

Sweden's election a blow to Maastricht

by Lotta-Stina Thronell

Pandemonium broke out among professional politicians and political experts after the low participation in the elections for the European Parliament on Sept. 17. Only 41% of the voters cast their votes, compared to the normal almost 90% participation. Of the 41%, many were protest voters, who opted for either the Green party or the old "soft" communist party, now called the Left party. All the media were talking about the low turnout as "a shame" for the nation, "a catastrophe for democracy." But the results reflected the distrust toward the traditional parties, and more so toward the European Union (EU), and especially the European Monetary Union (EMU).

The supranationalists in the establishment are still ignoring the problems with creating a common European currency. The Green party, the biggest winner in the elections to the European Parliament, which moved from 5% in the national elections last fall to over 17% on Sept. 17, attracted equal numbers of protest voters from the Social Democratic and non-socialist camps because of its anti-EU policy. The party demands that Sweden leave the EU through a referendum.

The Left party, which grew from 6.2% last fall to 12.9% this year, also demands that Sweden leave the EU. Many left-wing Social Democrats voted for the Left party in disgust over its own party's inability to state a clear policy for or against the EMU. The third voice demanding a referendum on participation in the EMU, the non-socialist Center party, got 7.2%, compared to 7.7% last year.

The Social Democrats are in crisis

The Social Democratic Party is in an existential crisis. It is believed that a majority of the social democratic voters today are against Swedish participation in the EMU, despite the fact that Social Democratic Finance Minister Göran Persson is in favor of it.

The resignation of Social Democratic Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson before the elections didn't help the party's chances, although some voters might have voted for the party out of "sympathy" for an obviously "tired" Carlsson. In the national elections last fall, the Social Democrats got 45.5% of over 2.5 million votes. Now, in the European Parliament elections, the party took 28.1% of 745,268 votes. The question of who is going to replace Carlsson has already created a lot of controversy. Immediately after the elections, one of the mooted candidates, Jan Nygren, representing a more

"moderate" influence from the trade unions, not a fanatic greenie, withdrew in favor of Deputy Prime Minister Mona Sahlin. Women and younger voters seem to prefer Sahlin, Nygren stated. Sahlin immediately announced her willingness to pick up the post after Carlsson.

A wave of protests against "the dictatorial party board" of the Social Democrats over the Sahlin affair broke out in regional Social Democratic newspapers and among trade unionists. Already before that, various voices, especially from the trade unions, were threatening that the "the party might split now," as a regional leader of the national trade union LO stated in the Sept. 19 *Dagens Nyheter*.

Even the predominantly pro-EU and pro-EMU party, the conservative Moderate party of U.N. "peace" negotiator Carl Bildt, has been severely shaken by the anti-EU sentiment. The party scored 23.1%, compared to 22.4% in last year's national elections, but almost 27% of its voters, according to polls, are now negative toward the EU and the EMU. Keep in mind that Bildt and Carlsson are working in tandem for supranational solutions, both for increased power to the U.N. and its ambitions to become a "one-world government," and for the monetarist order for Europe struck at the Maastricht EU meeting in 1991.

One of the new Moderate party members of the European Parliament is Staffan Burenstam-Linder, the dean of the Stockholm School of Economics and a follower of shock therapy and monetarist looting policies for the East. In July 1994, the school opened in Riga, Latvia, in a building provided by the Latvian State and rebuilt with funding from the Swedish State and the George Soros Foundation.

The Liberal party, led by Maria Leissner, got 4.8%, compared to 7.2% in the national elections last year. The party and its chairman declared its support for the EU and the EMU in the election campaign.

So far, commentators have missed the point on the low voter turnout. The biggest group of "protest voters" was those who chose *not to vote*. The 41% turnout contrasts with the 86% who voted one year ago. Of those participating, nearly a majority chose to vote against, above all, the EMU.

Since Sweden joined the EU, food prices have gone up sharply, the consumer paying as much as 40% more for vegetables such as tomatoes and bananas. The reaction to the lower standard of living has been to oppose supranational solutions, such as Maastricht and the EMU. The emotional support for national sovereignty against supranational, utopian solutions, above all indicated by the "silent" protest of all those citizens who did not vote, parallels the anti-Maastricht sentiment signalled by voters in Denmark, France, and Norway in past years.

The oligarchical elite got very little support from the population for supranational solutions, but a political vacuum which their red-green Frankenstein's monster has started to fill. At this moment, Carlsson and Bildt should know: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."