

THE AWFUL TRUTH ABOUT SWEDEN

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Over the past few weeks, two articles — one in *The Guardian* and the other in *Le Figaro* — have given new ammunition to those who worship the Swedish social model. Both articles, as is so common among those that discuss Sweden's welfare society, were characterised by grave inaccuracies.

The first piece, by *The Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee, described a Sweden where unemployment is low, growth is high, and where 'public services are second to none'. Hence the unambiguous title for the piece, 'The Most Successful Society the World has Ever Known'. Moreover, Toynbee's column described a Swedish labour market built on a 'magic' pact between the state, its employers, and its workforce.

And just last week, in the midst of the French riots, a team of journalists from *Le Figaro* paid a visit to Rinkeby, a predominantly immigrant area in Stockholm. The newspaper — generally considered right-wing in the Swedish press — entitled their resulting story, 'Rinkeby, a Model for the Suburbs', and held up the Swedish immigration model as an example of great success.

Sadly for these journalists — and for Sweden — their descriptions couldn't be further from the truth. Yet their descriptions are quite typical: few comprehend the full scope of the problems with the Swedish welfare state.

First, unemployment is not at all low. The official rate stands around 6 percent, which is just above normal for a market economy. But according to the trade unions, which are intimately connected to the Social Democratic government, the real — and hidden — level of unemployment rises above 20 percent. Out of a population of nine million people, over one and a half million healthy Swedes have chosen not to enter the labour market and live on welfare instead.

The Swedish labour market is rigid and regulated, and the real significance of the 'magic' pact between the state, employers, and the workforce to which *The Guardian* refers is an order where the state takes away every right from the employer and gives those rights to his or her employees instead. Companies do not dare to hire new staff; because of labour legislation, it is impossible to get rid of them. There is no doubt that this is a major reason for Sweden's mass unemployment.

And second, while Sweden's growth (around 3 percent) is above the European average, it is still relatively low. If Sweden were a state in America today, it would be the fifth poorest. Even more, the total tax pressure is 63 percent. In that perspective, perhaps it is not surprising that not a single large-scale enterprise — like IKEA or Ericsson — has been created in Sweden since 1970.

Are these the trademarks of the world's most successful society? I think not, and there is even more: ten percent of Swedish students leave compulsory school without complete grades, and one third of the students in upper secondary school drop out. And the universal health care system — widely celebrated abroad for its 'fairness' — is an equally dismal story. The wait

between a first doctor's appointment and an operation may be as long as a year or more, which in some cases is enough time for the patient to die, while others are forced to spend the better part of their 'golden years' waiting for a new hip. At the same time, the government is trying to enforce a ban on private health care initiatives.

Sweden's immigration model, which bears much resemblance to the French model, is unsuccessful for a host of reasons. Multiculturalism has been allowed to grow strong enough to challenge the welfare state, and this multiculturalism is in no way related to the natural symbiosis of lifestyles that come into existence when people live together. Rather, it is a reference to the political philosophy that holds every culture at equal standards, and, in the name of tolerance, ignores curtailments of our liberty. The Swedish welfare state is tearing apart because of its desperate effort to please every minority and special interest group, and to respect all cultural manifestations, even if they are harmful. This leads to a situation in which Islamic extremism is given a forum, and in turn, a silent approval by the authorities.

Instead of putting immigrants to work and assimilating them to Sweden's democratic values, they are placed in economically destitute suburbs. It is in these suburbs that immigrants begin hating freedom and start dreaming up ways to set cities ablaze.

In the neighbourhood praised by *Le Figaro*, Rinkeby, the unemployment rate is 60 percent. A similar Stockholm suburb is Tensta, where unemployment is in the high 50s. Tensta is currently the home of one of the Social Democratic Party's most renowned immigrant personalities, yet she is set to move due to fear of the violence and Islamic extremism that has taken root in the community. And in a suburb of Malmö, a recent FOX News feature showed young immigrants throwing stones at an ambulance. Yet, for some reason, French journalists manage to claim that 'the Swedish model of social integration does not appear to create much frustration'.

As chilling as the news may be to the European Left, the Swedish welfare society is no longer a success. It was certainly good when Sweden, during a hundred year period (1860-1960), experienced the world's highest growth, but that sprung from entrepreneurship. And that entrepreneurship is gone. All we have left today is a Social Democratic prime minister who loudly criticises everyone who speaks badly of Sweden. It's quite sad.

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