



Letter From Stockholm

by Eric Brodin

The Church in Sweden's Welfare State

As this is written, the annual Council of the Church of Sweden is meeting here, proceedings which will last to the end of the month of August. As the name implies, Sweden has a state church which is Lutheran in confession. Its origin, like that of the Church of England, was based on the whim of a king. In the case of England, it was Henry VIII, who wanted a new wife. In the case of Sweden, it was Gustav Wasa, who wanted the church riches for his exchequer.

Gustav Wasa was the first king of Sweden after it became fully independent from Denmark. In 1527 he decided to join in Luther's reformation and break with the Church of Rome, but his decision involved political and fiscal reasons more than moral or theological ones.

The nature of the state church was further confirmed in 1686 by the absolute monarch Charles XI. The constitution of 1809 stated that the monarch was acting as "Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith." The king and his family, as well as the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, have to be members of the state church. There is no requirement that they believe in God; however, both these issues have caused some problems in Sweden in the last 50 years. In 1982 the council relegated to the parliament the exclusive right to pass all legislation and thus confirmed with finality the integration of the church into the political system, although 450 laws already exist which determine the Church's relationship to the people and the state.

When on August 20, 1986, the church council reconvened, it did so with a processional from the old parlia-

ment building to the nearby Storkyrkan, the first time it had done so in 10 years. (Significantly, the procession did not take place in the opposite direction.) The procession was led by Archbishop Bertil Werkstrom, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, and included Sweden's other 12 bishops and 251 delegates, 91 of whom attended the council for the first time and a majority of whom were laymen. To have been elected delegates, they need not have been baptized, confirmed, or even active members of the state church.

The initial message to the delegates from Archbishop Werkstrom was hardly positive. "While statistics can be poor testimonies of spiritual realities, there is also a great risk in underestimating their importance or ignoring or suppressing their evidence. When church attendance in a single year declined by 900,000 and the collection by five million crowns, these are signs which must be interpreted with a great deal of serious concern," said the Archbishop.

There are a number of other statistical indicators which reveal that there is a fundamental malaise in the Church of Sweden today. "Most of us have not had definite feelings about these tendencies . . . but the picture is, unfortunately, rather uniform. The increase of Communion-takers of the last few decades has stopped. Baptisms reached their lowest ebb in years . . . and there has been a decline in the number of confirmation and church burials," the Archbishop continued.

There are a number of evident reasons for these developments, but it is unlikely that the church meetings are going to deal with these fundamental issues in any great degree. Church leaders have had other more weighty concerns. For example, a committee has already spent 13.5 million crowns over the hymnal *Psalm-book*, weeding out, among other things, hymns and songs with overly "patriotic" or militant themes.

The fundamental problem, of

course, is the nature of the state church. By its political linkage, it has become something other than the community of believers united by a confession of faith which it was meant to be. It has instead become another instrument of political power. When the socialist and labor movements arrived on Sweden's political scene in the 1880's, they directed their campaign against "the Throne" (monarchy), "the money-bag" (the capitalist system), and "the bishop's staff" (the state church). But once they gained parliamentary majority in 1932, they soon turned the church into another agent of political power. By controlling its boards, publications, and seminaries and by its power to appoint bishops, the government made the church a secularized arm of a socialist, egalitarian, and collectivized state. The Socialist Democratic Party soon dropped its insistence on "separation of church and state" (as it has also not insisted on getting rid of the monarchy, in recognition of the indisputable popularity of the royal family of Charles XVI Gustav).

The collective allegiance to the state church can take bizarre forms. Let us say that a Turkish Muslim or an Italian Catholic moves to Sweden to work. He is automatically signed on the rolls of the local Lutheran State Church congregation where he lives. (He is also, not coincidentally, signed on the rolls of the union representing his place of work, and this union most often will also collectively and compulsorily join him to the Socialist Labor Party to which he has to pay dues, although, as a foreigner, he cannot vote.) It is true that one can "opt out" of both the state church and the Socialist Party membership, but that involves both some knowledge of Swedish bureaucratic procedures and the risk of harassment from fellow workers.

As both Swedes and foreigners become acquainted with the less bureaucratic ways to opt out of church mem-

bership, the total of Swedish residents who are nonmembers has increased by 25,000 a year the last few years. In 1984 there were 7,963,696 state church members and 420,572 nonmembers in Sweden. That year 13,395 left and 5,874 joined the state church. But even if you leave, you still have to pay 60 percent of the church tax for handling civil registration.

That most people in Sweden do not regard the Church of Sweden as anything more than the keeper of vital statistics may be inferred from the fact that while 93 percent of Sweden's 8.3 million population are nominal members, only 2 percent attend Sunday morning services on any given Sunday.

Church attendance in the Stockholm area is as low as 0.7 percent of the population. The highest attendance is recorded in the relatively sparsely populated dioceses of Vaxjo and Visby with 3.3 percent attending the state church regularly.

The erosion both of the spiritual authority and the moral *raison d'être* of the state church has had a number of contributing factors: (1) corruption among bishops in allegedly rigged elections; (2) politicization of both appointments and expressions; (3) splits in the clergy regarding controversial social-moral issues such as homosexuality, abortion, contraceptives, etc.; and (4) the three double splits regarding state church versus (a) confessional church, (b) the High and Low Church movements, and (c) the exceptionally sensitive issues over the ordination of women into the priesthood. (They were first admitted in 1958. Today women represent about 10 percent of the 3,000 clergy, but as they are 50 percent of the students in the theological seminaries, this portends something for the future.) Another issue which causes controversy and hard feelings is the immense wealth of the church and the way it is administered. It should be noted that the church and its employees are an important part of government bureaucracy and civil service. The church employs 25,000 persons. Three thousand of these are clergy, of whom 85 percent are members of unions with full and recognized rights to strike.

Part of the church wealth has medieval origins, such as 4,000 church structures, 2.5 percent of Sweden's

arable lands, and 1.4 percent of its forests. Although many Lutheran church services may gather no more than two dozen worshipers on a Sunday, new churches worth about one half billion crowns are built each year while 1.5 million crowns are expended annually for the upkeep of those which already exist.

Of the total church of 20 billion crowns, 15.8 billion are in cemeteries and church structures, 1.6 billion in funds and investments, 1.3 billion in forests and acreage, one billion in schools and foundations, and 120 million in corporations such as a publishing company and a press service. There are many who consider it inappropriate for a church to have such wealth when so much of the world is starving. This is seen as a violation of Jesus' words to the rich young man, "Go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and you shall gain a treasure in heaven." Yet others criticize the church for not properly "multiplying the talents" by modern and effective methods of investments.

If the state church is ever to regain its voice as an ecclesiastical authority on spiritual grounds, it is evident that a spiritual revival must occur like the one initiated by Martin Luther. When bishops and clergy are appointed for narrow political ends or as partisan favors and when delegates to the church council are selected mostly for political loyalty, then the politicized content of the message becomes dominant. It was not many years ago that the Bishop of Stockholm, Ingemar Strom, said he would rather live in the Soviet Union than the USA (because the latter was such a commercialized society). Last year current Archbishop Werkstrom dared to draw some scriptural conclusions about homosexuality and other "sins." The outcry was immense from a prevailingly liberal press, as well as from some clergy. Three bishops opposed the *primus* openly, and the current Bishop of Stockholm, Krister Stendahl, had a special worship service for homosexuals which ended with a riot and police dragging protesting young fundamentalists out of the church. It was Bishop Stendahl who lately used his pulpit to condemn those wishing to leave Sweden as "sinners." (Wanting to exercise a fundamental right and shelter some economic gain

from an increasingly rapacious Swedish taxation authority was considered a "sin.") These moral protests sounded strange in view of the bishop's own decades-long tenure at Harvard as a professor of theology and his final return to the U.S. this year "to be near his family."

Where does this leave the many Swedes who are active in their own dissenting or national churches? What rights do they have, and what is their relationship to the state and the state church? For the purposes of the state relationship to the free denominations, these are divided into three categories: (1) traditional evangelical denominations such as Methodists (6,649 in 1981), Baptists (21,952), Salvation Army (36,793), and Pentecostals (99,047); (2) "foreign national churches": Jews (9,300), Muslims, Roman Catholics (105,590), and Greek Orthodox (20,000); and (3) so-called "cults and sects" in which Sweden's two fastest growing religious groups are placed, the Mormons (7,000) and Jehovah's Witnesses (16,000).

Since the state has a radio and television monopoly, no religious denomination can either buy time in the networks or acquire it outright. (The only exception is local radio with extremely limited frequency.) Only once, for example, has a fairly full church service from the Mormons been shown on television. Programs on "cults and sects" are most often subjected to "investigative reporting" where the beliefs or theology of these groups are given subjective scrutiny. The Social Democratic Party has initiated campaigns against "sects or cults" and called for state money for refugees and "deprogramming" of young converts, with or without their consent.

The nonstate denominations are also suffering other disadvantages. No tax exemptions or deductions are given to those who support non-state churches (as in the USA or even Denmark). Their church properties are often expropriated by rezoning laws, municipal prior purchase, or by municipal expropriation rights. Still they flourish, filling an important need which the state church of Sweden is unwilling or unable to fulfill — the spiritual vacuum of young people hungering for moral discipline and spiritual solace. They have experienced life in the world's most

secularized society and now realize, in the words of a visitor: "In the Soviet Union God was replaced with socialist morality; in Sweden He was replaced by *nothing*."

Eric Brodin is an émigré from Sweden and a professor of the philosophy of business at Campbell University.

Letter From Albion by Andrei Navrozov

Viktor's Spetsnaz, John's Southwestern

Last September, some readers may recall, my letter was devoted to Viktor Suvorov, the pseudonymous writer and former GRU officer who now lives in England under yet another assumed name. It has taken me nearly a year to track down the author of *Spetsnaz*. Soon after our conversation begins, he recites in Russian:

In '41
rich lodes from mother earth
by our shovels
will again be wrested

And possibly
a fuel meant for all
will be uranium,
by cyclotrone sequestered.

Like any year
for victory, for scope
of coal and metallurgy
we are headed

And possibly
to the existing sixteen crests
in due course new ones
will be added.

But let me begin from afar, as the Russians are fond of saying.

"Southwestern" is the abridged name of a publishing company in the U.S. which recruits college students to sell its products, mostly Bibles and encyclopedias, during summer vacations. A graduate of the "Southwestern" school of commercial daring is expected to knock on an average of 3,000 doors per month, apply secret methods of persuasion like "Selling Through the Screen Door," rejoice in being arrested for trespassing or shot at by a reluctant

prospect, and otherwise prove his devotion to the free market ideal during every one of his 16-hour days. (He knocks on his first door of the day at 7:59 A.M. Disregard of the rule—knocking at 8:00 or 8:03—is, in the opinion of the managers, a sure sign that he won't make it at Southwestern.)

Thus schooled, the Southwestern salesman finds it difficult to function in a less competitive environment; the company's training cry, "I feel happy, I feel healthy, I feel teRRRRific!" is likely to sound in his head at 5:00 A.M. for the rest of his life, and a Yale friend of mine who had "done Southwestern" once confessed to have completed the year's course work in one week, an accomplishment he was shrewd enough to conceal from his professors. Today, John runs a major television distribution network in Los Angeles; needless to say, he credits neither Yale nor even his beloved Harrow with his success.

Success is the opening subject of my discussion with Viktor Suvorov, which took place under circumstances I have agreed not to reveal. Suvorov is the author of four books, in addition to *Spetsnaz: The Liberators*, describing his 1968 mission of peace to Czechoslovakia with a motor-rifle company under his command (*Soviet Military Intelligence*); and *Aquarium*, in which he tells of his own training as an intelligence officer, his life as a *rezident* spy, and his subsequent defection.

But what, the puzzled reader may ask, does all this have to do with success? Or door-to-door salesmen in Texas, for that matter?

A free society, Suvorov and I soon agree, is designed for life, while a totalitarian society is designed for war. Hence success is defined by the rules and practices of these two societies in radically different ways, and the same applies to their means of allocating resources, their attitudes to human abilities and achievements, their systems of punishments and rewards. Growing up in a "closed zone" of a country hidden from Western eyes for over half a century, Suvorov had not seen a man in civilian clothes—"without epaulettes," as he puts it—until he was a teenager; yet how many American children have ever been inside a tank? Nearly all U.S. helicopters landed at Dasht-e Kavir to rescue the hostages held by Iran had failed to

function; on the other hand, Soviet tractors perform no better. More cars are owned, per capita, by the poor blacks of South Africa than by the Soviet population; but NATO submarines are made of steel, while the Soviets have started making theirs of titanium, the "space metal" 1.5 times stronger and twice as light. The Soviets can't feed their own people? True, but they produced 170 million tons of steel in 1984, while in the U.S. 242,000 tons was the total used that year for all "ordinance and other military" needs. And yes, a "Southwestern" teenager can outsell, outwit, and outearn a Soviet minister for trade; yet even a Soviet schoolboy is liable to know more about war than Paul Nitze.

"I wanted to be a commanding officer since I could walk," says Suvorov. "When Stalin died I was five, and I remember asking my father incredulously: 'Why are we telling everyone he is dead? The Americans will think we are vulnerable.'" It was this ability to think clearly, together with his remarkable memory and physical stamina, that opened the doors of success for Suvorov when he joined the "Aquarium," GRU's Moscow headquarters, after attracting the favorable notice of his superiors during an exercise in which his tank company unexpectedly broke out of the tank park by demolishing it, and later proving himself worthy of that notice by his service record in *Spetsnaz*. After being shown a film of Oleg Penkovsky, the most important (and probably the last) agent Western intelligence has ever had in Russia, strapped to a conveyer belt edging its way into the open mouth of a crematorium furnace, he was offered a chance to change his mind about his promotion: "We have a simple rule," he was told. "It's a rouble to get in, but two to get out." Moved by the ambition that marks born soldiers east of the Elbe and born salesmen west of the Mississippi, he opted for the rouble.

It was as a writer, not as a spy, that I discovered Suvorov. "I have never read anything as powerful as *Spetsnaz*," I wrote in this space last September. "Were the reading public more interested in the immediate prospects for the survival of our civilization than in the opinions of the Nobel committee, the name of Viktor Suvorov—on the strength of this book alone—would