



**INTERNATIONAL MILITARY CHAPLAINS CONFERENCE  
STOCKHOLM FEBRUARY 2013**

**Julian J Harston**  
**Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations ( rtd.)**

**SWEDEN, WORLD POWER FOR PEACE**

**5 February 2013**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is an enormous privilege for me to speak to you today. And I find myself in awe of what it is you do..... and what it is you represent. You are the voices of reason and spiritual awareness among a congregation, if I may call it that, which looks to you for comfort and solace in the smoke of war, and for explanation and justification during times of preparation for conflict. Times of peace. An increasingly well educated and thinking congregation, more demanding, more questioning, and in some ways more sophisticated, but sharing with those who went before them in equal measure a yearning for your reassuring presence and brotherly or sisterly care. Ladies and Gentlemen, as I said, I am in awe.**

**BUT, but but but.....The thought struck me as I wrote this speech.....What an amazing opportunity this is for revenge.....**

**I was brought up in the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of the Anglican Community. One of the oldest religious buildings in Europe, and only burned to the ground once, by the DANES in 11 01 I sang as a chorister. I sang in the choir of the Kings**

**school. A large part of my early youth was spent in attending services.....sometimes three times a day.....and at least once a day. I was at school for Christmas and Easter.**

**I loved it. Not a day went by when I was not surrounded by history and music and the wonderful soft sandstone universe of what remains my spiritual home.....like the young Christopher Marlow who was at my school**

*"Here, nurtured by the beauty of sound and sight, which his mind absorbed daily, the young Marlowe's genius blossomed."* ,

**BUT, and you will recall that I mentioned revenge.....I had to sit and listen to sermons, addresses, at least twice a week for TEN YEARS.....**

**So this is my chance. I promise not to overdo it. A couple of hours should be enough.....**

**The rough guidelines I was given for this talk were to tell you about my experiences in the field in UN Peacekeeping, about my experience of the Swedes and Sweden and of the Swedes in peacekeeping.**

**Let me start with a couple of stories.....the first because it is a good yarn, the second because it speaks to my subject. Both because they illustrate the importance of spirituality, and how we seek it at different times of our life.**

**Picture yourself, if you can, as young child, aged 7. Just after lights out, trying to get to sleep, when the lights in the room you share with seven others turns on, and there is the Headmaster.....first thoughts What have we done.....worse still.....what have I done.**

**‘ Get into your dressing gowns and slippers and follow me ‘ And off we went 40 of us collected and wrapped.....out of the school, along a pathway leading to the cloisters of the cathedral, up the ancient Dean’s steps into the Nave, and into our usual places in the Choir. The cathedral was dark, except for a light in the organ loft. There we could just make out an old man with a white beard sitting at the organ waiting to play. The music rose up around us.....there wasn’t a skin without goose bumps. Bach, Toccata and Fugue, perhaps the mightiest of organ pieces.....and the old man with the beard.....Albert Schweizer.....**

**On a visit from his beloved Congo, had asked permission to play and it had been granted. His audience, 40 little boys who would remember every moment of that evening for the rest of their lives.**

**My second story is set on December 13th 1995, in Zagreb Croatia. More precisely in the UN cafeteria at breakfast time.....it is a dark, wet December morning and the Cafeteria is full. Men and women, perhaps from as many as thirty or forty different nationalities taking some comfort from each other’s company and the warm food. A demoralised group, seen unjustly by the world as having failed in their task ‘in the service of peace’ u sluzbi mira ‘. Witnesses to mans inhumanity to man in Srebrenice and wherever, or so it seemed, might could triumph over right.....**

**And suddenly the lights dimmed and into the cafeteria came young women and young men, draped in white, and carrying candles, escorting their Santa Lucia, wearing a garland with candles on her head.....**

*Natten går tunga fjät, runt gård och stuga.  
Kring jord som sol'n förlät, skuggorna ruva.*

*Då i vårt mörka hus, stiga med tända ljus,  
Sankta Lucia, Sankta Lucia.*

*The night treads heavily  
around yards and dwellings  
In places unreached by sun,  
the shadows brood  
Into our dark house she comes,  
bearing lighted candles,  
Saint Lucia, Saint Lucia.*

**There were trays of cinnamon rolls and ginger biscuits.....and as the lights went up we recognised among the stjärngossar and tärnor in the procession, the faces of the Swedish headquarters Company and Military Police, whom we normally saw under very different circumstances. Very few dry eyes in the house. In bringing us their start of the Christmas season, the Swedes had provided all of us with a spiritual moment we would remember for ever.....and a lift in morale that was instantaneous.**

**Now let me return, more or less to the subject I was asked to talk about.**

**Sweden and Peacekeeping.**

**Swedish support for the United Nations (UN) is strong. Sweden is one of the major donors and one of the few countries that meets the UN development assistance goal of 0.7 per cent of GDP. Sweden has participated in many UN peacekeeping operations since the 1960s. Over 80 000 Swedes have served in UN operations over the years and several Swedes have worked as UN mediators.**

**Sweden became a member of the UN in 1946, the year after the organisation was formed. Since then, active involvement in the UN has been a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. Sweden was among the countries behind strengthening the rights of the child and the Convention against torture. It was also active in promoting the abolition of the death penalty and of apartheid, and in such fields as disarmament, environment, the fight against drugs and measures against terrorism. Sweden has been a member of the UN Security Council three times: 1957-58, 1975-76 and 1997-98.**

**A number of Swedes have served with distinction at the United Nations (UN) in various capacities. Folke Bernadotte (1895-1948) was the UN's first mediator. Following him, several other Swedes have served as mediators: Gunnar Jarring, Olof Rydbeck, Olof Palme and Jan Eliasson. Others who have held prominent positions at the UN in recent years include Jan Mårtensson, Rolf Ekéus, Carl Bildt and Hans Blix. Hans Corell was Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel of the UN.**

**In April 2005, Inga-Britt Ahlenius was appointed Under-Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services. In June 2005, Jan Eliasson was elected President of the United Nations General Assembly during its 60th session. And was subsequently appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the UN.**

**But in my view no one did more for the United Nations and for the image of Sweden as , and here let me coin a phrase which I hope will stick, a world power for peace than Dag Hammarskjöld who was the**

**second Secretary-General of the UN during the period 1953-1961.**

**What a truly extraordinary man.....**

**In a brief piece written for a radio program in 1953, Dag Hammarskjöld spoke of the influence of his parents: "From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country - or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions. From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side, I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters in God."<sup>1</sup>**

**In the six years after his first major victory of 1954-1955, when he personally negotiated the release of American soldiers captured by the Chinese in the Korean War, he was involved in struggles on three of the world's continents. He approached them through what he liked to call "preventive diplomacy" and while doing so sought to establish more independence and effectiveness in the post of Secretary-General itself.**

**In the Middle East his efforts to ease the situation in Palestine and to resolve its problems continued throughout his stay in office. During the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, he exercised his own personal diplomacy with the nations involved; worked with many others in the UN to get the UN to nullify the use of force by Israel, France, and Great Britain following Nasser's commandeering of the Canal; and under the UN's mandate, commissioned the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) - the first**

ever mobilized by an international organization. In 1958 he suggested to the Assembly a solution to the crises in Lebanon and Jordan and subsequently directed the establishment of the UN Observation Group in Lebanon and the UN Office in Jordan, bringing about the withdrawal of the American and British troops which had been sent there. In 1959 he sent a personal representative to Southeast Asia when Cambodia and Thailand broke off diplomatic relations, and another to Laos when problems arose there.

Out of these crises came procedures and tactics new to the UN - the use of the UNEF, employment of a UN "presence" in world trouble spots and a steadily growing tendency to make the Secretary-General the executive for operations for peace.

So this was the genesis of the peacekeeping endeavour, in which Sweden has played such an important part. Swedish soldiers sailors and airmen have served in

### **Palestine**

The UN's first peacekeeping operation was to act in a mediatory role in the Palestine conflict in 1948. At the very start of the operation Sweden deployed military observers and has remained present in that capacity since then.

### **Kashmir**

**The conflict between Pakistan and India over the province of Kashmir began in 1950. Since then Swedish officers have acted as observers in Kashmir.**

### **Suez-Gaza**

**As a result of the Suez Crisis and the war between Israel and Egypt in 1956 the United Nations decided to establish a peacekeeping force of 6000 men ready for operations. Two days in advance of the General Assembly's decision the Swedish government decided to place a military force at the UN's disposal. The mission was the UN's first involving an organised military force and Sweden's first international contingent recruited on a voluntary basis.**

### **Congo**

**When the former Belgian Congo gained independence in 1960 unrest broke out almost immediately. With the aim of preventing a civil war the UN later sent a force of some 20,000 made up of troops from 30 different countries. The Swedish battalion based in Gaza was deployed immediately to the province of Katanga.. The original peacekeeping operation escalated to one of peace enforcement and the Swedish battalion was engaged in some relatively heavy fighting which lasted until the New Year of 1963. Sweden also deployed a temporarily formed air force squadron, F21, consisting of nine SAAB J29 aircraft, the "Flying Barrel", flying alongside the G2 "Seagulls" of the Yugoslav Air Force.**

### **Cyprus**

**In December 1963 fighting broke out between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots on Cyprus, which resulted in a decision by the UN to send a peacekeeping force to the island. After pressure from the UN Sweden took the decision to recruit another Swedish battalion of 955 men, which in spring 1964 found itself operating in the difficult terrain of western Cyprus**

### **Sinai**

**In October 1973 Egypt and Syria carried out a surprise attack on Israel. After a short war the UN successfully brought about a ceasefire and arranged a peacekeeping force to monitor the truce. At a later stage troops were required to man the buffer zone area which had been established by the UN. Sweden agreed to temporarily redeploy the Cyprus battalion to Sinai, where the force was almost immediately increased by one more battalion.**

### **Lebanon**

**In March 1978 the PLO conducted a commando raid into northern Israel. In retaliation the Israeli army attacked and later occupied southern Lebanon. The UN urged Israel to withdraw her forces and deployed a UN force to monitor the withdrawal and to restore peace to the area. A Swedish contingent of 250 men from the Sinai battalion took part in the first phase of the operation. In August 1980 Sweden provided a field hospital for use by the UN force. It was deployed to southern Lebanon and was reinforced in December by an additional Swedish unit, the contingent eventually growing to**

**become a 500 strong logistics battalion. The battalion remained in Lebanon until 1994.**

### **The Kuwait War**

**The Kuwait War in 1990-91 was sanctioned by the Security Council, but operations were not directed by the UN. Sweden contributed a field hospital and a 525-strong contingent.**

### **Yugoslavia**

**In April 1992 the UN sanctioned the deployment of a protection force to set up air bridges and to monitor the ceasefire agreements. The force gradually increased in size and the UN also conducted operations in Bosnia and Macedonia. Initially Sweden contributed a Staff and Signals company which served at the UNPROFOR Headquarters in Sarajevo. When hostilities started in the city the unit was sent to the Croatian capital, Zagreb. In 1993 after a request from the UN the Swedish government placed a mechanised battalion at the UN's disposal. The battalion, including three mechanised rifle companies reinforced by a Danish armoured squadron, was deployed around the town of Tuzla in northeast Bosnia. The heavier equipment and better weaponry provided for this battalion represented an important break in trend for UN peacekeeping operations. The battalion was assigned a difficult task in a harsh civil war and played a very important part in protecting Bosnian refugees. Swedish UN troops were also serving at the same time in a battalion in Macedonia and in addition Swedish officers were**

**serving in a host of different positions and on various missions throughout the whole of former Yugoslavia.**

### **Congo**

**During the peace process in the Congo Sweden deployed a number of observers and contributed an airfield support unit for the period 2003-2004, of which part served in Uganda.**

### **Liberia**

**In 2003 a UN force was deployed to Liberia to support the ceasefire process in the civil war. The force consisted of a Swedish motorised infantry company and a logistics unit.**

### **Lebanon – Mediterranean**

**Unrest in Lebanon and the Israeli attack in summer 2006 led to intervention by the UN. The measures taken included trying to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Lebanon by sea. From 2006 therefore Swedish naval units served with the UN for the first time, as part of these anti-smuggling operations. Initially HMS Gävle was deployed to be later relieved by HMS Sundsvall. All in all 140 people took part in the operation.**

### **Chad**

**Since spring 2008 a rifle company of 208 men from the Swedish Marines has been deployed in Chad, tasked to improve safety for the 400,000 mainly Sudanese refugees, who have entered the country.**

**As I said before, some 80000 Swedes have taken part in Peacekeeping. That is an amazing 10% of all peacekeepers deployed in the last 60 years. All on a voluntary basis.**

**I will try to offer some reasons why later, but first let me tell you a little about UN Peacekeeping in 2013.**

**The challenges we are facing today in many ways remain daunting. UN peacekeeping operations are deployed to environments that are inhospitable, remote and dangerous, sometimes with inadequate logistical support and resources. The diversity of our missions is likely to continue to grow, as are the expectations in terms of what UN peacekeeping should deliver. Missions' mandates are increasingly more complex and multidimensional. While we still have traditional missions supporting a ceasefire agreement between two or more parties, we also manage multi-dimensional missions, supporting a peace process and national authorities after civil conflict, on the other end of the spectrum. These missions cover vast territories, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, and have complex mandates ranging from supporting elections and state capacity, to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, strengthening the rule of law and improving the management of the security sector. Other missions provide security and protection in response to a conflict. Increasingly, UN peacekeepers are called upon to take a more robust approach to implement complex mission mandates, and to deter spoilers to a peace process, to the mandate, and to mission personnel. They are called upon to protect civilians, including from sexual violence in conflict. This carries significant policy and operational challenges.**

**Since the end of the Cold War, we have seen the emergence of a new type of operation, which also seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict. These operations have found themselves involved in activities to promote democratic practices; to build sustainable institutions; and to enhance respect for human rights. They essentially attempt to enable a society to complete within six to seven years an evolutionary process that would ordinarily take decades or centuries. ( e this is exactly the kind of operation that we are all involved in in Afghanistan.)**

**In the year 2000 the level of deployment was 20,000.**

**On 1 June 2012 some 125,000 military, police and civilian peacekeepers were deployed in 16 Peacekeeping operations, one AU operation and 10 Political Missions, budgeted at a total of \$8 billion.**

**Today the UN operates and maintains more than 300 medical facilities, almost 300 aircraft, 17,000 vehicles, and 40,000 computers. In the last year, we chartered over 900 aircraft and 20 ships to move cargo and people. The annual procurement bill for peacekeeping now approaches \$2.7billion annually. Each of these figures still represents an historic high.**

**The separation of military and civilian problem solving no longer exists in almost all cases. Conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post conflict reconstruction, are together the base upon which a large part of today's diplomacy in the area of Peace and security is built. BUT, unless violence stops there is no basis upon which to build governance and stability.**

**The “ comprehensive approach” to stabilisation operations is a reality. Without it, peacekeeping and peacebuilding will not succeed. In Afghanistan and elsewhere the message of the ‘enemy’ is a startlingly simple one. These foreigners will leave. We will stay. Stick with us we are your future.**

**Our only response must be to give the people a real choice by creating the secure and sustainable foundation upon which, with our continued help, they can build a better future and a real alternative.**

**This is perhaps a good moment to reflect on Afghanistan. Almost all the lessons I have just outlined have been ignored there. With the result that we are now limping towards a withdrawal, and Afghanistan may well be seen in the future as a copy book example of how not to do these things.**

**‘ We failed to concentrate first on the rule of law and now find ourselves both burdened and besmirched with a Government in Kabul so tainted with corruption that its writ (and ours) declines by the day, For too many years our military strategy was chasing the enemy, when we should have been protecting the people. We wasted lives, resources, money and opportunities on our own impossible ambitions rather than delivering the simpler things with which Afghans would have been content. We have been blunderingly ignorant of local customs, traditions and language because we thought we knew better.**

**We failed to understand that in these wars it is politics, not weapons, that counts most. Even if you win on the battlefield, you lose, if you lose politically;**

**Our greatest mistake of all is that when unity of command and action on the part of the interveners is crucial to success, we have failed completely to achieve this. .’**

**‘A sustainable peace also requires that we do what we can to promote a new de facto constitutional structure that runs with the grain of Afghan tribal realities. It was arrogance compounded by ignorance that led us to press for a Western-style centralised constitution, complete with elections they couldn’t afford without our money, in a country that has been decentralised and tribal for at least two thousand years.’**

**And make no mistake the blame for this can not be simply attributed to NATO, the coalition or even the United States, but must also be seen as a failure by those in the United Nations, who of all people should have known better.**

**Peacekeeping is a flagship-endeavour of the United Nations and represents the whole of the Organisation. Millions of people depend, every day, on UN peacekeepers.**

**Peacekeeping operations can only succeed in the right political context, with a readiness for peace on the ground, and a will to work for it in major capitals.**

**The circumstances now present in the Sudan, the DRC (the size of Western Europe), Côte d’Ivoire, Haiti, Darfur and in southern Sudan and elsewhere are infinitely more complex. We are mandated to assist complex state-restoration and building processes after decades of conflict. The peace agreements we are tasked to implement do not enjoy universal participation and support. The number of local factions proliferates rapidly within a constellation of shifting alliances, uncertain allegiances and lucrative opportunities for economic gain. The honeymoon effects of the end of the Cold War have been replaced with strains on the international system exacerbated by divisions over**

**responses to the “Global War on Terror”, and increased competition for scarce energy resources and global markets.**

**The challenges for our biggest, more recent and complex missions – in Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of Congo – are daunting in their scale and complexity.....and in neither case are we winning.....**

**The UN is constantly asked to do more while its political leverage on recalcitrant parties has diminished. Worse, there is a false expectation that Blue Helmets can make up the difference through force.**

**Peacekeepers can help implement a political strategy that enjoys international support; they cannot serve as a substitute for the absence of one.**

**The question of whether UN peacekeeping can take on more must be seen in the light of few global alternatives. Of all the world’s organizations, the UN is least able to turn its back on those whose very lives hang in the balance.**

**As LakhdarBrahimi, the wise man of the UN himself said to the General assembly earlier this year “ There will be plenty of surprises over the next decade. I am fairly certain that one thing will remain constant though and that is that UN peacekeeping shall continue to be in high demand” and he went on to repeat the plea he made ten years ago**

***“ I call on the leaders of the world to strengthen the capacity of the United nations to fully accomplish the mission which is indeed its very raison d’être: to help communities engulfed in strife and to maintain or restore peace”.***

**And the Swedes will be there. Universally recognized as the best of the best. Labelled as effective, compassionate, flexible, trustworthy, and well motivated.**

**Why.....**

**Lets start with the politics. The Social democrats who ruled for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were internationalist. They believed that Foreign Policy and domestic policy are one. You can not have a moral outlook at home which you do not express abroad. You can not be progressive at home and conservative abroad. Hjalmar Brannting winner of the Nobel Peace prize, social democrat Prime Minister expanded upon this saying “ We can not do anything sustainable at home unless we contribute to a safer world , not by military means but by values and by solidarity’**  
**The Swedes really believed that the same things that Swedish workers were fighting for at home were equally the rights of workers abroad. How could a war in Vietnam be right and a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan be wrong.....**

**This simple sum.....what’s good for us in terms of personal freedoms and personal responsibilities is the natural right of others, is now deeply inculcated into the Swedish psyche.....even among those who gave up on the Social Democrats years ago..**

**And what about the Swedish psyche? What makes Swedes tick?**

**Well, the stereotypes are easy.....cool...relatively  
humourless.....socially awkward.....gloomy.....well  
organised.....egalitarian.....and so on.**

### **CONFLICT AVOIDANCE**

**Swedes typically avoid face-to-face conflicts. Like the Japanese, Swedes tend to be in strong favor of agreement and consensus. This same desire to avoid confrontation is also put to good use in mediation and negotiations and Swedish management style.**

### **HONESTY**

**Swedes describe themselves as honest, although this notion has been considerably challenged in recent years: income tax evasion is frequently mentioned as one of several exceptions to the rule. It seems to be a tendency among Swedes to tell the truth in a very precise way, i e not to exaggerate, but rather to present all the details. But honesty is also praised in a more traditional way - lying is considered bad by a majority of Swedes (60%), compared with only 13% of Danes and 26% for Mediterranean Europe. On the whole Swedes try not to manipulate their fellow beings by giving false impressions, lying, pretending etc. Normally they do not question the statement of other Swedes, in the sense that they do not suspect a hidden message.**

## **EMOTIONS**

**Among Swedes there are relatively few kisses, hugs and verbal emotional expressions...**

## **REASON**

**In Sweden, rationalism has long dominated the climate of opinion. A pious Swede is often ashamed of admitting his allegiance to God, while a rationalist Swede is not at all shy about admitting his to Reason.**

**There is a strong preference for rational arguments, facts and concreteness, as opposed to emotional and speculative imagination. The effectiveness of planning and ability for willingness among Swedes to negotiate and to agree on compromises has also been attributed to this rational argumentation.**

## **GLOOM**

**In the eyes of many foreigners Swedes seem to be gloomy and joyless. The gloom in Swedish character is traditionally explained with reference to two factors: the Nordic climate and the Lutheran Church. The climate issue concerns the impact of light, temperature, winds, etc. on the human biological system and thereby on psychological status. The puritan Lutheran world view is restrictive. Pleasure is allowed but mainly in forms of short breaks or ways of regaining strength needed for work. "Too much" pleasure gives rise to guilt feelings. Comfort is basically sinful.**

## **THE ROOTS OF SWEDISHNESS**

**In order to explain the relative shyness, reservedness, silence, seriousness, etc., among Swedes today, you need to look at the recent history of Sweden to get a clearer view and remember how late the move to the cities came compared to much of Europe. The rural personality type is still remarkably prevalent among Swedes.. The main psychological stress factor in rural Sweden was the capriciousness of nature. The psychological stress on the people from societal factors has been comparatively limited in Sweden. The absence of wars, revolutions and political turbulence has had an impact on the Swedish mentality.. To what extent this trend will change as a result of recent immigration is a question which remains to be answered.**

**The Jante Law or the Law of Jante! ( groans from the Swedes here)**

**And one can't forget to mention the Jante Law! Jante Law is actually a fictional law but has had a great impact in Sweden. The writer Aksel Sandemose lived in Denmark but wrote the book in which Jantelaw is described in Norwegian. Jante formulated in words the unwritten law that says you should not be different or think that you are better than anyone else in any way. Anyway, Jante Law may be on its way out and be very weak now, but it has yet influenced the Swedish style of today and is the bases for the Swede's restraint.**

.....

**There is the Swede for you. Personally I love the Swedes and appreciate the Swedish way of being polite, to not seek trouble if it isn't necessary, the view of equality and great care for others, and a lifelong quest to serve Salmon in all its forms as many times a day as possible. ( but seriously Swedish cuisine is one of the best kept secrets in Europe..fresh...tasty..and very healthy )**

**In sum.....An inbred belief that what is good for Swedes is worth fighting for for others, people with a desire to avoid conflict. Honest people who avoid exaggerated shows of emotion, people who will almost always choose rationalism over emotion, people who understand that discomfort is good for the soul.....and a nation that believes that they are essentially the same as others and claim no special position because of their relative wealth and their rich history. If you had boxes to tick on the question “ who makes a good peacekeeper “ the Swedes tick all the right boxes. That is what makes Sweden a ‘ World power for Peace’.**

.....

**My last story.....in 1996 I was in Tuzla, Bosnia, in the evening, in the Cafeteria sitting at a table with some Swedish Peacekeepers and some Americans. The Swedes in jumpers and jeans.....the Americans in combat dress with bullet proof vests alongside them on the floor. After half an hour or so the Swedes stood up and excused themselves saying they were walking down to the local town hall to choir practice**

**for Christmas.....at this time the Americans were only allowed out of the base in two armoured vehicles with body armour.....**

**Before I leave you a piece of advice.....with Swedes you only get one Chance.**

**If a Swede asks you if you want to join him on a skiing trip, or if you would like another cookie, make sure you know what you want before you answer. Unlike many other cultures, Swedish people will not coax or insist. They will ask you once and then accept your first answer. Therefore, if you want another cookie, you had better take the chance and accept the offer the first time around.....**

**Thank you**

