

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

Reagan to welcome Sweden's premier

Prime Minister Carlsson's visit is seen as breaking the ice, but what will emerge underneath?

If you go by the communiqués and the official pronouncements of the Swedish foreign ministry, as well as by the declarations of its foremost representatives, and if you at the same time follow the foreign-policy line of those Swedish media that are subject to state supervision (radio, TV), you get the impression that Sweden, employing great propaganda efforts, has to defend itself from two aggressive neighboring countries—namely *Chile* and *South Africa*.”

Thus began a pointed review of Sweden's foreign policy by the Aug. 21 *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the daily of record of another neutral country, Switzerland. Before Swedish Premier Ingvar Carlsson's Sept. 9 arrival in Washington, D.C.—the first official Swedish prime minister's visit to the U.S. in 35 years—the question raised by many an observer is, “Has Sweden's foreign policy changed after Palme?”

Although Swedish foreign policy declarations still conform to the pattern that little dogs bark more aggressively, the further away the object of their anger, most of the barking is no longer performed by the prime minister in person, but rather by Foreign Minister Sten Andersson and his right-hand man, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Pierre Schori. While Carlsson does espouse a new style—more low key than Palme's in foreign affairs—it is still opportune for Swedish officials to assail the United States on every occasion, but be taciturn and cautious respecting the Soviet Union, the sole foreign power proven to represent a threat to Sweden.

After a long, icy period in Swedish-American relations, reaching its nadir in 1972-73 as the U.S. ambassador and his number-two man were both posted in the United States, the new opening signaled by Carlsson's visit became visible toward the end of Olof Palme's reign, with the arrival of the new U.S. ambassador to Sweden, Gregory Newell, and the Swedish decision to abide by the U.S. rules for exporting militarily sensitive technologies.

While terminating Western high-technology leaks to the East is certainly important, the Swedish regime otherwise continues habitually to attack the U.S. administration where it is right, and to support it where it is at fault.

To the extent that the U.S. government pushes ahead on its Strategic Defense Initiative, enhances traditional American positions of influence in any part of the world, or generally counteracts the Soviet drive for a “New Yalta” deal over the heads of other sovereign powers, it can be sure to be met by disapproval from the Social-Democratic apparatchiks populating the corridors of the Swedish foreign ministry.

If, on the other hand, the U.S. government lends a helping, if “invisible” hand to the fascist economic austerity policy of the International Monetary Fund, the Swedish Social Democrats will invariably either give outright support to such policies, or gleefully seek to reap the anti-American fruits cultivated by U.S. support of economic destruction in many regions of the world.

While a Swedish social-democratic foreign policy maker would hypocritically be horrified at the revelations of unlawful actions in the congressional Iran-Contras hearings, he would at the same time himself depend on the same “Project Democracy” operations characteristic of an Ollie North, a Michael Ledeen, or an Alexander Haig.

He would, for example, support the Iranian war effort, as the U.S. “invisible government” did under the pretext of aiding the hostages; he would also exploit the U.S. support for the dope-peddling Contras, to excuse making the Nicaraguan junta the sole recipient of all Swedish aid funds going to Ibero-America. Undersecretary Schori, of course, has gained notoriety for disapproving of “right-wing” dictatorships such as that of Pinochet in Chile at least as strongly as he graciously approves of totalitarian methods if they are exercised in Nicaragua, in Cuba, or against his own political enemies in Sweden.

In spite of almost two decades of official anti-American rhetoric by neutral Swedish governments, the Swedish people, one of the most Americanized, for both good and bad, in the 1950s and 1960s, have maintained overwhelming pro-Western sympathies. Not only is Russia the hereditary foe of Sweden throughout centuries of history, but the dramatic Soviet submarine incursions so much in evidence during the 1980s have made it clear to increasing numbers of Swedes that their national security, in one form or another, is found in a stronger Western alliance.

While this simple fact will be hysterically denied by any faithful Swedish Social Democrat, Premier Carlsson included, the reality of life next-door to an ill-tempered bear makes decent relations with anybody who could keep the zoo in order indispensable.