. Sven Lindqvist is her long-time cohabitant.
12. Pilger, John. "Bringing You the News, Courtesy of the Law of Opposites and the Law of Silence", *The New Statesman*. 7 April 2005.
13. The case of the two asylum seekers delivered by the Swedish government to U.S. agents for transport to Egypt is discussed by Seymour Hersh in his book, *Chain of Command* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2004). See also: "Deported terror suspects tortured" by Richard Norton-Taylor in *The Guardian*, 15 April 2005.
14. In a collection of essays on the politics of Göran Persson published in early 2005, seventeen Swedish commentators with diverse backgrounds and political inclinations all arrived at the same conclusion—that Persson lacks a discernible political vision or ideology, and is motivated primarily by a lust for power. Hence the title of the book: "Power above All" (*Makten framför allt*. Mats Ögren, ed. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 2005.)
15. For more on "The Legacy of Olof Palme", see: [www.nnn.se/n-model/palme/palme.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/palme/palme.htm)
16. Regarding Croatia and the United States, see:
  - Öberg, Jan. "The forgotten 10th anniversary: Operation Storm in Croatia", *TFF Feature Collection*. 5 August 2005. [www.transnational.org/features/2005/Coll\\_OperationStorm.html](http://www.transnational.org/features/2005/Coll_OperationStorm.html)
  - "Croatia". Amnesty International at: <http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/ED44C74FD6781D7180256FD9005BA381>
17. For accounts of the two Swedish referendums on the European Union, see *Great European Expectations* at: [www.nnn.se/n-model/eu/eu.htm](http://www.nnn.se/n-model/eu/eu.htm)
18. Lundgren, Nils. "Krisen i EU – bra för folket", *Aftonbladet*. 27 July 2005.
19. Esaiasson, Peter. "När argumenten tryter", *Aftonbladet*. 27 December 2004.
20. Carl Hamilton quoted by Torsten Sverenius in *Vad hände med Sveriges ekonomi efter 1970?* Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, SOU 1999:150.
21. Lappé, Frances Moore. "Time for Progressives to Grow Up", *Guerrilla News Network*, 26 May 2005

## APPENDIX

Item	Page
1. Noam Chomsky on criticisms of Johnstone's book	62
2. Leif Ericsson's confession of error in <i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	64
3. Diana Johnstone's response to Ericsson's confession	66
4. Edward S. Herman's response to Ericsson's confession	67
5. Leif Ericsson on "Denying Guilt"	71
6. Diana Johnstone's response to Ericsson's "Denying Guilt"	73
7. Edward S. Herman's response to Ericsson's "Denying Guilt"	76
8. Motion 16 to Annual Meeting: "On open and rational debate"	80
9. Christina Hagner's letter to Ordfront membership	81
10. A democratic board member's response to Hagner's letter	83
11. Gertrud Åström's response to authors' statement	85
12. Al Burke's reply to Åström's letter	86
13. On the curious lack of response	87
14. The problem of Philip Knightley	88
15. E-mail addresses	89

### 1. Noam Chomsky on criticisms of Johnstone's book

---

I have heard from various friends in Sweden about an ongoing controversy concerning Diana Johnstone's book on the Balkans. I have known her for many years, have read the book, and feel that it is quite serious and important. I also know that it has been very favorably reviewed, e.g., by the leading British scholarly journal *International Affairs*, published by the Royal Academy. I was therefore interested to learn of the criticisms and the controversy, and took the trouble to investigate what was sent to me.

Some comments follow about what was sent to me, which I am assuming to be accurate, for the sake of these comments. I am sending them in the hope that they may be relevant to whatever discussions are taking place within Ordfront.

A Swedish journalist sent me sections of an article in *Svenska Dagbladet* that stated:

"As witness to the truth, an author is interviewed, who in the spirit of Noam Chomsky claims that the discourse on ethnic cleansing and genocide in Yugoslavia is 'the great lie, the heart of the myth.' Such events have not occurred, just 'incidents'."

The sender suggested that I respond, but of course I will not. There is no need to dignify such gutter journalism with response. Evidently, no journal that expects to be taken seriously would publish such slanders without even a pretense of argument or evidence, and that the fact that it appears tells us a good deal about the standards of any journal that would tolerate this practice.



Another document sent to me contains a number of charges:

- 1) "According to her [Johnstone] it cannot be a matter of genocide when women and children are spared. But to me it is obvious that genocide and crimes against humanity have been committed in Srebrenica. . . ."

Reference is apparently to Johnstone's statement (p. 117) refuting the claim that the charge of "genocide" is demonstrated by the fact that the Serbs who conquered Srebrenica offered safe passage to women and children. In response to this absurd claim, she writes: "However, one thing should be obvious: one does not commit 'genocide' by sparing women and children."

I do not see how her entirely appropriate comment justifies the charge in (1).

- 2) Johnstone "claims that the circa 40 persons who were killed in the village of Racak were not civilians but Albanian guerrilla fighters which had been killed in fighting with Serbian police."

I read the section but could not find that claim.

- 3) "Johnstone asserts that more effort has gone into exaggerating the number of dead than into identifying and calculating the actual number of victims, that there was never any real wish to find out how many were killed and who they were. She suggests that several thousand had fled and survived."

I read that section too. I am aware of no evidence—of course, meaning evidence available to her at the time she wrote—that the statements she actually made in this regard (as distinct from those attributed to her) are incorrect.

- 4) Mikael van Reis published an article in *Göteborgs-Posten*. I quote: ". . . the revisionist author Diana Johnstone, foreground figure in the slander-convicted magazine *Living Marxism*. She insists that the Serb atrocities—ethnic cleansing, torture camps, mass executions—are western propaganda. That is also what Slobodan Milosevic and his ilk profess. Thus the Ordfront left is suddenly travelling in the same compartment as postcommunist fascism."

I do not know van Reis, and hope that the quotation is incorrect. However, if it is correct, it is quite remarkable.

Let us first consider the "slander-convicted magazine *Living Marxism*." The case is important. *LM* was indeed convicted, and put out of business, thanks to Britain's outrageous libel laws, denounced as scandalous worldwide by everyone concerned with the right of freedom of expression. In this case, a huge corporation was able to put a small, marginal journal out of business by demanding the impossible, as Britain's miserable libel laws require, and in the certain knowledge that the journal would be unable to mount a defense given the ludicrous imbalance of resources.

Van Reis is, of course, entitled to hold, and express, his strong opposition to freedom of speech: specifically, his doctrine, clearly expressed here, that the rich and powerful should be able to use the power of the state to silence opinion and reporting they do not like.

But putting that aside, let's now consider his reasoning. Johnstone argues—and, in fact, clearly demonstrates—that a good deal of what has been charged has no basis in fact, and much of it is pure fabrication. For van Reis, this is outrageous. Van Reis therefore is telling us, loud and clear, that he not only is a dedicated opponent of freedom of speech, but he believes with equal passion that it is critically important to safeguard the right to lie—not in the interests of freedom of expression, which he strongly opposes, as just demonstrated—but rather in one special case: to lie in service of power and privilege.

Consider finally his interesting logic. Johnstone's actual statements (the accuracy of which he rightly does not challenge) are also made by Milosevic. Therefore, she and Ordfront are supporters of Milosevic's crimes. And, by precisely the same argument, van Reis is a strong defender of the Holocaust. The proof is elementary. His charges against Stalinist crimes were also made by Goebbels, Himmler, and their apologists until today.

It is astonishing that anything like this should appear in print, in a reputable journal.

A final comment on "genocide". People are free to use the term "genocide" as they please, and to condemn Racak and Srebrenica, say, as genocidal if they like. But then they

have a simple responsibility: Inform us of their bitter denunciations of the incomparably worse “genocide” carried out with the strong backing of the US and UK at the very same moment as Racak. Say, the massacre at Ljubička, with perhaps up to 200 civilians murdered, one of many (unlike Racak), in a country under military occupation and hence a grave war crime (unlike Racak), and in this case simply a massacre of civilians, without even a pretext of resistance (again unlike Racak).

Furthermore, unless the British government, the State Department, NATO, the OSCE, and other impeccable Western sources are lying outright, the Racak massacre was committed at a time when the KLA guerrillas were carrying out terrorist attacks from their Albanian bases against Serbian civilians and police, and were responsible for the majority of atrocities (see, for example, Lord Robertson and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, or the very few serious scholarly studies, such as Nicholas Wheeler’s— who strongly supports the NATO bombing but is so unfashionable as to report the results of the massive Western documentation).

And to continue, Swedes who display their outrage over these examples of Serbian genocide clearly have the duty of informing us of their far more bitter condemnations of the massacres (again with decisive US-UK backing) through 1999, leaving maybe 5000-6000 civilian corpses, according to the Church in

East Timor and the leading Western historian of Timor, the British scholar John Taylor — all BEFORE the paroxysm of terror in late August 1999, after which the US and UK (and for all I know, Sweden) continued to support the Indonesian murderers who were already responsible for the death of about 1/3 of the population in pure aggression decisively supported by the US and UK (and when it came time to make some profit from it, Sweden). Perhaps they have issued bitter condemnations of their Western allies (and Sweden). If so, they have a right to use the term “genocide” in the case of the terrible but much lesser crimes of Racak and Srebrenica. And, needless to say, this is only one trivial example of Western crimes in the same years.

I don’t read Swedish journals of course, but it would be interesting to learn how the Swedish press explains the fact that their interpretation of Johnstone’s book differs so radically from that of Britain’s leading scholarly foreign affairs journal, *International Affairs*. I mentioned the very respectful review by Robert Caplan, of the University of Reading and Oxford. It is obligatory, surely, for those who condemn Johnstone’s book in the terms just reviewed to issue still harsher condemnation of *International Affairs*, as well as of the universities of Reading and Oxford, for allowing such a review to appear, and for allowing the author to escape censure.

That seems pretty straightforward

## 2. Leif Ericsson confession of error in *Dagens Nyheter*

### I was wrong

Leif Ericsson  
*Dagens Nyheter*  
 25 November 2003

“Ordfront denies genocide” was the headline of Maciej Zaremba’s article in *Dagens Nyheter* (3 November). He attacked an article in *Ordfront Magazine* which challenged the established history of the Balkan War. The editors of *Ordfront Magazine* replied on 13 November; other articles [a second by Maciej Zaremba, and one by Ed Vulliamy] appeared on 14 and 17 November.

After having read Diana Johnstone’s book and listened to the criticisms of it, I have become convinced that I made a mistake when I authorized publication of the interview. To be sure, I was sceptical of the article, which defends positions of which I did not approve. But my basic standpoint is that different voices shall be heard in *Ordfront Magazine*.

My scepticism changed to dismay when I began comparing Johnstone’s data on some critical periods of the Balkan tragedy with corresponding data from rulings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague, and with witness

statements from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Dutch government report on Srebrenica, and other sources.

The conclusion to which these comparisons led me is that Johnstone's book, *Fools' Crusade*, is full of factual errors. In some cases, the explanation may be sloppiness or ignorance; in other cases, perhaps a tendentious selection of facts, which may be unintentional, I don't know. In some cases, I have found that well-known facts are falsely presented. I shall give a few examples of the inaccuracies that I found.

*The massacre at Racak in January of 1999:* Johnstone claims that the circa 40 persons who were killed in the village of Racak were not civilians but Albanian guerrilla fighters who had been killed in combat with Serbian police. The shots had been fired from a long distance; only one victim had been shot at close range. According to Johnstone, it is a myth that the victims were defenceless civilians who had been massacred by Serbian forces. According to her, the Serbian and Belorussian pathologists came to the same conclusion as the European Union team led by the Finnish pathologist, Dr. Helena Ranta.

But Helena Ranta claims in her testimony before the Hague Tribunal that the murdered people were unarmed civilian villagers. Among the victims were a woman and a child; several were elderly men. The victims had been shot at approximately the same time. Helena Ranta does not accept the method used by the Serbian pathologists to secure traces of gun powder on the victims, which was meant to prove that they were guerrilla soldiers in civilian outfits. She describes the method as unscientific and accuses the Serbian team of lying before the Hague Tribunal about the fact that the tests were supposed to have been carried out in the presence of the EU team of pathologists and had been accepted by them. According to Ranta the fatal shots were fired from close range, as they otherwise would not have been able to penetrate the ground surface. DNA from bullets that have been dug up corresponds to that of the victims.

Helena Ranta's data are compatible with a report from Human Rights Watch which is based on separate interviews with fourteen witnesses to the massacre. Their testimony

points toward a planned attack on civilians and disproves the claims that the victims were either guerrilla soldiers or civilians who had been caught in crossfire between guerrilla and Serbian police.

*Srebrenica:* Johnstone asserts that more effort has gone into exaggerating the number of dead than into identifying and calculating the actual number of victims, that there was never any real desire to find out how many were killed or who they were. She suggests that several thousand had fled and survived.

The Dutch government commissioned the Institute of War Documentation (NIOD) to carry out a five-year study of the tragedy at Srebrenica. The report was published in April of last year. The authors describe, in great detail, the different ways in which they have attempted to calculate and identify the number of disappeared and dead at Srebrenica.

The Hague Tribunal commissioned two Norwegian demographers to make a scientific estimate of the number of missing persons. They analysed the reliability of the data concerning dead and missing persons, which had been collected by the International Red Cross and Physicians for Human Rights. They compared the lists with the electoral registers from 1997, 1998, and 1991 and concluded that 7475 persons were either known to have died or still reported as missing. Of these, all but 48 were men. They found no evidence indicating that anyone who had been reported missing from Srebrenica had survived. All available information shows that those who are missing can be presumed to be dead. Despite all the attempts of the International Red Cross and others to track down survivors, only six have been found— even though many women from Srebrenica continue to hope that their husbands are still alive.

These are but two examples. I have examined others, as well, and I can draw only one conclusion: Johnstone is telling lies.

Why did we, then, published the article?

At *Ordfront Magazine*, each member of the editorial board stands for his or her articles and opinions. The magazine is to be edited in a spirit of tolerance. It is meant that *Ordfront Magazine* as a publication and *Ordfront* as an organization shall include dissenting voices. If there is a risk that any given writer's

controversial opinion may be regarded as the position of the Ordfront organization, we must clearly state that that is not the case.

In this case, however, that was not clearly stated. The interview with Diana Johnstone does not express Ordfront's view. It is often difficult to determine what is true and what is false. The best way to get to the truth is to allow the arguments to be tested in public debate. How to know what is right if one is not allowed to hear what is wrong, or crazy or repugnant? The right to make mistakes is necessary if one is to learn how to evaluate arguments.

None of this can justify the publication of texts which contain apparent errors. It cannot be right to publish texts that contain grossly erroneous accounts of serious events for which the facts are known. To do so is to be complicit in spreading a distorted view of

reality, and to deny the suffering of human beings. For that reason, we at *Ordfront Magazine* were at fault. For that, I am very sorry. We have a responsibility toward our readers and our members. We do not fulfill that responsibility if we avoid controversial issues, but by treating them in a way that results in highly credible articles.

Sweden needs Ordfront. We are devoted democrats, even if we sometimes make mistakes. We will not become any better if we are called brown-shirts, fascists, nazis, genocide- and Holocaust deniers, antisemites, Islamaphobes, desecrators — to cite some of the more common epithets that have been applied to us during the past week. But we will improve if we receive impartial criticism. I am grateful that the criticism was so severe. I believe that it will make *Ordfront Magazine* a better publication.

### 3. Diana Johnstone's response to Ericsson's confession

---

#### Open Letter to Leif Ericsson

*(Rejected by Dagens Nyheter)*

Since first hearing about the attacks on Ordfront occasioned by the article on my book, I had expected to hear from you. It seemed to me obvious that Ordfront could defend itself better by solidarity than by "throwing someone to the wolves". By consulting with me, you could have found some answers to the attacks and insults directed against me.

There are certainly various points in my book which differ from the version you are accustomed to. That is precisely why I wrote it: to offer readers an alternative interpretation of the official NATO version. You might have noticed that my book contains 430 footnotes citing my sources. If you are an expert on the Yugoslav question, you might perhaps be able to criticize my sources. Instead of that, clearly without having studied the matter yourself, you publicly accuse me not merely of making mistakes (anyone can make a mistake) but of "lying".

This does not indicate a readiness to consider different viewpoints. It makes further discussion difficult or impossible. In your "confession" to Dagens Nyheter, you seri-

ously misrepresent what I wrote. This is the usual tactic of making exaggerated or false paraphrases in order to attack them rather than the arguments of the adversary.

Rather than accuse you of deliberately misrepresenting my book, it is more charitable to conclude that you have not really read it, certainly not carefully, but instead have been "briefed" on it by someone who wants to discredit my viewpoint and prevent people from considering my analysis.

Perhaps if you and others in Sweden should ever take the trouble to read my book carefully and to reflect on the issues raised, a serious debate might be possible. Meanwhile, your great "debate" is not a debate at all, but an obvious campaign of slander intended to silence dissenting opinion.

I find it particularly objectionable to claim that publishing my views amounts to "denying people's suffering". The people who suffered, suffered. It is not denying the suffering of known victims to raise questions about unsubstantiated numbers or, especially, about the political exploitation by various parties of the victims' suffering.

Regretfully,  
Diana Johnstone

#### 4. Edward S. Herman's response to Ericsson's confession

---

*(Rejected by Dagens Nyheter)*

As one who has been working for some years on issues relating to the Balkans, and who knows Diana Johnstone's book *Fools' Crusade* very well, I want to call your attention to a number of features of Mr. Leif Ericsson's letter, "I was wrong" (*Dagens Nyheter*, 25 November) that make it a journalistic disgrace and outrage.

First, Mr. Ericsson claims that the book is "filled with factual errors," but he only mentions two "inaccuracies," regarding Racak and Srebrenica. In both cases Ericsson fails to provide a single quotation from the book or give page numbers, which you would expect him to do if he was contesting factual errors. On these alleged errors Ericsson also never had the courtesy to check out his claims with the author, a practice which is regarded as required by elementary balance as well as fairness in many journalist circles in the West, but apparently not for Ericsson and by implication Ordfront. Most important, Ericsson not only fails to prove a single inaccuracy in Johnstone's book, he himself makes a stream of egregious errors (which I will document below). This suggests that he may have avoided contacting Johnstone in part because it would have been obvious that he had scarcely glanced at the book, but instead was making these accusations based on second-hand and prejudiced information. On any or all of these counts, this is deeply irresponsible journalism.

Second, I find it remarkable that a journalist for a magazine that purports to be independent and on the left should rely so exclusively on establishment sources, and with great gullibility. It never occurs to Ericsson that Helena Ranta, selected by the OSCE to chair the group dealing with Racak forensics, or Tribunal officials and hirelings, might be biased. Many lawyers and analysts in the West have denounced the Tribunal as a political and propaganda arm of the United States and NATO. Canada's best-known criminal lawyer, a political conservative and no friend of Milosevic, Edward Greenspan, has described the Milosevic trial as a "charade. . . lynching. . . show trial" and "kangaroo court" (quotes from

"This is a lynching," *National Post*, 13 March 2002). The conservative *London Times* analyst and expert on the Tribunal, John Laughland, calls it "a rogue court with rigged rules," charges which he documents at length ("The anomalies of the International Criminal Tribunal are legion," *Times*, 17 June 1999). These and many other negative assessments seem to have escaped Ericsson.

Third, Ericsson consistently ignores evidence from other sources that conflict with his bias and derogation program, a number of which are discussed in Johnstone's book. He fails to mention that the Serbs had invited OSCE personnel to accompany them in their pursuit of the KLA at Racak, and indeed OSCE observers did come, along with two AP photographers who made a video of the action. Late in that afternoon, after the departure of the Serbs, Christophe Chatelet, a journalist from *Le Monde*, arrived at Racak, and was told by OSCE personnel that nothing of interest had happened (*Le Monde*, Jan. 21, 1999). On the following day Chatelet and *Le Figaro* reporter Renaud Girard looked at the video made by the AP photographers and saw nothing suggestive of a massacre. The photographers and video have been kept unavailable since then, just as the full forensic report by Ranta and her colleagues has also been kept secret. Shouldn't that arouse the interest and suspicion of an unbiased journalist?

Bodies were found in the gully after the Serbs had left and the KLA had reoccupied the village. If the Serbs had killed many civilians, would they have left them behind lying there in a heap to provide material for a propaganda barrage against them?

I would wager that Ericsson accepts claims of the extreme measures Serbs took in exhuming and reburying massacre victims in efforts at concealment in Bosnia, yet he finds it unremarkable that at Racak bodies were left where they allegedly fell in open view for all to see. The alternative is too unpalatable: that the KLA collected the bodies of dead KLA fighters and put them in the gully, counting on the Western establishment to swallow a massacre,

which Albright and company eagerly desired to provide the *casus belli* for a long-planned attack.

Ericsson says that “According to her [Johnstone], the Serbian and Belorussian pathologists came to the same conclusion as the EU team led by Finnish pathologist doctor Helena Ranta.” This is a false statement, and even contains a further factual error. Ranta was a dentist, not a “pathologist,” and in her testimony before the Tribunal she acknowledged this in explaining the limits of her testimony (p. 17706).

Johnstone does mention that three forensic doctors on the Finnish team finally did publish an account of their findings in an article on the Racak evidence in 2001: “Independent forensic autopsies,” in *Forensic Science International*. These analysts reported finding a bizarre set of bullet paths that do not fit a picture of a firing squad mowing down a row of standing people. They also found only one example of a body that had been subjected to “close-range firing.” The authors also stated that the Yugoslav and Finnish teams discussed the autopsy findings “in full professional consensus. . . . In both groups the final conclusions were equally strong.” These analysts denied any capacity to determine whether the bodies were of “unarmed civilians.”

So these members of the Finnish team DID come to conclusions similar to those of the Serbian and Belorussian pathologists. Johnstone never said explicitly that these conclusions were similar, but they were, so here Ericsson is making false statements on several counts.

These comments by the three Finnish forensic experts are worth more than those of Helena Ranta, who was under intense pressure from William Walker, the U.S. official who had orchestrated the “massacre” claims, and the OSCE, to give the desired politically correct answers. Why would a journalist without an axe to grind rely so heavily on Helena Ranta and entirely ignore other members of the Finnish team, who were under less political pressure and writing in a scientific journal?

Ericsson says that Helena Ranta “does not accept the method used by the Serb pathologists to secure traces of gunpowder on their victims, which was meant to prove that they

were guerrilla soldiers.” But in her testimony before the Tribunal Ranta admits that she is not a ballistics expert (“I wish to emphasize that I’m not an expert on ballistics,” p. 17727), and her repudiation of the gunpowder test, still widely used, is hardly the final word as Ericsson implies. Ranta never used her preferred method on the bodies of the Racak victims (as she testified on 12 March 2003, p. 17723), as Ericsson implies she did, so the results of the still widely accepted gunpowder test—which showed that most of the dead had used weapons shortly before their deaths—cannot be rejected because of different results from a better test.

Ericsson then goes on to say that Ranta “accuses the Serbian team of lying before the Hague Tribunal about the fact that the tests were supposed to have been carried out in the presence of the EU team. . . and been accepted by them.” But although Ranta does deny any claims that the tests were carried out in the presence of her team, she never used the word “lying” in her testimony, and she never attributed that false claim to the Yugoslav and Belorussian forensic team. In fact, she praised that team, saying that “I wish to emphasize that the professional work at the autopsy theatres was very smooth regardless of the national origins of the experts, and we were able to conduct the autopsies very smoothly and in a very good professional spirit. And this also extended to forensics” (p. 17757). And as I noted, her three colleagues wrote in *Forensic Science International* that there was a “full professional consensus” and with “equally strong” final conclusions. So who is distorting the evidence here, even about what Helena Ranta had to say?

Ericsson says Ranta claimed that she had been told by pathologists that the “victims had been shot at approximately the same time,” but he suppresses or is ignorant of the fact that Ranta admitted that, not being a pathologist, she couldn’t say whether “at the same time” meant immediately, “within a few hours of each other” or even “on the same day.” (p. 17808)

Ericsson also misrepresents Ranta when he says that “she claims in her testimony before the Hague Tribunal that the group of murdered people were unarmed civilian villagers.” Ranta never said “the group of murdered

people were unarmed civilian villagers." She limited herself to saying that, "At the time—at that time— there was no indication of them being anything but unarmed civilians." (p. 17727) In fact, she explicitly denied having claimed any "executions" ("I never used the word 'executed'." (p. 17770]) Her hedging reflected the fact that in the Tribunal hearings she had been made well aware of the fact that some of the autopsied bodies were dressed in ways that suggested that they had been fighters; and in her press conference in Pristina back in 1999 she noted that "medicolegal investigations cannot give a conclusive answer to the question of whether there was a battle or whether the victims died under some other circumstances." This conflicts with her ambiguous statement before the Tribunal, as well as her earlier statement that, "They were most likely killed where they were found," a statement based on hearsay, and offered despite the fact that she didn't arrive on the scene until a week later and acknowledged that there had been no "chain of custody" of the bodies.

The only other source Ericsson relies on is Human Rights Watch, perhaps the most compromised of all human rights groups, with advisory boards stuffed with former U.S. State Department officials and very frequently serving as a supportive arm of U.S. foreign policy. Ericsson mentions that their report on Racak found 14 witnesses to the massacre. Is it not amazing that none of these witnesses made their appearance on the day of the massacre, when Chatelet visited Racak in the afternoon, after the Serbs had left, and was told by OSCE personnel that nothing very interesting had happened? There were no bodies and no witnesses till after the KLA returned to their controlled village, but the claims of those witnesses "disproves" any contrary view for Ericsson.

I believe that the preponderance of evidence indicates that the Racak "massacre" was a staged fraud in which KLA members killed in a firefight were assembled for William Walker's and NATO's benefit. Diana Johnstone, however, never made such a direct claim; she merely presented a great deal of evidence and raised questions contesting the official view. Leif Ericsson, on the other hand, KNOWS that all those dead people were

"murdered civilians", a description that even Helena Ranta was driven to recognize did not apply to all those examined.

Ericsson never deals with the evidence of the French reporters, or with any of the evidence Johnstone put forward. His "proof" of Johnstone's "inaccuracies" on Racak misrepresents Johnstone, suppresses inconvenient but highly salient facts, relies on questionable sources, and even misrepresents the position of his preferred source, Helena Ranta.

Ericsson's other alleged inaccuracies in Johnstone are that, in writing on the Srebrenica massacre, Johnstone "asserts that more effort has gone into exaggerating the number of dead than in identifying and calculating the actual number of victims, that there was never any real desire to find out how many were killed or who they were. She suggests that several thousand had fled and survived."

Johnstone does assert that "more effort has been made to inflate the figures than to identify and count the real victims," but she never said that "there was never any real desire to find out how many were killed or who they were." I believe her position would be that many people wanted such information, but others who used the massacre as a political weapon were indifferent to the identity and count, and in fact were happy with obfuscation. So the latter part of Ericsson's statement is one more misrepresentation on his part. The first part concerns a judgement related to the politics of the Srebrenica massacre, where Johnstone is speaking of the political use of the massacre and media treatment of it in the West. Possibly this is a disputable sentence, but Ericsson doesn't even pretend to discuss it and can hardly be said to deal with this alleged "inaccuracy."

What about her claim that "several thousand had fled and survived." Johnstone quotes the *New York Times* report that "some 3,000 to 4,000 Bosnian Muslims who were considered by UN officials to be missing after the fall of Srebrenica have made their way through enemy lines to Bosnian government territory" (Chris Hedges, "Conflict in the Balkans: In Bosnia, Muslim Refugees Slip Across Serb lines," *New York Times*, 18 July 1995). She quotes the London *Times* report of 2 August 1995 that thousands of "missing" Bosnian

Muslim troops had regrouped in Muslim territory (Michael Evans and Michael Kallenbach, "Missing Enclave Troops Found," *Times*, 2 August 1999). On December 25, 1995, Dutch Radio reported that "The Bosnian authorities refuse to clarify the fate of thousands of people that fled the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica last July." The UN report of the Secretary General on Srebrenica says that of 10,000 initial Red Cross (ICRC) listings of missing persons, "5,000 of the tracing requests concern individuals who are said to have left the enclave before it was taken by the Bosnian Serbs" (paragraph 6, *Report of the Secretary-General* [on Srebrenica], 27 November 1995).

Were the *New York Times* and London *Times* reporters, Dutch Radio, and the UN report lying also? In fact, no serious authority denies that large numbers of Bosnian Muslim soldiers got through enemy lines, even though many were killed. So once again Ericsson's claim of an inaccuracy proves to be inaccurate, and his failure to mention these pieces of evidence, several in Johnstone's book, furthers the suspicion that he never read it.

Ericsson then tries to attack Johnstone by citing computations of dead and missing persons in the Srebrenica area. He relies heavily on numbers published in a Dutch report, but he is apparently unaware of the fact that those numbers were published after Johnstone's book went to press, another unconscionable journalistic failing. He also does not recognize that such gross numbers are problematic in a scene of great turmoil and where political interests are at stake. Most of the July 1995 population of Srebrenica consisted of refugees who came there in 1993, so that 1991 census figures used in the Dutch report are valueless.

There are also insoluble elements of bias by virtue of initially inflated claims, duplicated numbers (the Red Cross found 2000 duplicates in the initial set of 10,000 reported missing), and the failure to report the return or permanent relocation of those reported missing. Johnstone notes the unwillingness of the Bosnian government to provide lists of those who got through the Serb lines, clearly in the interest of keeping the numbers of missing large.

This was confirmed by Dutch Radio, as noted, and by Red Cross spokesman Christophe Girod, who stated on BBC TV on Aug. 1,

1995, that "Several thousand of these [Bosnian Muslim] men arrived in Central Bosnia, but they are now kept in a military camp in the West of Tuzla. They were not able to contact their families. . . which means that out of the thousands of allegations we got from the displaced in Tuzla, there might be several answers about the men." Former BBC reporter Jonathan Rooper found a number of names of those missing on electoral lists in Bosnia, but failed to get the OSCE to even check out his findings and extend the search beyond that.

But what does this have to do with the truthfulness of Johnstone, who wrote before the Dutch report, who gives her own credible analysis of the numbers involved, and whose claim about several thousand Bosnians escaping through Serb lines, which Ericsson contests, was acknowledged by the major Western media and the UN back in 1995?

So Ericsson's apology to readers of *Dagens Nyheter* for publishing "grossly mistaken descriptions of serious events where facts are known" is based on a series of errors, evasions, displays of ignorance, and misrepresentations that would be hard to match. They themselves are a journalistic "distorted picture of [the] reality" of Johnstone's work and violate all journalistic standards.

This attack, and his grovelling apology, are apparently based on emotional prior beliefs by Ericsson that cannot tolerate an alternative viewpoint. He claims that we may only find the truth by "free debate," and that this depends on people being "allowed to hear what is wrong, or crazy or repugnant." But Ericsson's misrepresentations of Johnstone deny readers of *Dagens Nyheter* and *Ordfront Magazine* the right to hear her views, as he has distorted them beyond recognition, and his defamation will make it difficult for her actual views to be heard.

This is a journalistic disgrace, and it is both outrageous and sad that *Ordfront* can allow and even support such a tissue of insulting misrepresentations and even literal lies. This was done by Ericsson in support of the suppression of carefully stated and well researched views that contest the establishment's "truths" and that are therefore especially deserving of honest examination in an age of increasingly effective news management and propaganda.



## 5. Leif Ericsson on “Denying Guilt”

---

*Denying or minimizing persecution and murder in former Yugoslavia also constitutes a denial of the perpetrators’ guilt.*

The memory of the war in former Yugoslavia remains like an open wound, which can only be healed if we develop a common narrative about it. In that narrative, perpetrators must be called perpetrators, victims called victims, and assailants must get their punishment, victims their redress. Such a narrative makes reconciliation possible. It becomes a common memory of mankind, which can help us understand ourselves and how we can avoid similar human catastrophes.

Concerning the Nazi Holocaust, there is still a great deal to be understood. Many important details remain to be established. But there is consensus about the basic outline of the story. To question that is to question one of the principal self-insights of humankind—that we are capable of such crimes.

Yet there are those who deny the Holocaust. The French professor of literature, Robert Faurisson, spotted difference between different editions of Anne Frank’s *Diary*, which should not have been possible, given that Anne Frank was arrested and murdered by the Nazis during the war. With his sense of language, he also noticed odd deviations in style and drew the conclusion that the diary was not authentic—and that the persecution of Jews had not taken place.

Faurisson’s interpretation was embraced by those who deny the Holocaust. Towards the end of his life, Anne’s father Otto admitted that he had cut passages which he considered inappropriate, those in which his teenage daughter wrote about sex, and had editor her negative comments about his wife. This story was told in *Ordfront Magazine*, No. 3/1992.

This pattern of thought—to deduce from the fact that one detail is wrong that the overall story is also wrong—seems to be a common logical error of humans. It also occurs in distortions of the history of the wars in former Yugoslavia.

The case that has drawn most attention is the assertion that the photo of Fikret Alic in the Trnopolje camp has been used in a way

that distorts of reality. It is claimed that the photo was used by the western powers in order to alter their policy on invalid grounds. Among other things, it is claimed that the photographer had placed himself inside a barbed wire fence, which incorrectly makes the refugees outside look like prisoners. According to media critic Edward S. Herman, for example, the camp was actually a refugee centre and Fikret Alic was not incarcerated, but on transit to exile in Scandinavia.

The report from the camp in Trnopolje at the beginning of August 1992 was made by a team from the British television company ITV and journalist Ed Vulliamy from *The Guardian*. Vulliamy later wrote a book, *Triumph of Insanity* (1994) which includes an account of his experiences at the camp. Journalist Thomas Deichmann compared Vulliamy’s report with the book and noticed that the two sets of facts about the barbed wire were contradictory. From that he drew the conclusion that Villainy’s report was exaggerated.

How is it possible to deduce from one detail that everything is wrong? I was myself close to doing that with regard to the photo of Fikret Alic. I had read a university paper about the debated photo and an essay by Philip Knightley, a specialist in war journalism. Knightley’s calmly reasoned text, in particular, seemed convincing to me. But the criticism that followed the interview with Johnstone worried me, since many years ago I had read a great deal about the crimes at Prijedor in former Yugoslavia.

When I started to read the testimonies and judgements concerning conditions at Trnopolje, there emerged a reality which differed substantially from the one maintained by critics of the photo. And it became clear to me that the camera angle did not at all affect the interpretation of the photo. Trnopolje and the camps nearby were just as horrid as the reports have indicated. It was proper of the surrounding world to react decisively. Even if the scope of the killing was not comparable to the extermination of Jews, the mass killing and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia was the worst in Europe since the Holocaust and World War II.

But why do some of us refuse to change track in spite of the mountain of facts amassed before them? Among those facts are the following: Vulliamy has admitted that his book's description of the barbed wire at the camp was (inadvertently) erroneous; U.N. investigators, the Hague Tribunal and others have established that murder and rape took place at Trnopolje; the camp was guarded by guards with machine guns; thousands of people were systematically killed in 1992 in the Prijedor area; and the Keraterm-Trnopolje-Omarska camp system was a tool of ethnic cleansing. The unshakeable conclusion of Deichmann and Herman is that all such facts mean nothing: The camera angle was wrong, there were no concentration camps and no systematic killing.

A strong ideological conviction seems capable of making one impervious to facts and arguments. Conviction turns into dogmatism. Diana Johnstone's book, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (2002) begins with a stated thesis which she aims to confirm, i.e. that NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia was from the very start a decisive cause of the tragedy.

But Johnstone allows nothing that may call that thesis into question. She is biased in selecting her facts; the thesis becomes a dogma. She rejects in advance institutions and organisations which may present facts that contradict the dogma. Even indisputable facts from the Hague Tribunal, for example, are automatically disapproved. According to Johnstone and Edward S. Herman, the Hague Tribunal is NATO's prolonged propaganda arm which was created as a step in the preparations for war against Serbia. OCSE is branded as an occupying power. Johnstone and Herman regard the human rights organization Human Rights Watch as compromised, even a pro-imperialist NGO.

One recurring feature is that Johnstone and Herman minimize the excesses and the number of non-Serbian victims. Herman is of the opinion that the executions in Srebrenica probably numbered "between a few hundred up to about five hundred people". But the Hague Tribunal has judged General Krstic guilty of the murder of thousands of Bosnian Muslims, and of having implemented a plan

to conduct mass executions of all men in Srebrenica who were old enough to bear arms. The Bosnian-Serb government of Republika Srpska recently acknowledged the Srebrenica massacre, as Peter Öholm reports in this issue of *Ordfront Magazine*.

From the reduction or denial of guilt also follows the claim that the other side committed worse atrocities. For example, Herman claims that the Bosnian commander-in-chief Nasir Oric and his troops probably killed more people in Srebrenica than the Bosnian Serbs did. Johnstone's and Herman's assertion that the Serbs have been demonised by the West leads them to claim that the atrocities which non-Serbs have committed have been covered up and have not led to indictment and sentencing by the Hague Tribunal. According to Johnstone and Herman, for example, neither the massacre of Serbs in the Croatian city of Gospic in 1991 or Naser Orics war crimes against Serbs in and around Srebrenica have been reported by the media, and they claim that no action has been taken to prosecute the perpetrators.

But in the winter of 2001, Croatian General Mirko Norac was arrested and the Hague Tribunal authorized Croatia to prosecute him. The Croatian court found that Norac had ordered the executions of around 50 Serbs in Gospic in October 1991 and he was sentenced on 24 March 2003 to twelve years' imprisonment. And Naser Oric, commander of the Bosnian army in Srebrenica during 1992-95 was arrested and brought to the Hague in April of 2003, and has been indicted for war crimes against Serbs. Johnstone's and Herman's preconceived standpoints make them unable to see what is happening at the Hague Tribunal.

The verdict of the Hague Tribunal against General Krstic includes the following memorable words of Judge Almiro Rodrigues: "The Tribunal has not been established to consider the possibility of collective responsibility. In my task lies to evaluate in each trial whether the evidence presented to the court is sufficient to find a defendant guilty. I have to sentence a defendant. I do not sentence a people. Yes, in former Yugoslavia attacks took place against the civilian population. Yes, there were massacres and persecution. Yes, some of these crimes were committed by Serb forces. But, in

the words of a great humanist, I would consider it an insult to the Serb people to connect this evil to the Serb identity, and that would betray the idea about a society consisting of citizens. But it would be just as monstrous not to give this evil a name just because that could be taken as an insult against the Serbs.”

I cannot think of a better response to the accusation that the Hague Tribunal demonizes the Serb people.

The accusations of inadequate documentation which Johnstone, Herman and make against established media must also be applied to them. Uncritically, they appoint each other as authorities. Left criticism of the mainstream media’s propaganda favouring the standpoints of power and the establishment—criticism in which there is much truth—utterly collapses when a critical attitude toward one’s own standpoints is not maintained.

In a report dated 17 February 2002, Ed Vulliamy of the *The Guardian* described how Milosevic had organized the arguments of his speech of self-defence at The Hague. It reads like a summary of Johnstone’s book and Herman’s standpoints. Milosevic denied that there was a plan for a “Greater Serbia”. He blamed the killing on paramilitary groups over which the Yugoslavian army had no control. He said it was a lie that the Trnopolje camp was

a concentration camp; according to Milosevic, they were “faked TV images intended to promote anti-Serb policies. It was a centre for refugees who were able to move freely about the village. . . they had come there to get protection.” He claimed that the Racak massacre in 1999 was a hoax, a pretext for NATO to attack Yugoslavia. The Serbs, according to Milosevic, were victims of a new “Eastern plan” in which Germany— supported by the USA in its quest for world hegemony— aimed to subdue Serbia.

There is always a danger of dogmatism. In 1979 *Ordfront* received a 10th anniversary present in the form of advice from the writer, Folke Isaksson: “Reject dogmatism as the plague”. We followed his advice then, and we will continue to do so. It is wise advice to draw upon when creating a common narrative about the war in former Yugoslavia with the power to heal.

*Photo caption:* The preconceived standpoints of Johnstone and Herman make them unable to see what is happening at the Hague Tribunal. On 27 May 1992, sixteen people queuing for bread in Sarajevo were killed. The red colour marks the spot where the massacre took place.

*Ordfront Magazine*  
January 2004

## 6. Diana Johnstone’s response to Leif Ericsson’s “Denying Guilt”

---

### Objective Truth vs. the “Common Narrative”

In his latest contribution to the Swedish media attack on my (as yet unpublished in Sweden) book on NATO and the Yugoslav conflicts, Leif Ericsson concludes grandly with a denunciation of “dogmatism”.

Yet his whole text is an illustration of how dogmatism develops and operates. Ericsson begins with the claim to a grand humanitarian ambition: “The memory of the war in former Yugoslavia remains like an open wound, which can only be healed if we develop a common narrative about it. In that narrative, perpetrators must be called perpetrators, victims called victims, and assailants

must get their punishment, victims their redress. Such a narrative makes reconciliation possible. It becomes a common memory of mankind.”

Ericsson’s aspiration is to “develop a common narrative”. This is presented as the necessary means to a noble end: “healing the wounds” and “making reconciliation possible”. Since any dissident viewpoints may threaten the “common narrative”, they must be repressed — in the name of reconciliation.

Because of the noble purpose proclaimed, the unanimity of the “common narrative” becomes more important than whether or not it is objectively true.

And by its primary concern for the higher purpose, the “common narrative” becomes a form of dogma. We must all say and think the same thing, or else we endanger the “common narrative” and with it the sacred cause, which in this case is proclaimed as a “healing” process. In this view, the test of truth is unanimity. His higher, purposeful truth (the “common narrative”) is established by banning dissent.

Ericsson’s procedures in pursuit of this “common narrative” show his disregard for mere truth.

(1) He lies about what others have said.

Operating in a media environment which describes as “debate” unilateral public attacks which exclude answers, Ericsson lies with an evident sense of impunity. How else could he dare claim that Professor Edward S. Herman writes that “the Bosnian commander-in-chief Nasir Oric and his troops probably killed more people in Srebrenica than the Bosnian Serbs did”?

Herman not only never made such a statement, but never even mentioned Oric in the text Ericsson is attacking.

(2) He grossly distorts the argument he opposes, in order to attack the distortion and avoid confronting the argument.

For example, in attacking my book (which he claims — unconvincingly — to have read), Ericsson describes my thesis in these words: “that NATO’s military intervention in Yugoslavia was from the very beginning a decisive cause of the tragedy”.

Here is what I actually wrote: “My main thesis is that the intervention of the NATO powers in Yugoslavia, far from being a last-minute rescue, was from the start a major driving factor in the tragic course of events. At best, the Great Powers intruded with all the helpfulness of bulls in a china shop. At worst, they deliberately stirred up fear and hatred in order to serve their own interests.” My book is full of examples to illustrate these points.

Now, a careful reader can see the difference between NATO as an institution and the “NATO powers”. My ample documentation of the role of the leading NATO powers, first of all Germany and then the United States, is not challenged nor even acknowledged by Ericsson.

Of course there was no “NATO military intervention. . . from the very beginning” and of course I never said there was. NATO’s open organized military intervention came in short outbursts in Bosnia, and finally as full-fledged war over Kosovo, as the result of a series of more or less opportunistic policy changes. Ericsson grossly distorts what I wrote in order to make it sound like the “dogma” he denounces.

Ericsson writes of me that “she is biased in selecting her facts”. Well, as I wrote in my introduction: “The objective is not to recount the whole story (impossible in a book of this length), but to put the story in perspective. The inevitable selectivity may be reproached as evidence of a ‘pro-Serb’ bias. Inasmuch as the dominant mainstream bias has been blatantly anti-Serb, this is unavoidable in an effort to recover a fair balance.”

(3) He argues beside the point, evading serious discussion by dwelling on things which are irrelevant to the argument he pretends to refute.

Ericsson goes on at great length about the nature of the Trnopolje camp run by the Bosnian Serbs at the start of the war there. This is a way of distracting from the real point of the discussion of the Trnopolje camp, which is essentially not about the nature of the camp, but about the use of photographs taken there to create a one-sided impression of the Bosnia conflict.

Ericsson writes: “Among other things, it is claimed that the photographer had placed himself inside a barbed wire fence, which incorrectly makes the refugees outside look like prisoners.”

The particular point about the barbed wire is not simply “claimed”, it has been generally recognized as fact. Ericsson even notes that one of the reporters at Trnopolje, Ed Vulliamy, “has admitted that his book’s description of the barbed wire at the camp was (inadvertently) erroneous”.

The use of the barbed wire fence was not “among other things”, it was the whole point. The photo was used not simply “to make the refugees look like prisoners”, but above all to make them look like prisoners in a Nazi prison camp.

My book mentions Trnopolje briefly, citing examples of how these photos were used, from British tabloid headlines and U.S. magazine covers to a large-scale poster campaign in France.

This repeated likening of the Serbs with the Nazis has indeed contributed to the “common narrative”, but it certainly does not contribute to the “healing process”. Shouldn’t a salutary “common narrative” comprise all sides of a civil war?

Where then are the photographs of Celebici camp, for instance? Eventually, a couple of Muslims officers running the Celebici camp were indicted by The Hague Tribunal for their brutal treatment of Serb prisoners, but the general public is scarcely aware of this, and images of Celebici are not familiar symbols of the war in Bosnia.

Ericsson writes: “According to Johnstone and Herman, for example, neither the massacre of Serbs in the Croatian city of Gospić in 1991 or Naser Oric’s war crimes against Serbs in and around Srebrenica have been reported by the media. . . .” This is either an outright lie or evidence that Ericsson has not in fact ever read my book, since I cite several U.S. newspaper reports on those events.

My point is simply that the media and politicians constantly remind the public of the crimes committed by one side, while the crimes of the other sides are mentioned so rarely as to be scarcely noticed and quickly forgotten.

As for the role of the Hague Tribunal, my lengthy detailed criticism of its origins, functions and implications is clearly more than Ericsson cares to deal with. So he grabs a few incidents to brandish, pretending that by allegedly failing to recognize them, I am guilty of a dogmatic selection of facts (a truly comic assertion coming from this artisan of the “common narrative”).

He cites an obscure statement by a no doubt worthy but scarcely influential Hague Tribunal judge named Almiro Rodrigues as proof that the Tribunal is unbiased! As if this one statement could outbalance the many biased statements to be found in the public press year after year.

As proof of my “dogmatism”, Ericsson also cites my failure to mention a few facts that

occurred after my book was published. One of these is the indictment of Nasir Oric, which came not only too late for my book, but more significantly, too late to correct the general impression of one-sided guilt of the Serbs in the Srebrenica region. I suggest that “Ordfront” sponsor a public opinion survey to compare public recognition of Oric with Mladic, Karadzic or the Serb paramilitary leader Arkan.

But what is far more significant is the fact that the Hague Tribunal refused even to consider indicting the NATO powers for a totally illegal war of aggression against Yugoslavia which deliberately destroyed the country’s infrastructure and targeted civilian installations, costing the lives of many civilians and leaving the entire country as a “wound” whose healing will need much more than pious words from outsiders with scant grasp of the situation.

(4) He attempts to discredit facts not by refuting them but by “guilty association”.

Example: where is his proof that Milosevic acted in pursuit of a “Greater Serbia” project? His “proof” seems to be that Milosevic denies it; therefore it must be true!

What’s more, I also deny it, making it doubly true. But where is Ericsson’s evidence that Milosevic advocated “Greater Serbia”? The “common narrative” of course. So we are going around in a circle.

Goebbels understood “common narrative”: repeat something long enough and everyone will assume it must be true.

(5) He does not cite any solid evidence for his assumption that this “common narrative” will produce the salutary effect he attributes to it.

Ericsson concludes with a reference to “creating a common narrative about the war in former Yugoslavia with the power to heal.” He seems to aspire to be among these “creators”. . . by censoring and condemning any dissenting opinion that might make his narrative less than “common”.

Since free dissent is the only way to determine what is true, the implication is that unanimity is more important than truth, since the “common narrative” serves a higher purpose. This is the attitude toward truth which in the old days was ascribed to totalitarian states and vigorously condemned.

There two good reasons for such condemnation. One is simply that truth is an end in itself. The other is that without free access to truth, these supposedly beneficial ends may be — and often are — mere illusion. And such illusion is easily manipulated by the powerful to pursue less noble aims.

There is absolutely no evidence of the “healing power” that Ericsson claims for his “common narrative”. On the local level of Yugoslavia, the constant insistence on unilateral Serb guilt has in reality fostered a sense of grievance on all sides.

It has helped turn Kosovo over to the most violent and criminal elements among the Kosovo Albanian nationalists, who are terrorizing the remaining non-Albanians in Kosovo, and even their fellow Albanians, while pursuing their own goal of an ethnically pure Greater Albanian into Macedonia and other surrounding territories. It has enabled a petty trafficker, Milan Djukanovic, to take over Montenegro and be described as a great “democrat”.

But the main, obvious end served by the “common narrative” is to justify unilateral aggressive war by the U.S. Superpower and its subordinate allies. Thanks to the “common narrative”, the Kosovo war is repeatedly cited as the precedent proving that the “international community”— common narrative-speak for the Superpower and its willing executioners— can and should bomb and invade other countries.

I remember Sweden as a country which, thanks to the acts and principles of Olof Palme, was a beacon of peace and resistance to imperialist aggression. It is indeed a matter of consternation to see that today, Sweden is being led into conformity with U.S.-NATO aggressive ideology, not only by the right-wing press such as *Dagens Nyheter*, but also, sheepishly, by the chief editor of a supposedly alternative left magazine.

Bringing Sweden firmly into what I call the “imperial condominium” appears to be the real purpose of the extraordinary campaign against my little book.

## 7. Edward S. Herman’s response to Leif Ericsson’s “Denying Guilt”

---

To the Editor  
Ordfront Magazine

Dear Sir:

I have read Leif Ericsson’s piece on “Denying Guilt,” in Ordfront Magazine of January 2004 with considerable dismay. One problem I have with his article, and with your publishing it, is that he refers to my critique of his *Dagens Nyheter* letter of November 25, but you have failed to make available to your readers the actual content of that critique [rejected by *Dagens Nyheter* but reproduced herein as item 4; see p. 67]. In that critique I made the case that Ericsson had not supported a single charge of “inaccuracy” that he levelled against Johnstone, and I showed that he had made a series of erroneous statements. In “Denying Guilt” Ericsson fails to respond to a single one of my charges which, if correct, would lead to the conclusion that his journalism is fatally flawed. Is it ethical journalistic practice to allow him to attack me without my original being

shown and with Ericsson still failing to answer my serious charges?

Where Ericsson does mention my name, once again, he is incapable of getting his facts straight. He says that I claimed that Nasir Oric “probably killed more people in Srebrenica than the Bosnian Serbs did.” This is a straightforward lie: I never said any such thing at any time, and in fact never even mentioned Oric in my letter criticizing his *Dagens Nyheter* letter. He says that it is my “unshakeable conclusion” that “there were no concentration camps and no systematic killing,” which he presumably infers from what I said about Fikret Alic and the use of his photo in a review of Johnstone’s book. Fikret Alic was in fact in transit through Trnopolje—he was not killed, and did leave Trnopolje, and the photo was designed falsely to show him behind barbed wire— so once again Ericsson misrepresents my position and the meaning of

our focus on this fraud. One would think that an honest journalist would consider a photo fraud something to be condemned, but Ericsson does not condemn it because it fits the higher truth that he wishes to convey.

Ericsson speaks of a “strong ideological conviction” that apparently makes me and Johnstone “impervious to facts”. He stands the truth on its head— it is he who has an overwhelmingly strong ideological conviction and is impervious to facts. This is why he made the stream of errors on Johnstone that I listed in my letter: For example, Johnstone was allegedly guilty of suggesting that thousands of Bosnian Muslims escaped from Srebrenica to Muslim territory— Ericsson couldn’t accept this because it doesn’t fit his ideological demand that nobody escaped from Srebrenica, and the readily available facts on the case, which Johnstone and I cited, were therefore inadmissible. Similarly, the inconvenient evidence that Johnstone and I cite on Racak doesn’t fit his good/evil preconceptions, so that evidence was also inadmissible, and as I showed, he even repeatedly misrepresented his preferred source Helen Ranta.

Ericsson’s overwhelming bias is most clearly displayed in his extremely simple-minded appeal for “a common narrative” that will call the villains villains, victims victims, “and [cause] assailants [to] get their punishment. . . . Such a narrative makes reconciliation possible.” He then refers to the Holocaust and Holocaust denials. He is clearly of the opinion that recent Yugoslav history is of bad men like Hitler and the Nazis killing innocent victims like Jews, with Milosevic and the Serbs in the Nazi role. This analogy rests on profound bias, profound ignorance, and an inability to cope with complexity; but it is greatly helped along by the inadmissibility of inconvenient facts. Let me list a few inadmissible points that will not fit the NATO party line that Ericsson uses as a Procrustean bed to which all facts must conform.

First, all serious studies of the breakdown of Yugoslavia give heavy weight to the German, Austrian, Vatican, and general EU support for the unmediated and un-voted exit of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia, and then for the unconstitutional exit of Bosnia, with no provision for the relocation of stranded minorities

(and in fact opposition to their movements into preferred new states) as a key element in producing wars over space and ethnic cleansing. Johnstone of course stresses this, but so does everybody else of seriously scholarly bent.

Second, it is also well-established, and is clearly stated in Lord David Owen’s *Balkan Odyssey* and Susan Woodward’s *Balkan Tragedy*, as well as in Johnstone’s book, that the failure of negotiations in Bosnia from 1992 onward was attributable in large part to the fact that Izetbegovic, with U.S. encouragement, balked time and again in hopes of getting more territory, with the assistance of NATO force that he eventually did succeed in mobilizing. Milosevic was eager for a settlement, as he wanted sanctions on Yugoslavia lifted, and he was several times at serious odds with the Bosnian Serbs, who were more difficult, although less so than Izetbegovic. I believe that these historical facts are inadmissible and will not make it into Ericsson’s “common narrative” of good and bad guys.

Third, the Yugoslav government submitted a letter to the UN on 24 May 1993 on “War Crimes and Crimes of Genocide in Eastern Bosnia. . . Committed against the Serb Population from April 1992 to April 1993 .” This document describes the “almost complete ethnic cleansing of Serbs” from Srebrenica before the autumn of 1992, and lists 12 settlements and 39 villages destroyed and burnt down by Bosnian Muslim forces, with about 1200 killed and between 2800 and 3200 injured. The almost complete ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Srebrenica described in this document is supported by UNHCR monthly reports, which also show that all the so-called “safe zones” were substantially cleansed of Serbs before July 1995. Half of the Serb population of the overall area had been driven out by then. This report includes scores of affidavits from Serb victims, who were often able to name the Bosnian Muslims who attacked them.

An even more extensive document was produced by the Serbian Council Information Center on “Persecution of Serbs and Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia 1991-1998,” with massive data on killings, destruction of homes, and enforced flight, similar in character to the data put forward by the Tribunal in its focus on the

persecution of Bosnian Muslims. It is extremely doubtful that Leif Ericsson has looked at this kind of evidence, because it deals with the wrong victims and is therefore inadmissible. I believe his “common narrative” will not include these victims and will therefore not do much to bring about reconciliation.

Fourth, these Serb documents cover the ethnic cleansing of the Serbs in the Croatian Krajina area. This involved the forced removal of some 250,000 Serb inhabitants, with unknown but substantial numbers killed, the victims being unarmed civilians. This was possibly the largest single episode of ethnic cleansing in the Balkan wars. It was aided by the United States, and led to no indictments by the Tribunal. Its responsible leader Tudjman was allegedly “under investigation” by the Tribunal when he died in December 1999. Similarly, Izetbegovic was “under investigation” when he died in 2003. No doubt Ericsson’s “common narrative” will explain this odd course of justice in which the ethnic cleansers supported by the NATO powers somehow escaped indictment, but very possibly for him Tudjman and Izetbegovic were merely victims of the bad man in his simple world of good and evil.

Fifth, it is now very clear that in the early and mid-90s, with U.S. and Saudi help, thousands of mujahadin and Al Qaeda warriors were brought into Bosnia from Afghanistan and elsewhere to help the Bosnian Muslims fight for their territorial claims. Osama Bin Laden was among these guests, and he also visited the allied KLA in Kosovo. These fighters were aggressive and vicious and their jihadist cruelties were described in the Serb documents mentioned earlier, but almost never in the Western media. The Al Qaeda continuing presence in Bosnia and Kosovo is troublesome to the Western powers, but I suspect that their history in Bosnia and Kosovo will not show up in Ericsson’s common narrative.

Sixth, following the NATO war against Yugoslavia, and under NATO auspices, Kosovo was subject to what Jan Öberg described as “the largest ethnic cleansing in the Balkan wars” (in percentage terms). What is more, this cleansing was wide-ranging, with Turks, Jews and Roma being driven out by the Kosovo Albanians along with the Serbs. Not only were

the Serbs killed and driven out on a large scale (contrary to the pledges of tolerance in Security Council Resolution 1244 that ended the bombing war in June 1999), the Kosovo Albanians systematically attacked all Serb cultural institutions, including some 112 Orthodox churches and monasteries destroyed or seriously damaged (a list of 76 such churches destroyed or desecrated between June and October 1999, with many photos, is given in a Serb document entitled *Crucified Kosovo*, published in late 1999).

The Roma were not discriminated against by the Serbs, but as described by Voice of Roma in “The Current Plight of the Kosovo Roma” (Sebastapol, CA, 2002), after the NATO occupation of Kosovo a “systematic campaign of persecution and ethnic cleansing of the Roma by extremist ethnic Albanians” took place that “some have characterized as genocide”. An estimated 12,600 Roma homes have been destroyed, many were killed, and a large fraction of the Roma have left Kosovo. I would wager that Ericsson has never written on the ethnic cleansing of the Roma and others in post-bombing Kosovo— now sometimes described as “a largely outlaw province” and “the republic of heroin” (Isabel Vincent, “Crime, terror flourish in ‘liberated’ Kosovo,” *National Post* [Canada], 10 Dec. 2003)— and I suspect that the Roma experience will not become part of Ericsson’s “common narrative” that will facilitate reconciliation.

Ericsson speaks of Johnstone’s and my “minimizing the excesses and the number of non-Serbian victims”. But while Johnstone and I never denied significant killings by the Bosnian Serbs, Ericsson has completely disappeared the excesses and numbers of Serb and Roma victims. He says that Johnstone “is biased in selecting her facts”; but whereas Johnstone admits and discusses a wide range of facts, Ericsson ignores ALL facts that interfere with his NATO party line— he selects a Helen Ranta as truth teller and ignores her colleagues writing in a scientific journal as well as other credible sources on the Racak incident, like two distinguished French journalists without an axe to grind. And as I pointed out, he even misrepresents Ranta. He can’t bear the notion that significant numbers of Bosnian Muslims escaped Srebrenica, so he mentions this as a



Johnstone “inaccuracy”, when in fact it is a widely acknowledged fact. This is bias and journalistic ineptitude at its very worst.

Ericsson mentions that Johnstone and I have harshly criticized the Tribunal as a politicized institution. He says that we reject “indisputable facts” by the Tribunal “in advance”. This is another misrepresentation. We accept many Tribunal-based facts as true, but we consider the institution to be hugely biased in selecting cases and in its methods of obtaining witness support. We consider it an arm of NATO, and we have written many pages in support of this claim, and we are not alone in this view. But Ericsson treats the Tribunal as sacrosanct, presumably apolitical and seeking justice, with its facts—including confessions by witnesses under plea bargaining threats—as indisputable.

This is incredibly naïve and once again ignores crucial facts—like the funding of the Tribunal, its staffing, the vetting of the prosecutors by Madeleine Albright, and its detailed service to NATO policy. For example, in May of 1999, in the midst of the 78-day bombing war, when NATO began to bomb Serbian civilian facilities in order to obtain quick surrender, in blatant violation of the rules of war and with criticism of the bombing growing, prosecutor Louise Arbour rushed out an indictment of Milosevic based on unverified information given her by U.S. intelligence. This served to distract attention from the bombing onto the evils of the Serb leadership and provided a valuable public relations cover justifying the bombing. This kind of crude but well-designed service was repeated time and again. Ericsson cannot recognize this or question the Tribunal because in his simple “common narrative” the Tribunal is good, serving justice.

Ericsson cites a Tribunal conclusion that General Krstic was guilty of the murder of thousands of Bosnian Muslims. He is incapable of grasping the fact that with unlimited resources any Tribunal organized with a purpose could get victims of a war, and even some of the aggressors (seeking plea bargaining concessions on prison terms), to claim or admit having killed many innocents. A Tribunal could easily have placed Izetbegovic, his paramilitaries like Nasir Oric, his generals, and his

mujahadin allies in the same position as Milosevic, Arkan, Krstic and others, if power could have been mobilized in that direction. (Nasir Oric’s indictment came very late in the game, and like several others seems to have been timed as a response to criticism of the Tribunal’s extreme one-sidedness.)

Milosevic’s indictment in May of 1999 was nominally based on the killing of 385 Kosovo Albanians at the onset of the bombing war (although these were unverified by the Tribunal and Milosevic’s direct responsibility had not been established). By contrast, in response to a huge and detailed petition asking that NATO be indicted for killing many hundreds of Serb civilians by bombing deliberately directed at civilian sites, Carla Del Ponte declined to even investigate this charge because her office found that 500 deaths attributable to NATO were too few to rate—“there is simply no evidence of the necessary crime base for charges of genocide or crimes against humanity”. So for Milosevic, 385 is a sufficient crime base for an indictment, but for NATO 500 is too slight to even support an investigation! Can there be any doubt that an unbiased Tribunal could have come to a different assessment—and that its pronouncements must be evaluated accordingly? But for a true believer in a NATO-friendly common narrative, these awkward facts must be ignored.

In sum, Ericsson’s “Denying Guilt” is a journalistic disaster and disgrace, that repeatedly misrepresents what Johnstone and I have said, continues to produce new factual errors, and while accusing us of ideological bias and selectivity, displays his own ideological bias and selectivity to a degree that would be hard to match. He is a crude apologist for the NATO war against Yugoslavia, and an incompetent one at that, as his apologetic fails to withstand the slightest scrutiny.

He has yet to answer a single one of the dozen charges I levied at his grovelling letter of November 25 in *Dagens Nyheter*, and in “Denying Guilt” he simply adds to the list of his misrepresentations and plain errors. It is sad for Sweden and the world that such drivel can be published by a chief editor of a publication supposedly on the left.

## 8. Motion 16 to Annual Meeting 2004: On open and rational debate

---

In the autumn of 2003, *Ordfront Magazine* and the Ordfront organization as a whole were subjected to an extraordinary campaign of slander. It posed a serious challenge to the organization and its leadership; and after several weeks of media pressure, the board of directors and the chief editor caved in. That was a mistake.

For many years, *Ordfront Magazine* has provided space for a variety of opinions on the Balkan conflict. In June of 2003, the magazine published a lengthy interview with the U.S. journalist, Diana Johnstone, which was conducted by managing editor Björn Eklund. It presented an interpretation of developments in former Yugoslavia which deviated from that which has dominated public debate in Sweden. The following issue of the magazine provided space for criticism and discussion.

In November, five months after the interview in *Ordfront Magazine*, Maciej Zaremba published in *Dagens Nyheter* [Sweden's leading daily newspaper] a piece headlined, "Ordfront Denies Balkan Genocide". His objections were not limited only to the facts of the case. He attacked the very publication of the interview with Diana Johnstone. It was said to be "a gross outrage against all the victims of the massacres and rapes in the Balkans, comparable with what denial of the Holocaust means for the survivors". Ordfront was stated to have allied itself with "red fascists".

In their replies to *Dagens Nyheter*, Björn Eklund and Leif Ericsson, the magazine's managing and chief editors, addressed some of the main issues. Ericsson accused DN of attempting to silence Ordfront, and defended publication of the interview: "It is necessary and important to have an open and tolerant discussion of these difficult issues. The best way to get to the truth is to allow the arguments to be tested in public debate."

That did not silence the hunting cries of the press. In leaders and op-ed pieces published by several newspapers, Ordfront was said to be promoting "historical revisionism". In a fresh attack in *Dagens Nyheter*, Maciej Zaremba accused Leif Ericsson of consciously publishing outrageous lies which cause "the reader to draw parallels with Faurisson". He

implied that Björn Eklund and Ordfront had anti-semitic views, and questioned whether publication of the Johnstone interview was compatible with freedom of the press.

At that point, Leif Ericsson retreated. He wrote in *Dagens Nyheter* that he had now read Diana Johnstone's book on the Balkan conflict and had found that several of her statements do not agree with information from the Hague Tribunal, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other sources. He drew the conclusion that he should have prevented the interview from being published. "It cannot be right to publish texts that contain grossly erroneous accounts of serious events for which the facts are known. To do so is to be complicit in spreading a distorted view of reality, and to deny the suffering of human beings."

Ordfront's board of directors agreed with that conclusion in an open letter to the membership: "The organization's board of directors feels that the article should not have been published in the uncritical form in which it was written. . . . People who have been afflicted by the Balkan wars have been personally outraged by the article and the subsequent debate. For that, we are deeply regretful. . . . We feel that there was a failure to check the sources for the article and that it was too uncritical toward [Diana Johnstone's] viewpoints. Other problems were that the viewpoints conveyed in the article could have been incorrectly perceived as Ordfront's, and that no alternative points of view were presented."

It is of the greatest importance that Ordfront's annual meeting, the organization's highest decision-making body, take a stand in this matter.

The board's retroactive rejection of Björn Eklund's interview with Diana Johnstone means that its words on continued openness within Ordfront for debate on the Balkan wars have lost all value. It is also a serious setback for the organization's efforts to maintain a space for critical public debate in Sweden.

That a controversial article in *Ordfront Magazine* is subjected to harsh criticism is, in itself, nothing to lament. On the contrary, it is to be welcomed. But the onslaught by Maciej Zaremba was an attack on the basic preconditions

for an open, rational debate on developments in the Balkans. His criticism of Ordfront for the Johnstone interview assumes what remains to be proved— that a genocide has taken place in former Yugoslavia. Based on that premise, the hounds were unleashed on a hunt for “historical revisionism” that can be likened to “denial of the Holocaust”.

This ostensibly self-evident basis of the campaign is in many ways open to discussion, however, as anyone at all familiar with the facts of the case is aware. No one denies that massive cruelties and murder have taken place; but whether genocide as defined by international law has taken place is disputed. Likewise disputed is the allocation of guilt for the tragedy that has befallen the peoples of the Balkans.

The chief editor and the board should therefore have defended the standpoint which Leif Ericsson formulated in his initial reply to *Dagens Nyheter*: “The best way to get to the truth is to allow the arguments to be tested in public debate.”

As Ordfront’s managing director, Gertrud Åström, wrote in December of 2003, there is no “Ordfront standpoint on the Balkans”. There are many different views within the organization concerning developments in former Yugoslavia. There are also differences of opinion about the interview with Diana Johnstone that was published in *Ordfront Magazine*. The members of the board, along with other members of the organization, have discussed the article and commented upon its form and content, The board should have adhered to Ordfront’s principles and defended

the public space for critical debate on controversial issues.

Information and interpretations which subsequently turn out to be wrong and are then corrected are normal features of reasonable discourse. In a public debate of which editors presume to be the interpreters of Truth, rational discussion is silenced, sooner or later. The campaign that Maciej Zaremba set in motion was an unpleasant reminder of that fact.

Therefore, we propose that the annual meeting adopt the following statement:

Ordfront’s annual meeting on 15 May 2004 has discussed the campaign to which the organization was subjected following publication of an interview with Diana Johnstone regarding developments in former Yugoslavia.

There are differing opinions about the Balkan wars and the interview among the delegates to the annual meeting, as among the membership in general. The annual meeting welcomes an open, rational debate on developments in former Yugoslavia. The best way to develop a clear understanding of what has happened there is to allow the various arguments to be tested in public debate. In that way, erroneous information and interpretations can be corrected.

Accordingly, it is the opinion of the annual meeting that it was wrong of the organization’s board to repudiate publication of the interview with Diana Johnstone. In keeping with the organization’s stated purpose, the board should instead have defended the provision of a public space for critical debate on controversial issues.

## 9. Christina Hagner’s letter to the membership

---

### Important letter about the special annual meeting!

Dear Ordfront member!

On the 4th of September, there will be a special annual meeting which may turn out to be the most significant in Ordfront’s history. Therefore, it is important that as many Ordfront members as possible study the issues to be taken up at the meeting and come to Stockholm to participate.

I have been the chair of Ordfront’s board for eight years, and feel that Ordfront is now in the process of changing direction without any formal changes to the organization’s stated objectives or political guidelines. An intense power struggle is now taking place within the organization, and it is my duty as chairperson to call the attention of members to that fact.

The regular annual meeting that was held this spring was one of the most well-attended ever. Nearly 200 members participated, compared with the usual level of around 50. The auditors have found fault with some of the decisions made by the annual meeting and, in accordance with the by-laws, have called a special meeting. It is their view that the membership did not have an opportunity to inform itself in advance about the decisions and their consequences. The special annual meeting will deal with those issues anew.

The auditors' base their decision on the principle that everyone shall have access to all relevant information three weeks prior to the annual meeting in order to enable them to determine whether or not they wish to participate. That was not the case with Motion 18, which was altered and to which several codicils were added during the course of the meeting. The same applies to the election of the new board. The nominating committee did not present its recommendations until the day before the meeting. Also, an alternative list was presented during the meeting. The meeting elected primarily candidates from the alternative list. All of the auditors' arguments for the special meeting have been posted on Ordfront's web site.

#### WHAT WILL THE SPECIAL ANNUAL MEETING BE ABOUT?

Motion 18 concerns Björn Eklund, managing editor of *Ordfront Magazine*, who was dismissed this spring. The annual meeting repudiated that dismissal. It is my contention that, in this case, a personnel matter has been transformed into a political issue. It was the position of the old board that this conflict should be decided by the labour market parties involved in accordance with the relevant labour market legislation, and not by a vote of the annual meeting. Negotiations between Ordfront's representative and Björn Eklund's union (HTF) ended in disagreement, after which HTF decided not to pursue the matter in the Labour Relations Court.

Never before has an Ordfront annual meeting made a decision on an individual personnel matter. The consequence of such a new order is an insecure situation for the personnel. The established order of the labour

market is subjugated to the temporary majority of the annual meeting.

The situation becomes impossible for Executive Director Gertrud Åström, as well. She is responsible for the working conditions of all employees, but is bereft of her ability to act. During here nearly two years at the helm, Gertrud Åström has put Ordfront's finances in order, and has created good order in the workplace. The auditors have praised her efforts and she has the strong support of the staff. It would cause enormous damage to Ordfront if she were forced to leave. It is, after all, a question of thirty employees and an enterprise with an annual budget of SEK 80 million.

#### MAIN ISSUE OF THE SPECIAL MEETING: ELECTION OF THE BOARD

There is an old conflict, concerning what Ordfront is to be, which is not always clearly discernible. Niklas Nåsander, who in the spring was elected to the board from the alternative list and who also has a leading role with the socialist journal, *Clarté*, has described the conflict within Ordfront as a struggle between a "broad Left" to which he assigns himself, and a "human-rights Left" which includes myself, among many others. He uses the word "broad", but in effect he speaks for a more narrow Ordfront.\*

His distinction is invalid, because Ordfront's core is not at all leftist, but is characterized by the struggle for democracy and human rights. Allow me to remind the reader of Ordfront stated objectives:

By means of language, the spoken and the written word, the cultural association Ordfront seeks to contribute to people's development of their societal involvement and to their critical, independent thought.

In the spirit of the Swedish folk education tradition, Ordfront seeks to contribute to the development and strengthening of democracy in all sectors of society.

---

\*Note: Hagner's critical remarks about Niklas Nåsander were untrue, as she later acknowledged— after the intended damage had been done, of course.

It is the desire of Ordfront that the development of society will be guided by solidarity and a spirit of consideration.

Ordfront defends human rights and the equal value of all human beings.

Ordfront's watchword is to defend freedom of expression and of the press.

One of the things that makes Ordfront great is that we have been radical without limiting ourselves to "the Left" in any of its variants. Our support is much broader than that. Of course there is an important place for leftist voices in Ordfront, but only among a chorus of many voices.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITHIN ORDFRONT

Currently, a power struggle is taking place within Ordfront, both economically and politically. It has to do with control of our resources, and with the power to interpret our objectives and apply them concretely. As one example of this power struggle, Niklas Näsander and six other board members suddenly called an "extra board meeting" in July. This was in the middle of the summer holiday, and two weeks before a meeting planned for August 15th. On their agenda for this extra board meeting were

proposals to replace the board of the Ordfront Corporation [a subsidiary of the overall, non-profit organization], designate new authorized endorsers, and appoint a committee to recruit a new chief editor of the magazine. These plans were not fulfilled; but they made the intentions of the group plain.

I hope that the special annual meeting will elect a new board for the organization which will preserve Ordfront as a broad cultural association, and oppose the politicization and narrowing of Ordfront. The new board must have the entire organization's best at heart, and refrain from involving itself in daily operations. It is diversity that is Ordfront's strength. Further, I hope that the new board will have the sense to appreciate the good work that Gertrud Åström has done, and support the existing board of the corporation.

The chairmanship will also be up for reconsideration. The auditors have not found fault with my election; but due to the conflict that has arisen, I would like the membership's trust in me to be tested again. If I receive the renewed support of the membership, I will gladly serve another term. But if a majority supports the alternative list and its new direction, the special annual meeting will also have to elect a new chairperson.

## 10. A democratic board member's response to Hagner's letter

---

From: Christina Garbergs-Gunn

I have been a member of Ordfront since the mid-1970s, and have been a member of the organization's board of directors since 1998. I work as a librarian and teacher at Brunnsvik Folk High School, the oldest such institution of the labour movement, which is located near Ludvika and is sponsored by the Workers' Education Society and the Swedish Trade Union Association. I have been active in voluntary associations, both cultural and union-related, for some forty years. In addition to serving on Ordfront's board, I also represent the organization on the board of [a subsidiary book publisher]. In addition, I am chairman of [a network of libraries] serving Sweden's 147 folk high schools.

I have worked with Christina Hagner and Gertrud Åström for many years, and feel that they have done a good job in many respects. But with regard to Motion 18 [concerning the dismissal of Björn Eklund], I feel that both have acted wrongly and that the situation has unfortunately become worse since the annual meeting in May. That, I deeply regret.

For several reasons, I was not present at Ordfront's annual meeting in May. But I have followed the discussions that have taken place both within the board and outside of it. I was also present at the board meeting in April when the [workplace consultant] presented the findings of his investigation. I believe that there is nothing in that accounting which

supports the assertion that Björn Eklund has been disloyal. Therefore, I dissented from the decision to dismiss him.

The letter dated 9 August which Christina Hagner sent to the entire membership of Ordfront, without the prior knowledge of the board and at a cost which probably exceeds SEK 100,000, contains several statements that require a response. The letter states that, "Motion 18 concerns Björn Eklund, managing editor of *Ordfront Magazine*, who was dismissed this spring. The annual meeting repudiated that dismissal." That is formally correct; but it is a half-truth, because Björn Eklund's dismissal was not based on redundancy, but rather on alleged disloyalty. That is a serious accusation and, in my opinion, an insult to someone who for over twenty years has energetically worked on behalf of Ordfront.

It is against this treatment that so many have reacted, not least because it is Ordfront's stated objective to defend freedom of expression and of the press. That is not mentioned by Christina Hagner in her letter. In my view, it has never been possible to demonstrate disloyalty [on the part of Eklund], either at the board meeting during which the workplace consultant and the executive director [Gertrud Åström] gave their account, or on any other occasion.

Along with two other board members, I dissented from the decision to dismiss Björn Eklund at the meeting on 24 April, two weeks before the annual meeting. An additional two board members would have done the same if they had been able to attend the meeting. Thus, the board was not in agreement on this matter. That is not mentioned in Christina Hagner's letter.

An additional item of disinformation in Christina Hagner's letter is that she states that Björn Eklund's labour union had decided not to file a complaint with the Labour Relations Court. While the letter was written before the formal complaint was delivered, Christina Hagner could have easily learned that such action had in fact been decided upon if she had asked either Björn Eklund or his union.

It should also be noted that Motion 18, in my view, is not about an individual personnel matter, but rather an important question of principle which is intimately related to Ordfront's

basic objectives— to contribute to critical, independent thought, to develop democracy, to protect human rights and, not least, to defend freedom of expression and the press. . . .

Christina Hagner also writes in her letter that a power struggle is taking place within Ordfront, both economically and politically. In this connection, in my view, she makes a number of assertions which are unfounded. I regarded the special board meeting which I and five other board members called, in full accordance with the by-laws, as a necessity and not at all as something in the nature of a coup.

In connection with the board meeting on 19 June, the members were presented with copies of [the commercial lawyer's] memorandum dated 28 May and of the legal action filed in the Stockholm District Court on 10 June by Edna Eriksson, Jann Storsaeter and Ingegärd Waaranperä [see p. 24]. Some members had received this documentation the day before the meeting and others during it. While on a visit to Ordfront's offices, I happened by chance to see an issue of the magazine whose cover I did not recognize. To my surprise, the above-noted documents were referred to in that copy of the magazine's 7-8/2004 edition, which at that point had not yet been distributed to the membership. Thus, the editorial staff and others already knew about the information which was first presented to the board at the much later date.

When the decision to call a special annual meeting— which the auditors demanded, but which a majority of the board questioned— was nevertheless approved, it was decided that all relevant information would be published on Ordfront's web site no later than 14 August, i.e. one day before the board meeting scheduled for 15 August. This meant that the board would not have any other opportunity to thoroughly discuss the serious situation within the organization or the information being prepared for the special annual meeting.

Since many of us, both new and old members of the board, were worried about the situation, we found it necessary to gather around the table— despite the sun, summer and holiday season. Christina Hagner states in her letter that we, i.e. a majority consisting of eleven

board members, intended among other things to “replace the board of the [subsidiary] corporation”— an accusation which was as serious as it was untrue.

It is true that the agenda of the board meeting we called for 31 July does include an item concerning the corporation’s board. It was I who demanded that the issue be taken up; I had already done so at the board meeting in June, because I found it to be remarkable that the old Ordfront board had appointed the members of the corporation’s new board. Ordfront’s by-laws stipulate that among the [overall] board’s duties are to:

- implement the decisions of the annual meeting and deal with issues relating to the organization’s strategic development
- manage and conserve the organization’s assets
- co-ordinate, lead and monitor the activities of the organization, and appoint the members of boards of the corporation and other subsidiaries owned partly or entirely by the organization, or in which it is otherwise involved.

I regard it as strange, to say the least, that the annual meeting of the subsidiary corporation took place on 11 May, four days before the entire organization’s annual meeting. Present at the corporation’s meeting were Gertrud Åström, Tord Olsson, Christina Hagner and Anna Wigenmark. These four individuals decided to elect Leif Ericsson, Tore Persson, Ami Lönnroth, Birgitta Hjärpe, Bo Nordling, Elsa Walter, Brita Joneskär and Matts Nilsson to

become ordinary members of the corporation’s board and [those of three other subsidiaries].

The last named of these, Matts Nilsson, was recommended to replace Sköld Peter Matthis in an e-mail from Christina Hagner on 8 May. Mathis had dissented from the decision to dismiss Björn Eklund, as he explained at the corporation’s board meeting on 26 April. The next day, he was informed by Christina Hagner over the telephone that he was no longer wanted on the corporation’s board. The replacement of Sköld Peter Matthis was never discussed by the overarching Ordfront board. . . .

In my view, it is a the established practice that the annual meeting elects Ordfront’s primary board of directors, which in turn issues directives and appoints representatives to the various subsidiaries. This is also stipulated in the by-laws.

I am aware that the recent discussions concerning Ordfront, both internal and external, are causing harm to the organization and its operation. For that reason, I have tried for as long as possible to conduct discussion within the confines of the board. However, it is now my belief that so many Potemkin facades obscure the view that the discussion must be broadened.

At issue is Ordfront’s credibility. The Ordfront whose stated objectives are to work in the spirit of the Swedish folk education tradition for the development and strengthening of democracy, the protection of human rights, and for societal development based on solidarity and a spirit of consideration. It is therefore essential to defend freedom of expression and of the press.

## 11. Gertrud Åström’s response to authors’ statement

---

To: Ed Herman and Arundhati Roy, John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, Michael Albert, Tariq Ali och David Barsamian

Your letter to Ordfront of the 18th of June concerned me deeply. It seems to be based on a serious misunderstanding. Freedom of expression and the right to express dissenting views are and have always been Ordfront’s credo, that applies also for the debate concerning the views of Diana Johnstone.

In an interview after the annual meeting of Ordfront, Jan-Erik Pettersson, the head of Ordfront publishing house, stressed in Svensk Bokhandel (the Swedish journal for publishers and bookshops) the importance that all members stay and no authors leave Ordfront. He also stressed that the publishing policy of Ordfront will remain the same.

Contrary to what You write, the leadership of Ordfront has never denied Diana Johnstone

her right to be heard. Our paper, *Ordfront magasin*, has published her views on the critic against her stands in the issues of October 2003 and March 2004. Also the views of Ed Herman have been published in *Ordfront magasin* of March 2004. The magazine and the homepage of *Ordfront* have also published references and links to a large number of texts by Diana Johnstone and Ed Herman in the current debate.

I deeply regret that somebody has supplied You with desinformation in the obvious purpose to harm *Ordfront*'s good reputation.

You are always welcome to contact me or our publisher Jan-Erik Pettersson to avoid future misunderstandings. Jan-Erik Pettersson is on vacation but will be back by the end of this month.

Yours sincerely

Gertrud Åström  
General secretary/managing director  
*Ordfront*

## 12. Al Burke's reply to Åström's letter

---

Gertrud Åström  
*Ordfront*

Re: Your reply to E. Herman *et al.*  
dated 2 July 2004

Ms. Åström:

As one who has been attempting to keep Ed Herman and Diane Johnstone informed of developments surrounding the ongoing crisis within *Ordfront*, I feel obligated to comment upon your response to the statement by *Ordfront* authors that was initiated and organized by Professor Herman.

He undoubtedly has other sources of information, and has himself corresponded directly with key figures in the controversy over Diane Johnstone's book, including Chief Editor Leif Ericsson and Chairwoman Christina Hagner. However, I believe that I have been his principal source of information concerning the recent annual meeting and its aftermath, and am therefore the primary suspect of spreading the desinformation which you allege in your response.

You imply that the information on which the authors' statement is based has been conveyed by some surreptitious process. In fact, I have circulated my memoranda to Ed Herman and Diana Johnstone via several channels in Sweden, including the e-mail discussion group administered by *Ordfront* which is included among the addressees of your response. I find it difficult to believe that you are not aware of this.

In any event, I have yet to receive any reaction of any kind to the memoranda thus circulated— as one would expect if they constituted desinformation on matters which, according to your response, concern you deeply. You and your associates have certainly demonstrated a great eagerness to discuss many other matters. You have, for instance, expended a remarkable amount of time and effort in attempting to convince *Ordfront* members that it is improper for them to meet informally to discuss the current crisis.

Your lack of response to my memoranda suggests that perhaps they may not be exercises in desinformation, after all. But I enclose them herewith in both PC/Word and RTF formats, and you are very welcome to point out the disinformative bits. Of particular importance, of course, is my translation of Motion No. 16 from the annual meeting [reproduced above, item 8]. That, in itself, suffices as a basis of information for most of the points taken up in the authors' statement.

The only key issue which it does not touch upon is Jan-Erik Pettersson's interview in *Svensk Bokhandel*, which came afterward. I regard your interpretation of that interview as disingenuous, at best. But others may judge for themselves by referring to the interview. Do you find any inaccuracies in the attached translation of the relevant excerpts (item dated 26 May)?

It is good to learn that Jan-Erik Pettersson will finally respond to the questions that have



been raised about that interview by the end of this month, although it is difficult to understand why he has not already done so. Has he been on holiday since May? If and when he does respond, I would suggest that he address at least the following questions:

- Exactly what did he mean when he (reportedly) said that, “We probably have a stormy period ahead of us, so we are going to need support from the outside world.”?
- To whom was he referring, if not the majority of the annual meeting, when he (apparently) confided to the reporter that he is “worried that word will start to spread that Ordfront is on the way to becoming a sect.”
- Is it true that he rejected and criticized Diana Johnstone’s book without having read it?
- In what respects is that book less worthy of publication than those of the authors who signed the statement?
- Would he please explain in greater detail why he feels it is “contemptible, and indicates an appalling view of democracy” to criticize the fact that

Ordfront’s chief executive— i.e. you— works part-time for the government, with an office and staff at government headquarters?

As regards your recitation of the ways in which Ordfront has upheld Diana Johnstone’s right to be heard, both she and Prof. Herman are better qualified than I to respond to that question. But I will point out that the authors’ statement does not claim, as you have written, that Ordfront has denied her that right. Rather, the statement implicitly congratulates the annual meeting for “insisting on the right of Diana Johnstone to be heard”.

I will also note that the controversy is not limited to what has been done or not done by Ordfront, but also what has been published in the mainstream press and how Ordfront’s leadership has responded to that. This is explained very clearly in Motion No. 16. Is it so difficult to grasp?

Finally, I would like to point out that you are in absolutely no position to condemn others for acting so as “to harm Ordfront’s good reputation”. With the exception of Christina Hagner, I am aware of no one who has done more harm to that reputation. The only question is how long you will continue.

### 13. On the curious lack of response

---

#### *The art of evading a serious discussion*

The statement in support of the decisions and signed by Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy and four other international Ordfront authors, has not surprisingly aroused considerable attention and discussion. [For text of statement, see p. 31.]

Many have welcomed the initiative by a number of respected international authors as confirmation of the democratic majority’s wisdom. Others— not least those who, by means of several dirty tricks, have forced the impending special annual meeting to take place— have expressed their dismay over the statement and the fact that it is being disseminated throughout Sweden via diverse channels.

In her reply to the authors dated 2 July, for example, Gertrud Åström states that “some-

body has supplied You with desinformation in the obvious purpose to harm Ordfront’s good reputation.” In his contribution to this [email] forum dated 16 August, Staffan Myrbäck referred to “a very one-sided account of the conflict within Ordfront”. And, recently, I happened to see an undated internal memorandum signed by the entire editorial staff of Ordfront’s book division which suggests that “a gross form of slander against the publishing house” has been committed.

What is remarkable about all these complaints and accusations is that they contain hardly any details about the information that has been conveyed to the international authors, and not a word about who is responsible. Remarkable, because it is I who have informed the authors via Prof. Edward S. Herman, and

everything I have communicated in that connection has been openly declared in Sweden via this e-mail discussion group, among other channels.

I have also publicly urged Gertrud Åström (or anyone else) to explain which parts of that information are to be regarded as “desinformation”. In addition, I have urged Jan-Erik Petterson, head of the publishing division, to explain his much-noted statements in *Svensk Bokhandel*, for the benefit of all interested parties.

Not a single word have I received in reply. Instead, all of the dismayed continue to refer indignantly to “someone” who has disinformationed the authors with “a very one-sided account”, etc.

That is certainly strange, and it has occurred to me that the purpose of this apparently oblivious behaviour is to evade a serious discussion of the issues: If one accuses an unspecified “someone” of conveying unspecified “desinformation”, it is not necessary to present any evidence or documentation.

Perhaps there is some other explanation. It would in any event be interesting to learn the reason for the lack of response. . . .

*Al Burke*  
17 August 2004

## 14. The problem of Philip Knightley

---

To Dagens Nyheter’s culture/debate editorial staff, including Christian Palme, Lars Linder, Ola Larsmo and Kurt Mälarstedt:

It was curious to read in DN a few days ago Peter Löfgren’s positive review of Philip Knightley’s classic work, *The First Casualty*, now in a revised edition published in Sweden by Ordfront.

Curious, because this is the same Philip Knightley whose published writings include the article from the British daily, *The Independent*, which is excerpted below— an article which clearly qualifies him for the same kind of ferocious campaign that DN’s culture/debate editorial staff unleashed not so long ago against Diana Johnstone and the selfsame Ordfront’s Björn Eklund. Consider, for example, the following excerpts:

The atrocity story is a tried and tested way of arousing hatred. It fortifies the mind of the nation with “proof” of the depravity of the enemy and his cruel and degenerate conduct of his war. Your battle against him can then be painted as a righteous one, a test of civilised values over barbarity.

This is exactly what has happened with Kosovo. President Milosevic, from being a pragmatic leader that the West could do business with, became a new Genghis Khan and, significantly, a new

Hitler. This link with the Second World War, a war for Britain of national survival, has strong emotional appeal.

So all those in government who supported the NATO war, from the Prime Minister down, began to pepper their speeches with words like “Holocaust” and “genocide” (on whose PR advice, one wonders?) until the idea was established that the new Hitler, Milosevic, was guilty not just of atrocities but of genocide against the Kosovar Albanians, and that a new Holocaust was in the making. . . .

This spurious association of Kosovo with the Second World War not only aroused the fighting fervour of the nation and brought back our finest hour, but made it almost impossible for those who felt disgusted, uneasy, or just doubtful about the war to speak out in protest without being accused of “appeasement” (shades of Chamberlain) or worse, of Holocaust denial (shades of neo-Nazism). . . .

In this scramble for atrocity stories, prudent scepticism was lost. Reporters seemed ready to believe anything as long as it painted the Serbs as monsters. . . .

When the war ended, NATO was naturally anxious to uncover evidence of Serb atrocities in Kosovo. If there were none, then the whole edifice on which it had

based its war would have collapsed. Fortunately, the media, militarised to a degree unknown since the Second World War, was anxious to help. . . .

Meanwhile, Albanian war crimes against the Serbs appear to have begun. How will they be reported?

In short, the man denies genocide and depicts journalists like yourselves as useful idiots of the military aggressor. It was on the basis of similar views that you launched your attack against Diana Johnstone and Björn Eklund.

To my knowledge, Knightley has not changed his position on this issue. On the contrary, he continues to refer to your style of reporting on the Balkan wars as a textbook example of the woeful syndrome which his

standard work illuminates. Would it not then be appropriate to launch a massive assault on the genocide-denying Knightley?

Or have you begun to realize that DN's reporting, with Christian Palme in the lead and the likes of Leif Ericsson following along, is precisely the sort of war propaganda that is the subject of Knightley's book? If so, you obviously owe Diana Johnstone, Björn Eklund, Ordfront and your own readers an exceedingly humble apology.

Which is it to be— annihilate Knightley, or acknowledge your sins?

*Al Burke*

*8 August 2004*

[Note: There has been no response to this letter from anyone at *Dagens Nyheter*.]

## 15. E-mail addresses

---

The following e-mail addresses are those available as of August 2005 for individuals whose conduct has been criticized or called into question in this document. Readers are urged to contact them to verify attributed quotations, or pose other questions relating to this account of the Ordfront scandal. Where no individual address is available, a more general address at the relevant organization is given (e.g. <info@ordfront.se>); in such cases, remember to specify the name of the individual for whom the message is intended.

All e-mail addresses are, of course, subject to change. If a message is rejected as undeliverable, it should be possible to contact the organization in question via its web site, the address of which usually consists of "www." plus the two main elements following the "@" figure of the e-mail address (e.g. "www.ordfront.se").

Other questions and comments may be addressed to the author at <editor@nnn.se>

Abrahamsson, Kjell-Albin  
<kjell-albin.abrahamsson@sr.se>

Andersson, Ulf B.\*  
<info@ordfront.se>

Åström, Gertrud  
<gertrud.astrom@ordfront.se>

Berggren, Johan  
<johan.berggren@ordfront.se>

Carlén, Stefan  
<stefan.carlen@ordfront.se>

*Dagens Nyheter*  
<kultur@dn.se>

Ericsson, Leif  
<leif@ordfront.se>

Hagner, Christina  
<christina.hagner@rb.se>

Hammarberg, Tomas  
<thomas.hammarberg@palmecenter.se>

Linder, Lars  
<lars.linder@dn.se>

Nilsson, Peter O.  
<peter.o.nilsson@svt.se>

Palme, Christian  
<christian.palme@dn.se>

Pettersson, Jan-Erik  
<jan-erik.pettersson@ordfront.se>

Stark, Agneta  
<agneta.stark@tema.liu.se>

Tamas, Gellert\*  
<info@ordfront.se>

Zaremba, Maciej\*  
<kultur@dn.se>

\*Remember to specify name

# ALL QUIETED ON THE WORD FRONT

*Notes on the abuse of power and  
the stifling of dissent by Swedish “progressives”*



**NORDIC NEWS NETWORK**

**[www.nnn.se](http://www.nnn.se)**

