

Abstract

Lizelotte Lundgren Rydén, *Ett svenskt dilemma. Socialdemokraterna, centern och EG-frågan 1957-1994*. (Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 23, Göteborg 2000.) 319 pages. Written in Swedish with an English summary. [*A Swedish Dilemma. The Social Democrats, the Center Party, and the EC, 1957-1994*.] ISBN 91-88614-29-8; ISSN 1100-6781.

Sweden's main problem in its relations to the EC has always been balancing its economic needs and the policy of neutrality. This is what I call "The Swedish Dilemma." For a long time, Sweden regarded neutrality as an insurmountable obstacle to membership, but the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 created new conditions. The deep economic crisis in the early 1990s forced the politicians to seek solutions to domestic problems outside Sweden. In October 1990, the government announced a sudden policy change and in July 1991 Sweden formally applied for EC membership.

The mission of this thesis is to chart, explain, and compare the EEC/EC/EU discussions within the Social Democratic and the Center Party. The investigation starts with the 1957 signing of the Treaty of Rome and closes with the 1994 Swedish referendum on EU membership. During this period, the two parties changed from a negative to a positive attitude towards membership. Both also have close connections to strong organised interests, namely the trade union movement and the farmers' organisations respectively. Members of these organisations form the core groups of the parties. Argumentation analysis is used to structure the discussion to discern continuity and change over time. The arguments are also related to ideologies and interests.

Three processes influenced the discussion: the development of the European integration, the Cold War, and the economic, social, and political changes in postwar Swedish society. A conclusion of this thesis is that the EC question was essentially a domestic political matter. The two parties made similar judgments about the external processes. It is principally the third process that explains differences between the parties. The political actors' perception of EC membership's effects on the core groups and interest areas was very important for their attitudes. After 1989, neutrality was no longer as urgent as before. Party specific arguments, which had been only vaguely discernible before, now became more pronounced. For the Social Democrats, these arguments concerned labour market and social welfare. In the Center Party, agriculture and regional policy were central themes. A condition for the traditional Swedish policy in these fields was a high degree of national economic independence. A negative attitude towards the EC therefore accorded more with the two parties' ideologies. The new standpoint of the party elites caused a wide gap to their voters. In order to ease the tensions within the two parties, each of the party leaderships launched an ideologically impeccable vision of Sweden in Europe. The Social Democrats emphasized the EC's so-called social dimension, which they described as a necessary counterweight to market forces and international capital. The Center leaders seized upon the principle of subsidiarity. They equated this vague principle to the idea of decentralisation, which was fundamental for the party. This did not at all convince the parties' members and voters, which was clear in the campaign leading up to the 13 November 1994 referendum.

Key words: Sweden, European integration, neutrality, Swedish model, Social Democrats, Center Party, interest organisations, trade union movement, agricultural organisations, argumentation analysis.