

Northern Flank by A. Borealis

Palme wins over spineless opposition

The non-socialist parties snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, by neglecting the issues of national security and drugs.

An "almost certain" victory for the opposition against the pro-Soviet government of Olof Palme went up in smoke in Sweden's Sept. 15 national elections, further endangering the weak northern flank of NATO. The non-socialist parties did not dare to go on the offensive against Palme's slavish collaboration with the Soviets, and ran their entire campaign without once referring to Soviet submarine incursions or the obvious Soviet war preparations just a few hundred kilometers from the Swedish coast.

This controlled debate continued while the warnings from the *EIR* press conference on the *Global Showdown Report* were blacked out, except for one local paper *Vasterviks Tidning*, where a conservative politician wrote an excellent article on the *EIR* report. In addition to the *EIR* press conference, the EAP, the European Labor Party, campaigned vigorously for Sweden to join NATO, distributing 50,000 copies of the newspaper *Ny Solidaritet* with a Swedish version of the section on the Northern Flank in the *Global Showdown Report*.

The difference between the outcome of the Swedish elections and the Norwegian elections of Sept. 9 is striking. Norwegian Prime Minister Kare Willoch took up the security issue at the end of the election campaign, after the *EIR* seminar there, by attacking the socialist opposition for bringing enemies of NATO into the government. This was enough to explode a debate on the reliability of the

party of Arne Treholt, who is serving a 20-year jail term as a Soviet spy, and the Norwegian parliamentary election was narrowly won by the non-socialist parties.

The Swedish non-socialist parties had seemed for some time about to begin an offensive against the liberal drug-policies of the Palme government, which prohibits the possession but not the use of drugs. Olof Palme got very nervous but counterattacked, bluffing that he himself was fighting drugs harder than anyone else. None of the opposition party leaders dared to call Palme's bluff.

While the two most sensitive issues for Palme were security and dope, the non-socialist parties spent their campaigns debating what type of austerity they preferred to balance the budget. This, of course, could take no votes from Palme's Social Democratic Workers Party, and left workers with almost no choice but to vote for Palme in the hope of avoiding cuts in social services. Both the government and the non-socialist parties accepted the policies of the International Monetary Fund. In the summer, in the middle of the election campaign, the IMF had a secret delegation in Sweden.

Since these austerity policies rule out expansion, the "economics" debate pivoted on shuffling the burden from one interest group to the other. One central issue was the situation of families with children and that of senior citizens. Palme merely promised to protect his interest groups, and, with

no debate on defense cuts, he escaped the austerity question, and the conservatives' neo-liberal policies had no chance to win votes.

On election day, the Conservative Party's ugly Milton Friedman policies had reduced their vote by 2.3% in comparison to the 1982 elections (down to 21.3%), just as such policies had almost cost the ruling Norwegian party the victory on Sept. 9. The big Conservative loss and the loss for the non-socialist Center Party was compensated for by the remarkable growth of the Liberal Party, which, under its new leader, Bengt Westerberg, more than doubled its vote (from 5.9%, up to 14.3%). Palme slipped 0.5%, down to 45.1%, and is now dependent on the Communist Party (5.4%) for a parliamentary majority. Already in the last electoral period, the Communist Party was allowed to increase its participation in parliamentary committees.

The EAP was another winner, since it established, for the first time, a national party with a machine reaching into most regions of Sweden. This machine polarized regional debates on issues of defense, drugs, and the right of families to rear their own children.

The Social Democrats lost much of their local influence. Most telling was the setback in Sweden's third largest city, Malmö, which became non-Social Democratic for the first time in 66 years, i.e., since the Russian Revolution! They lost because a regionalist party took 9% from them on a platform of, among other things, joining the southern region of Sweden, Skane, to NATO and stationing cruise missiles there. This demonstrates that the NATO question can become a hot issue again in Swedish politics, which has deeply Western-oriented currents, even within the ruling Social Democratic Party.