

New role for the 'Northern Route,' as EU gets three more members

by Ulf Sandmark

The European Union (EU) is expanding as a vehicle for European economic and political cooperation. After the referendums in Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Norway, the smoke has cleared, and the results can be seen: Austria, Finland, and Sweden have joined, while Norway stays out. These four countries, together with Switzerland and Iceland, were holdovers from the British-led European Free Trade Area (EFTA), which was formed as a less-centralized alternative to the European Economic Community, the predecessor of today's European Union (EU).

The postwar Yalta arrangements forced Finland and Austria to remain neutral countries after World War II. Sweden has maintained its neutrality since the 19th century, while Norway became a member of NATO. For Finland and Austria, integration into the EU was only made possible with the end of the Yalta-designed Cold War system. In 1990, when German reunification became a reality, the EU, under the influence of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, decided to actively recruit new member nations and use this as the first step in developing a new security policy for all Europe, under the rubric of "common security." The process was interrupted with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, when the EU embarked on an internal integration policy in order to form an economic, political, and security union.

A missed opportunity

A great opportunity was missed. The leading nations of Europe concentrated on domestic problems at a time when history had provided the chance to develop cooperative structures and rebuild the newly opened East. This self-imposed isolation by the EU nations was a strategic blunder, making it possible for the British and their co-thinkers to introduce devastating "shock therapy" into eastern Europe and Russia.

However, the EFTA countries were asked to apply for membership as early as 1990, so as to be ready to join by Jan. 1, 1995, after the first round of the Maastricht negotiations had been completed. This has been accomplished with Austria, Finland, and Sweden joining the EU. The integration of the East European nations of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, is now on the agenda. European Commission President Jacques

Delors's plan for infrastructure development, with the backing of the Clinton administration, can strengthen that policy direction. Time, however, is short. The next round of Maastricht Treaty negotiations starts next year. If the British government succeeds in delaying the Delors plan just a few months, it can have devastating consequences (see article, p. 4).

Overriding security concerns

With the Finnish decision in the referendum on Oct. 16 to join the EU, a border of 1,200 kilometers between the EU and Russia was established. Finland's proximity to Russia was directly relevant to the outcome of the referendum in that country. Improved security was the overriding concern for Finland, which has used the window of opportunity after the Berlin Wall came down, to steadily arrange closer connections with the West. Besides its application to join the EU, Finland also has applied for membership in the Western European Union (WEU) military alliance.

Four weeks after the Finns, the Swedes also voted "yes" to join the EU in their referendum on Nov. 13. The Swedish voters were decisively influenced by the Finnish vote. However, Sweden has decided to maintain its policy of neutrality and only apply for observer status in the WEU. But the Finnish policy of seeking alliance with the West, will also shield Sweden, and in reality will also bring in Sweden into security cooperation with the West. One week after the Swedish referendum, the biggest Swedish daily newspaper, *Expressen*, intersected this development and started a campaign for Sweden to fully join NATO.

Finland has taken the initiative over Sweden to break with the old, traditionally Swedish-dominated mode of "Nordic cooperation." Matti Klinge, a history professor at Helsinki University, clearly defined the Finnish orientation as not "Nordic," but rather toward the "Baltic Sea," and directly oriented toward Germany. Interviewed by the daily *Svenska Dagbladet* of Nov. 1, he said: "We Finns have no negative feelings toward Germany, quite the contrary. Germany is our best friend, on one condition: that it does not create any problems vis-à-vis Russia. Germany and Russia must be on good terms and live in peace with each other and together

generate economic progress. In the 19th century, St. Petersburg was to a great extent a German city. It could become a new center of gravitation."

Klinge thus expressed a clear and realistic peace policy, similar to that of other central European nations—i.e., no experiments, but peace through security and economic development.

For NATO member Norway, these security concerns, so important to Central Europe and Finland, had no importance in the political debate before the referendum of Nov. 28. The different security concerns were probably the most decisive factor, given the small vote margins, that explains why the Norwegians did not follow Austria, Finland, and Sweden into the EU.

A hornet's nest

Although the integration of Scandinavia into EU has been very much sponsored by many EU politicians, EU policy toward northern Europe is almost nonexistent. Soon it will be decided, whether the old Northern Route—across Scandinavia into Russia—will be brought to bear in efforts by the EU to develop Russia, or whether it will continue to be a channel for destruction of the productive capacities of Russia with aggressive shock therapy and radical environmentalist policies.

A closer look at the Swedish EU referendum debate, and the role played in it by the environmentalists, could give one the impression that Sweden's strategic reason for joining the EU was similar to that behind Viking invasions. The oligarchy of Constantinople sponsored the Vikings—Nordic mercenaries trained by the Roman legions—in order to attack the Carolingian state. Today's barbarians are being trained by the oligarchy's ecology movement.

The Swedish ecology movement campaigned for joining the EU to "strengthen the EU's environmental policy." Three "peace activists" from Sweden, Norway, and Finland wanted to form a Nordic faction in the European Commission, controlling enough votes—27, together with the United Kingdom—to veto any decision.

The Swedish financial and banking sector also opted for influence within the European Commission. The head of the Church of Sweden, Archbishop Gunnar Weman, together with Bishops Jonas Jonsson and Henrik Svennungsson, wrote, in *Dagens Nyheter* on Nov. 3, that they wanted to join the EU in order to make an alliance with the Anglican Church to counter Catholic influence. Even the Swedish nomenklatura joined the queue, desperately hungry for the 1,000 new high-paying jobs which will now open up in the bureaucracy at European Union headquarters in Brussels.

The result of the Scandinavian referendums were very narrow. In Sweden, it was 52% for and 47% against, while in Norway, the exact opposite was true. It was only in the more populous urban areas that the supporters of the referendum carried a majority. Most of the territory in each country

carried a "no" majority, certainly all northern areas. The negotiated deals between the EU and each nation had been tailored to recruit the voters to say "yes" at a minimum cost to the EU.

The main issue that carried the "yes" campaigns, was to increase the export markets for industry, saying that this would give jobs to the unemployed. Swedish farmers got a better deal, much better than the Swedish free-market farm policy offers them, and this recruited the big farm organization to campaign for the "yes" side. In Finland and Norway, on the other hand, a farmers' revolt joined the "no" side.

In the last week of the Swedish election campaign, when the polls showed a slight lead for the "no" side, the European Commission also threw in a big infrastructure program to create jobs for Swedes. They decided to make the Nordic Triangle the 12th project in the Delors plan for infrastructure development in Europe, which means economic support to build high-speed railways and motorways among the capitals Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm, with a connection to Helsinki.

For Norway, the infrastructure programs would only affect the very southeastern part of the country. For the other regions, much more support for farming and regional development comes from national sources. Norway has a strong economy from oil and fishing, resources that the Norwegians found no reason to share with the other nations of the European Union. Therefore, the question of national sovereignty and the totalitarian features of the Maastricht Treaty became the most successful arguments for the "no" side in Norway.

Will the integration succeed?

With all this popular resistance and all the oligarchical counteroperations, the success of the EU infrastructure projects in Scandinavia will be the determining factor not only for transport, but for broader policies as well. It will serve as a rallying point to organize the Scandinavian populations to make participation in the European Union, and the Northern Route to the East, oriented to a constructive "development for peace" perspective.

Finland has again taken a lead, assuming its role as a direct physical bridge to Russia. The Finnish road authority has already decided to invest \$700 million to build a 580-kilometer four-lane highway from Abo across Finland, and then to St. Petersburg, Russia by year 2010. The sum includes support from the EU.

The fight over the financing of the projects could turn the European states away from British monetarist policies into a more dirigist direction, which would be of great benefit to the nations of Europe. Also, the almost half of the Scandinavian population who voted "no" out of protectionist sentiments or opposition to the Maastricht Treaty, could be recruited to support such a dirigist economic policy, centered around the expansion of agricultural production, regional development programs, and high-technology infrastructure projects.