

Northern Flank by Tore Fredin

Carlsson resigns, before the election

The Swedish prime minister is hoping to generate a wave of sympathy to carry his party to electoral victory.

Ingvar Carlsson, prime minister of the Swedish government and chairman of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), at a press conference on Aug. 18 launching the party platform for the upcoming European Union elections, announced that within six months he will resign from both his posts. Never before has an election campaign been kicked off in such an odd way. It was a surprise to all except King Carl XVI Gustav, Speaker of Parliament Birgitta Dahl, and one of Carlsson's closest party buddies, Thage Pettersson.

Carlsson typifies a Social Democratic bureaucrat. He has been a party apparatchik for almost 40 of his 60 years, serving the party system without giving it any new ideas. He started in the late 1950s, together with Palme, under Social Democratic leader Tage Erlander, who ran both the party and the government for 25 years, from the end of World War II until late 1960s. He was put in as party chairman after Olof Palme was killed on Feb. 28, 1986.

Carlsson has been part of the U.N. mentality intent on dismantling national institutions, to be replaced by the U.N. one-world government and the non-governmental organizations, as the "representatives" of the people. In 1994, together with Shridath Ramphal, he published "On Our Global Neighborhood," a report issued by the U.N. Commission on Global Governance.

One quote from the report gives the gist: "By global governance, we mean the way in which we manage our global affairs, how we relate to each other, how we take decisions that bear on our common future. There should be no misunderstanding about

the term—by global governance we do not mean global government, as that would only reinforce the roles of states and governments; global governance is about putting people at the center of world affairs."

At the press conference, Carlsson pledged to work to save and rebuild U.N. along the lines of this report, that is, to strengthen the role of small nations in the U.N. at the expense of the superpowers—which in reality means less power to all sovereign nations. According to Carlsson, the U.N. must be given more power to intervene as the world policeman in social, political, and military conflicts, and to enforce global environmental policies.

Officially, Carlsson said he could leave "because the Swedish economy now is in such a good recovery." In reality, he is cornered domestically, because of the undercutting of his own base by his harsh austerity policy, record high unemployment, and the nuclear issue.

For the last six months, it has been clear that the official policy, to shut down nuclear power plants by the year 2010, is not going to work. Already, the most militant anti-nuclear politician, Center Party leader Olof Johansson, is saying that 2010 is not decisive, but it is more important to begin phasing out nuclear power within the present election period, that is, before 1998. This, Carlsson can't be part of, because he only promised to phase out nuclear power by 2010, and a change in the nuclear policy would destroy his credibility, so he reasons.

Another aspect of his decision to become a lame duck for the next six

months, is the fact that the Social Democrats don't have a majority in Parliament. The SAP is dependent on support from the Center Party, its unofficial coalition partner, to get its policy through. Carlsson's resignation leaves room for a lot of maneuvering. No one will know who is governing, and the Social Democrats can muddle along with its policy of crisis management.

A more immediate reason for his resignation, is that in the EU election on Sept. 17, the Social Democrats are expected to lose 15% of the vote they got in the last parliamentary election one year ago. The reason is that the SAP won that election on a populist policy against the austerity policy of the free-market Carl Bildt government. Six months later, the SAP turned around and implemented the same policy it opposed in the election. Consequently, it has lost a lot of support, which has now gone over to the left-wing Vænsterpartiet, the former communist party, which nowadays is accepted as a legitimate democratic party.

The Vænsterpartiet has almost tripled its support in the polls since the last election, from 6% to 15-17%. All of it comes from discontented left Social Democrats who believed that the SAP would keep its promises. Vænsterpartiet is expected to make a good showing in the coming EU election, while the Social Democrats are heading for one of the worst results ever. The SAP might not even remain the largest party, a position into which the moderates, its arch-rivals, are moving.

Therefore, Carlsson is trying to generate a wave of sympathy, similar to that which led the party to election victory after the murder of Palme. To save the party from disaster, Carlsson is resigning before the election, to get people to vote for it.