

## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 26

"FREEDOM FROM ALLIANCES"

Hotell Reisen,  
Skeppsbron 12-14, Stockholm  
August 5, 1959

Mr. Walter S. Rogers.  
Institute of Current World Affairs.  
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:



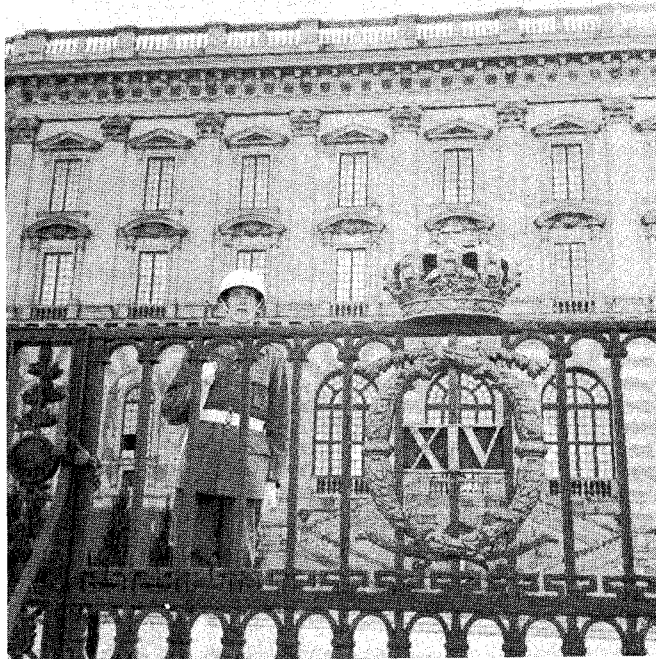
**HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS NEUTRAL:** Day camp and old age apartment house, Stockholm

Sweden has been practicing neutrality for the past 145 years with such enormous success that she has managed to stay out of other peoples' troubles -- and wars, inch her standard of living up while war-torn nations were in chaos and, of late years, gain a good deal of world respectability by providing the manpower and middle ground for international refereeing. Despite the success of this practice, Sweden, as many other nations I've visited, still hedges away from the "neutral" label. Here the preferred term is nice and cumbersome: "Freedom from alliances in peace conducive to neutrality in war." And it carries with it one vital wherewithall: Swedish defenses are kept in first-rate readiness to let would-be aggressors know she is neither supine nor passive, but a neutral prepared to fight for that middle ground.

There seems to be little challenge today to leaving Sweden stay where she is. Russia and the U.S. Both find her neutrality convenient. True, Nikita Khrushchev let go with a scorcher a few weeks ago for the criticism against him by certain Swedish politicians and editors. But Mr. Khrushchev merely wanted to back out of his Scandinavian trip. True, there have been periodic cries that Sweden should join the West in its NATO alliance. True, Sweden has been the

leader in pushing an "Outer Seven" free trade zone and organization which Pravda, at least, finds much too linked with Western unity for its liking. But these things are fairly minor ripples. The one potentially serious challenge to Swedish neutrality is Finland. As one Swedish politician told me, "Now, if Russia occupied Finland and put troops along our northern frontier, then it's conceivable that we would join the Atlantic Pact." And, looking at it the other way, if Sweden abandoned her neutrality it is also possible that Russia might move into Finland in order to watch the border.

Sweden has stayed out of alliances and wars since the breakup of Napoleon's Europe in 1814. Not that there haven't been temptations. Sweden planned to side with Britain against Russia in the Crimean War of 1854-56. But by the time she finally made up her mind the war was over. In 1864, Sweden's King promised Brother Denmark he would come to the rescue after Denmark's invasion by Prussia and Austria. But the Cabinet nixed it. And, anyway, Sweden was still so slow in making up her mind this war was also already over. When Brother Norway dissolved its union with Sweden in 1905 there were cries of "War!!" and "We'll show 'em!" But compromise and a peaceful solution prevailed. When World War I broke out, some Swedes wanted to side with Germany and liberate Brother Finland from the Czar. But public opinion rejected this. And, as a matter of fact, Sweden's neutrality during World War I became so adamant and so obvious that ever since then Swedish neutrality has become a sort of international habit -- even for the Swedes.



ROYAL PALACE: Couldn't help Brother Denmark

For instance, immediately after the war when the people of the Aland Islands, situated between Sweden and Finland, demanded annexation to Sweden, Sweden put aside sword in favor of submission to the League of Nations. And when the League ruled for Finland, so be it. And during World War II, when Brothers Denmark and Norway were both under the Nazis and Finland was a cobelligerent with Germany in order to recoup lost lands from Russia (WWU-25), Sweden calmed down internal cries to join the Allies -- even when Germany insisted on moving one of her divisions from Norway through Sweden to Finland in the summer of 1941. More recently, Sweden has demonstrated her neutrality by refusing to join NATO, on the one hand, and rejecting a proposal by the Riksdag's Communist delegation in 1956 to codify Swedish neutrality in a Constitutional amendment. The non-Communist Swedes foresaw that if their neutrality were spelled out in the books they might be pushed into the defensive and forced to explain their country's actions as being in accordance with official neutrality. They figured neutrality was their policy, not the Communists, and reaffirmed their freedom to act in accordance with each situation.

And one such situation presented itself just a few months ago.

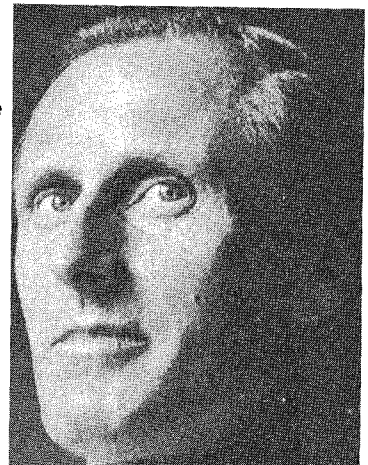
Comrade Khrushchev, in a speech in Riga in June, called for a neutralization of the entire Baltic, an open bid to Norway and Denmark to quit NATO. Before the month was out, Osten Undén, Sweden's longtime Foreign Minister -- a man who in the past has succeeded in raising the hackles of U.S. officials by referring to "the so-called free world" and calling the U.S. as foreign to Sweden as Russia -- decided to speak out. I've been told that Undén wanted to make it quite plain to Mr. Khrushchev that if he was predicating his August visit to Scandinavia on preaching a neutralized Baltic, he would be wasting his time.

Addressing his fellow Nordic Council Foreign Ministers on June 26, the usually circumspect Mr. Undén was unusually blunt: "A mere prohibition of hostilities in the Baltic would not offer any security...Free access to the Baltic is a principle established by international law and one, moreover, which we believe to be in accordance both with Sweden's interests and with the general interest that large seas should not be monopolized by a certain state or group of states...So far as I know, there is only one Baltic state which is in possession of nuclear weapons, and that is the Soviet Union. I do not venture to believe that the Soviet government is ready to free a huge zone of its territory from nuclear weapons in connection with the establishment of an atom-free zone in the Baltic region." Mr. Undén also had a little fun straightening out recent references by both Khrushchev and Finland's President and Foreign Minister to a "Nordic Zone." He reminded his listeners the Baltic waters cleansed a few "non-Nordics" -- Poland, Germany and the Soviet Union.

Last month when Mr. Khrushchev decided to call off his visit to Scandinavia (possibly because he learned he could go to America instead), he told reporters in Poland: "I think well of the Swedes. They beat us and then Peter (the Great) beat them at Poltava. I consider we are quits. I have nothing against Erlander (Swedish Premier Tage Erlander), nor against Premier Hans C. Hansen of Denmark. But when the government newspaper (unidentified) comes out against my visit, that is another pair of shoes. When they spit in my face, a guest, why should I go?" In its official reply, Sweden reminded Khrushchev that in a country with freedom of the press the government had no control over such criticism. Sweden further told Khrushchev he had let down the governing Swedish Social Democratic Party by giving his attention to Opposition criticism and ignoring Cabinet assurances of a welcome visit. Some Swedes have told me they thought the Swedish note far too mild.

I had a talk with Sverker Åström who, although only in his early 'forties, is chief of the Foreign Ministry's political section and the man generally credited with being the day-to-day moving force behind Swedish foreign relations today. (Minister Undén, who has been in office for some 42 years, is now too old for active administration). It was one of Stockholm's warmest days and Åström greeted me in his shirtsleeves, and with no apologies. I'd been told he is a human dynamo and his alternate floor pacing and vigorous arm gesturing certainly indicated this.

Said Åström in explaining his country's policies: "We have no running commentary on world affairs but we do have an opinion when called upon. We hold to our policy in order not to necessarily increase the chance of our getting into a



ÅSTRÖM

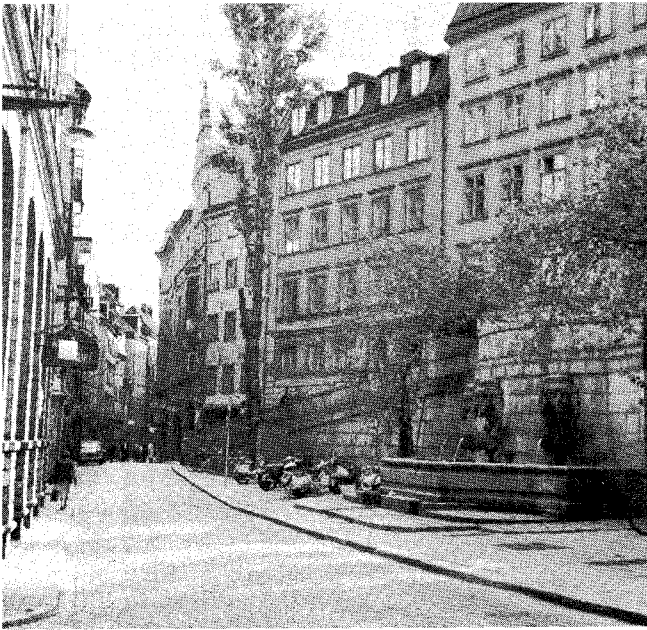
war. Certainly Finland is a big concern and we seek to do as little to embarrass her as possible." Does the West ever misunderstand Sweden's neutrality? "Don't assume that just because one day we favor Russia the next day we are going to favor the West. We do what we honestly think is right." Does Sweden think the answer to international refereeing lies with a UN police force such as the one in which Sweden now participates in the Gaza Strip? "UNEF is very successful, but I doubt that there will ever be a permanent UN police force. It's too expensive just to have a standby police force. And Hammarskjold organized this one within days anyway, so it doesn't take long to get together. But if a shot were ever fired in anger, that would be the end of it. Gaza is a very special mission and circumstances and the future uses would be dependent upon the special needs at the time."

Åström gave a speech on Swedish neutrality in Vienna last summer and since the U.S. Embassy looks upon this as a particularly articulate summary of Swedish foreign policy, I'll repeat a few parts:

"Swedish foreign policy both during the first and during the second World Wars reads like an inexhaustible exercise in international law... We realize naturally that our possibilities of preserving our own peace depend first of all upon circumstances and considerations beyond our control, political and strategic, over which Sweden has at the best only the slenderest chance of being heard... We do also know that had we not based our policy upon a determination to remain neutral during the last two wars, we should have stood very little chance then of maintaining our neutrality as we did... We are convinced that our own defenses at various instances have provided us with the necessary further margin... In time of peace we have to conduct our policy in such a way that we cannot become automatically involved in a war between great powers... We would prevent as far as possible our country from being considered as a military 'blank' which belligerents, without encountering too much difficulty or resistance, could occupy areas of strategic importance to themselves... We have to aim our policy at winning and retaining the confidence of the great powers... We dissent from the one-sided ideological and fatalistic doctrine that the world must be divided into two camps, in principle engaged in a life and death struggle. In the present world such a belief is outdistanced and anachronistic... A small country such as Sweden, with its limited political and military possibilities of influencing the shape of events, can take no moral responsibility for international policies... We do sufficient for the defense of our democratic ideals and for the security of our part of the world if we direct our internal policies to the maintenance and increase of social and economic capacities, and our external policies towards the reduction of tensions between the great powers in the Baltic area, while at the same time our defense policy is effective defense. Perhaps even in these senses we contribute something to the maintenance of a certain balance in Northern Europe... We have found that our neutral position places great charges upon us, and heavy responsibilities. In every international problem arising we search for factors and formulae of common interest to the great powers, and we make efforts willingly where we can on such bases to bring them around the table..."

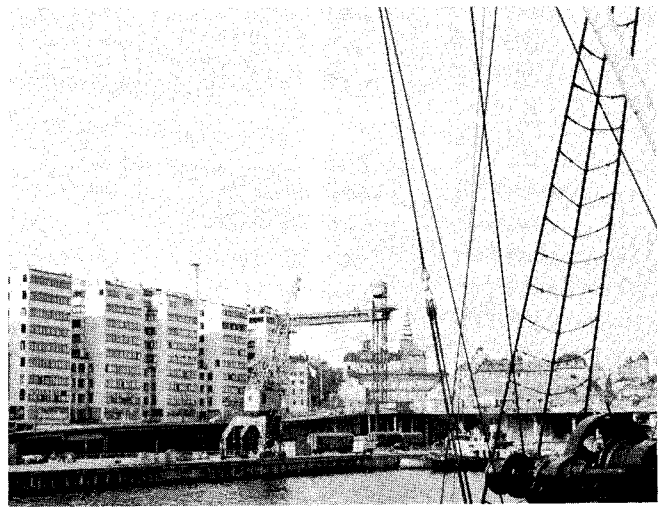
I should add that, despite his high-flown phrasing, Åström proved to be highly engaging and went out of his way to give me a tour of the Foreign Ministry. He explained that it was a former Royal Palace, showed me his favorite room (a very ornate one) as well as Dag Hammarskjold's old office when he was the Foreign Ministry's Permanent Secretary.

Prof. Herbert Tingsten, a onetime political science teacher who now is editor of Dagens Nyheter, Sweden's largest daily (270,000), is in his



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'seventies yet still considered to be one of his country's most important conscience prickers. For many years, Tingsten has urged Sweden to join NATO. More recently, he has assigned an even higher priority to Sweden acquiring her own nuclear weapons stockpile to assure adequate defense. Tingsten and his editorials are sufficiently outspoken to cause Nikita Khrushchev to single them out by name in his angry decision not to visit Scandinavia this month.

When the Khrushchev trip cancellation was announced, Tingsten editorialized, "A Welcome Decline." As for the Swedish Government's reply, Tingsten told me he considered it, "not exactly servile, but more or less in this line."



TINGSTEN

"The Swedes' feeling for European unity is much less than that of France, Germany and Italy," Tingsten declared. "Sweden is very satisfied with being alone by itself." Then he got around to his main theme these days, nuclear armament: "As long as the general talk in the U.S. was all 'massive retaliation' the Swedes thought, 'Well, we can sit back. They will kill off each other.' But now with the 'limited war' talk again the Government is quite honest when they talk about making resistance to the last point. But it seems to me really unbelievable that we will last beyond a couple of days if we haven't the atomic weapons. The decision will have to be made and I think they must do it by next year."

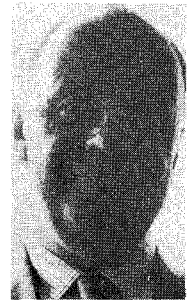
Tingsten called Sweden "one of the satisfied States" and was very pithy in explaining why: "One proof which is always quoted of Sweden's love of peace is the fact that she has not been at war for more than a century. The curious point is that this peace is so often regarded as something of Sweden's own making, as the result of merit, not of good fortune. There is not much justification for this view in actual Nineteenth Century history. Sweden has, for obvious reasons, had nothing to gain by a change in the status quo, and has had neither the incentive nor the opportunity to conduct an expansionist policy. From this follows her desire to preserve peace. (Yet) the Swedish attitude has been a general self-satisfaction, a sense of moral superiority...The maintenance of peace can hardly be cited to prove exceptional wisdom or exceptional morality." Tingsten went on to say that a major factor in Sweden's ability to stay out of other peoples' wars for the past 145 years has been "pure luck."

Now the professor is not at all convinced that Sweden's luck for avoiding scraps will hold out in today's nuclear age. He terms "untenable" Foreign Minister Undén's contention that in the event of a thermonuclear war Sweden couldn't do much about it anyhow. "For one thing," says Tingsten, "it is possible that Russia might make an isolated attack on Sweden or make demands on Sweden that cannot be accepted without surrender. Or Sweden may become involved in a world war, particularly if Swedish territory becomes of importance in mounting attacks on Norway and Denmark, or in defending them. In this view, the only way to limit this risk of war so far as possible is to join NATO, for then Sweden in time of peace could make effective defense preparations in collaboration with the other NATO countries, and in case of attack, would be assured of assistance. As long as Sweden remains outside the alliance it is possible that the country could be attacked and occupied from the East without getting any help from the West." And by NATO help, Tingsten means atomic weapons. I

should interject here that Tingsten's cry for joining NATO is almost a solo voice in Sweden. As a matter of fact, whenever I mentioned Tingsten's name, the reply went something like, "Oh yes, the NATO man."

Tingsten called talk of Sweden's absolute neutrality "pure bluff": "Sweden's democratic and humanitarian character ties it unalterably to the West, and no conditions can be imagined which would lead Sweden in case of war to become an ally of the dictatorships of the East. This is just as well known in Russia as in the U.S. and England. A powerful reason for neutrality has been a fear that Russia might occupy Finland or stiffen its policy toward that country if Sweden were to enter NATO." Tingsten said this reason is never mentioned publicly. He also reports that Swedish foreign policy is a sort of collusive affair, arrived at in secret council by leaders of the major political parties. Parliament is untroubled by debate and what criticism and questioning there is of foreign policy comes solely from such independent newspapers as his own. More of this a bit later.

Allan Hernelius, the editor of Stockholm's Svenska Dagbladet, seemed more inclined to side with the Government. He thinks his country need offer no excuses for not being a member of the NATO alliance: "We are a full member of the Western family even if we are outside NATO. We are not weakening the Western system. As a matter of fact, it's not so expensive for NATO because we are doing the work ourselves. And maybe there is some use for a country outside the two blocs to do the UN's work. We have observation troops in Korea, Lebanon and Suez and have helped further economic cooperation for countries outside the blocs." But then he added: "The weakness, of course, is that we have no promise of help if we are attacked. Another weakness is that we have not so much modern equipment as NATO. But we have a license to import weapons from the U.S."



HERNELIUS

Prof. Bertil Ohlin said he would let me in on a little secret: Swedish political parties are soon going to face up to the decision of entering the nuclear weapons club. Ohlin is chairman of the Liberal (People's) Party whose 38 seats in the lower chamber Riksdag make it Sweden's third largest political faction. The Liberals still are not speaking out publicly. But Ohlin left no doubt where his mind is -- for Sweden going ahead. But first he wants to give his party's "free-church" components a little more time to work out their pacifist reluctances. The Conservative Party (45 seats) has already declared itself in favor of nuclear weapons. The Agrarian, or Center Party, (32 seats) has been nearly as forthright. And as for the Government Social Democrats (111 seats out of the Riksdag's 231 total), whose leaders also have been silent, Ohlin explained that Foreign Minister Undén is still trying to prevent the subject from coming up at next summer's conference. And the party, with an eye to winning next year's elections, "wants to give people the impression that they are more against atomic weapons." But Sweden's military leadership is openly urging nuclear armament and the military budget already includes a nuclear provision. All the military is waiting for is the Riksdag's blessing. Ohlin thinks the fight will come "this winter" on whether or not to begin nuclear research right away. "We have the type of scientists that are necessary. We have the uranium. And we have some know-how, but we are not very far advanced. The money (for necessary research) will not take a major part of our budget," Ohlin declared.

Professor Ohlin, a strikingly handsome political scientist of



SWEDISH BARUCH

in the attitude of Russia towards Finland. Russia interfered more than she had ever done, even if it was rather stupid of the Finns to put two men into the Government who are notorious Russian haters." He continued: "Finland is one important reason for our neutral policy, true. But you can't think away Finland and separate it from Russia. Now if Russia occupied Finland and put troops along our northern frontier, then it's conceivable that we would join the Atlantic Pact. Neutrality is something that is weighing so much more heavily." Enough to consider abandoning neutrality when Russia did interfere in the Finnish Cabinet? "The question was never put." Does Sweden consider her membership in the UN an interference with being neutral, as Switzerland reportedly does? "We don't feel that membership has anything to do with neutrality as all the different groups are members. If Russia and all her satellites left the UN, then there would be an issue. It would then be an association of only one bloc. But I don't say that we would quit."

Professor Ohlin, by the way, also was singled out for rebuke (along with Professor Tingsten) by Mr. Khrushchev when he decided to cancel his Scandinavian visit. "Khrushchev talked about 'opposition.' I merely had said I would not attend a dinner party for him, that's all. I did not open my mouth for five months after that. We regard it (the trip cancellation) as a minor event."



BOHEMAN

I heard more about the neutrality issue from Eric Boheman, former Swedish Ambassador to Washington and now the suave board member of one of Stockholm's biggest banks. Boheman presides over three desk phones in an enormous paneled room and makes no secret over the pleasure he gets in being released from the no-public-opinion conformity of a government servant.

"There is no comparison between us and the 'uncommitted' nations of Asia," Boheman told me. "We are committed, but not in a military way. The difference from India and Indonesia is that we have no internal communist danger. And also, there is not a single Swede who interprets neutrality in a way that we might fight against the West. Here nobody even thinks of the possibility of a war except against Russia. The neutral position here really boils down to only one thing: No foreign

60, discussed Swedish neutrality with me in a most appropriate setting: a churchyard bench. Actually, he first sought a coffee table along one of Stockholm's shopping sidewalks. But the combination of crowds and deafening pneumatic drillwork on streets under repair drove us churchward. I was lucky to catch Ohlin too. Not only was this one of his infrequent visits into town from his suburban home, he was about to depart for Charlottesville where the University of Virginia has granted him the status of resident professor for a year. He said he is looking forward to "getting away from politics." But in the next breath he confessed he would be in "residence" only a month before having to interrupt his Charlottesville stay for the business at home.

Ohlin said that he regards the Soviet interference in the composition of Finland's Cabinet last Fall (WWU-25) as "a relatively important change



bases on Swedish soil. Rightly or wrongly, we think that might affect the very delicate situation of Finland. And I suspect that a majority of the Swedish Parliament would swing around if Russia did anything to Finland."

Then Boheman added: "Our attitude in not having any military alliance rests on the fact that we have to keep a defense that is not inferior to any members of the Atlantic Pact. Now all these NATO countries, if they don't manufacture A-bombs, have them at their disposal through the U.S. We cannot keep up our policy of non-alignment if we don't keep up our defense at the level of others. Sweden sooner or later must have a defense which isn't lagging."

Stig Lundgren looks like a burly labor leader and, as a matter of fact, he even refers to the Social Democrats, of which he is organizing chairman, as the "Labor Party." He appears to be in his 'forties, has a big red nose, and only the daily copy of The New York Times on his desk hints of the incisive mind of this physically unimpressive politician.



LUNDGREN

Lundgren's views differ somewhat from those of the other men with whom I talked: "Soviet Russia is one of our neighbors. We are a small country and we don't feel that we can do anything to create a new government system in Russia. Small Sweden can't convince the Russian people that they ought to go over to a democratic system. We have to live together. We have to move more carefully. We are situated where we can't do anything, frankly, which would be a danger, not only for our relations with Soviet Russia, but also for Finland. All parties in Sweden, even the Communists, are in favor of the alliance-free policy. But, of course, we don't count on the Communists very well because we know where they would have their home in a war between Soviet Russia and the U.S. We belong to the West. But we feel more responsible to this alliance-free policy than the Liberals and Conservatives. We say it wasn't too good for them to speak out against Mr. Khrushchev's visit. We had a lot of questions to discuss with the Russians. It was necessary to discuss the Finnish problem with the Russians because this is a subject that is not very open. We have 700 Estonians, Lithuanians and Latvians with relatives in Soviet Russia and only five or ten people have had permission to leave. There are still many who would like to get over. I don't think it quite the right thing for their people (the Opposition) to have organized a demonstration."

Lundgren brought up a party kinship which I hadn't realized existed. He referred to a "special relation" with Finland's Social Democrats, the strongest anti-communist element in a country where the largest single bloc of parliamentary seats is held by the Communists. And he reminded me that the Finnish Social Democrats are already split with a minority group of 13 (out of a total 51) deputies "more or less ready to cooperate with the Communists."

"We missed a chance, an opportunity to talk with Mr. Khrushchev. We might possibly have been able to get better relations after his visit. We believe the Russian leaders don't know too much about our (Scandinavian) countries," Lundgren lamented.

Folke Björkman, Organizing Secretary of the Conservative Party,

couldn't agree less regarding the Khrushchev visit: "We think that Khrushchev just wanted to have the Scandinavian countries as a propaganda platform for Berlin and Geneva and we don't want to be used that way. We think the Government pays too much attention to what goes on in the Kremlin. A lot of us don't think we can be neutral, really, and that if there is a war that we can just stay out of it. Mr. Undén (the Foreign Minister) knew before he invited Mr. Khrushchev that we and the Liberals would oppose it. But he took that chance." What about the "delicate relations" with Finland? "It's always been that we are so close to Finland we don't want to help it be dragged to the other side. I'm quite sure that Moscow knows so well -- they are such realists -- that if they want to grab Finland they can do it all the same. I really don't think there will be any neutrals if there is a new war."



BJÖRKMAN

Björkman, a very affable, elegantly spoken man who for the past year has been one of his party's 45 deputies in the Riksdag (representing Stockholm), indicated that one of the most controversial aspects of the Government's foreign policy was the Foreign Minister himself. As I said earlier, Mr. Undén has been in high government office for 42 years -- more than half of his 73 years -- and apparently a good amount of the Swedes, including Mr. Undén himself, consider him the sole arbiter of Swedish foreign policy. Björkman referred to Undén as a "neutral idealist."

I asked Bertil Swård, head of the Foreign Ministry's economic section, how he thought the new "Outer Seven" (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the U.K., Switzerland, Portugal and Austria) free trade area organization would affect Swedish-Finnish relations. He explained that from a cold, commercial point of view, "it would be against our interests" to have Finland a member of the Outer Seven -- since Finland competes with Sweden's pulp and lumber industries for world markets. Then he added: "But Finland is so closely related to our hearts that we couldn't actually do anything that is disfavorable." He said that if Finland "can't" join the Outer Seven, she should "at least have access to the Scandinavian market." What Swård didn't spell out was that if Finland is prevented by Russia -- or fear of Russia -- from joining the Outer Seven in their free trade area she will be forced to become associated even more closely with the Russian economy. And closer economic association, of course, leads to closer political dependency. Swård, as all others I've questioned on this subject, swore up and down that the Outer Seven is a "purely economic" association and contains nothing in its organization to give Russia the encirclement qualms she fears in the "super personality" of the common market sponsored by the European Economic Community (France, Italy, Germany and the Benelux countries).



SWÅRD

Professor Ohlin told me that Finland had hoped to join a Scandinavian Tariff Union this June. But she was left waiting at the altar after the Norwegian Government backed out, deciding such a union would bring on an unwanted political fight with its Opposition.

Former Ambassador Boheman thought it best to make "special arrangements" for Finland to give her the same advantages as actual Outer Seven membership. Otherwise, he fears, "Russia will just let Finland get

so far and then pull them out so as to embarrass Finland and Sweden and cause Sweden to make a choice about joining."

Sven Backlund, the Foreign Ministry spokesman who set a record for popularity when he was Swedish Embassy press attache in Washington a few years back, explained to me why Swedish foreign policy is always argued out in private among the major party leaders and never aired in public Riksdag debate. "You see," he said, "unlike the U.S. and big countries, small countries can't afford foreign policy debates in the open because then the big powers will come in and champion one side or the other." He cited Russia's interference in Finnish politics as the actuality. And for a possibility, he suggested what might happen, for instance, if Mexican politicians should ever commit the mistake of airing their differences over U.S. relations in public and America would be obliged to "take an interest."

Backlund, in a delightfully humorous way, also indicated why some Swedes feel they can be smug over Sweden's alliance-free policy. "Russia likes us because she thinks she can use us to get Norway and Denmark away from NATO. You like us because we are neutral from Russia. Germany likes us because she assumes we like her since we are the only country she didn't occupy during World War II..."

Maybe it has been "pure luck." But as I said at the beginning, Sweden's neutrality has been paying handsome dividends for the past 145 years so who can blame the Swedes for feeling a little pleased with themselves?

Cordially,



Warren W. Unna

Received New York September 29, 1959