

Magnus Jerneck, *Kritik som utrikespolitiskt medel. En studie av de amerikanska reaktionerna på den svenska Vietnamkritiken* (Criticism as a foreign policy instrument. A study of American reactions to the Swedish Vietnam criticism). Lund, Sweden, 1983. 246 pp.

What are the effects of criticism from abroad on the foreign policy behavior of a great power? This broad, but interesting question has received a lot of attention in a Swedish research project headed by political science professor Lars-Göran Stenelo. Magnus Jerneck's study of American reactions to Sweden's Vietnam criticism forms an important part of this project.

Swedish criticism of the US policy in Vietnam became pronounced from 1965 on. The Social Democratic government objected not only to the means Washington used, but also to the American goals, particularly the extent to which the Johnson, and later the Nixon Administration allegedly pursued goals which were different from the formally announced objectives. The United States came to be seen as an obstacle to Vietnam's right of self-determination. By international standards the means used by the Swedes in their criticism were dramatic; Olof Palme joined the North Vietnamese ambassador to the Soviet Union in a demonstration against the war in February 1968, and as Prime Minister compared the American Christmas bombings of 1972 to the Nazi acts of terror during the Second World War. Sweden's recognition of North Vietnam in 1969 and its substantial economic

support to Hanoi could be seen as more indirect, but still potent criticism of the United States.

Jerneck is primarily concerned with the reactions of Congress and the American press and he does not deal at any length with the response of the Johnson and Nixon administrations to the Swedish criticism. That part will apparently be handled by others working within the same project. This division of labor is unfortunate, at least from Jerneck's point of view, since Congressional and press attitudes to Sweden to a large extent really represented responses to actions taken by the Nixon Administration, not by the Swedes.

One of Jerneck's conclusions is that Sweden's criticism had little impact on Congress and the press. Little attention was generally paid to what Stockholm said and did. The Erlander and from 1969 the Palme government were heard primarily when their protests were at their dramatic, but then they were considered so leftist that even American liberals felt uncomfortable with them. The Nazi comparison was an obvious case in point.

It does not come as any big surprise to learn that many liberals were fairly sympathetic to Seden's over-all criticism while conservatives attacked the Swedish attitude. Somewhat more remarkable is the extent to which liberal American reactions to Sweden reflected American actions, and not Swedish ones. The Swedish attitude was generally ignored until 1968, when the opposition within America itself took on new dimensions. Even after 1968 anti-war senators, such as Fulbright and Pell, and congressmen, such as Reuss and Fraser, did not really use "Swedish" arguments against the war to any great extent. Instead they primarily protested Nixon Administration diplomatic reactions to the Swedish criticism. (In 1968 the American ambassador to Sweden was called home for consultations and diplomatic relations were only normalized in 1974.) Conservatives, on the other hand, responded more directly to Swedish reactions. In these quarters the comparison of the American Christmas bombings in 1972 to the fascist war crimes resulted largely in very unfavorable references to Sweden's World War II record.

The eye-witness reports from Ambassador Jean-Christophe Øberg in the summer of 1972 provided one of the few examples of Swedish information directly influencing the American debate. Øberg's speaking out against further bombing of the dikes also received considerable attention. Concrete information about the effects of the bombing probably had a greater impact on the opposition to the Vietnam war than had more general moral condemnations. Jerneck leaves curiously unexplored hints that Swedish diplomats provided Congressional anti-war leaders with covert information, primarily from North Vietnam (p. 201, p. 206 — note 5).

Jerneck's general conclusion is that "To the extent one may speak of Swedish influence on that process of opinion formation which is said to have contributed to a reappraisal of American policy, this can only have been marginal and indirect, within the framework of a strong and politically significant international opinion pressure." Few would quarrel with such a vaguely worded conclusion. Occasionally the author hints that Sweden's voice may have carried extra authority because of that country's neutrality (pp. 207-08). His final comment that the criticism from US allies carried greater weight (p. 220) would appear to be closer to reality.

All in all, this is a competently done, although somewhat limited study of

an interesting topic where most of the conclusions seem acceptable, but also fairly obvious.

The book contains a useful nine-page English summary.

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