

News from Sweden #6 Nyheter från Sverige

‘Out damned spot!’ Most people recognize this quote from Shakespeare’s play Macbeth, as the exasperated woman tries to wash guilt-inspired, invisible blood off her hands.

The pandemic has changed everything, everywhere, causing selective retrenchment, stopped travel and is a significant inconvenience. News and conditions are changing fast. The Corona report was recently released faulting the Government on its handling of the pandemic, in particular criticising management of Elder Care facilities that took the major hit in corona deaths. Lack of qualifications, training, safety materials and the inequities of labor laws are the major issues. Hourly workers were only given short work weeks thus avoiding benefits like health care, and also receive the lowest of wages. People went to work when sick due to necessity. On 17 Dec. 2020 Prime Minister Stefan Löfven was quoted and we paraphrase here: ‘I had no idea my (Agency) ministers weren’t doing the job’. This public admission was fodder for the canons fired by the other six political parties in the Riksdag.

WE expected far stronger restrictions, closing all non-essential businesses, all museums, theatres, bars & restaurants, with only grocery stores and pharmacies being open. We know that transmissions happen by personal contact!

The other Nordic countries are thoroughly unhappy with Sweden. Sweden has become a pariah whose neighbors had imposed tight restrictions on travel and social life. The data show their successful policies. Norway in particular requires proof of testing negative within 72 hours plus two-weeks of quarantine before permitting Swedes to enter. A big scandal is brewing over the Swedish Government’s handling of the pandemic. It is viewed as a crises everywhere except by the Swedish Government. Politicians are running for cover, blaming everyone else for the cause and defective policies and directing blame at the 21(landskap) Regions and the 290 (landsting) communities who are waiting for instructions from the

Government. More of the Catch 22 phenomena. It is past time to stop intellectualizing issues to their logical absurdity, get off the pot and call it like it is.

Sweden hasn't had a war since 1814. It's only crisis, has been life itself, precarious in the cold and often sunless northern regions of the globe before its social safety net was designed. Starting in the early 1800s and taking off in the 1850s 1.5 million Swedes migrated to the US. Sweden had at the time a population of 3.5 million. In Sweden, paternalism and compliance is fundamental to fulfillment in a society that follows its own road, one it built and staunchly defends. The government decision-making is primarily based on economic principles, consensus and input from its agencies, rather than social or health requirements. The corona cases began last February. Historically Sweden is definitely a land that is slow to change or make decisions compared to its Nordic neighbors. Sweden has been building this independent road since the early 1800s becoming really serious about its socioeconomic condition after WW II.

The Swedish Government, usually very intrusive following old laws, had no clue how to deal with crises and remains oblivious. A good start is not denying there is a problem. Don't apply old solutions to new problems. Planning ahead is a good idea. The 1915 N1H1 flu pandemic was a killer but very informative historically, providing evidence of public response and realities of unpreparedness including the spread of disease in communities without immunity. In China the knowledge and use of vaccination to inhibit disease has been around since the year 1000 and used around the world in the 16th century. The first smallpox vaccine was introduced to the world population in the 19th century.

When the Covid-19 broke on the scene, scientific knowledge was generally based on the behavior of viruses. The Covid-19 virus is not like any other. Fortunately, we have history and science to guide those responsible to get us safely forward, setting aside politics, tradition and pride. Biological science today is far advanced since the 19th

century. The Covid-19 vaccines have been developed in months rather than years.

Sweden is not alone in the decision-making wasteland. Serious concern about economic matters has clouded decision-making throughout Europe and the USA. While Sweden wrestles over what to do, many other countries have now closed down for 2-6 weeks to slow down the virus spread, infection rates down over 50% whereas the US has gone up by 50%. Compliance is an issue in many places. A major reality, however, is just how history education is deficient world-wide. People seem to have forgotten even recent history. Sweden and the USA are the only two countries failing to curb the death rate and spread of the virus.

We wish that the Covid-19 virus would go away. It has dampened the plans of everyone: shorten lives, brought grief to so many, wreaked relationships, destroyed dreams and futures, ruined businesses, budgets, and governments. It also has exposed the underbelly of inept politicians and governments unable or unwilling to grasp the full impact of a unique disease. Covid-19 is running rampant across all things living, a ruthless disease of astonishing versatility and capacity for biological destruction. Hysteria abounds. In Denmark and Sweden mink farmers destroyed thousands of animals suspected of having Covid-19, later discovering no one animal had actually been tested positive for the virus. Only a few isolated animals fell ill.

Our health care systems world-wide have been under siege, exhibiting inadequacies in budget, capacity and preparedness. The many facets of humanity also have been revealed including human virtues like devotion to duty, sacrifice, dedication, love and grief. Wishing, tradition, pride, myths of self-importance or anything akin will not work in war and crises. This fact makes this pandemic all the more difficult to understand in societies or social groups where false definitions of freedom, wish-fulfillment and denial are the basis for happiness and decision-making. Our humanness and vulnerability have been peeled wide open, exposing many who have forgotten what it is like to be a human. Religiosity, political mass hysteria and

the extent of sociopathy as witnessed in the USA, coupled with political ineptitude, strengthens denial and producing paralysis where a call to arms is obvious. Exceptions are Finland, Denmark, Norway and New Zealand.

While the pandemic is out of control in the USA, Sweden seems unable to fully grasp the seriousness of this pandemic, a failed outcome of its model. They have sent two SMS by the phone system about the new restrictions. The message was only in Swedish. It informs one to find it on a web site for further information. Finland sent their warning message in four languages. In Sweden the spoken languages are Swedish, English, Arabic, Finnish, Meänkieli (also known as Tornedal, Tornionlaaksonsuomi or Tornedalian), Romani, Sámi languages (in particular Lule, Northern, and Southern Sámi), and Yiddish.

The outcomes are worse than the combined stats of the other Nordic countries. Dagens Nyheter has been reporting on failed policy and exposing the issues taking no prisoners. A clinic specializing in infectious diseases in Malmö, built to handle the pandemic, now has 70% of its personnel infected with the virus. Some physicians are speaking out calling for possible assistance from Norway and Finland to take patients and/or send medical teams to Sweden.

Sweden and Norway have in early history being spared pandemics from the continent. The peninsula was physically isolated until the 11th century when Christianity and European cultural influences moved northward. When social democratic reforms were instituted in Sweden after WW II began to improve the social life of citizens, folks became true believers in, and depended on the government. Sweden's politicians however are now running for shelter and looking everywhere and for anyone to blame, except of course, themselves. The science chief doesn't believe (right, 'believe' is the operative word) in wearing masks. Findings from the hundreds of Covid-19 research studies and actual data from the trenches indicate that a second wave is here. Where is Dr. Fauci? We need him in Sweden! Scientists study and interpret data, a hypothesis may be based on popular belief, but well-designed studies are the bases

for professional opinion. This is why testing is so important. This disease is not going away because people think it doesn't apply to them. Only direct confrontation and action is required to slow the pandemic. The Government has said it is going to test everyone. So far only a limited testing has been done, and there are insufficient machines for analysis of the test. The Government has known about this deficiency since spring. Vaccination will start one day, but the vaccine has not arrived here.

The weather was mild for a typical November. December is so far gloomy, dark gray, rainy, but not unbearable. The Sun did peak out for about 3 seconds the other day. The apartment lit up so bright we thought it was a nuclear attack. Covid-19 commonsense restriction make the time rather challenging, so one must be creative. It is only seven days till the winter equinox and our 'mother' begins leaning in a southerly direction. We spend our time discussing the news from various sources, making sacrifices to Odin, performing domestic chores and trying to figure out the mentality of our adopted country.

The local library provides much needed literature in English. Carl spends much of his time writing newsletters & complaining that the newspapers here that do not have a 'letters-to-editors' section as he was accustomed in San Diego. Ingrid's handcrafted hearts, Santas, mobiles & wall hangings decorate our new home from December 1st to January 13th. Red and white are the prime colors with lots of lights! Ingrid prepares delicious meals every day, often with cream. Our waistlines have increased. Our goal is to allocate more time for long nature walks, less coffee breaks with sweets and more conversations with neighbors along with a glass of wine.

So, our friends, you are the chosen ones. We are 'wishing' for a peak at 'ol Sol' and lusting for a piece of Julian Apple Pie.

God Jul och Gott Nytt År

Carl and Ingrid