Beyond Panic: How Sweden Prepares Citizens for Crises and Wars

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Sweden has sent every family a bright yellow 64-page booklet, simple in appearance but powerful in content: a practical guide to dealing with wars, blackouts, cyberattacks, and disinformation. The title, *Om krisen eller kriget kommer*—"If a Crisis or War Comes"—is clear and direct. Although at first glance it may seem like a design or lifestyle brochure, it is actually a real manual for surviving extreme crises.

This type of publication is not new in Sweden. The first version dates back to World War II and was updated until 1991. It was reintroduced in 2018, and the 2024 edition arrives at a time of high international tension, particularly after the update of the Russian nuclear doctrine allowing the use of nuclear weapons in response to long-range missiles provided by Western countries to Ukraine.

A Manual Designed for Everyone

Created by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), the manual is designed to be accessible to everyone. Unlike U.S. resources, available online but scattered across different sites, the Swedish guide is physical, unified, and always consultable, even without electricity or internet.

Printed in black and white with yellow highlights, the booklet has a clear and consistent layout. It uses readable fonts (Century Gothic for titles, Garamond for the body), bullet points, and icons to facilitate understanding. According to Robin Fredholm, head of design, the goal was to make the information clear for everyone, even for those with visual or linguistic difficulties.

Graphics explain civil alarm signals, while symbols identify shelters such as subway stations. Checklists help organize supplies of food, water, and basic materials for at least seven days. It's not just about surviving, but doing so independently.

Preparing, Even Psychologically

The manual clarifies that all citizens between 16 and 70 years old are part of the national defense, and in case of crisis, they must be ready to contribute. Besides material preparation, there is a section dedicated to psychological stability, with advice to help children manage anxiety by involving them in practical tasks to strengthen their sense of security.

The issue of disinformation is also addressed: it encourages sharing only verified news and following only official sources. On the back of the booklet, emergency contacts, useful links, and support resources are listed.

In case of evacuation, sirens and local media will give instructions. Only essentials should be taken: documents, money, medications, food, and a radio.

Design in the Service of Resilience

The manual does not aim to scare, but to prepare. The graphic choices are not aesthetic, but functional to clarity. The bright yellow attracts attention, the organization of information reduces stress in emergency situations.

With the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and the growing risk of an extension of the conflict, Sweden chooses the path of awareness and organization. *Om krisen eller kriget kommer* is a survival guide designed with intelligence and rigor: an example of how design can truly save lives.

In case of warDownload

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