

# The demise of the 'Swedish model'

by Michael Ericson

Swedish political life was thrown into a state of shock after the Sept. 15 parliamentary elections. The Social Democrats, ruling the country for almost 53 of the last 60 years, received the worst election results since the 1920s with 38% of the total vote, a loss of over 5%. Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson resigned Sept. 16.

For the last three years, the Carlsson cabinet has ruled the country by a "jumping majority," where the Social Democrats have formed a parliamentary majority by allying themselves on issues with one or another of the non-socialist "opposition" parties. The two parties, the liberals and the Center Party, which did lend their support to Carlsson on different occasions, made, respectively, their next to worst and worst electoral showing in history, both ending up with well below 10%.

The Green Party, failing to gain the 4% of the vote required, was thrown out of parliament, and the small Christian Democratic Party, gaining slightly more than 7%, was able to enter the Parliament.

## Anti-establishment party wins seats

These results fit the pattern of what most political commentators had long expected, or feared. What has put them into a state of shock, however, is that for the first time in Swedish history, an anti-establishment, populist party managed not only to get into the Parliament, but also to become the swing factor. The 25 seats won by the members of the populist New Democracy will be needed for a majority (i.e., the 175 votes required) behind a legislative proposition from a non-socialist government, facing a combined Social Democratic and communist bloc of 154 votes of the total of 349 seats of the parliament.

On Sept. 17, Carl Bildt, the party leader of the conservatives, or the "moderates" as they call themselves, was assigned the task of trying to form a new governing coalition, as the leader of the biggest non-socialist party, with about 22% of the vote. No one can tell whether Bildt will manage to form a two-, three-, or four-party minority government, tolerated by a majority of Parliament. The leader of the liberal party characterized the situation as "the worst case scenario." Others have even talked about there being a national emergency situation, and the despised outgoing prime minister already talks about early elections. The fact that the Parliament now consists of seven parties, instead of the traditional

five, is not going to make things easier for the new government.

Few, though, have dared tried to understand the depth in the change of mood of the Swedish population that manifested itself in the elections. The Social Democrats appealed to voters on a platform for saving what they claim is "unique" with "their" Sweden, i.e., the infamous Swedish corporatist model. The almost 7% vote for the New Democracy, treated to a hate campaign in most of the media, was won on the basis of their populist platform of pro-growth rhetoric—for lowering taxes and cutting the state bureaucracy—but it was just one part of the vote against this Swedish model.

Some 20% of the vote can clearly be counted as an anti-establishment, anti-Swedish model vote, a pattern that is prominently visible in the local elections that took place at the same time. Most of that protest vote went to the small Christian Democrats, New Democracy, and other smaller parties, plus an abnormally high abstention rate. The Swedes revolted against the controllers of the creeping fascism of the Swedish model.

The numerically tiny forces in Sweden of the international movement associated with American statesman Lyndon LaRouche played a decisive role in catalyzing this fast-growing revolt. One example was how the Schiller Institute forced the extremely high food prices and agricultural policy to become an election issue. In the spring, the Social Democratic government, in an attempt to neutralize the food issue before the elections, lowered import tariffs on food and agricultural products. That would have pleased the free traders fighting for a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade "trade liberalization" agreement. But the LaRouche movement intervened with a leaflet campaign around the "Food Price Hoax," explaining that the GATT deal, if realized, would kill both the farm industry and open a new wave of looting in eastern Europe.

In a situation where 500 Swedish kroner worth of food can be bought for the equivalent of 300 kroner in Germany, the leaflet pointed out that the consumer's budget fails to provide the nourishment needed at an affordable price. With over 100,000 leaflets distributed, food prices became an election issue, and one of the hardest hitting issues against the Social Democratic government.

The food policy campaign demonstrated that the LaRouche movement is a political force to be reckoned with. Its political arm, the European Labor Party (EAP), is in an excellent position to gain increased weight in the coming turbulent phase of Swedish politics. The EAP election platform took apart the Swedish model for "fascism with a human face" at the same time that it detailed the role of LaRouche and his political movement to shape a way out of the disastrous present world economic crisis. That platform can rapidly become the point of reference for lots of people, who, now with the Swedish model crushed, for the first time see a possibility to get some decent work done.