

Unofficial translation

THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY - 1984 CONGRESS

OLOF PALME's speech to Congress on Foreign Policy and  
National Security, 17th of September 1984

Responsibility for Sweden must characterise the foreign policy of the Social Democratic Party.

This means the defence of our country's independence, our democratic social order, our right to decide our own future.

This responsibility is best served by a firm policy of neutrality.

We Social Democrats intend to carry out this policy with energy, clarity and consistency.

Responsibility for Sweden requires a strong defence in relation to our situation. This is an expression of our determination to defend our independence and repel all intruders.

Our responsibility also includes a commitment to contribute to the work for peace and reconciliation in the world, and to pursue a policy of international solidarity. This is also an important element in our security policy.

Today the international situation is more serious and threatening than it has been for some time past.

Total military spending in our world is now approaching 800 billion dollars. New nuclear weapons are being deployed, not least on our continent. However, instead of providing increased security, these weapons have led to an increased insecurity. And as if it were not enough with the planet we live on, plans are in progress for the placing of high technology weapons in outer space.

Nuclear war is the overshadowing threat of our age. It is described by scientists, writers, artists and priests as an existential question in the most real and appalling sense of the word. It is a question of the survival of humanity.

Despite this, all negotiations on these fateful weapons have been adjourned. The dialogue between the two superpowers has practically been reduced to silence. We witness a confrontation of words characterised by the very deep mistrust of one another's intentions.

This tension casts an awesome shadow over every region of the world.

Armed conflicts are taking place all over the world; in the Middle East, in southern Africa, in Asia and in Central America. In every one of these regions, one or both of the two superpowers are involved or can quickly

become involved. The risk of an escalation to global conflict is evident.

Poverty and starvation in the Third World remain a threat to peace.

But even in our own area of the world the climate has become colder. The fundamental pattern of security policy in Northern Europe remains unchanged, but the strategic interest has increased above all in the northernmost part of the region. Military build-ups are taking place in our area, to the east and to the west. Both sides have started to follow closely one another's military activities with increasing impertinence and unease. In ever more tightening circles they observe one another. We have ourselves experienced a lack of respect for our territorial inviolability.

This puts an edge on the demands on our policy of neutrality.

The cardinal rule of the policy of neutrality is that it must never be conducted in a way which can raise expectations on the one side, or apprehensions for divergences from the chosen course of action, on the other.

For many calm and perhaps uneventful years, Swedish governments have declared that in times of unrest, this rule of firmness and consistency in the pursued policy will be our foremost guiding principle. On this there has been a broad agreement in the Swedish parliament. When colder winds

blow we must not begin to bend. For it is then that the firmness of our policy is put to the test.

We must be careful about the confidence of the world in our declared intention not to abandon our policy of neutrality even under strong external pressure not to become an outpost for one military alliance or the other.

This policy must bear the hallmark of unyielding determination. The world must be able to trust Sweden's course.

This summer SVEN ANDERSSON - a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Defence - wrote in relation to an injudicious Moderate newspaper article, that our leading politicians must remain cool-headed and not allow themselves to be provoked into drawing rash conclusions in issues central to security policy, which affect the ultimate well-being of our country and our people.

Ill-considered and ill-founded statements can cause great damage to our policy of neutrality if the world were to interpret them as representative of widely held opinions in Sweden.

Sven Andersson is right. We must firmly dissociate ourselves from every attempt to create a false impression of what our policy of neutrality means.

It is for this reason that we have found it necessary to take a stand against representatives of the Moderate party when they have distanced themselves from the traditional policy of neutrality. And this is a fight we handle on our own.

To take one example, we have made it clear that our messages are unambiguous when we have reacted against violations of our territory.

No matter how strong our defence force is, if the world should begin to doubt our non-participation in alliances, our ability to pursue our policy of neutrality would nevertheless be circumscribed. For this reason our foreign policy is always our first line of defence.

On the other hand, if our ability to defend our territory by military means is cast in doubt we cannot pursue our policy of neutrality. With the help of our defence we will protect our territory in peace time. We must be able to repel those who violate our air space or our waters. And our defence must be so strong that those who plan to attack in time of war, will think twice about the risks involved in such an enterprise.

These are the two dimensions of Swedish security policy.

Swedish Social Democracy rejects now, as previously, a policy of unilateral disarmament. The Swedish Labour Movement has always been prepared to shoulder its responsibility for the country's defence.

For many years now, Sweden has allocated considerable resources to building up an independent defence of its own. We have a conscription system which enables us to mobilize, at short notice, a defence force of considerable size. We have acquired the means to manufacture the bulk of our defence forces' requirements. And our civil defence has few equals in the world regarding size and quality.

In times like these we will not abandon this policy. Our defence policy remains firm. I made that clear this summer and added that there was good reason for us to raise our ruff somewhat in the current situation. We have also been required to sharpen our claws somewhat. It was, quite simply, necessary to reinforce our provisions for anti-submarine defence. We were, moreover, forced to compensate for the violent upswing of the dollar.

It is a source of strength for our country that the decision on this issue could be carried through in our parliament with wide support. It was an important signal to the world.

This does not mean that we are abandoning the long term directives set by the 1981 Party Congress.

We strive for peace and disarmament. We must be prepared, when circumstances permit, to reduce our spending on defence. We will prepare for this with studies of the type carried out by INGA THORSSON. We must conduct research on peace and on the possibilities it opens up.

Given the realities we face today, defence has an important role, even in peace time. That means that we must be able to detect and repel those who violate our borders. It is vital to the credibility of our policy of neutrality that we act against every intrusion and maintain our territorial integrity by every means.

Disrespect for the inviolability of our territory has been shown in different quarters over the past few years. We have been able to pinpoint and identify violations of our air space. The serious intrusions into our waters are more complicated. They are difficult to discover but, above all, even more difficult to identify. Our resources, both in terms of intelligence and equipment, to track down and act against foreign intruders, increase from one month to the next.

I would like to remind you of what I said after the events in Hårsfjärden in the autumn of 1982:

"I wish to point out that it is possible for the Swedish government to order the defence forces to sink a foreign submarine in Swedish waters. Anyone who contemplates

violating Swedish territory should take into account the fact that the government will in the future resort to that possibility".

I do not hesitate to reiterate that statement today. It can be interpreted as a threat addressed to anyone or to those who contemplate violations of Swedish waters. But we do not threaten to abandon the Swedish policy of neutrality. It is unshakable.

A lot has been said about the value of clear signals. This is clear cut language.

The recent years' serious Soviet violations of Swedish territory have created strains in our relationship with the Soviet Union.

We have not hesitated to protest with firmness against these events.

We do not give way on questions concerning our national sovereignty and international law. We do not bow low to the superpowers.

We must then have confidence enough to meet the superpower eye to eye.

That, we had in the Vietnam question, when the American superpower carried out an unjust war against a small nation.

And that we must have in today's delicate relationship with the Soviet Union, where our own national security interests are directly affected.

We must never allow the course of events to deprive us of the possibility of speaking on our own behalf in questions which affect the vital interests of our nation. Others cannot speak on our behalf in Moscow. We will and shall always do so ourselves.

In other contexts we plead for dialogue and discussion, instead of confrontation and conflict. This must also apply to ourselves.

When we say that we are open for talks this must not be taken as an indication that we are excusing or passing over things.

We must not be afraid to assert our national interests in the form of a direct exchange of views with the Soviet Union.

Thus we do not hesitate to criticise the Soviet Union. But let me state firmly that we strive for good relations with that country. We do not engage in campaigns of anti-Sovietism. We assert Sweden's national interests. We have

clearly differing opinions on such questions as civil rights and liberty, and Afghanistan. In other questions, such as some issues related to disarmament, our views are close. In a number of fields such as trade, culture and scientific research our interests are best served by a regular exchange of contacts with the Soviet Union. We have nothing to gain from strangling connections which are mutually advantageous to our two countries.

Stable and good relations require that this country fully respects our territorial integrity. There must never be any doubt about this when we speak with representatives of the Soviet Union.

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Right from the start internationalism and the Swedish Labour Movement have been indivisibly bound together.

Already in the programme for the Swedish Social Democratic Party, which the Social Democratic club in Stockholm adopted in February 1885, it was stated:

"The workers' question is however neither local nor national but international. For this reason the socialdemocratic workers' party, even if it principally is active only in Sweden, is aware of the Labour Movement's international character, and strives to fulfil all the duties

which the Swedish workers have towards their brothers in other nations. The common brotherhood of man is a future goal also for us."

The Swedish Labour Movement's century-long struggle for democracy and justice has therefore also been a history of international solidarity. This has left its mark on the achievements of the leading figures in our movement, from HJALMAR BRANTING to ALVA MYRDAL.

Our international involvement concerns important principles: respect for self-determination, social and economic justice, peace and freedom.

But it also concerns our own interests: Sweden cannot isolate itself from the rest of the world of which we are a part. We are dependent on the world for our foreign trade. Without that we would be a very poor nation. And the prevention of a nuclear war is vital to us, for such a war would affect every nation and every people. Including ourselves.

When we work for peace and international solidarity we also exercise our responsibility for Sweden.

The Swedish Labour Movement is proud to belong to an international community where we can work together to try to eradicate injustice and promote peace and freedom.

There are times when we hear voices raised claiming that we should be less involved, not make statements as often as we do on conditions in far-off countries - more mind our own business.

I only wish that those who say so had been with me in Arusha in Tanzania two weeks ago. The Socialist International held a conference there on southern Africa with representatives of the Front-Line States and liberation movements. It was clearly shown that the policy of racial segregation has not at all been reformed for the better. In reality, the apartheid system has been made more brutal and the repression of the black majority made stronger.

Every third day a black man is hanged in South Africa.

Every year hundreds of thousands of blacks are arrested for breaking the pass laws.

9 million people have already been deprived of their citizenship and 4 million forceably removed to the so-called home-lands with the most infertile land in the country.

Apartheid is an especially perverse form of tyranny.

Or to quote PER WÄSTBERG:

"The legal cruelty, the long-drawn-out killings, the gradual elimination of peoples' hopes and aspirations - that is South Africa's crime."

The regime in South Africa has now taken to aggression against its neighbours in order to force them into submission by means of armed violence and economic pressure.

I met the Minister for Information from Lesotho, a country with a population of 1.3 million people, surrounded on all sides by South Africa. It is subjected to blackmail by South Africa. The apartheid regime exploits its geographical, economical and military superiority to try to force Lesotho to sign a peace agreement which would deprive the country of most of its independence. If they do not sign this agreement, South Africa threatens to call off a large irrigation project which has been planned, to prevent the delivery of helicopters needed to transport food to the starving, and to harass people crossing the border.

Lesotho's predicament is difficult, very difficult. They have no desire to subject themselves to the dictates of Pretoria. They turn to us and say: Do not break your promises, continue to press for an end to the apartheid system! And talk to South Africa's friends in the industrialised world and try to get them to put pressure on South Africa!

We could of course say that this is an issue between Lesotho and South Africa.

But we do not say that, we cannot say that.

To fight against apartheid and to support its victims is a common responsibility, a duty which calls. We must do what we can, even if it is limited. We achieve this through, for example, our foreign policy, through our aid programme, and through our work in the Socialist International. And we shall certainly not suddenly start to ease restrictions on investments in South Africa.

To those who ask we shall reply: we will continue, to the best of our ability, to work for peace and solidarity. This is also an important part of our national security policy.

This policy for peace has many features:

The first is that we must defend international law. There must exist rules for the relations between nations just as there are for relations between people. We cannot accept the law of the jungle, a law of power in the international sphere. We must have an international law where all states are equal before the law and where all states must respect the rights of others.

International law is of special importance for the smaller nations. For this reason we in Sweden react particularly sharply against violations against this law.

We did so when the Soviet Union marched into Afghanistan.

We did so when the United States invaded Grenada, and when Nicaragua's waters were mined.

We do so when South Africa attacks its neighbours and continues its illegal occupation of Namibia.

And we do so when someone violates our own border.

Our defence of other nations' rights to form their own future does not mean that we can promise some certain policy or some certain social order in those states when self-determination has been achieved. We support the right of people to independence, but we cannot make any promises about what will come in its wake. Nations themselves decide their own fates.

The second feature in our policy for peace is the work for human rights.

The right to live is a basic human right. We must never cease to be angered at the fact that every year, in this, the twentieth century, millions of children on our planet are condemned to die of malnutrition and hunger. And it is part of the desperation of our time that this is allowed to happen at the same time as billions and billions are wasted on a destructive military machine.

The increased gaps in our world are a threat to peace. With ever greater differences between poor and rich

no lasting détente can be reached. A generous aid policy is therefore an important part of our policy for peace. We are all closely tied to one another. It is insufferable that we should live in a world where the vast majority of the population lives in ever deeper poverty. And we could demonstrate clearly in the Brandt Commission's Report that the world in this sense will perish because of poverty - but also that this is in no way a process decided by fate. With a slightly more sensible policy it would be possible to abolish poverty in the world towards the year 2000. It is possible to change the course of developments in the poor countries. We could exploit all the spare capacity in the industrialized world, with all its millions of unemployed; we could put its industry to work in producing for the needs of the poor world. And we should be able to fight hunger and poverty with the people living there.

Human rights reach further than that.

As long as injustice and lack of liberty dominate in a society, people will offer resistance and seek to improve their lot. In a dictatorship citizens are not only denied their basic human rights. It gives rise to dangerous conflicts which can have repercussions far beyond the country's borders. The hopes for peace and disarmament can never be fully realized before all peoples have achieved their liberation.

Social Democracy has a long tradition of the struggle for freedom within our own respective countries and across borders.

It was Social Democracy which, in country after country, had to win human rights and trade union rights in conflict with the holders of power in the bourgeois class society. It was the Labour Movement which had to bear the brunt of the attack in the struggle against the ideologies of violence in Europe. Countless Social Democrats died because of their convictions in the struggle against stalinism, fascism and nazism.

This tradition means that we feel a strong bond and solidarity with those who today struggle for the same rights and liberties which we won, which we have succeeded in upholding and which we have patiently sought to develop.

This is the case in Turkey, where trade union leaders are imprisoned, and opponents to the regime are sentenced to death at mass trials.

It applies to El Salvador, where many of our party comrades have been killed in the struggle for democracy.

It applies to Afghanistan, where Soviet troops seek to crush a popular resistance.

And it applies to Eastern Europe, where the people of Poland in particular - these people who have suffered so terribly in the struggle for freedom over centuries - have in recent years

once again caught our attention. It was and is clear that we have shown our feelings in different ways when workers in a neighbouring country stand up in a struggle for their rights and their freedom. And I believe that they have known this in Poland.

We must speak out against crimes against human rights wherever they occur. I found it natural and very reasonable to receive Sakharov's step daughter this summer and to follow up her visit with a plea to the Soviet leaders on behalf of the Sakharovs.

But it applies in other parts of the world, too.

The indiscriminate murder which has been going on for years in El Salvador and in Guatemala is a dark stain on humanity.

At the beginning of the year I visited Nicaragua. I met Swedish aid corps workers, among them some who worked for Christian organisations. They told me about the CIA-supported Somoza guardsmen's ravaging in the border areas, about small boys shot in the coffee fields, about twelve year old girls kidnapped and dragged along for months and later living with aid corps workers in order to be cured of the psychological shock and venereal diseases.

Let me state quite clearly: Democracy cannot be secured by the clandestine operations of secret agents in conflict with international public law. Democracy is humanist and conciliatory and cannot be promoted by death patrols or military aggression.

Our solidarity with our fellow men must never be limited by different political systems. An imprisoned trade union leader is an imprisoned trade union leader regardless of where it happens; in Guatemala, in Poland or in Turkey. A village in flames is a village in flames regardless of whether it is the object of terror bombing in El Salvador or in Afghanistan.

There are those who mumble when we talk of Afghanistan, because it concerns the Eastern side.

There are those who mumble when we talk of Chile, because it concerns the Western side.

But human suffering cannot be measured by geography or block affiliation. We can, of course, in practice face difficult problems of weighing one factor against the other. But we must be clear on the principle involved: It is a case of standing on the side of the individuals in their sufferings and desperation, in their greatness and in their never diminishing will to resist the wretched misery of oppression.

The third feature in our peace policy is to continually strive for peaceful solutions to conflicts.

We have provided strong support for the UN since it was founded. Almost 50,000 Swedes have taken part in the peace-keeping operations of the UN all over the world. When the UN has asked us to make a contribution, we have never hesitated to offer our services. We have, since the time of FOLKE BERNADOTTE and DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD, a long and binding tradition in Sweden of placing ourselves at the service of the organisation.

With all its weaknesses the United Nations remains our foremost instrument for preventing and solving conflicts in partnership. We must therefore do all we can to strengthen the United Nations.

The fourth element is the work for disarmament.

A war in the nuclear age threatens the existence of all of us - even in countries farthest from the areas of conflict. For nuclear weapons cause not only immediate and direct destruction. As the American scientist Carl Sagan has shown, many millions of tons of smoke and dust would be pumped up into the atmosphere within a few days following a nuclear attack. A gigantic smoke cloud would be formed. Over large areas of our earth it would be dark for 24 hours of the day. The temperature would fall below freezing point, animals would be deprived of their grazing lands and starve to death. We would all suffer from the effects of a nuclear winter which would probably wipe out mankind. Our civilization, which is so rich and fantastic, which has taken thousands of years of human effort to build, would quite simply come to an end.

Even if the super powers have conflicting interests in many areas, their citizens must nevertheless share the desire to survive, to see their children and their grandchildren living on after them.

Developments have reached the point, where they can only survive together with their opponent. It has been said many times before, but can be said over and over again: A nuclear war cannot be won, it leaves only losers behind it.

The super-powers must therefore negotiate and co-operate on the most basic issue, on common security.

Those who decide on the use of nuclear weapons do not only play with the survival of their own countries. They also hold our lives in their hands. We others, who do not have nuclear weapons, must therefore do our utmost to assert our interests and to persuade the super-powers to realize that they also have a responsibility to us.

This is an important part of the background to Sweden's active policy of disarmament.

It is for this reason that we want to reach an agreement on a freeze on development of nuclear weapons, a stop for all nuclear tests, and a moratorium on the deployment of new nuclear weapons in order to halt the arms race and reduce the arsenals of nuclear weapons, in balanced and controlled forms.

It is also the reason why we work for a corridor free from battlefield nuclear weapons in Central Europe.

Therefore we are striving for a nuclear-free zone, in order to reduce the risks that nuclear weapons will be used in our area. We are glad that the united Nordic Labour Movement now shares a common basic view on this important question.

Our goal is to bring about international disarmament in ways which do not give advantages to any one side, but rather security to all.

Our foremost hope is simply people's desire for peace, their aversion to war, their good sense. The broad popular mobilisation for peace is one of the hopeful phenomena and most positive expressions of belief in the value of life of recent years.

The Labour Movement is the greatest Peace Movement which has ever existed. Peace remains our responsibility.

(Original in Swedish)