

with 5 million refugees, who have spent 13 years in the Northwest Frontier Province and northern part of Baluchistan, Islamabad would like them to go back home. At the same time, the Pakistanis are aware that if a satisfactory power-sharing formula is not found, the disgruntled Pakhtoons from Afghanistan, such as Hekmatyar, Khalis etc., may stir up the old movement for the formation of a "Greater Pakhtoonistan" which would involve most of Pakistan's western part. Perhaps it is this fear which prompted the Pakistani foreign office to tell newsmen on April 21 that any decision regarding Afghanistan's future will be based on a majority decision rather than on consensus. With Hekmatyar being the main obstacle to the formation of a Mujahideen Council, this statement indicates Pakistan is now ready to dump Hekmatyar.

Territorial integrity of Pakistan

A similar warning note also came from the former ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul (ret.), a staunch backer (and personal friend) of Hekmatyar in his service days. In a recent interview, General Gul pointed out that the demarcation line between Pakistan and Afghanistan, known as the Durand line delineated by the British, is not recognized by the Pakhtoons on either side. "A minor misadventure" in dealing with the crisis in Afghanistan "could prove extremely harmful and lead to the disintegration of Pakistan," Gul said. Urging Pakistan to handle the situation with extreme caution, Gul insisted that any provocation which may lead to fighting between the Mujahideen and Pakistani forces will be considered by the Pakhtoons as "the Punjabi prime minister's prejudice against the Pakhtoons, and the struggle for the disintegration of Pakistan would begin." He also told newsmen that Hekmatyar had told him that any "alien force in Afghanistan would be treated as an enemy."

At the same time, Pakistan cannot ignore Iran's plans or Saudi designs, since both are Pakistan's friends. In addition, Islamabad will have to absorb pressures exerted from Washington. Caught in this cross-fire, and facing stray allegations, such as the charge that Pakistan is carving out the eastern part of Afghanistan as its sphere of influence, Pakistan will have to be extremely judicious, both diplomatically and politically.

Under the circumstances, Hekmatyar, with distinct links to Saudi Arabia, and Massoud, with links to Washington and Teheran, the situation could be dangerous. The danger is not only that Afghans will spill more Afghani blood, but once again the specter of "alien forces" walking into Afghanistan to rescue one or the other of their clients.

While the U.N. peace plan has little future other than rotting under the fierce summer heat, former Pakistani Chief of Armed Services Gen. Aslam Beg has correctly warned on more than one occasion lately that the Afghan developments are spiked with dangers, unless the external forces choose not to meddle in the affairs which best should be left to the Afghans to resolve.

Denmark approaches a change of government

by Poul Rasmussen

The staggering series of economic and political crisis sweeping through all of Europe often takes a peculiar form in each country. While most of Scandinavia, particularly Finland, Sweden, and Norway, has been severely shaken by an unheralded crisis in the financial sector, the situation in Denmark remains relatively calm, at least for the moment. While Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian banks have collapsed in a domino-like chain reaction, the Danish financial sector has remained untouched.

A significant factor behind the apparent Danish immunity from the Scandinavian financial crisis can be found in the geographical proximity of Denmark to the reunited Germany. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Denmark has been experiencing an unprecedented export bonanza to Germany, resulting in historic record surpluses for Danish balance of payments. Until 1989; Denmark had a 25-year, unbroken history of balance of payment deficits.

But the economic benefits of the reunification of Germany have not rendered Denmark immune to the political crisis now afflicting almost every country in Europe.

In September of this year, Prime Minister Poul Schlüter of the Conservative Party will celebrate his first full decade as the head of the Danish government. But 10 years in office is a long time by any European standard, and, in all likelihood, the Schlüter government will not survive long beyond September.

The IMF dictated change

When Schlüter came to power in 1982, the world was staggered by the Mexican debt moratorium and the international debt crisis. All through the summer of 1982, the Social Democratic minority government of Anker Joergensen had struggled to compose a proposal for a new national budget. In May of that year, a delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had visited Denmark and left a clear and uncompromising message to the Joergensen government: Your country has the highest national foreign debt per capita in the northern hemisphere and in the world. Therefore, you must immediately implement an unprecedented set of austerity measures.

Joergensen gave up. Without even calling for new elections, the government resigned, and Schlüter formed a four-party minority coalition government. Nobody expected the new government to last long. The Social Democrats expected the Conservative-Liberal government to be swept away by the international financial crisis within no more than six months. The Schlüter government did fall four months later, but new elections gave the coalition parties enough political strength to continue running the government. For the Danish Social Democrats, this was the beginning of the longest period out of power since 1911.

In 1987, two things happened on the political scene of Denmark. In September, Anker Joergensen resigned as party chairman of the Social Democratic Party, and former Minister of Labor Svend Auken, only 43 years of age, took over. In December, the Schlüter government presented to the parliament the most severe austerity budget the country had ever seen.

Ever since the December 1987 budget, the popularity of the Schlüter government has been constantly falling. In three consecutive elections, the coalition parties of the government have been losing substantial numbers of votes, and the Social Democrats have been making corresponding gains. Nonetheless, the Social Democratic Party was slipping further and further away from running the government. The main reason was the unreliability of the young Svend Auken.

By fall 1991, a series of internal crises within the Social Democratic Party had caused public distrust of the leadership qualifications of Svend Auken to reach new intensity. At the same time, the Schlüter government was severely shaken by its own political scandals, most particularly the so-called Tamil case, an affair that could still topple the government. Denmark had neither government nor opposition; it was a country without any effective political leadership. The story of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* came to mind again.

The Tamil case

In the fall of 1988, the then-minister of justice, the Conservative Party's Erik Ninn-Hansen, used the power of his office to prevent families of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka from coming into Denmark. According to Danish law, refugees have a right to be reunited with their families. Following a preliminary investigation in the spring of 1989, Prime Minister Schlüter assured the Parliament on April 25 that "nothing has been swept under the carpet in this case." Schlüter's speech of April 25, 1989 has since been known as "the carpet speech," and when the special prosecutor later this year presents the results of his investigation, "the carpet speech" might very well precipitate the end of the Schlüter era.

The unpopular economic policies and the Tamil case have already weakened the government to the extent that, under normal circumstances, a change of government would have taken place long ago. But Svend Auken has been

Schlüter's best political insurance policy. The distrust of the leadership qualifications of Auken had even one-third of the Social Democratic voters preferring a Schlüter-led government to an Auken government. By the end of 1991, the situation was no longer acceptable to the behind-the-scenes leadership of Denmark's industry and trade unions.

The conservative Federation of Danish Industries quietly sent signals saying that the Schlüter government might not "be there forever," and the Social Democratic leadership of the major trade unions clearly signaled that the time had come for a change in the chairman of the party. On March 17, after weeks of political rumors, the vice chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, announced his candidacy for chairman.

A new Social Democratic chairman

At a dramatic extraordinary party convention on April 11, the Danish Social Democratic Party elected a new party chairman. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, age 48, unseated the party chief since 1987, Svend Auken. This was the first time in the 100 years of Social Democratic Party history that the chairman had to face a challenge to his position, and Svend Auken lost badly. Of the 556 party delegates at the convention, only 187 voted for Auken, while the new chairman, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, received the backing of 359 delegates (with 10 abstentions).

With Poul Nyrup Rasmussen as chairman of the Social Democratic Party, a potential alternative to the Schlüter government has finally been established. At least, this is what the traditional political establishment of Denmark would like to believe. If and when the international economic crisis sweeps through the country in the near future, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen is already presented to the public as "the man to replace the old regime." Unfortunately for the Danish people, there is not likely to be much change with a Prime Minister Nyrup Rasmussen. Trained as an economist in the Danish trade unions, he represents nothing new in terms of economic policies. They have backed almost every step of the Schlüter economic policies—quietly, but solidly.

On June 2, Denmark will hold a referendum on the Maastricht accords of the European Community. Only Denmark and Ireland requested that their citizens be asked to vote before these sweeping changes to the Rome treaty would be implemented. According to the statutes of the European Community, any change to the original treaty requires unanimity. Therefore, if the Danes reject the Maastricht accords, the much-touted European Union will not become reality.

The series of scandals hitting both the government and the opposition in the last several months has produced a profound fear inside the establishment that the fast-growing disgust for their establishment politicians will manifest itself as a "no" vote for the Maastricht accords. If so, the political crisis of Denmark will suddenly be extended to all of Europe.