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Image of Migrants and Refugees in Sweden in 2015 and the Following Years as Emerging from the Opinions of Political Elites and the Media Discourse

Obraz migrantów i uchodźców w Szwecji w 2015 roku (i w latach następnych) w opiniach elit politycznych i w dyskursie medialnym

• **Abstract** •

The basis for the current analysis and the case-study method applied herein is provided by press reports, scholarly articles and books, both in the paper and online forms, containing the positions and statements by politicians from Sweden and elsewhere, the media community, public service officials, as well as average residents of Sweden who had encountered problems that resulted from the 2015 refugee crisis and the uncontrolled influx of migrants and refugees, especially those hailing from the Islamic world. Some of the research questions posed by the author are which Swedish political forces and circles supported this influx and which were against it, and how this was reflected in the political and media discourse. Other research questions concern the attitudes towards refugees and migrants presented by the country's native residents and by persons of other origins who have lived there for a long time, as well as the factors influencing the media portrayal and the existing evaluation of events, in relation to the escalation of violence that occurred in some Swedish cities in the years 2016 and 2017. This

• **Abstrakt** •

Podstawą niniejszej analizy i zastosowanej metody studium przypadku (*case study*) są przekazy prasowe, artykuły naukowe i książki (zarówno w wersji papierowej, jak i stanowiące materiały z Internetu), zawierające m.in. stanowiska i oficjalne wypowiedzi przedstawicieli elit politycznych Królestwa Szwecji (i nie tylko), ludzi mediów, funkcjonariuszy służb publicznych czy przeciętnych mieszkańców kraju, którzy zetknęli się ze skutkami kryzysu uchodźczego 2015 roku i niekontrolowanego napływu migrantów (zwłaszcza ze świata islamu). Zasadnicze pytania badawcze dotyczą tego, jakie szwedzkie siły polityczne i środowiska wsparły napływ migrantów, a które były mu przeciwne, i jakie znalazło to odbicie w politycznym i medialnym dyskursie. Inne pytanie badawcze dotyczy stosunku do uchodźców i migrantów rdzennych mieszkańców kraju, jak i tych, którzy mieszkają tam od dawna. Kolejne zagadnienie, które porusza autor, to czynniki mające wpływ na obraz medialny i zaistniałą ocenę wydarzeń w związku z eskalacją przemocy w latach 2016–2017 w niektórych miastach Szwecji. Ta

issue is examined through an analysis of various statements made by residents of the Kingdom of Sweden: political figures, scholars, and ordinary people. The closing caesura is the year 2018 and the state of affairs after the parliamentary elections, in which the right-wing Sweden Democrats achieved a significant success. The analysis of the events of 2015–2018 as reflected in the media and political discourse, which is presented in the article, indicates how the massive influx of migrants and refugees has changed the sense of social security of the Swedes and what effects this "clash of civilisations" has already had and may have in the future.

Keywords: 2015 migrant crisis in Sweden; refugees in Sweden; Polish press on Sweden; world's opinions on Sweden; migrant crime in Sweden; 2018 elections in Sweden

kwestia jest rozpatrywana na podstawie analizy różnych wypowiedzi mieszkańców Królestwa, przedstawicieli świata polityki, naukowców i zwykłych mieszkańców kraju. Cezurę końcową stanowi rok 2018 i sytuacja po wyborach parlamentarnych, w których istotny sukces odnieśli prawicowi Szwedzcy Demokraci. Ukazana w artykule analiza wydarzeń z lat 2015–2018, odzwierciedlonych w dyskursie medialnym i politycznym, pokazuje, jak masowy napływ migrantów i uchodźców wpłynął na zmianę poczucia bezpieczeństwa społecznego Szwedów i jakie skutki wywarło i może nadal wywierać owo „zderzenie cywilizacji".

Słowa kluczowe: kryzys migracyjny w Szwecji w 2015 r.; uchodźcy w Szwecji; prasa polska o Szwecji; światowe opinie o Szwecji; przestępczość migrantów w Szwecji; wybory w Szwecji w 2018 r.

Introduction

One of the main issues to bring into focus are, in the intention of the author of the present study, the effects of a clash of civilisations that occurred due to the migrant crisis of 2015 and the following years, that is, the effects of an influx of huge numbers – amounting to hundreds of thousands – of men and women culturally and mentally alien to the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Sweden. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, in particular, a country which for centuries had a relatively homogeneous population became "friendly" towards all kinds of immigrants and refugees from various areas of the world. This started a long process of the "mixing of cultures" and changing the country's ethnic composition, the effects of which are visible today. From the middle of the twentieth century onwards, a decades-long process has led to the emergence of a system referred to as *Folkhemmet*, or welfare state (Andersson, 1956, pp. 453–454; Nowiak, 2008, pp. 124–125; Nowiak, 2011; Muciek, 2018, p. 336 ff). The cultural components with which Sweden is also associated are sexual freedom, gender parity and the equality policy promoted by feminism, an ecological lifestyle, the concept of happiness known as the *lagom*, IKEA, VOLVO, the books by Astrid Lindgren and the golden age of pop music, i.e., the hits of ABBA or the equally well-known group Roxette. The stereotypical image of a native Swede is that of a man who is reticent, pedantic, punctual, very calm and

conflict-avoiding, cultured and well-organised, i.e., always sticking to a plan, as well as focused on individualism, sometimes to the extreme (Lewandowski, 2004, p. 111 ff; Booth, 2014; Kołaczek, 2017; Åkerström, 2017a; Tubylewicz, 2017, p. 29 ff). Yet in the course of just over a hundred years, beginning in the first half of the twentieth century, this very culturally and ethnically homogeneous country visibly changed, and this change has become particularly evident over the last few decades.

The basis for the current analysis and the case-study method applied herein is provided by press reports, books, articles and other communications containing the positions and statements by politicians (both Swedish and non-Swedish), the media community, as well as the average residents of Sweden who had encountered the problems that accompanied the influx of migrants and refugees (especially those hailing from the Islamic world), both in the years before 2015 and several years afterwards. The Polish and Polish-language accounts very often mirror the accounts and reports of the Swedish media or Swedish authors. The author's intention is to show the very complex issue of the relationship of some of the "natives" of the Kingdom with the newcomers, mainly in a positive aspect. Critical voices on this issue have been collected in a separate publication. The final caesura is the state of affairs after the parliamentary elections held at the beginning of September 2018.

One of the research questions reviewed herein is what political forces and environments supported the influx of the "aliens". Some of the opinions voiced by native Swedes, as well as persons who had long held Swedish citizenship, are also worth quoting. Finally, the emerging picture would be incomplete if it were not shown from the side of migrants and refugees, whose fates were, and still are, very diverse as well.

Opinions on the Swedish refugee crisis of 2015 and the following few years – as well as assessments of the 2018 general election, where the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD) had a significant success – as voiced by the media and politicians from other countries are an important addition to the research material. The author has therefore chosen to show the problem under consideration through the views and assessments of politicians, political groups, and ordinary people who were "in favour", including their various motivations.

Outline of the ethnic structure of the Kingdom of Sweden and major aspects of migration policy in the course of the twentieth century

According to official data, just over 10-million population of Sweden includes people belonging to some 200 nations and ethnic groups (World Population Review,

2021). This indicator is the highest among the Scandinavian countries and one of the highest in Europe in general. Indigenous Swedes make up about 90% of the population, the Finns 2%, and the Saami (formerly known as Laplanders) – 1%. The remaining 7% is the immigrant population, i.e., economic immigrants and refugees. According to the Central Statistical Office, another large group apart from the Finns are Poles (Grzybowski, 2019, pp. 11–14). In addition, the Kingdom of Sweden is inhabited by the Danes, Norwegians, Brits, Hungarians and Romanians, a large number of the former Yugoslavs, as well as Turks, Kurds, Iraqis, Iranians, Somalis, Ethiopians, and Eritreans. In recent years, there has also been an influx of refugees from the civil war-torn Syria. The ratio of immigrants to refugees is roughly 3:1 (Tomala, 2017, pp. 502–505, with Polish- and foreign-language literature on the subject). Since 1974, Sweden has moved from being an ethnically relatively homogeneous state to a formally multicultural one. As pointed out by, among others, Andrzej Kubka, Sweden's "migration policy and migrant integration policy were, and still are, considered exemplary. Over the years, Sweden, alongside Canada and Australia, and on the European continent, the UK and the Netherlands, has provided an example of a very positive attitude towards the phenomenon of immigration and immigrants"[1] (2017, p. 7).

From the earliest post-war years, immigration problems were linked with labour market problems. The influx of labour immigrants reached its greatest intensity in 1970, with the arrival of some 80,000 people into Sweden. The newcomers were mainly workers from the neighbouring Scandinavian countries, whose admission allowed Sweden to do justice to the calls for "Nordic solidarity". With their arrival, Sweden gained the workforce it greatly needed to fuel its labour market, which had not been destroyed during the war. The Kingdom of Sweden was seen as an "immigration country" and, in the specific context of labour immigration, its immigration policy was perceived as favourable (Kubka, 2017, p. 11). In 1972, immigration for work purposes was stopped (with the exception of migrants from the Scandinavian countries). Starting with the events in Chile in 1973, refugees have become the most prominent among the groups migrating to Sweden. Until the early 1990s, Swedish immigration policy became, in essence, a refugee policy (*flyktingspolitik*). The new immigration and minority policy introduced in 1975 was a policy of integrating immigrants into the Swedish society.

[1] Unless otherwise stated, quotations from the Polish-language sources have been translated solely for the purpose of the present study.

Opinions and voices favourable to migrants and refugees in the early years of the 2015 migrant crisis

This "model image" that Kubka wrote about is still present in the minds of many Swedes, as well as members of other nations. However, it is a very complex issue, especially after a few years have passed since the memorable year 2015. The problems of the newcomers adapting to the Swedish way of life had already existed for a long time, but politicians and the media tried not to bring the issue to light – "for the good of the cause", but also in order not to violate the principle of political correctness, which is very visibly observed in Sweden. Even before the influx of migrants took a very strong turn in 2015, voices in support of this phenomenon were heard at the very top of the Kingdom of Sweden's political elite.

On August 16, 2014, during the election campaign, the then Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt gave a speech at Norrmalmstorg Square in Stockholm, in the presence of the press and a large audience. The speech dealt with the issue of immigrants, with the PM urging Swedes to "open their hearts" towards them and to understand the situation. This is, among other, what he said: "We now have people fleeing in numbers that are similar to the Balkan crisis in the beginning of the 1990s. Now I appeal to the Swedish people for patience, to open your hearts to people in stress who fear death threats and are fleeing, fleeing to Europe, fleeing to freedom, fleeing to better conditions. Show that openness. Show that tolerance when it is said that 'they are too many', 'it will be complicated', 'it will be difficult'. Show that tolerance and show that we have done it before. We have seen people come from stress, fleeing from oppression, who have arrived to our society, learned the Swedish language, found a job and are now helping to build a better and a freer Sweden" (after: Landström & Ekengren, 2021, p. 94).

On another occasion, despite cover-ups of immigrant crimes by the police and the media being revealed due to the work of web bloggers, and some journalists as well, Reinfeldt gave a statement that emphatically indicated what the government's policy towards the influx of newcomers would be. He had already recognised that considering the rate at which they were coming, the immigration institutions and their infrastructure would soon be unable to cope; at the same time, however, he stated that the government refused to change its line, because of what was at stake: "We will not be able to afford much else", he said, "but it's really people fleeing for their lives" (Murray, 2017, p. 251). However, it was yet another statement by Reinfeldt that had a very large media impact. During a television interview he gave on Christmas Eve in 2014, the ex-PM stated that the Swedish people themselves were "uninteresting", that borders were "fictional" constructs and, above all, that

Sweden belonged "to the people who [had] come to make a better life rather than to the people who [had] lived there for generations" (Murray, 2017, p. 251).

Reinfeldt's attitude to the so-called multiculturalism and diversity was also evidenced by his statement issued earlier, in 2006: "Only barbarism is genuinely Swedish. All further development has come from abroad". During the events of 2015, in turn, the new government was strongly supported by the Protestant churches; for instance, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden Antje Jackelén and other prominent members of the clergy "insisted that the country's migration policies must keep in mind that 'Jesus himself was a refugee'" (Murray, 2017, p. 250).

In her book, the journalist Elisabeth Åsbrink pointed out that the Prime Minister's speech of August 16, 2014, caused a visible turn in social mood – the Swedish people failed to open their hearts – and had an influence on his defeat in the upcoming elections. According to Åsbrink, Reinfeldt's speech proved to be a turning point in the perception of the welfare state versus immigration. Whereas a majority of Swedes continued to be positively inclined towards the concept of social equality regardless of a person's place of birth inside or outside Sweden, this percentage was by then already falling, and the speech became a caesura between the perception of what was opposed to social welfare: before, this had been the lowering of taxes, after, immigration. The issue of costs involved in Sweden's openness to refugees, argues Åsbrink, abruptly became the dominant topic of the political debate concerning welfare. In consequence, Reinfeldt's speech about the opening of hearts cost him the elections, control over the government, and chairmanship of the party (Åsbrink, 2019b, pp. 364–365). The September 14, 2014 elections brought about the collapse of the Alliance (Alliansen, initially: Allians för Sverige) and of Reinfeldt's liberal-conservative Moderate Coalition Party, the loss of over thirty seats in the Riksdag, and, concurrently, the end of Reinfeldt's political career (*Britannica*, 2023). His successor was Stefan Löfven, who became the head of a minority coalition government of the Social Democrats and the Green Party (Miljöpartiet Gröna).

A year later, Sweden faced one of the most serious challenges in its history, the scale of which the former Prime Minister and other politicians or the citizens of the Kingdom had not foreseen and could not have imagined. The level of migration to the country had been high for years; but following the declaration made by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in August 2015 (which included the famous phrase "Herzlich willkommen"), with which she opened her country's borders to masses of refugees and migrants, the year proved to be unprecedented for Sweden. On some days, no less than 10,000 people would cross the border into the country. Thus resulted in an institutional and organisational paralysis, since it soon turned out

that Sweden was not prepared for the arrival of such vast human masses: "Although 163,000 people claimed asylum in that year alone, an unknown number of people entered and disappeared into the country without trace" (Eurostat, 2016; Murray, 2017, p. 152; Kubka, 2017, p. 8), the immigration authorities losing them from sight. There were also frequent cases of squatting, when newcomers with no regulated status and without any place to live would present indigenous Swedes with a *fait accompli*: "People visiting laundry rooms of their buildings in the tenements of Malmö found migrants living there" (Murray, 2017, p. 252). This was summed up by Kubka: "The situation that arose at the time could only be described as a crisis. This was because the number of asylum seekers had doubled (compared to 2014) and was much higher than the Central Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) had prognosticated. […] Sweden's social system faced enormous challenges in almost all key areas. The efforts undertaken to address the crisis were described as 'the country's largest humanitarian action since the end of the Second World War'" (Kubka, 2017, pp. 8–9).

The issue of the huge increase in the numbers of immigrants and "refugees", for this was how some of the new arrivals referred to themselves, which occurred in the second half of 2015, strongly divided the Swedish political scene (as it did in other European countries as well). Support for the newcomers came especially from the Swedish left. It turned out, however, that the open-door policy created huge problems with the growing levels of crime (again, as it was also in the case of Germany and some other EU countries); there was also a potential threat of infiltration by members of Salafite and jihadist organisations. Hence, on November 25, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson presented a joint position that imposed certain restrictions on further arrivals. Among the important issues offered for debate at the time, some were particularly relevant: (a) tightening border controls, (b) introduction of temporary residence permits, (c) restrictions on the right to family reunification (Tomala, 2017, p. 509). These restrictions were adopted for a period of three years.

This amply showed that attitudes to the issue were linked to the values and ideology, as well as the programmes of individual parties and political circles. Criticism of the restrictions became a running theme to the leftist Riksdag parliamentarians; for example, Jonas Sjöstedt, leader of the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), said that Sweden had been "a light in the darkness" to refugees, "but today the light was extinguished. […] Most refugees do not have identity documents, so now they cannot even get to the border and seek asylum" (*Szwecja już nie chce…*, 2015; Tomala, 2017, p. 509). Also Deputy Prime Minister Romson, who was from the Green Party, the political entity most sympathetic to the influx of migrants, pointed out that the new policy

had a downside: "The government's decision will make the lives of refugees even more precarious". Representatives of right-wing and centre-right groups assumed an entirely different position. Leader of the Moderate Coalition Party (Moderaterna Samlingspartiet, also known as Moderaterna, i.e., the Moderates) Anna Kinberg Batra generally supported the government's position, but she pointed out that "the announced restrictions are not sufficient". The Sweden Democrats, in turn, stated that "the government's actions are insufficient and have been taken too late" (Tomala, 2017, p. 510). In the not-too-distant future, the issue of problems with immigrants would be the programmatic element that would turn this party – which previously had very little popular support and met with huge ostracism from the left and the liberals or the media that favoured them – into a very important force on Sweden's political scene; this shall be discussed further on.

Introduction of the above-mentioned regulations (supplemented by another package of regulations concerning temporary residence), which came into force on July 16, 2016, was the result of a political accord between Löfven's ruling Social Democrats and the four opposition parties (Moderaterna, Centerpartiet, Liberalerna, Kristdemokraterna). The core of the new legislation was thus the desire to adopt a principle of accepting fewer immigrants and to reduce social benefits for those who had obtained a residence permit (Kubka, 2017, pp. 9–10).

Katarzyna Tubylewicz, the former director of the Polish Institute in Stockholm (2006–2012) and a lecturer at Stockholm University, who is also associated with, among others, "Krytyka Polityczna", wrote about Swedish society's enormous "solidarity with the refugees" at the time and its very evident willingness to help: "Swedes pride themselves on their solidarity and see helping others as a clear-cut duty. I hear this often, in many everyday conversations. For this reason, the Swedish reaction to the wave of refugees resembled the reaction of the Germans, their *Willkommenskultur*. Prime Minister Löfven guaranteed that there would be no limit to Swedish hospitality, and ordinary people got involved on an unprecedented scale in organising help for the newcomers. Many changed their lives at that time, left their old jobs to start working with the refugees. After a while, it became clear that the easiest way to help others is when we see them only as innocent victims. It is a more difficult feat to help when refugees start causing problems; when they turn out to be human and therefore full of flaws and not always grateful for help. And also when space and money start to run out (in 2016, the Migration Agency spent 73 million kronor, close to 8 per cent of the state budget). Sweden is today at a moment of a historic test of solidarity. It is still too early to make definite summaries, but I have met many Swedes who have lived up to the test. Although this has come at a price" (Tubylewicz, 2017, pp. 25–26).

After some months between 2015 and 2017, assessments and opinions began to gradually change as the numbers of immigrants continued to grow and, unfortunately, cases of immigrant crime began to emerge. As a consequence of this change, anti-immigrant groups, especially the hitherto marginalised Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD), rose in popularity, as did their rhetoric, which left-wing politicians described as "racist" and "fascist" or as "right-wing populism". It became necessary on the part of the broad left and the liberals to justify the government's increasingly criticised policies and its struggle for the "sway over the souls" in the sphere of propaganda, and to maintain political correctness at all costs, even at the cost of denying the facts (Tubylewicz, 2017, pp. 25–26).

The Kingdom of Sweden's government, too, was aware of the image damage that could be caused by emerging reports and media coverage of the rise in crime occurring over the period of just a few years, the increasingly visible problems with immigrant neighbourhoods, or, later, the repercussions of the terrorist attack committed by Rakhmat Akilov, an Uzbek Islamist, in Stockholm in April 2017. An official governmental website "Facts about Migration, Integration and Crime in Sweden" was created in order to dispel the emerging falsehoods or criticisms of the country. One of the false claims that according to the government needed to be corrected is: "Sweden has suffered numerous Islamic terror attacks". The pertinent "Facts" section begins: "The first case of what could be termed Islamic terrorism in Sweden occurred in 2010". The Stockholm attack is referred to, markedly without any reference to the defendant's faith, in the following way: "On 7 June 2018, the Stockholm District Court handed down a sentence against the person who was indicted for that offence. The defendant was found guilty of terrorist offense by murder in five cases, as well as numerous counts of attempted murder. The penalty was set to life imprisonment. The Court also decided to expel the accused from Sweden for life. In addition, the defendant was held liable to pay damages to more than one hundred victims of the attack" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

In Poland, the Embassy of Sweden official website includes a Polish-language page titled "What Are the Facts on Migration and Criminality in Sweden?", a catalogue of questions on migrant criminality with answers containing relevant official figures (Ambasada Szwecji…, n.d.). One of the claims the embassy embarked on disproving there is "Sweden has suffered its first Islamist terrorist attack". The "Facts" section below is a direct translation of the passage from the "Facts about Migration" page as cited above. Both the English- and the Polish-language pages contain an official declaration: "The Swedish authorities have no interest in concealing statistics and facts; on the contrary, they expect an open and fact-based dialogue. Sweden is an open society in which the right of public access to official data is the basis of

governance". In general, even though the perpetrator himself admitted to the attack, publicly and with evident pride declared his sympathy for the Islamic State, and stated that "his aim was to kill Swedish citizens", and his contacts with jihadists were documented, the government officially denied that there had been an "Islamist terrorist attack" in Sweden, because no radical Muslim group had officially taken responsibility for it (Neuding, 2018).

When criticism of criminal acts involving immigrants or refugees began to be expressed, chiefly by the right-wing media and politicians, but also by ordinary Swedes, left-wing newspapers tried to deny these incidents as "right-wing fake news", downplay "youthful antics", or even pass them over in silence, or report the facts very briefly and without giving any data about the perpetrators, especially about their backgrounds. This has happened not only in Sweden, but also in countries outside Sweden.

One of very many such examples of support for Swedish pro-immigrant policies and manipulation of facts "for the good of the cause" was Kamil Fejfer's article, which energetically set out to debunk and refute all the "myths", "propaganda lies" and "right-wing nonsense" about the no-go zones, the scale of the incidence of rape, assaults on women and crime, and the alleged inability of Sweden and its administrative bodies to deal with the problem. The crowning evidence brought up by Fejfer were the official *démenti* by the Embassy of Sweden in Poland and the police authorities, including those issued in reaction to the statement made by the chairman of the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) party Jarosław Kaczyński in the Sejm (parliament) in September 2015, concerning "fifty-four Sharia zones" in Sweden; also, the significant reduction of the number of followers of Islam to only those who belong to any organisation or association (Fejfer, 2017). As it turned out later, Kaczyński's blunder referred not to "Sharia zones" but "locations particularly threatened by exclusion" (this was the official Swedish term for immigrant neighbourhoods with high crime rates). The Embassy's official *démenti* about the "absence of Sharia zones in Sweden" notwithstanding, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's media statement of November 19, 2015 (Wybranowski, 2018, pp. 147–148), included a reference to the arrest of an Iraqi suspected of preparing an attack, allegedly behind which were "Swedish citizens of Arab origin returning from the war in Syria", fighting in the Islamic State army. The Prime Minister's choice of words was diplomatic, but reading between the lines, his statement revealed the true problem: "I must admit that Sweden has been naive in this respect. Perhaps we found it difficult to accept that in our open society, among us, there are people – citizens of Sweden – who sympathise with the murderers from the Islamic State" (*Szwedzi rewidują swoją politykę*, 2015). While a few weeks earlier, politicians in Stockholm had talked about

the fact that former fighters (i.e., those citizens of the Kingdom who, having been mujahedin of the Islamic State, had returned from Syria and Iraq to Sweden) should be "assisted in their search for work and housing", now the Prime Minister was clear about such men: "The message to those who leave Sweden to commit crimes against humanity in other countries is this: if they return, they will be arrested, put on trial and sentenced". By that time, 120 such radicals had been officially recorded and the prospect of possible attacks caused the Security Police (Säkerhetspolisen, SÄPO) to raise the threat level, very considerably, for the first time (*Szwedzi rewidują…*, 2015).

In the course of the year 2015, before the migrant crisis in Sweden visibly intensified, moods favourable towards the influx of immigrants engendered such statements as that issued by the Swedish MEP Cecilia Wikström, who intensified her existing campaign in favour of providing the migrants with "legal and safe" transport routes to Europe. Affected by the sinking of a boat that carried a large number of migrants from Africa across the Mediterranean, Wikström insisted that the absence or discontinuance of support for the arrival of migrants into Sweden would be compared by future generations to indifference in the face of the Holocaust: "I think that my children and grandchildren are going to ask why more wasn't done to help people running away from Isis, or violence in Eritrea or wherever, when we knew that people were dying in their thousands. People will ask the same question they did after the war, 'If you were aware, why didn't you do something?'. In Sweden, we allowed our railroads to be used to transfer Jews to Nazi death camps. There are more refugees in the world today than during and after the Second World War. The world is on fire at the moment and we need to cope with that" (after: Murray, 2017, p. 159).

Some voices of support for immigration came from members of the Swedish Polish community. One such example was a statement given by Krzysztof Surowiak from Gothenburg, an architect who had lived in Sweden for almost three decades, in an interview by Katarzyna Zuchowicz for the NaTemat portal: "'Arson attacks on cars do occur in these neighbourhoods [meaning the "difficult" districts inhabited largely by newcomers], and it is better not to leave your car there overnight'. Because if you leave a van with construction equipment there, you will find it in the morning without the equipment and with a broken window. 'But I do not see much difference between Polish and local rowdies. Are there no rapes in Poland?', he said", adding that "immigrants can strengthen society economically. 'They are the ones who will pay our pensions, so let's be glad that there are more of them. The more we open up to them, the more we shall gain ourselves', he says. He gives an example of his friend, who helps immigrant children who came to Sweden on their own. 'Three of them already completed a course for electricians. There is a shortage of such professionals

in Sweden, and they gain opportunities to enter the labour market this way. One of them has already worked as a trainee electrician at my construction site. […] Immigrants want to live like the Swedes. A house, a car, etc. But if you are born in poverty, in a poor neighbourhood, with poor parents, you have the same prospects as those poor Poles who vote for the PiS'" (Zuchowicz, 2017).

Promoters of immigration believe that immigrants are more likely to break the law not because they come from some criminal culture, but because they are the poorest part of society. For supporters of open borders, this constitutes evidence that social policies need to be improved (Czarnecki, 2019, p. 21). A similar, very supportive tone was also evident in the statements of Prof. Jerzy Sarnecki, a criminologist from Stockholm University, passages from which are worth quoting here: "If we compare immigrants and native Swedes who have grown up in similar social and economic conditions, there is little difference between them in the likelihood of committing crimes. It is simply that foreigners make up the lowest social classes and the majority of residents in 'difficult neighbourhoods'". And further on: "Enclaves have emerged in Stockholm, Gothenburg, or Malmö where we have huge unemployment and problems with schools. Many primary school students do not score high enough [the professor does not explain why this is the case] to go on to secondary school. In such areas – American sociologists described this already a century ago – gangs form, subcultures develop. Unable to communicate with society, young people, mainly first- and second-generation immigrants who have been in Sweden for quite a long time, take matters into their own hands" (Czarnecki, 2019, p. 22).

The rest of Sarnecki's statement clearly suggests that "Sweden made a mistake" and that it is the government and the institutions of the state that are most to blame: "American studies made it clear what risks there were. Yet the state authorities did not invest sufficiently in immigrant neighbourhoods; it was not profitable for entrepreneurs to open shops there. This is a failure of the integration attempt, although I acknowledge that it concerns a rather small group. The typical tendency in capitalist societies is that the poor live in the cheapest neighbourhoods. Many immigrants lived in such neighbourhoods for ten, fifteen years, until they learnt the language, got a job, moved elsewhere. Those who stayed were the ones who didn't make it. People with educational problems, unemployed. They created criminal structures, which will recruit new members" (Czarnecki, 2019, p. 23).

In the already mentioned reportage from Sweden, Zuchowicz included information gleaned from the residents of Malmö as to the various types of social assistance offered to newcomers by private and public institutions: "But the residents also tell stories of private centres that offer free medical care, including dentists and psychologists, drive them to the swimming pool, to the gym, provide food.

And they say that [such centres] have sprung up like mushrooms because the state provides high funding per immigrant and some people have decided that it is not a bad business. How much truth is in that? 'They come already well apprised as to what they are entitled to in Sweden. They know everything', says Monika Olsson" (Zuchowicz, 2017).

As a result of its apparent desire to maintain its image as a "migrant- and refugee-friendly state", its leftist-liberal assumptions of political correctness and its "fight against racism, xenophobia and exclusion", in 2015 and the subsequent years the Kingdom of Sweden became the country that received the largest number of migrants and refugees (alongside Germany, Greece, Italy, Finland, France, and the UK), and zealously supported, or pursued, the European Union's strategy in this regard. In 2015–2016 alone, Sweden received more than 200,000 of migrants and refugees. At the same time, it was the Swedish politicians – together with leading representatives of the EU institutions – that criticised the countries of the Visegrád Group, who were firmly opposed to the so-called "refugee relocation", especially Poland and Hungary (Fehler, Cebul, & Podgórzańska, 2017, p. 142 ff; Wojnicki, 2017; Wybranowski, 2020, p. 420). At the plenary session of the European Parliament held in early March 2016, Prime Minister Löfven said that Sweden "will act for a new asylum system in the EU that is based on equal distribution and in which asylum is sought in the EU – not in an individual country", and presented Sweden's position in view of the refugee problem (*Swedish Prime Minister on Refugee Crisis…*, 2016).

"An important part of the Swedish government's policy during the crisis was to evaluate the anti-crisis measures of many state and local government institutions, including the government itself", writes Andrzej Kubka. "Problems associated with the influx of immigrants to Sweden in the second half of 2015 became the subject of a study by a research committee set up by the government in June 2016. The committee submitted a report on its work, *The Reception of Refugees in Sweden in the Autumn of 2015*, in March 2017".

This report, which analysed the actions of state, regional and local authorities, concluded with establishing systemic principles of response. These were as follows: (a) The principle of accountability: institutions that bear responsibility for an area of action during a period of calm bear the same responsibility during a period of crisis; (b) The principle of cooperation: each agency is obliged to cooperate and collaborate with other agencies, often in multiple areas; (c) The government provides strategy and coordination (Kubka, 2017, p. 17).

In June 2017, the government also took an official stance on the anti-crisis measures, which indicated that "'Sweden has managed to generally accommodate

and provide shelter for a large number of asylum seekers'. […] While stressing that the situation in the autumn and winter of 2015/2016 had been extraordinary, in early 2017 the Swedish government assessed that the migrant crisis had been contained" (Kubka, 2017, p. 17). As indicated above, over the course of the twentieth century the Kingdom of Sweden succeeded in creating an image of itself as a country friendly to immigrants and refugees of all kinds. This image has persisted for decades, although some events have shown that the reality was more complex.

The issue of migrants and refugees in 2018 and its impact on the outcome of the general election

The repercussions which such a huge influx of immigrants to Sweden had brought about must necessarily have had an impact on the public mood, the assessment of the situation, and the sense of security of the Kingdom's citizens, especially in 2015 and the following years (*Swedish Government*, 2015; Hagelund, 2020; *How Did Sweden…*, 2017). An Ipsos poll published in April 2018 and made available to the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* found that as many as 60% of the respondents were against the policy of accepting refugees in such large numbers. 14% were in favour of significantly reducing the number of refugees, and 19% said that their admission should be limited to some extent. Only 12% of the respondents were of the opinion that their country should take in more refugees (*Szwedzi zmieniają zdanie…*, 2018). Prof. Marie Demker, a political scientist at the University of Gothenburg, commented: "This is a dramatic change if we consider that it has occurred in such a short period of time". Despite the formal tightening of the migration policy and its admission criteria by the government after a record-breaking year of 2015, when 163,000 people applied for asylum, there were 29,000 asylum seekers in 2016 and slightly fewer, 25,000, in 2017 (*Szwedzi zmieniają zdanie…*, 2018).

Apart from "welfare" and "integration", the issue of refugees, migrants and the problems associated with them became one of the important elements of the 2018 Riksdag election campaign, both before and after the elections themselves. With great concern and, at the same time, alarm (or undisguised hostility), the left-wing and liberal media wrote about "Jimmie Åkesson and his Sweden Democrats rushing to power", or "a coalition with anyone but the Sweden Democrats". The "far-right populism" of the Sweden Democrats was decried, as well as the party's "desire to squeeze as much as possible out of the migrant problem"; the "immigration scare" or "blaming Stefan Löfven's cabinet for the whole migrant situation" were also mentioned (Wiejas, 2018).

The mood among Swedes was commented on in an interview with WirtualnaPolska.pl by, among others, Artur Bryl, a Pole naturalised in Sweden and for many years a resident of Malmö: "People mainly complain about the health service. It is the economy that is the main topic for now". In his opinion, for the time being "only the social democrats [sic] talk a lot about immigration and emphasise that there are too many refugees from Syria and that aid must be cut. In their case, this is nothing new", he said. He also pointed out that "the summer holidays last until August 15, and literally nothing happens during this time. Swedes go on foreign holidays, do little politics and take care of themselves. It is only in a few days that the [election] campaign will start to get going" (Kociszewski, 2018).

One of the political arguments that appeared in the media prior to the parliamentary elections was the accusation that Åkesson's party "wants Sweden to leave the European Union". The argument was apparently based on statements about the "need to review relations with the EU" and demands to stop accepting refugees (the country was one of those which had previously accepted the most refugees). Some Polish reporters speculated that, in the event of a significant electoral success for Sweden Democrats, this could be "the beginning of Sweden's exit from the EU" (Bajerski, 2018).

Shortly before the Riksdag elections, despite officially disavowing the rhetoric of Sweden Democrats, some politicians from the centre-right Moderate Party cautiously hinted at the difficulties with integrating migrants. In an interview with Maciej Czarnecki in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on September 8, Karin Enström noted that "Sweden and Germany cannot take in so many migrants. We must now focus on integrating those who have arrived". In contrast, the left, including the socialists and the greens, tended to avoid any raising of the issue, especially in a critical manner, since Åkesson's party became the main opponent for them (Czarnecki, 2018). On the election night, September 9, 2018, Prime Minister Löfven stressed that "Sweden Democrats have not and will never have anything to offer that will help Swedish society" and that "they can only increase division and hatred". Political commentators, however, realised that soon after the election, the new rulers would be forced to reckon with the opinions of Jimmie Åkesson and his party (Wiejas, 2018).

The election results revealed a new distribution of forces in the Riksdag. The Social Democrats won 28.26% of votes, the Moderates – 19.84%, while Sweden Democrats, so criticised and bashed by the media beforehand, won 17.53%, which translated into 62 seats out of 349 (Valresultat…, 2018). The new post-election order and the place of Åkesson's party as the third political force in the country generated a great deal of commentaries and opinions both within and outside the Kingdom (*Swedish Center Parties Deadlocked…*, 2018; Mudde, 2018). In Poland, the Swedish

electoral competition was closely watched by the left, who, despite their joy at the outcome of the Socialist-led bloc, did not hide their disappointment at the result achieved by the "far-right" and "anti-immigrant" Sweden Democrats (pawk, 2018).

Yet, Sweden Democrats' electoral successes in the 2014 and 2018 elections were influenced by a number of factors, including the evolution of their programme from very xenophobic and racist to more subdued. Also, Jimmie Åkesson himself and other activists had been able to gradually win over many of the undecided or unconvinced voters with their rhetoric. This was analysed by, among others, Douglas Murray, Wiktoria Michałkiewicz, one of whose interviewees was the local activist Lars (Lasse) Bertil Andersson, and Natalia Osten-Sacken, who talked to an activist of the same party, Jan Sjunnesson, who is a husband to an immigrant and a supporter of the LGBT community (Murray, 2017, pp. 249–250; Michałkiewicz, 2020, p. 229 ff; Osten-Sacken, 2018).

Conclusion

Although the author of the present study has tried to present as wide a spectrum of the problem as possible, the statements and opinions quoted herein are only a section of the Swedish reality of a few years ago. Some of the refugees and migrants have found and adapted positively in their new country, have jobs, and have achieved material and life stability. Unfortunately, despite the fear and political correctness evident in the statements of some Swedish citizens, government representatives or various institutions notwithstanding, it is quite obvious that this country, once synonymous with Scandinavian stability and perceived as a dream place to live for newcomers, including Poles, has changed significantly when it comes to social and internal security. This change was due the influx of immigrants, and especially the criminal or terrorist activities of a certain proportion of them (for it is international gangs and Islamic radicals that negatively affect the overall picture).

As in Poland and other countries, in Sweden too it has become apparent that the government's official, positive and politically correct interpretation, including the opinions voiced by representatives of the left and the liberals, is dramatically out of step with the existing public sentiment and the feelings of a section of the population. There is also a great deal of resentment towards the frequent practice of keeping silent about crime involving immigrants, their origin and religion, even though the existence of this practice is being all the time officially denied by the government.

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