

## 'Following the "Yes" vote, Swedish anti-Europeans get ready to fight back' from Libération (15 November 1994)

**Caption:** On 15 November 1994, the French daily newspaper Libération analyses the political situation in Sweden after the positive result of the referendum held on 13 November on the country's accession to the European Union.

**Source:** Libération. 15.11.1994, n° 4196. Paris. "Après le "oui", les opposants suédois de l'Europe préparent la résistance", auteur:Millot, Lorraine , p. 15.

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## Following the 'Yes' vote, Swedish anti-Europeans get ready to fight back

Our special correspondent in Stockholm

**The Swedish people's 52.2 % 'Yes' vote in Sunday's referendum on accession to the European Union means that Sweden will accede on 1 January 1995, but it also forebodes tough resistance to any further integration.**

'A sigh of relief' was yesterday's headline in the business daily *Dagens Industri*, one of the most ardent supporters of accession, and it captured the prevailing mood in Sweden. Having been in the doldrums when pre-referendum polls were indicating a possible 'No' vote, the Stockholm Stock Exchange also welcomed the 'Yes' vote by opening 2.6 % up yesterday morning. The 52.2 % 'Yes' vote gives Sweden an undisputed right of entry into the Union, even if less prestigious than Finland's (where the 'Yes' vote got 57% in October) or particularly Austria's (with 66 % in June). All the anti-accession parties, including the Greens and the Communists, promised to abide by the outcome of the referendum when the Accession Treaty is ratified in Parliament on 14 December.

'We shall be an active partner in European cooperation,' the Social-Democrat Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, promised last Sunday, pronouncing himself *satisfied* with the result, despite the 47 % 'No' vote. Mr Carlsson, whose own position has been strengthened by the result, pointed out that the French referendum on Maastricht in 1992 was even more neck and neck. Yesterday, Olof Ruin, a political scientist at the University of Stockholm, said that 'The victory of the "Yes" vote owes a lot to him,' and that it confers on him a status comparable to that of Olof Palme, the legendary Social-Democrat Prime Minister who was assassinated in 1986. The Professor added that 'Just as Palme was a controversial figure during his lifetime, so, last Sunday, Carlsson earned for himself the image of father of the nation.' While allowing his party to fund the campaign of those Social-Democrats who opposed accession, Carlsson managed to convince a small majority of voters to vote 'Yes', and this proved decisive on Sunday.

The Swedes' very measured 'Yes' vote was one of resignation rather than enthusiasm, according to observers, and is a warning of strong opposition to any closer union. 'The struggle continues,' according to Hans Lindqvist, Chairman of the 'No to Europe' campaign, speaking yesterday. Counting on the 47 % of Swedes who wanted to block accession, opponents are already preparing for 1996 and the conference on the follow-up to Maastricht. 'If the Union decides to adopt a single currency or common defence policy, we shall call for a new referendum,' says Hans Lindqvist. The 'No' activists are planning to hold a congress in January to decide what form their resistance should take. Just as Danish opponents have been doing since 1973, they intend to put forward their own candidates for election to the European Parliament and, above all, prepare for the return match in 1996.

The map of voting patterns might also lead us to believe that accession had been rejected, since so many regions are coloured red, corresponding to the 'No' vote. The entire sparsely-populated north of the country rejected the Union, which is seen as being *remote* and *alien* to Swedish culture. 'What do the Eurocrats know about reindeer farming?' said one Laplander in a television interview. The largest 'No' vote (almost 72 %) was recorded in Jämtland, which borders on Norway and is traditionally hostile to the Government in Stockholm. The 'Yes' vote carried the day only thanks to the large conurbations in the south of the country, home to the political and economic 'establishment' that the embittered losers accuse of being 'the only ones to gain from the EU', while 'the man in the street can only hope that Brussels will not mess up the Swedish model too much'. The record for 'Yes' votes (64.8 %) goes to Malmö district, Sweden's south-western gateway to the *continent*, followed by the capital Stockholm with 61.4 %. A cursory sociological analysis would indicate that the Union secured most of its support from high-income voters, loyal to the Liberal or Conservative Party. The typical 'No' voter, on the other hand, was a young female civil servant or manual worker.

The relative timidity of the Swedish vote leaves a question mark over Norway's decision. It is the last of the four candidate countries to put its accession to the vote on 28 November. 'Many Norwegians will think that a "No" vote would mean that Norway would be the only one left outside,' was what Prime Minister

Gro Harlem Brundtland was hoping last Sunday. 'Reuniting the Scandinavian family' within Europe, rather than any enchantment with Europe itself, could be a decisive factor in ensuring that, on 28 November, Europe expands to encompass 16 countries.

Lorraine Millot