

Letter to Mr. Karl Erik Olsson, Member of the European Parliament, pursuing an AECA Conference Dinner with Mr. Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland on 22 March 2004

I have given further thought to your question what might be done to convince your fellow Swedish citizens that NATO (or other international frameworks) are worthwhile supporting. I think it would be most helpful if such matters would not be subjected to a referendum. A referendum seems the ultimate abdication of responsibility by politicians and really constitutes an abuse of the citizens. It seems grossly unfair to submit extremely complicated matters to the citizens for a vote. Citizens do not and cannot really understand these matters and when such matters are not well understood, they deserve to be turned down. This has happened several times. Sweden's brave foreign minister Anna Lindt unfortunately lost her life in the process (and worse, her children lost their mother). Politicians have been elected to represent the citizens and debate and decide on political matters however difficult and complicated they may be. Throwing such matters back to the citizens is a bad idea and counterproductive. This is the more so where the media play an ever more influential role in public life and in a referendum they are easily exploited by demagogues thereby manipulating the masses and distorting democracy.

So my recommendation therefore would be to not hold a referendum and let politicians do their proper job.