

Andres Jallai: The wreck of the “Estonia”, submarines, and the murder of Olof Palme; let us look more critically at the official explanations.

An article by journalist Anu Kaupmees in the Estonian emigré newspaper published in Sweden, describing Anders Jallai’s latest thriller entitled “The NATO Agent”:

Former Swedish fighter pilot and diver Andres Jallai is of Estonian extraction and has written three thrillers “Spionen från FRA” (The Spy From Radio Intelligence), “Landsförrädaren” (Enemy Of The State) and “Natoagenten” (The NATO Agent). The theme of all three are three major postwar incidents – foreign submarines in Swedish waters, the murder of the Prime Minister Olof Palme and the “Estonia” ferry disaster. All three books tackle the theme that hidden forces beyond democratic control are steering the country.

Andres Jallai (known in Sweden as Anders Jallai) has Estonian roots and a background as a fighter pilot and diver, and is well-known in Sweden as “the man who found the DC-3”, a Swedish reconnaissance plane shot down by the Soviets in 1952 over the Baltic Sea. The Swedish military had been searching in vain for the wreck and it was assumed that the bodies of the pilot and crew would never be found. This is not the only secret lying at the bottom of the Baltic Sea that Jallai has brought to light. In 1998, a team of divers under his leadership found an S7 Russian submarine that was depth charged during WWII by the Finnish navy and which lay underwater in the Stockholm archipelago for decades.

In two further novels Jallai has examined the murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 and the “Estonia” ferry disaster that took place in 1994. Andres Jallai has his own opinions about these events based on long research in the archives of the Swedish Security Police and Military Intelligence, and to avoid embarrassing them or getting them into difficulties, Jallai has presented his findings in the style of a thriller. He has thus written a thriller where facts are mixed with fiction.

From pilot and diver to writer

All three novels have the same protagonist – Anton Modin – who, like Jallai himself is a diver and a fighter pilot. Modin is also a former military intelligence officer, who lost his family in the “Estonia” disaster, and left his job when he began to be of the opinion that intelligence was to blame for the sinking of the ferry. In his novel “The NATO Agent” the author decides to find the root causes of the disaster, and his sure-footed research leads to the sphere of interest of various national intelligence services, who try to put an end to his investigations.

During these investigations, he travels to Estonia in order to meet a man who was working at the Estonian Foreign Ministry during the 1990s and who had told his own daughter, that in the lead up to the disaster two lorries containing Cobalt-60 and Caesium-137 were being transported on that ferry. Estonian civilians were at the wheel of the lorries, escorted by the military. Once on Estonian soil, Modin soon finds himself being tailed. When he reaches a farmstead in southern Estonia to interview a former official from the Foreign Ministry, when a tear gas grenade is thrown in through the window and in storms a covert operations unit with links to NATO, the notorious Barbro Group.

But Modin is not eliminated, quite the opposite. He receives a well-paid assignment from the President of the United States to dive down to the wreck of the “Estonia”, and to retrieve a suitcase from cabin number 62-30 on deck number 6 which contains secret papers. He accepts the assignment, as it would also give him the opportunity to retrieve the remains of his relatives. He dives, detects a high level of radioactivity in the hold of the vessel, sees marks at the door that suggest an attempt at a breakout and finds a hole in the hull that is not one that could have caused the disaster and could not have sunk the ship. In the end he finds the suitcase with its documents, and this awakens his curiosity...

Transport of military equipment

Andres Jallai himself did not dive down to the wreck of the

“Estonia”, but he has interviewed those that have. He quotes from documents and newspaper articles in “The NATO Agent”, making characters say what he himself believes: there was large-scale secret freight and arms transport, whereby from 1990 onwards the ferry across the Baltic would carry missile parts, maybe even parts for nuclear submarines, and where it was considered necessary to bring such things using the chaos of the crumbling Soviet Union as a cover and swiftly bring them to the west. NATO wished wanted to clear Russia of military equipment and, for instance, empty the former Soviet submarine base at Paldiski, and this was urgent, and this was a kind of shopping trip where everything was for sale.

In the first instance, diplomatic channels were employed, when these dried up, NATO organised its own connections with the leaders of the Estonian military to transport military technology on the passenger ferry, the “Estonia”. Sweden acted as go-between. It was because of this military technology and the danger of radiation that was the reason that the Swedish government wished to cover the wreck in a layer of concrete and forbid all diving down to the wreck. But the boys from NATO had after all already removed all essential objects from the vessel. The characters in the novel discuss what is written under the title of the novel on the book cover, i.e. that things are sold at a low price in the interests of the state”, which suggests that there is an element of truth to what the author describes.

Reading the reception that the book has received in Sweden, it strikes one that readers focussed on whether the book was a good or bad thriller, about the excitement factor of the action. No one appeared to react to the discussion about the actual disaster itself, which the author presents through the mouths of the characters. According to Jallai himself, he was rung up after the book had been launched by a former Estonian Minister of Defence (1992-93), Hain Rebas, who had also been Professor of History at Gothenburg University, and he praised Jallai at his true representation of attitudes at the time of the disaster, and that he had nothing to add to the theme himself. At the time of the disaster, Rebas had already left Estonia and had

no further comments, nor did he know anything more, beyond what he read in the papers.

Sweden's secret dealings with NATO

Andres Jallai does not believe in the theory that a bomb caused the "Estonia" disaster, but that it is likely that a number of factors played their part – the poor state of repair of the vessel, the ill-preparedness of the crew (i.e. the crew resource management at the time), the high speed of the vessel, the bad weather conditions, and the waves hitting the prow.

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Interviewer Anu Kaupmees: What does the secret of the "Estonia" disaster consist of, the actual sinking or the process that followed?

Andres Jallai: A secret cargo of useful military materiel was on the "Estonia", something that the authorities in Sweden, Finland and Estonia were keen to keep quiet about. Hence the decision not to bring the vessel to the surface and retrieve the bodies and to cover the wreck in a layer of concrete, plus the diving ban.

Interviewer: The Swedish Customs Authority admitted back in 2004 that there was an agreement between them and the Swedish military regarding the secret transport of military equipment on the "Estonia". But not a word of this is mentioned in the final report on the disaster. Do you believe that there was a similar agreement in place between the Swedish military and parties in Estonia?

Jallai: It is possible that there was an agreement between Swedish Military Intelligence and the Estline shipping company. It is also likely that the Estonian customs authority had been informed. Hard to tell without proof, but I do think that people at Estline knew. But this is sheer speculation.

Interviewer: Discussion about the "Estonia" disaster has faded

away by now in both Sweden and Estonia. Those who have tried to bring up the subject again are given looks of pity. What do you think is needed for the whole subject to be reconsidered in a serious manner?

Jallai: Maybe someone should dive down to the wreck without permission.

Interviewer: Is there anything in common with the murder of Olof Palme, the shooting down of the DC-3, and the "Estonia" disaster?

Jallai: Yes, Sweden's secret dealings with NATO.

Interviewer: You have devoted many years of your life to exposing secrets that the Swedish state has tried to conceal for decades. Do you not think that any one country should be able to keep some secrets from others?

Jallai: Yes, when the secrets concerned are directly connected to the security of the state. But secret shipments of military equipment for the benefit of NATO does not fall into this category, nor secret cooperation with NATO, nor shooting the Prime Minister of the country.

Interviewer: Reading your blog and the book "The NATO Agent", you could draw the conclusion that, for instance, not the KGB (FSB) in Russia is the problem, but the CIA instead.

Jallai: The CIA belongs to NATO, as do secret services such as MI6 in the UK, and the French and German ones. Plus many organisations in the USA such as the NSA and DIA. The KGB (FSB) and GRU are also a part of the whole problem, as I described in my first book "The Spy From Radio Intelligence".

The aim of my trilogy is to shed new light on how our thoughts and values are manipulated by the intelligence community, to which both the KGB (FSB) and CIA happen to belong. For that reason, we should examine critically information that has been in the public domain up to now. And there should also be a closer re-examination of the role of western intelligence agencies

during the Cold War.

Interviewer: Your books are read with interest at the Sweden Defence Ministry. Have you received, since the publication of your books, "threats" by men in dark glasses?

Jallai: No, but I have experienced an unusual and unhealthy interest on their part.

Interviewer: What is your Estonian background?

Jallai: My father, Viktor Jallai, was born near Vastseliina in Setumaa, south-eastern Estonia, and my mother Viola in the city of Narva in the north-east of the country.

Interviewer: Anu Kaupmees