

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

A moderate war of succession

Will the Moderate Party chairman's quitting make Sweden's largest opposition party face issues it's now busy evading?

The June 4 announcement of resignation by Moderate Party chairman Ulf Adelsohn, who assumed his post five years ago, has put Sweden's largest non-socialist party in a bind. Adelsohn's quitting not only took the Moderate Party by surprise, as his term was to expire only in 1987; but no serious rival has emerged, despite Adelsohn's failure to oust the Social Democratic regime in last year's elections.

Traditionally Sweden's right-wing conservatives, the Moderates have become increasingly dominated by neo-liberalism, as a younger, yuppie-minded generation pushed aside the more conventional, pro-defense and economic-growth outlook of the post-war era.

Old-line conservative leaders, with a classical education or firmly grounded in the reality of Swedish export business, with whatever flaws that may entail, were replaced by young upstarts, trained as speed-reading career politicians, whose only reality principle is the next imaginable promotion.

Although himself a colorful spot in the grey landscape of Swedish politics, the ascension of Adelsohn thus coincided with the rise of neo-liberalism and strategic softness. The non-socialist opposition came to richly deserve the epithet of the foremost asset of the ruling regime.

This dire condition of the Moderate Party, and of Sweden, is epitomized by the person singled out by media and opinion polls as Ulf Adelsohn's most likely successor: Moderate foreign affairs and security spokesman, 37-year-old Carl Bildt, the son-in-law of Adelsohn's predecessor

as party chairman.

Bildt has never revised his false claim that President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative "is and remains a technological impossibility," which, nonetheless, would "have troublesome consequences for Europe." While paying lip-service to conservative catch-words like a "strong defense," Bildt has always been keen on horse trading with the regime, in the name of cross-party unity behind Swedish "neutrality"—a dogma he fanatically defends against those who campaign for a Swedish alignment to the West, particularly the European Labor Party, the LaRouche co-thinker organization in Sweden.

Given Bildt's aristocratic veneer and air of still being wet behind the ears, some circles are looking for an alternative, and push the candidacy of Ingegerd Troedsson, the first deputy speaker of the parliament and vice chairman of the Moderate parliamentary group.

Formerly minister of health in the non-socialist coalition that took power in 1976, the 57-year-old Mrs. Troedsson, unlike the Moderate speed-readers mentioned above, is not lacking in real-life experience, but like most Moderates, tends to become overly enthusiastic when there is talk of "the magic of the marketplace" and cutting the budget.

Arguing that Moderate policy is eternally given, and that the choice of chairman bears only upon who's best to sell that policy to the voters, the Stockholm-based Moderates have called for quickly electing a new chairman at an extraordinary party

congress on Aug. 23. Some Gothenburg Moderates want to postpone the party congress until November, to give members a chance to debate and influence the election.

Moderate policy is *not* pre-determined, argued the former leader of the Gothenburg Moderates, Stig Gunne, but rather "all agree that the election will strongly influence which policy is to be pursued during years to come."

This statement of dissent by some Gothenburg Moderates, who are traditionally more conservative than other Moderates, and whose city is even nick-named "Little London" because of its Western ties, caused consternation among those anxious to remain neutral.

Asked for comment on the succession fight, another old-line Moderate and immediate predecessor of Adelsohn, Gösta Bohman, made no bones about his disapproval of Adelsohn's premature resignation. Moderate chairman during 1970-81, the 75-year-old Bohman said that assuming the party leadership is a mission in life—like a marriage—not something you quit after five years. Especially not if there is no successor.

While refusing to recommend any particular name, Bohman asserted that a Moderate leader must be able to go down to the harbor and share half a bottle of booze with the dockers—a rude disqualification of all thinkable contenders.

Pressed as to whether he would like his son-in-law, Carl Bildt, as the new chairman, Bohman quipped, "Sure I like him, he's my son-in-law, isn't he? And I need him for assisting me in chopping up the firewood, cutting down trees, painting sheds, tarring boats, and everything imaginable. As to the question of the party chairmanship, it shall be answered not by me, but by the election committee."