

SWEDEN – A MODEL OF WHAT?

By Eric Brodin

Although Sweden has been called by many names, the “Land of Sin, Suicide and Socialism,” is perhaps the one which is best known. It has also been called a Model of Socialism, and, depending whether your name is Michael Harrington or Bill Buckley, it is a model to emulate or to avoid.

Actually there is some debate as to whether Sweden is a socialist society. Part of the confusion is due to the socialists themselves, who claim abroad that Sweden has a mixed economy with only five percent of the nation’s economy under state-ownership, while to the people at home they point to the welfare provisions and the high standard of living and say: this is what socialism has brought you. To get closer to the truth, if we choose to define socialism as the state ownership of the means of production, then Sweden is *not* socialist, but if by socialism we mean state control of the results of production, then Sweden is socialist indeed. In any case the Public Sector is becoming increasingly dominant in the Swedish economy. Three fourths of the transport, wharfs, and mines, and one fourth of the forests and assorted other enterprises, including banks, the largest hotel and restaurant chain, and – significantly – practically all education, radio and television, are state owned.

From 1932 to 1975 the Social Democrats ruled Sweden mostly alone, sometimes with an odd agrarian and during the war years in a coalition government. Forty-three years is a long time without a change of government. In that time a super-structure of socialist welfare provisions can be built up; so firmly established as to be safe from political changes, secure in the power that corrupts.

The significant thing, therefore, is not how much in Sweden is owned by the state, but rather *what* is owned and what other means of controls the state is able to exercise over the people. In short, Swedish socialism has “a human face,” but it is a Janus-face. Behind the benevolent mask of the welfare state, with its provisions for the so-called welfare and security of the people, is the harsher reality: the regimentation of collectivism from which no one living in Sweden can escape.

Let us look at some of the ways in which social welfare in Sweden affects the daily life of the Swedish people.

Business and Industry

1. An employer is required by law to announce all vacant positions in the Labor exchange, and is equally compelled to accept the applicant assigned (except under very special exceptions).

2. While in law the “freedom of association grants to employees the right to belong or not to belong to unions,” in fact no employer would dare to guarantee this freedom. Compulsory unionism is nearly total and four fifths of the unions allied to the CLO – Central Labor Organization. Most unions also compulsorily affiliate their members to the Socialist Labour Party, with the result that they have to pay political party dues.

3. If a person has received employment lasting six months or more it is practically impossible to fire him or her, even for grave absenteeism, repeated drunkenness during work, and dishonesty. When a small shop owner in southern Sweden fired two employees who had stolen clothing in the shop where they worked, the owner was fined for illegally firing the workers. In another instance the firm was fined by a Labor Board for firing a man after he had received a year’s jail sentence. The absence should have been regarded as the same as absence due to pregnancy or for studies, and a substitute should have been hired, the court declared. Such restrictions on the employers result in unemployment, with effects similar to those resulting from the minimum wage law in USA.

4. Peace in the Swedish labor market has been assured by labor-management negotiations stemming from the 1938 Saltsjobaden agreement, which gave employers the right to hire, fire, direct and allocate work. In a recent decision this law was turned around, giving these rights to the unions instead of the employers! As the Unions are affiliated with the Socialist party a non-socialist can be prevented from obtaining a desired appointment for which he may be fully qualified.

5. A recent law, part of the “democratization” drive, requires a representative of the “workers” on the Board of Directors or in management. This workers’ representative is not to be democratically chosen by his peers in his place of employment,

but is selected by the unions. If these decide that a particular shop or industry has no worker “qualified” for the position, they can choose someone from outside. As Unions are at times part-owners of enterprises, this can in effect permit industrial espionage against competing non-union owned enterprises.

6. The training of the workers’ representative, as well as the Swedish language training for immigrant workers, is in the hands of the ABF (Workers’ Educational Association), a Party affiliated organization whose instruction material – including language text books – is ideologically anti-capitalist and pro-socialist. As employers have to give workers paid leave of absence to attend these programs, they are in effect required to finance activities which work against the best interests of their own firms.

7. By law an employee is guaranteed six month’s full salary in the event of a company liquidation. At the time of formation firms must deposit this sum in reserve or obtain guarantees from a bank. Many small or medium firms cannot obtain such guarantees, and as a result many much-needed employment opportunities do not get off the ground. For the same reason one third of all registered Swedish enterprises are “one man companies” and for the same reason there are increasing incidents of people working “black.”

8. This last phenomenon is due to the rapid increase in the costs to the employer of the employees’ social fees (pensions, illness insurance, etc.). Such costs for the employers have increased ten times during the past 18 years on a \$14,000 salary and fifteen times in the \$45,000 a year range. With additional charges resulting from new union contracts, the costs to the employer (aside from wages) may be up to 60 per cent of the salary. The doubling of bankruptcies in Sweden within a decade is, in part, due to this. Of Sweden’s 300,000 small firms, 75,000 of them disappeared during the 1970s. Few can afford to inherit a company when inheritance tax totals more than 40% of the value, including the estimated value of fixtures.

9. Hardly a single major Swedish enterprise today exists without one form of subsidy or the other. These may take the form of “relocation” subsidies, training grants for new jobs, or subsidies to retain personnel to produce items which cannot be sold – with the government paying the salary of the unneeded and unwanted workers. In some cases, the state has

even guaranteed loans to produce ships for which there was no buyer — all in the name of the “sacred cow” of Swedish economics — full employment.

But economic inefficiency is only one phase of Swedish life. There are other areas in which the social welfare policy of the Swedish socialists affects the life of individual Swedish men and women.

Education

There is practically no private education left in Sweden today. No single facility for higher education remains in private or denominational hands. Of late, some Christian primary and secondary schools have started, but they have a precarious existence, as there is no tax exemption for contributions to any religious or idealistic institution. Schools advocating other educational theories, such as those of Montessori or Rudolf Steiner, are discriminated against or harassed by government authorities through licensing requirements, refusal of building permits and the like.

The state school curriculum calls for compulsory instruction in religion (Jews are exempted). But the instruction is so watered down that the instruction amounts to a survey in which Moses, Marx and Mohammed are put on a par with Jesus Christ. It is significant of the declining freedom of choice that when a small Free Evangelical Church in Stockholm (St. Martin Parish) wished to conduct the religious instruction of its parishioners' children, the congregation had to appeal all the way to the Human Rights Commission of the Council of Europe before the government agreed to release the children from the official religion classes.

When Sweden signed a UNESCO agreement which included a provision guaranteeing parents the right to determine “the religious and ethical education of their child,” she did so only with the express exception to that clause, based on the pretext that Swedish state school instruction was so “objective” that it was not necessary to extend this right to the parents of Swedish school children.

Such a situation is easily understood when we realize that Swedish social engineers, such as former premier Olof Palme, have declared that the school should be used as a tool in the creation of a socialist society.

The totally socialized educational system in Sweden contrasts sharply with that of Denmark, whose laws guarantee any eight parents the right to organize their own school, and where an effective “voucher system” is in effect to help give private schools economic parity with state schools.

The Church

Another important feature of Swedish life is the anomaly of the continued existence of a State (Lutheran) Church. For more than two decades and at the cost of several million dollars a committee for the separation of Church and state has been working in Sweden without result. And for good reasons. When the socialists entered the Swedish political scene in the 1880s one of the fundamental planks of their platform was the dis-establishment of the State Church. Today the Socialists are alone (except for the senior Conservatives) in advocating the retention of the State Church. As the state appoints two thirds of all bishops the socialists see this as another form of governmental power. During their long hegemony they could appoint politically reliable bishops, and it is no coincidence that the present Swedish Archbishop has openly declared that he would rather live in the atheist Soviet Union than in the United States, because he finds American commercialism offensive to his Christian sensibilities. What the realities of the Communist Gulags does to his supposed Christian sensibilities has not been recorded.

Because the State Church is regarded more as a service institution than a religious denomination, attendance is very low, varying between one half to 2.3 percent on a given Sunday. People still maintain membership more out of habit than anything else, especially as the Church still maintains civil registration. When you are born (or emigrate into Sweden) you are automatically placed on the rolls. It is possible to opt out, but not every person knows this and those that do still have to pay a Church tax.

Certainly there is no legislated religious discrimination in Sweden. But inasmuch as the government is allowed to interfere in so many ways into the life and activities of both individuals and of organizations, there is a potential for discriminatory treatment which is constantly used. The right of municipal expropriation, for example, can condemn the chapels and other

buildings of non-socialist denominations whereas this never happens to edifices of the State Church, regardless of how empty they may be on Sundays. This has happened to free evangelical and catholic churches in central Stockholm and to eleven edifices (mostly villas) used by the Mormon Church, to cite some examples. The denomination is given a choice of two sites, often on the outskirts of the cities, far from the elderly core membership. A punitive tax of 25% of the total cost is imposed on the value of the new structure, and the government from time to time imposes a special tax on "non-utilitarian" buildings such as gas-stations, warehouses – and churches.

Press, Radio, Television

One of the most essential ingredients in any society which wishes to call itself free is the untrammelled expression of its media – press, radio and television. The Swedish press is still free from government interference, but economic restraints are increasingly in evidence. No major Swedish newspaper or even journal of opinion exists without government subsidy in Sweden today. One is therefore justified in wondering how long this freedom will exist. In any analysis it is evident that Communist and left wing publications receive a disproportionate share of these subsidies. This has not changed with the new non-socialist government inasmuch as those in charge of these allocations are still ideologically part of the previous regime. In the 1977/1978 budget 6 million kronor (\$1.3 million) were given to 149 periodicals (discounting newspapers). Of these 41 were of a political nature and received 1.3 million kronor. A mere 175,000 kronor went to four right of centre periodicals.

Radio and television is a state monopoly. There is no possibility either to establish independent networks or to purchase time. Sweden's largest "Free Denomination" the Pentecostal Church has more freedom of the airwaves in Portugal or Africa than in Sweden. A fraction of the time of the three radio stations is devoted to religious news (8-6 hours a week 1976/1977 or 2-3 percent of total broadcasting time). Time is allocated for religious broadcasts according to a scheme whereby denominations in Sweden are divided into four categories: (a) State Church, (b) Free Evangelicals, (c) Foreign

State Churches – Catholic, Orthodox, and (d) cults and sects. The latter are such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's witnesses, the fastest growing groups in Sweden.

Medicine

In recent articles in *Private Practice* and *New Guard* I have debated the question whether Swedish medicine is as good as its reputation. I shall therefore avoid the tiresome repetition of statistics. Suffice to say, however, that no industrial nation today has so long a waiting list for badly needed medical care as does Sweden: one year for rheumatism treatment, two years for access to an eye clinic, three years for a gallstone operation, seven years for plastic surgery etc. In most cases there are two to three years' waiting at the state dental clinics (private dentists still exist).

What is the reason for such a catastrophic situation in a country which had none of its facilities destroyed by war, and which has but a minimal increase of the population from births (18,000 in one year)? There are three main reasons:

(1) Sweden has an impressive longevity among its citizens and this of course places a strain on existing facilities.

(2) But otherwise the problem is one which has grown out of the anti-private care ideology of the planners of Sweden's social welfare state. The private hospital, or other care facility, and private doctor legislated out of existence, or forced into early retirement due to taxation policies. For Sweden's eight million people there are today available but 1,300 practicing doctors and 54% of these are over 60 years old, showing the trends for the future. The privately-practicing physician and privately-owned care facility could do much to alleviate the present need had they been allowed to continue operation. Sweden has today one private hospital left with less than a hundred beds.

(3) The campaign against free enterprise in medical (and dental) care is waged in the name that "no one should profiteer from human suffering." (This was also the justification for nationalizing all drug outlets and most pharmaceutical industries). Yet it has been proved that private enterprise within the health sector can function more efficiently and at less cost to patients and taxpayers. Nineteen percent of Sweden's population is still treated privately, at half of the cost

for a similar examination in a state-operated hospital clinic.

Psychology of the Welfare State

Medical care is, of course, only one aspect of the welfare state, and here again I wish to emphasize that I criticize the Swedish system today less because the economy is under state control, than because of the effects of the "welfare state" provisions on the individual Swedish citizen.

Swedish people traditionally had a reputation for self-reliance, hard work, pride in achievement, and their sense of independence. The one million Swedes who came to America between 1850-1900 (one fourth of the population) has proved that. That is why it is so pitiable to see the effect of socialism on the Swedes of today — perhaps epitomized by a woman who called a radio talk show to complain that the government was only paying her \$5 an hour for taking care of her sick, elderly father.

Sweden's birth to womb or womb to tomb welfare society has an insidious, but viciously corroding effect on the moral character, and socialist materialism has created — and provided ideological justifications for — that most vicious of Swedish vices, envy. "I've paid for it — I've got it coming to me," is the idea. "They are getting aid, why should not I." The rapid increase in the utilization of welfare provisions and care facilities is not due to the Swedish people being more ill now than formerly, nor is it due to an increase in the population. It is due to a change in the character of the people resulting directly from state socialism.

The increase in the days of illness reported to the insurance bureau is in direct proportion to each change in the law which provides liberalization of the requirements. When the law was changed to allow for compensation from the first rather than the third day of illness, and without physician's signature, there was a corresponding jump in illness reported. An increase of four million days of illness was recorded 1975-1976, and the average time reported ill by the average Swede more than doubled between 1945 and 1975!

Moral Dimension

I have touched already on the moral cancer of the welfare state's umbrella of provisions from which no Swede can escape.

I have seen young American friends whose concept of independence has been strong, being snared up into the system of social welfare provisions: rent subsidies of which the availability to all – regardless of age or whether married or “living together” – is advertised in buses.

It is sad to say (but this is confirmed by residents and visitors alike) that Sweden is now one of the most drab and boring societies in that part of the world we still call free. The verve, the challenge, the risks, the hope to succeed, or the motivating fear of failure is absent. From the welfare state’s bureaucratic hydra comes the message, loud and clear, to the Swedish individual: “Don’t worry. You won’t be held accountable for your actions. If you get drunk and stay home from work – you’ll be paid anyway. If you fail to provide productive work – they can’t fire you. If your own acts of neglect leave the family without food – it will be provided by the state (which is always euphemistically called “society.” If you want to drop out of school – there is a WPA training program waiting for you. If you want to drop out of the program – you can get a pension as ‘unemployable’ at the age of 20.

Economic realities are continually withheld from the population (except when they pay taxes, now averaging 50 percent in income tax and 20 percent excise tax on all goods and services).

The combination of a materialist socialist ideology – reinforced in its dogmatic presence by a four decades’ long socialist hegemony – and the overweening presence of the welfare state in all its multifaceted aspects, has brought about a collectivism which is as eroding to the individual as anywhere in the world. Foreign observers have time and time again observed the anti-individualist streak in Swedish life and its effect on the Swedish character. I regret to say that Roland Huntford’s *The New Totalitarians* is not an exaggeration in its analysis of the effects of this materialism and collectivism on the Swedish character.

Impact on Family Life

Swedish people are among the loneliest in the world. On Saturday’s whole pages appear in newspapers filled with “contact” advertisements, and the words “lonely” and “alone” are in more than half of them. The collectivistic philosophy

which has been so prevalent in Sweden in most of this century has not only deemphasized the individual, but also denigrated the home and the traditional roles played by the members of the family. The replacement of the family by the collective (at work, in the club, in the political or union group) has left the individual Swede bereft of the natural moorings and true security provided by the most basic and vitally needed of the inherent parts of any society — the home.

Through an intentional policy — effected by a barrage of propaganda on radio and television and a discriminatory taxation policy — the woman (including mothers and housewives) are brought into the employment sector. The school curricula attempt the reversal of traditional sexual roles in work and activity. Employers are given bonuses for employing women in traditional male occupations. The policy is clear. First you break down and question the traditional interrelationships of father-mother-child in the home. Then you remove the mother from the home. Then you provide for the collective care of the child (as many as 46% are in pre-school care facilities in some communities) they you establish an activity-oriented, eight to eight, school system which acts as a *locus parentes*, a school in which social and political units are free to “activate and motivate.”

Vandalism

In the *Point International* (an international newsweekly) is recently published an article dealing with the post-war phenomena of vandalism in Sweden, which with rising drug addiction is Sweden's most serious juvenile delinquency problem. Today such vandalism is a multimillion dollar reality, including the stoning of stained glass windows, and the breaking of marble crosses on graves in cemeteries. I reported at a meeting of the Association of Municipal Governments on this problem. The reasons proposed by the sociologists present for the vandalism was a mish-mash of fuzzy Luddite arguments about a resentment against private property due, they claimed, to industrial closures.

Hardly anyone pointed out that the answer to the problem of the young people was not to spend more hours at school, but more hours at home; not more money brought home by a working mother, but more hours spent at home with a mother

who could make the young person feel loved and wanted. And the participants also forgot one other thing. In a society whose political ideas and economic structure restricts, increasingly, the right to private property, a pride in possession of something one has acquired and has title to in one's own right? (As Clarence Carson has so cogently observed: "Socialism inculcates disrespect for property, not in the abstract, perhaps, but in the concrete . . . Property held in common is frequently abused and neglected State-owned property can attract little more respect than the state that owns its. . . There is an essential nexus between property and man . . . Socialism breaks this connection. . . . Property is a vital extension of the man who owns it. . ." (*Freeman*, February 1978).

After more than four decades of a socialist-cum-welfare state philosophy whose very *raison d'être* is the aggrandizement of the state-directed collectives, the result in Sweden is an anti-individualism and anti-familism whose eroding effects gnaws at the very moral fiber of each Swedish person.

Yes, there is an absence of slums, there are provisions for the collective care of the elderly parents away from their children. There are provisions for the recreation of the pet dog, and the feeding of the wild birds. But when you come to Sweden to see what Marquis Childs once called "The Middle Way," look behind the facades of the newly built houses and the super-structures of the state (which now employs one fourth of Sweden's four million economically-active population). Come on a holiday week-end and see the 14 year old drunks in parks and doorways. Look at the sad evidence of the statistics which speak of the unprecedented rise in juvenile delinquency and drug addiction, and in lieu of that of alcohol, teenagers dying from glue sniffing, or the still more sad statistics which show that a third of all deaths of 20-25 year olds are due to suicide, which, after traffic accidents, is the biggest killer in the nation.

The Swedish social planners, bureaucrats, and politicians, who confuse the concepts of freedom and security, claim that complete security leads to freedom. In reality, Swedish society is a model which demonstrates that administered security and freedom are antithetical, and that socialism destroys above all else the vital will to live by their own efforts that alone gives dignity to men and women.

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PRIME-TIME DIPLOMACY

By Patricia A. Karl

Yesterday's front page foreign policy is today's instant history and tomorrow's stale news. The media have not only conditioned changes in the traditional methods and practices of diplomacy; the media have also become primary participants in contemporary diplomacy. As technology expands the range and capabilities of communication the media alter and redefine the traditional conventions of diplomacy in three ways: access to, volume of and dissemination of information.

Participating Diplomacy

We live in an age of what one could call participatory diplomacy. Today's diplomat shares his access to his own government and foreign sources of information with correspondents, cameramen, commentators, and with what Denis Stairs has called "alien bureaucratic interlopers." (1) In the United States, for example, sixty-one government departments and agencies are involved in what John Krizay calls "the Foreign Affairs Act." (2) In many instances the media and non-diplomatic personnel have access to groups or individuals (dissidents, opposition parties and terrorists) denied to the envoy or head of state. One recent restriction placed on the American diplomat, for example, was a Summer 1977 State Department directive to American Embassy personnel in Moscow that requires Embassy personnel to get a twenty-four hour advance approval from the ambassador before they meet with ordinary Soviet citizens. (3) Although this may meet security needs, it gives the media representatives an advantage over the professional diplomat.

As a result of the two-way access route between the media and sources, the media have become a channel of competition and communication within and among governments. Access, then, has altered diplomacy in several ways. First, the ability of the media to present foreign policy menus from a variety of sources has an impact on policy to the extent that alternative policies are grist for the public mill. However, the increase in alternatives guarantees mixed reviews for any policy. In foreign policy circles this is known as the "foulup factor." (4)