

**Olof Palme:
Democratic
socialism
means
solidarity**

Olof Palme, Prime Minister of Sweden and chairman of the Social Democratic Party, delivered two main speeches at the Party Congress in October 1972. These speeches — the inaugural address and the closing address — are reprinted in this booklet, which is published by the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

ISBN 91—532—0037—3

**Olof Palme:
Democratic
socialism
means
solidarity**



Closing address

The 1972 party congress has been characterized by hard work and seriousness. Many representatives have said to me, "This is a working congress". The representatives have put in an incredible amount of hard work. In one week we have gone over all the vital sectors of social policy in a spirit of earnestness, thoroughness and solidarity. This has to a very great extent been a congress of women and young people.

When I opened this congress I recalled the years of political and economic austerity that had passed.

People have asked: Where does the Social Democratic Party stand? What does it want to do?

The congress has been well aware of this. A realization of the responsibility of the congress was already evident from the preparations un-

dertaken by our basic organizations. We came to this congress with a particular aim in view, determined to tackle our problems and to evolve a clear programme of action.

No doubt this congress has disappointed our opponents. They had expected and hoped that the party which assembled here would be defeated from the very outset, a confused party devoid of either the courage or the strength for a critical appraisal of its policy.

But the mood of this congress has not been one of discouragement. On the contrary it has reflected a firm confidence in the ability of the party to solve the problems that people are confronted by. On one topic after another we have tackled the issues at stake and penetrated the problems.

This is not the behaviour of a party preparing for an election defeat.

Instead we have drawn up guidelines for policy in sectors which are of vital importance to the community.

In this way our congress differs in many respects from those held by the bourgeois parties.

The bourgeois parties

Very little has been said here concerning our

opponents. This has been wise and I have only the following to say now.

A few weeks ago the Moderates held their congress in Västerås: It was full of spiteful attacks on Social Democracy. The central issues in the election were to be the monarchy and the Church of Sweden. Those people who expected the Moderates to show how they would tackle unemployment, regional problems, working conditions, the status of women, were in for a disappointment.

The Centre Party held its congress in Växjö last summer. But did that congress leave anybody a penny the wiser as to what the policy of the Centre Party actually implies? What exactly do they want? *One* message did get across to us from that congress: there is no conflict between those who own the firms and those who work for them. Arne Geijer put paid to that one last Sunday. As he made quite clear, between the policy of the Centre and the social attitude of the union movement there is a great gulf fixed.

We have established quite empirically that the Centre Party's idea of the role of the union movement does not agree with the union movement's own ideas on the subject. We can also establish that the Centre Party has broken with

its tradition of working for a settlement with the Social Democratic Party and has instead joined forces with the Moderates and the Liberals. We find that the Centre Party regards the Social Democrats as its principal enemy and that this attitude has been confirmed during the past week.

From the ideological point of view it is interesting to note that the Centre Party has moved progressively closer to those parties which put their entire trust in the mechanism of the market, at the same time as it tries to keep in touch with the protest movement which has developed in recent years against the market mechanism and which has sometimes been dubbed the Green Wave. Of course it is impossible to square the circle in this way. The result can be little more than a nostalgic fantasy.

But the really interesting thing about the trends that have been at work in the world during the past few years is the concern for our common resources, for our environment, and the desire for partnership. This is a critique of society calling for co-operation and solidarity, demanding democratic decisions instead of anonymous forces. This critique is familiar to us. In fact the Green Wave is red.

Results of the congress

What have been the most important results of the congress? The answer depends on who you are and what your approach is.

For people with arduous and dangerous jobs, perhaps the most important result is the resolution for a new *Act on the working environment*, which among other things gives their safety officers the right to intervene. The individual must not be left alone to face the hazards of his job. He must have the entire community behind him — both his union and society at large.

Perhaps the most important resolution for those living and working in depopulation counties is that concerning *economic and regional policy*. They know that the Social Democrats are to be relied on wherever people's security is at stake. They know that we will go on fighting for job opportunities and development in the different parts of the country. They know that the Social Democrats will not acquiesce in the growth of antipathies and conflicts between town and country.

Those with low incomes and many mouths to feed will doubtless be reassured by the continued progress of Social Democracy along the path of *social equality*, with increased housing grants

and an equitable taxation policy. A far-reaching programme of social policy has been drawn up by the congress.

Similarly low wage earners will find that the labour movement remains true to its *equitable wage policy*. No doubt the attacks made on this policy by the bourgeois press and the bourgeois parties have aroused the fears and apprehensions of poorly paid female textile workers, nursing orderlies and those employed in retail trade and in the food manufacturing industry. But they know where the unions and the political labour movement stand. In this respect the party congress follows on directly from the I.O congress last year.

Women know that this congress has resolved to make the campaign for the *equal status of women* one of the principal issues of the 1970s. The labour movement will take the lead. This work will be done through the unions and politically. Efforts will be required from a strong society to provide child supervision, education and employment.

We shall pursue these efforts within our own organizations in order to get more women into politics, more women into Social Democracy, more women in positions of responsibility. We

have a vigorous women's federation. But this task concerns the entire party.

Everybody will judge the decisions of this congress according to their own premises. They can do so because in one sector after another we have dealt with practical problems which people encounter in their everyday lives. This is the fundamental difference between our congress and the bourgeois meetings.

We have in all things been guided by the criteria of socialism. Our work has been characterized by a desire for complete solidarity, by belief in democracy and by the struggle for equality.

Developing our economic policy

We started with industrial democracy. A democratization of working life is to be carried out by the unions and by the political labour movement. That is quite clear after the debate which was introduced by Gunnar Nilsson.

A great number of matters were cleared up in our discussion of economic policy. It was a long discussion. We know that a tremendous amount remains to be done in the practical sphere. But ideologically and politically speaking, the interesting thing was that the whole of

this lengthy debate was concerned with the way in which we could strengthen and amplify our economic policy. We were fully agreed that this policy should be developed further.

Our economic policy has come in for a heavy attack from the bourgeois. Year after year they have campaigned against government corporations. Now they expected us to beat the retreat, to say that our economic policy had been a mistake and that it had become a liability.

Instead the debate on economic policy has shown that the party is united in its support of the economic offensive launched by us at the end of the 1960s. The representatives who came to the congress were not told to advise us to keep quiet about economic policy. On the contrary, we were told: Keep going, for the Social Democratic economic policy is fundamentally right. It is important for our economic progress and for the security of the individual.

The equality programme now practical policy

The debate on the second report of the social equality group also served to clear up a great deal. Neither in this congress nor within our party is there any doubt that we did right in launching the campaign for social equality. And

we shall continue. Bourgeois propaganda against our efforts towards social equalization has not caused us to falter.

The interesting point is that when we raised the issue of social equality it was dismissed as a chimera. When the first report on social equality was presented, it was described as an attempt by the Social Democrats to start a fight. Now that the second report is being presented and discussed by the congress, it is regarded as a perfectly natural component of Social Democratic policy. This is because we can point to practical results which today are supported by the overwhelming majority of people. We have shown that greater equality is possible, we have given practical proof that the demand for equality means an improvement in people's living conditions coupled with greater liberty. We have placed the policy of social equality on a sound footing by beginning to realize it.

The right to work

Our discussion of the policy of social equality, of economic policy, of the status of women and of labour market and regional policy has centred round one consistently recurring theme: the right to work.

Arne Geijer forcefully emphasized how fundamental a demand this is. He has received an answer from the congress. Let me once again affirm: By various measures we have been able to create employment for more and more people. According to the labour force surveys there are between 150,000 and 200,000 more people in employment now than in 1967, due allowance being made for the statistical margin of error.

But there are still too many people out of work. The fight against unemployment remains our most important task.

People grow apprehensive when unemployment rises, and this apprehension is not confined to those who lose their jobs. It also affects the housewife who is thinking of looking for a job, and it affects young people about to complete their education.

People know that left to their own devices they are powerless against the trade cycle, structural change and the market mechanism. They are told by the bourgeois: Let us increase industrial profits, then perhaps there will be a job for you.

This kind of attitude is quite inadequate as a means of safeguarding employment. We are convinced that general tax relief for individual

firms is not of itself sufficient to solve employment problems. Instead this congress has once again affirmed that society must assume direct responsibility for people's security. We cannot rest content with awarding privileges to enterprise in the hope that those who own the firms will provide work for people.

We must increase security of employment and we must give the elderly, the handicapped, women and young persons a more secure status in the labour market.

But we must also create more job opportunities. This will be done through measures of economic policy designed to extend and strengthen industrial production.

But the public sector will also have to be expanded in the long run. Otherwise we will not achieve our aim: work for all. There are many more tasks which we can only solve by dint of combined efforts. People will come to require more of the community. The demand for full employment and the demand for better social services can be brought together in a fruitful alliance. The steep rise in the demand for employment can be converted via the public sector into productive contributions improving our common welfare.

Behind this view lies one of the fundamental long-term ideas of socialism: the intertwining of different aims to form a concerted policy.

The whole of society

It is not just a question of alleviating individual sufferings and abuses. The whole of society is to be reconstructed. If we wish to bring one problem into the light and work to solve it, we have to realize that the possibility of solving other urgent problems is also affected. If we try to create efficiency in industry without providing for general economic growth, e. g. in the public sector, we are liable to create unemployment. We will also create difficulties if we try to clean our air and our rivers and protect our natural resources without solving the problems of the working environment at the same time.

We shall continue the development of our overall planning. The congress has passed a resolution to this effect.

We shall extend democracy at work, in both the private and the public sectors. The congress has passed a resolution to this effect.

Behind these efforts stands a united labour movement. These lines of policy are intertwined by democratic socialism.

They can only be put into practice through the concerted efforts of politicians and unions. Practically and ideologically speaking the Social Democratic Party and the union movement are more closely united today than ever before.

We are prepared to co-operate

At meetings with representatives of private enterprise one is continually being asked where the Social Democrats stand. This is reasonable enough, for those representatives stand for an important interest group in Swedish society.

This congress has answered the question. We know where we stand on the main issues. Now we shall put our policy into effect.

I concluded my address at the inaugural celebration by saying that we would go to work with a sense of our responsibility for the nation. There is nothing arrogant in saying that this feeling of responsibility for the nation has been a *leitmotiv* in the work of our congress. In this spirit we shall endeavour to put the resolutions of the congress into practice.

But we are no sectarians. We are not engaged in a conspiracy. We do not deliberate behind locked doors. We are an open popular movement that knows what it wants.

For this reason we do not need to fight just for the sake of fighting. We are prepared to fight if we have to. We are of course prepared to co-operate if this can be done. The most important thing for us is to be able to implement our policies.

Now that the congress has given us the guidelines we shall proceed to get in touch with different groups and interests in Swedish society so as to discuss things openly with them. We shall embark on this discussion in the conviction that it is in the best interests of the entire nation for employment to be safeguarded, working environments improved, the natural environment protected and for wage earners to be given greater influence over the economy.

The policy of Social Democracy as confirmed by this congress is fundamentally an expression of optimism regarding the future.

We believe in the future of industrial society and we are convinced that the problems confronting us today can be overcome.

Social Democracy believes that people desire and are prepared to assume greater responsibility for our industrial and economic development in order to achieve greater security and welfare.

On the strength of the resolutions passed by the congress, the Social Democratic party therefore invites all groups and interests in Sweden to co-operate on a broad basis for the renewal of Swedish society in a positive spirit.

We shall win people over to our policy

A week ago we met to begin a hard working congress. This has now been completed. As always we have derived stimulus and happiness from the discussion of our policy.

Now it is time for the everyday grind to begin again. This is something which we have all had experience of, in the party committee, in the Riksdag group, in municipal councils and in union organizations.

The working party will start work and survey reports will be studied. Negotiations will be conducted and laws will be drafted. The resolutions of the congress will be hammered out into specific proposals.

Each of us in the party will have his or her job to do. We will come up against problems and difficulties, day-to-day problems of many kinds, we will be faced with the task of convincing others, endeavouring to co-operate with others or of fighting for our proposals.

As we get down to this job we are convinced that we will finish it, because we are democratic socialists, because we are convinced of the ability of reformism to accomplish things that are worthwhile for humanity.

Our struggle is not only a fatiguing round of investigations and organizational work, it is also a struggle for democracy.

For it is a peaceable struggle. Convictions, empirical reasons and facts are the weapons we fight with. We are constantly engaged in demonstrating the possibility of a peaceful transformation of society. By creating a better society for people to live in we spike the guns of those who advocate violence and revolution.

Reformism is a source of security to people and we are proud of being democratic reformers.

Fellow party members!

This congress has been given exhaustive coverage. But people in the country at large have not been able to follow it hour by hour, they have not experienced the mood in which it has been held. For most people in Sweden this has been an ordinary week of work and leisure with everyday worries and joys. Our policy is con-

cerned with this everyday scene and with its future appearance.

Now as we leave the People's Palace we do so in the determination to win people over to the policy we have laid down.

We shall propagate the resolutions of the Social Democratic Party congress at meetings, in study circles, at places of work and in housing areas.

This congress has displayed an incredible fund of knowledge, experience and ideas on the part of the members of the party. Now we shall show that we are capable of pursuing our resolutions and of winning people over to our policy.

Sweden will be going to the polls in a year's time. A great deal can happen before then. Nobody yet knows anything about the election campaign and all that. But of one thing I am quite sure. If we win the election we will all say: the foundations of our victory were laid in the People's Palace between 1—7 October 1972 at the twenty-fifth congress of the Social Democratic Party.