

## Sweden, Denmark and Refugees - Still Hope?

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Sweden

Permit a digression to neighbouring Sweden.

Sweden has - shamefully - not only closed its borders for people without valid documents, scrapped the right to asylum embedded in the Human Rights Declaration. It has declared (January 28, 2016) that it intends to deport 60.000-80.000 refugees already inside Sweden.

It was Sweden's ambassador, the courageous [Harald Edelstam](#), who in 1973 stood at the stadium in Santiago after the Pinochet coup and murder of president Allende and told thousands that they would always be welcome in Sweden. Thousands came and made a good life in Sweden. (There were 90 Chileans living in Sweden before the coup, today over 40,000). A small internationalist country took humanitarian leadership and we could all be proud.

But we can't take that many people now, I hear many say.

The head of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Region (SKL) has stated that 40-50 municipalities are facing crisis in Sweden but that, significantly, 200-220 municipalities "[say they can do more.](#)"

But then what about the country's security and stability? The risk of social disorder, criminality, hatred?

Of course that is a risk. But that is an old one - xenophobia and racism has been around for long in Sweden, however less visible at the surface. An enlightened government's response should be to serve as a role model and combat racism, Islamophobia in particular - not to combat and deport refugees.

Sweden's new overall refugee-repelling strategy is a deplorable bending down for the worst forces in society instead of mobilising a demonstratively humanitarian and visionary policy for the common good - good for Sweden and good for Europe. If you behave like Denmark and Sweden you lose your goodwill and certainly every chance to influence or take leadership among other EU countries.

Where there is a will there is a way. But it also requires a little creativity.

The Swedish government lacks the will. Like Denmark - albeit in different ways.

Are we moving from democracy towards some kind of *kakistocracy* – i.e. “government by the worst, least qualified or most unprincipled citizens”?

New Danish fighter planes and reduced development assistance

Back to Denmark and one more piquant aspect.

Denmark is close to making a decision about the acquisition of new fighter aircraft to a purchase value of US\$ 5 billion and maintenance cost over 20 years of US\$ billion 15, combined US\$ 4000 per capita. (The real price will be higher as no pre-sale estimates hold through the production phase).

This is just around the corner from the new anti-refugee laws described above.

It deserves mention that Denmark has already reduced its development aid over the years – the latest reduction was justified with this argument: Since an increased number of refugees are likely to seek asylum in Denmark, we need to find the funds for that somewhere – and that will be in the budget for development assistance.

It remains to be seen how the new fighter planes shall be financed. To put in sarcastic terms, the income from the stolen jewellery of refugees will hardly buy that many planes.

In summary, Denmark already lets the poorest of the poor contribute to its allegedly generous refugee policy. Few seem to have recognised that cutting down on development assistance in the long run may create both more terrorists and more refugees.

Denmark's moral compass lost

A great small country has lost the opportunity to uphold – indeed fight for – basic values and meaning of civilisation. With its rampant militarism, xeno- and Islamophobia, its selfrighteousness and lack of human compassion it has reinvented itself into decay.

In a global situation of death and destruction and ever increasing refugee and IDP flows – a situation where we all ought to find the best in ourselves and roll up our sleeves – Denmark and Sweden, the latter a major profiteering arms exporter, walk into the self-isolation and shame, losing the goodwill and good branding they once had.

The decay of the West

And there is a larger perspective: Just follow Sweden, Denmark and the EU's maldevelopment – and NATO's development into a global bombing association outside international law – during the last 20 years and a few years ahead and you'll begin to see it: *the relative decline of the West as a bloc and of Western civilisation.*

The West itself will be in denial as long as it can.

Catchword that comes to mind is loss of identity, compass and legitimacy. Another is lack of leadership. Militarism combined with decreasing compassion and a virtual absence of a sense of global responsibility – can only be rooted in subconscious fear for the future, nationalism and egoism.

Add to that modern versions of the outdated imperialism legacy – bombing and seeking to

control foreign lands with a *mission civilisatrice*...

The West has, to a large extent but not exclusively, of course – caused the refugees to flee. A hundred years of arrogant, insensitive policies in the Middle East from Sykes-Picot and onwards culminating recently in ruthless and failed wars in four countries and full support for a military dictatorship in Egypt. Sadly, the lack of principles seems to have become the leading principle.

This is not a refugee crisis

In conclusion, *there is no 'refugee' crisis*. By far the majority of those arriving could be integrated with a generous EU cost-sharing scheme, mobilisation of many and different resources and planning mechanisms and with much more cooperation with European civil society. 503 million – or just half of them – doing a little extra today for a better tomorrow for all. For their own decency's sake too. For the *good* Europe.

With Europe's need for manpower in decades to come, refugees could – should – be seen as a blessing, an opportunity to do good and create inter-cultural dialogues.

Instead, however, Europe panics, gives in to populist sentiments and confirms the terrorists' worst assumptions about the hollowness of Western culture, generosity and compassion.

The EU, devoid of visionary leadership, continues to 'solve' all problems by more bombing, more terrorism-creation and more inhumanity – that lead to more terror and more refugees. And hatred.

No this is *not* a refugee crisis!

It's a European *crisis of crisis management* – and it threatens potentially the whole EU construction because it fiddles around with both international law, human rights, peace, Schengen and Dublin. In short, Europe the greedy. The miserly. The self-defeating.

Denmark and Sweden – with Austria and Hungary – leading the way to the common bad instead of the common good.

It is a *crisis of ethics, empathy, compassion* caused by Euro-racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. Too strong words? Then ask yourself this:

Would any government in Europe have dared to treat Jews this way in 2016? Imagine that a catastrophe, say an earthquake or nuclear accident in Israel, had forced a million Jews to flee to Europe. Would we have taken their last possessions or tried to close our borders. Sent those out who had already come in?

In this sense, this policy is based on Islamophobia and it will eventually come boomeranging back. Blow-back terrorism – and we will once again see Europeans feel that they are only innocent victims.

And it's a *crisis of generosity and humanity* by a culture that is, underneath all its military prowess and glittering consumerism and superficial info-tainment, getting weaker, losing the grip – and knows it deep down.

And thus Fortress Europe builds walls again and can't 'afford' to care better for fellow global

citizens in need.

History will judge hard these dark trends growing in a region that is still one of the world's most wealthy. And Denmark - and Sweden - in the forefront of it: What a tragedy for Europe! What dark times for Swedes and Danes (and others too).

The rest of the world is watching in consternation and waiting out the consequences. Perhaps democracy cannot be taken for granted forever? Are we heading - step-by-step - for *kakistocracy* - i.e. "government by the worst, least qualified or most unprincipled citizens"?

Is there any hope?

Yes! Of course. Such trends also carry their *dialectics* - opposite forces will be mobilised.

- Good-hearted citizens rise and create the necessary debate and take action - "Not in our names" and "Welcome refugees"... and much more.
- Business people in Denmark will protest because a bad image of Denmark will impact on future business.
- Civil disobedience by police and others, turning their heads, overlooking the 'excessive' valuables, refusing to carry out the dirty work.
- International business people, politicians and tourists will increasingly boycott Denmark and go elsewhere.
- Like Chinese heavyweight artist, Ai Weiwei, artists and other people of culture will stop co-operating with and in Denmark.
- Danish humanitarian and human rights organisations have already protested, so will many more around the world. International media pressure. Denmark's image damage limitation attempts may soften manifest criticism - but then there is the anger you can't measure. People still remember the Mohamed caricatures. Iraqis and Libyans know what Denmark did to their people.
- The laws will end up in the European Court of Human Rights.
- Assuming that the refugee stream will continue for as long as Western countries conduct warfare in the Middle East, the pressures over time to *either* devise a completely new refugee reception and integration *or* stop the militarist adventures will mount - and it may go fast during the spring.
- Refugees can be seen as the largest non-violent movement against warfare at the moment - and they may join hands with peace, women, minority and other human rights movements to achieve a huge anti-war opinion - somewhat resembling the anti-nuclear movement in Europe of the 1980s that led to the end of the Cold War. Could the refugees be seen as the embryo of the fundamental change that is necessary to once and for all stop Western attempts to dominate in the Middle East - perhaps as an embryo also to the necessary de-legitimization of interventionist warfare?

If some of these and similar steps do not change the Danish "jewellery law", they may at least help teach the Danish decision-makers a much-needed lesson and make them re-think their next steps more carefully.

Denmark should pay a price for its morally unacceptable policies.

This is not the time to stay silent. Every refugee coming to Europe today could say what

Martin Luther King said:

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

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