



Richly forested and sparsely populated (only 8 million in a country not much larger than California), Sweden now has a heavily "urban" economy with rural pockets of relative poverty, especially in the north.



Sweden

A year ago, American newspapers headlined the election defeat of the prime architects of Sweden's famed welfare state, the Social Democrats, who were suddenly out of power for the first time since 1932. The shift prompted new looks by scholars at the future of Sweden's controversial, oft-misunderstood experiments in social and economic welfare. Here, historian Steven Koblik assesses some long-popular stereotypes—"socialism, sin, and suicide"—of Sweden. M. Donald Hancock, a professor of government, reviews the Social Democrats' troubled efforts to combine economic growth, egalitarianism, and "compensatory" welfare. Political scientist Steven Kelman looks at the future. Our Background Books review-essay stresses studies of Sweden's earlier history and culture and its neglected literature.



SYMBOLISM AND REALITY

by Steven Koblik

"Will the new President seek to turn the nation into a Swedenized America?"

This sentence from a pre-inaugural *Saturday Review* article about Jimmy Carter illustrates the special image Sweden has acquired among Americans. Ever since columnist Marquis Childs published his best-selling *Sweden: The Middle Way* in 1936, both advocates and foes of increased government intervention in American society have variously acclaimed Sweden as a "prototype of modern society" or damned it as "a

warning for democracy." A rare symbol of peace, progress, and prosperity to one faction—and, to this day, of sin, suicide, and bureaucratic socialism to the other.

While both the positive and negative views reflect certain realities, neither explains the peculiar Swedish phenomenon. Alone among European maritime nations, Sweden has not fought a war since 1814. She has undertaken a remarkable array of social reforms, particularly since World War II: a comprehensive school system influenced by American models, a far-reaching national health plan, a reliable pension scheme, a massive day-care system, effective programs for urban planning and job retraining, improvements in the work environment, and increased equality in the workplace.

All this has been accomplished in a period of growing prosperity, during which Sweden has virtually eliminated its slums, maintained near full employment, provided a high degree of equality of service to both rural and urban citizens, attained the highest per capita GNP west of the Persian Gulf, and given economic aid to the Third World at a level equivalent to almost 1 percent of her GNP.*

Has the price of these efforts been social decay, the erosion of morality, and the destruction of private initiative?

Few Swedes attend church. Although all Swedes are nominally born into the Lutheran Church, attendance rates and the proportion of the population retaining a "belief in God" are the lowest in the Western world. In 1974, more than one-fourth of Swedish babies were born out of wedlock. Divorce rates and crime (mostly nonviolent) are on the rise. The suicide rate normally stands among the top seven worldwide (20.8 per 100,000 in 1973). Personal income taxes rank second only to those of Israel. Prime Minister Thorbjörn Fälldin's ruling coalition, the first "nonsocialist" government in 44 years, has just raised the value-added sales tax to almost 21 percent. Swedish executives complain about government control and economic intervention; recently concluded labor negotiations saw the employers' federation take its toughest stand in years against current economic practices, particularly job security. And today Sweden faces its most serious economic crisis since World War II.

It is tempting—but extremely misleading—to link these "positive" and "negative" aspects in a cause-effect way. While

*The history of the Swedish welfare state can be traced in detail through the following books: Kurt Samuelsson's *From Great Power to Welfare State: 300 Years of Swedish Social Development* (1968); Hugh Heclo's *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance* (1976); and Gunnar Myrdal's 1960 book *Beyond the Welfare State: Economic Planning and Its International Implications*.

there have been dramatic changes in Swedish lifestyles, many traditional features remain. For example, foreign accusations of "sinfulness" are hardly new. In an 11th-century chronicle, Adam of Bremen wrote of Swedish men that "only in their sexual relations with women do they know no bounds." A 19th-century English traveler, Samuel Laing, found that "the moral condition of Sweden is extremely low," ascribing "this diseased moral condition" to the country's poverty and rigid class structure. The suicide rate has been relatively high since the turn of the century. The Swedes' great break with the active, religious life occurred well before the advent of the postwar welfare state. Since the early 20th century, Swedish law has not differentiated between children born in or out of wedlock. In short, Swedish sexual customs and social values simply differ from many Anglo-American traditions; they are not fresh products of the welfare state. Next door, Norway, which has a welfare system almost identical to that of Sweden, does not display such "deviant behavior."

Cultivating Capitalism

In economic matters too, simplistic observations can be misleading. Sweden is not burdened (or benefited) by "socialism." More than 90 percent of its industrial production is privately owned. Most of the few public enterprises—in transportation, communications, and iron-ore mining—were established before World War II. Their managements operate much as do those of private firms; they must demonstrate both solvency and social responsibility to survive. The Swedish national railways, for example, were compelled by a parliamentary ruling to be self-supporting, and that decision has led to a severe and much-lamented contraction of rail service in rural areas.

Swedish industry is not only privately controlled, it is dominated by a few individuals or families. Swedes talk of the

*Steven Koblik, 36, is associate professor of history and chairman of the international relations program at Pomona College. Born in Sacramento, he received his B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley (1963), his M.A. from the University of Stockholm (1964), and his Ph.D. from Northwestern (1970). He has taught at Pomona since 1968 and has twice served as visiting professor at the University of Lund. He is the author of *Sweden: The Neutral Victor* (1973) and editor of *From Poverty to Affluence, a collection of essays on Sweden, published in Swedish in 1972 and in English in 1975.**

famous "17 families," none of them particularly flamboyant, which control a growing portion of Swedish business. The Wallenberg family is the best known and through its Stockholm Enskilda Bank has had an extraordinary influence over the economic life of the country. Fourteen years ago, the head of the clan, Dr. Marcus Wallenberg, sat on the boards of 63 of Sweden's major companies. His fellow Enskilda Bank directors held an additional 133 posts—a number that grew when the Wallenberg bank was merged with the Skandinaviska Bank, Sweden's largest, in the early 1970s. No American dynasty enjoys that degree of economic influence.

Moreover, the Social Democratic government long encouraged the trend toward mergers and concentration, perceiving it as rational and efficient. Sweden needs companies large enough to compete internationally, because export earnings are the lifeblood of the country. Sweden has the world's largest number of multinational corporations per capita. Big companies, it is believed, provide an improved workplace environment and better opportunities for improved labor productivity (average annual increase, 1965–70: 7.6 percent), and can muster the capital for research and development.

The tax system reinforces these tendencies. While personal income taxes quickly reach 60 to 80 percent on a graduated scale, Sweden's business taxes are lower than equivalent taxes in the United States. Tax incentives for new investment are generous and tend to aid large companies as well as small. Outright nationalization was not attractive to the Social Democrats. They chose to rely on indirect methods to achieve the same social goals.

Harmony and Fulfillment

Swedish industry is privately owned, but it is not untrammelled. Political decisions by Parliament have strongly shaped private management processes, the workplace environment, and criteria for investment. Labor relations are centrally controlled. Government planners, big business, and big unions work together, cozily for the most part, to push and mold Swedish economic development. The president of Volvo, Pehr Gyllenhammer, for example, has written, "Private companies do not solve their own problems alone. They are dependent upon cooperation with local and national governments and the programs of the public sector that are directed toward the creation of harmonious and fulfilled citizens."

What should be clear by now is that popular American perceptions about Sweden are not very accurate. For a better understanding, one must look at five historical factors that have been essential to the relatively smooth development of the Swedish welfare state:

- ¶ The consensus nature of Swedish society;
- ¶ The strength of conservative traditions;
- ¶ The importance of nongovernmental organizations;
- ¶ Popular acceptance of the notions of "rationalization" and "progress";
- ¶ Public deference to ruling elites.

Sweden is a homogeneous society whose historical experience has been largely isolated from the turmoil and conflict of the European continent across the Baltic. During the early 20th century, in particular, the Swedes developed a sense of community that obscures class differences and provides a near-universal sense of national identity. Unlike Americans, whose social identity is commonly rooted in church, neighborhood, or region, Swedes have an overwhelming sense of "Swedishness"; they share a broad range of social, cultural, and moral values. Levels of conflict, as measured in violent crimes or labor violence, are remarkably low. Even more important is the cultural value that rejects confrontation as a proper means for settling differences of opinion. From childhood on, Swedes are taught to compromise and to seek consensus. Open displays of real differences of opinion, although strong differences may exist, are not common either in business or in politics. The preferred procedure is to discuss a problem informally, examine all solutions, and then select one that can be accepted by a large majority.

When I once remarked, during an interview with former Prime Minister Olof Palme, that official minutes of Cabinet meetings gave little indication of interministerial conflict, he replied that discussion of government policy often takes place at informal luncheon meetings where no official record is kept.

All of Sweden's major social reforms were preceded by such a process of quiet, methodical dialogue among various factions. In the formal sense, the Social Democrats may have governed the nation between 1932 and 1976, but they alone did not create contemporary Sweden.

The tendency to reach a consensus is reinforced by a widespread desire not to upset traditional values. Swedes are

among the most "anti-urban" of the West's industrial citizenry, and the pastoral life has a strong hold on butcher and banker alike. The central place of the family, the work ethic, a commitment to traditional Judeo-Christian humanism, a desire to live harmoniously with nature, a fairly stiff code of interpersonal relations, a tradition of authoritarianism—all are Swedish characteristics that have historical roots. One key to the success of Sweden's social planners is that they have not challenged the people's basic values; rather they have argued that the old socioeconomic system did not permit all Swedes to find self-fulfillment.

Swedes are an organized people. Most Swedes belong to at least three organizations (e.g., labor union, cooperative, renters group). Over 90 percent of the labor force is unionized (compared with 21.7 percent in the United States). Employers are also organized. Most Swedes are members of cooperatives. Other special-interest organizations abound. Swedes are indirectly represented in the economic and political decision-making process through these organizations, whose leaders operate as lobbyists. They serve on parliamentary and bureaucratic commissions and are queried by political leaders about the attitudes of their members.

The "Elm Tree" Incident

This "organizational" leadership, mostly recruited from a small group of highly educated Swedes, has tremendous power. Rank and file cohesion is extremely strong. Wildcat strikes, splinter groups, and public airing of differences within organizations are frowned upon. A 1971 demonstration to save some elm trees on the site of a future subway station in central Stockholm, for example, was condemned by the city's Social Democratic mayor as a "fascist" attempt to thwart democracy.

With the exception of a few such grassroots incidents, the Swedish public defers to its trusted decision-makers. Swedes vote in astounding numbers (91 percent of everyone over the age of 18 in the last election), but their participation in the political process is more symbolic than real. Decisions are made behind closed doors by political leaders and the bureaucracy in touch with the leaders of interest groups and private industry. The public is informed rather than consulted. There is seldom any protest. Corruption is rare. Leaders and their grassroots followers share too much in common.

As Thomas J. Anton writes, "Although there is over-

SWEDEN: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1809** Swedish Constitution adopted; Finland ceded to Russia.
- 1814** Sweden's last war: Karl XIV Johan joins the alliance against Napoleon and forces Denmark to surrender Norway to Sweden.
- 1882** Emigration to the United States reaches peak (1,116,239 Swedes arrive in the United States, 1820-1920).
- 1889** Founding of the Social Democratic Party.
- 1905** Union with Norway dissolved.
- 1913** Sweden's first social insurance scheme: the compulsory Basic Public Pension System.
- 1920** First Labor administration elected.
- 1932** Worldwide economic depression hits Sweden; Per Albin Hansson forms a Social Democratic Cabinet.
- 1939** A coalition Cabinet made up of Sweden's democratic parties created under Hansson's leadership.
- 1945** Social Democrats take office as a single-party government.
- 1946** Per Albin Hansson dies; Tage Erlander becomes Sweden's new Prime Minister; Sweden joins the UN.
- 1952** Nordic Council established (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland).
- 1958** Parliament approves Supplementary Pension System.
- 1960** Sweden joins the European Free Trade Association.
- 1969** Olof Palme succeeds Tage Erlander as Prime Minister.
- 1973** King Gustav VI Adolf dies; his grandson, King Karl XVI Gustav, accedes to the throne.
- 1974** Parliament approves a constitutional amendment stripping the monarchy of its residual political powers; President Nixon appoints Robert Strausz-Hupe U.S. ambassador to Sweden, ending a 15-month diplomatic freeze over Palme's criticism of the 1972 American bombing of Hanoi.
- 1976** Parliament approves industrial democracy bill giving workers greater control over employers and management; Social Democrats defeated by a coalition of three non-Socialist parties, ending 44 years of rule; Thorbjörn Fälldin named Prime Minister.

whelming evidence to support the proposition that Swedish citizens are quite uninterested in the question of who governs or how, it is equally clear that they are very much interested in what comes out of the governmental box in the form of municipal services.”*

Policies have been pragmatic and problem-oriented. There is frequent testing of alternative solutions before final decisions are made. Nearly all Swedes, whether of the “Left” or “Right,” share a taste for “rationality,” rather than symbolic politics or rhetoric, and politics are justified and judged in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. For example, Swedes believed (at least until recently) that they could achieve a better society through “progress,” but they did not try to redistribute existing wealth. Rather, they divided new wealth achieved through economic growth in such a way as to redress past imbalances.

The Sweden of today has been built on shared values, consensus building, rational decision-making, and a highly self-disciplined society. The country is no Utopia but neither is it a danger to democracy. Along with economic growth, Swedes have sought to establish a minimum standard of living and a real measure of equality for all its citizens. Opposition to the welfare state concept hardly exists. When there is debate, it arises over such questions as: How much can Sweden pay to achieve its social goals? Are some of these goals counterproductive? And must there be limits to economic growth?

*In *Governing Greater Stockholm*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.



THE SWEDISH WELFARE STATE: PROSPECTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

by M. Donald Hancock

For decades the Swedish welfare state has simultaneously fascinated and troubled outsiders. After the rise of the Social Democrats to long-term political power in 1932 and their subsequent success in initiating a comprehensive program of social and educational reforms, sympathetic Western journalists and social scientists began to celebrate the Swedish system as a "middle way" between capitalism and socialism, a "model for the world," and the "world's most modern society."

Liberal-minded politicians in such countries as Norway, England, West Germany, New Zealand, and the United States have borrowed selectively from the Swedish experience to establish ombudsmen and introduce social reforms. During the 1960s, Willy Brandt, then Chancellor of West Germany, publicly praised Sweden's mixture of public-private economy and welfare services as a model for encouraging growth and minimizing class conflict in other industrial societies.

At the opposite extreme, social critics with diverse points of view have regarded the Swedish welfare state with ideological disdain. Conservative politicians in Western Europe and the United States have repeatedly criticized the Swedish system for allegedly frustrating individual initiative. In a more strident vein, the South African journalist Roland Huntford has attacked Swedish bureaucracy and the Social Democratic commitment to equality for comprising the basis for a "new totalitarianism." Similar views based on other premises have been voiced by the radical left within Sweden itself. Criticizing the "alliance" between business and Social Democracy as "the Swedish model of exploitation," Jan Myrdal, son of economist Gunnar Myrdal, and other "proletarian" writers have agreed with Huntford that Sweden is well on its

way to becoming a "union dictatorship."

Both uncritical praise and strident disapproval obscure more than they reveal. The Swedish welfare state is a success as well as a failure; moreover, it is far from a finished product. To understand Sweden's relevance for social change elsewhere we must examine her domestic reform efforts in their own political context.

What are the underlying objectives of the welfare state as conceived by the Social Democrats and implemented with varying degrees of nonsocialist endorsement from the early 1930s onward?

What has the evolution of the Swedish welfare state done for workers, women, and others—and at what financial and social cost?

What has the welfare state failed to achieve and what are its prospects for future transformation?

One of the most pervasive myths concerning the contemporary Swedish welfare state is the naive belief that the country's industrial growth has produced "generalized welfare" as a matter of course. In fact, the development of the Swedish welfare state has resulted from basic ideological choices by the Social Democrats and other domestic reformers during the crucial decades of Sweden's industrialization and political modernization since 1900. As the political spokesmen for Sweden's growing industrial proletariat, Social Democratic leaders decided as early as the party's founding congress in 1889 to work within the existing socioeconomic and legal system in pursuing social change. Accordingly, they joined with other progressive parties—the Liberals early in the century, the Agrarians (now the ruling Center Party) from the 1930s through the mid-1950s—in implementing reform efforts piecemeal.

These involved, first, the slow democratization of the Swedish political system in accordance with Western notions of parliamentarianism and individual civil liberties (1907–1921),* and, second, the expansion of the government's role as economic and social engineer.

From the outset, Social Democratic leaders and their

*Sweden shifted during this period from a system of limited suffrage, in which votes were weighted according to income, to a system of universal suffrage. Likewise, a parliamentary democracy was introduced, in which the ruling party was required to maintain the confidence and support of a parliamentary majority.

close allies, the officials of the national labor federation (*Landsorganisation*) renounced the Marxist concept of inexorable class conflict under capitalism. Once the Social Democrats acquired a stable parliamentary majority in the 1932 elections, they proceeded to act from this ideological perspective with New Deal style measures to help restore economic health in the face of the Great Depression—introducing public works, worker retraining programs, and government subsidies to farmers distributed through a network of agricultural cooperative associations.

In 1938, the national labor federation undertook a major step toward ensuring labor peace by concluding the historic "Saltsjöbaden agreement" with the Swedish Association of Employers. This pact, named after the Baltic resort town where it was signed, outlawed unauthorized strikes and set up grievance procedures to supplement the work of the Labor Court, established in 1928 to settle labor-management disputes over interpretations of wage contracts.

Simultaneously, the Social Democrats, with the support of the Agrarian Party, embarked on an ambitious effort to expand social services. Between 1934 and 1937, the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament, approved voluntary unemployment insurance, a national pension system, home construction subsidies for large families, maternity benefits, state grants to invalids and orphans, and state subsidies for school lunches.

The advance of the welfare state, which had been interrupted by World War II, was resumed under the Social Democrats after the war. The Riksdag endorsed a compulsory national pension program in 1946 and communal support for home construction in 1947. A national health program was also introduced in 1947, but because of a doctor shortage, it was not fully implemented until 1955. In addition, the Social Democrats sponsored a 1956 law on "social help," which further extended social services and narrowly won a protracted parliamentary struggle with the Conservative, Liberal,

M. Donald Hancock, 38, is professor of government and associate dean in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas. Born in McAllen, Texas, he received his B.A. at the University of Texas (1961) and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia (1962, 1966). He has taught at Columbia and at the Universities of Bielefeld and Mannheim in West Germany. He is the author of Sweden: The Politics of Postindustrial Change (1972) and is currently writing a book on West German politics. Martin Peterson of the University of Göteborg and Marna Feldt of the Swedish Information Service in New York assisted in compiling statistics and other material for this article.

and Center Parties in 1959 to launch a new compulsory pension scheme providing supplemental retirement benefits based on a citizen's best-income years.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Social Democrats initiated another set of reforms—this time with the formal support of the three nonsocialist parties. To promote greater class equality by reducing educational barriers to socioeconomic mobility, the traditional three-track public school system (vocational, intermediate, pre-university) was abolished in favor of a unified system modeled after that of the United States. "In the process," says Professor Arnold J. Heidenheimer of Washington University in St. Louis, the Swedes "greatly increased access, particularly of working-class children, by eliminating most standard examinations and other criteria of selection, even to the point of abolishing the exam given at the conclusion of gymnasium [advanced secondary school] study."¹

Overall, the Social Democrats sought to "humanize" Sweden's existing capitalist industrial system while increasing its efficiency. Their reform strategy thus served two overlapping social objectives: to ameliorate individual deprivation caused by advancing age, disability, unemployment, and insufficient income; and, as a necessary means to that end, to accelerate Sweden's economic growth through active labor-market, monetary, and fiscal policies.

Both supporters and critics of the Swedish welfare state have described this strategy in terms of a "compensatory" theory of social justice. As the authors of a joint 1971 Social Democratic Party-National Federation of Trade Unions report, *Equality*, asserted, "We have the means to be generous toward those who aren't successful in our complicated society."² In 1970, when he optimistically forecast 70 percent economic growth by the end of the decade, former Prime Minister Olof Palme asked rhetorically, "Is this desirable or not?" and answered:

A rate of progress of 60-70 percent is, of course, valuable. But if the price is that people are adversely affected, if they are thrown out of work without being given new opportunities to find employment, then the price would be too high. If the price is to exacerbate social cleavages in Swedish society, the price is also too high. But if an increase in productivity of 70 percent means that we can help people who are hurt and can reduce social cleavages in Sweden, it's worth the price.³

The dual purpose of the Swedish welfare state, then, is to promote material prosperity while compensating those individuals who, in the words of the *Equality* report, "for whatever reason wind up outside the boundaries recognized by a career society."

Radical critics are correct when they detect in this strategy some strong ideological limits to the structural transformation of Swedish society. While the emergence of the welfare state has undeniably enhanced social security and altered the distribution of political power in Sweden, it has neither abolished social stratification nor changed basic relations between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

Prosperity and Labor Peace

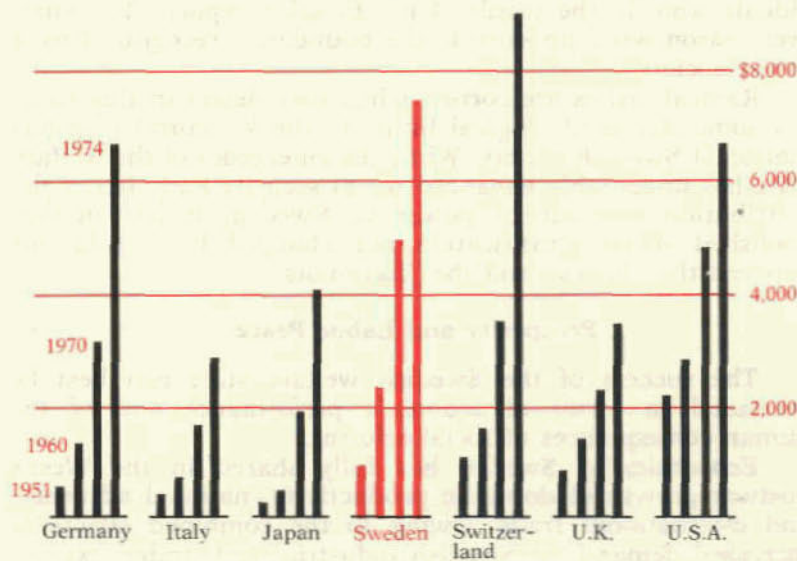
The success of the Swedish welfare state can best be measured in terms of economic performance and of the human consequences of social reforms.

Economically, Sweden has fully shared in the West's postwar growth of domestic productivity, national affluence, and international trade. Owing to the combined effects of increased demand for Swedish industrial and timber exports (chiefly in Scandinavia, the Common Market area, and North America) and efforts by the central government to facilitate investment and industrial rationalization, Sweden experienced an average annual growth rate of 4-5 percent from 1945 through 1970.

By 1973, Sweden's per capita gross national product reached \$6,140 (second only to the United States and Switzerland among industrial nations). In that same year, private consumption per capita was \$3,240 (compared to \$3,840 in the United States, \$3,000 in West Germany, and \$1,190 in the United Kingdom). Between 1967 and 1974, real hourly earnings increased by 28 percent; in 1976 they averaged 23 Kr (kronor), or approximately \$5.50, as compared with \$4.87 in the United States.

As in other advanced Western countries, economic growth in Sweden has been uneven during the past decade and increasingly beset by "stagflation." Productivity declined during the mid-1960s and again after 1971 in response to international recessionary trends. But in both instances, indirect government intervention in the economy helped ease the effects of incipient economic crisis. A direct result of government economic activism was Sweden's strikingly low rate of unemployment; it rose from 1.5 percent in 1970 to a peak of

PER CAPITA GNP IN CURRENT U.S. DOLLARS, 1951-74



Source: GNP and population—*International Financial Statistics* (International Monetary Fund), 1976, 1977; midpoint exchange rates—United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook, 1961* and *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, July 1977.

2.5 in 1973, declining thereafter to 2.0 in 1974 (compared to 5.6 percent in the United States in 1974 and 3.0 percent in West Germany).

Important to Sweden's postwar affluence has been an extraordinary record of labor peace. As a matter of deliberate policy, the national labor federation—which encompasses virtually all of the industrial hourly wage earners and roughly one-fourth of the lower-level salaried employees—has generally sought to avoid direct confrontation with the Swedish Association of Employers in negotiating national wage agreements. Moreover, between sessions, the trade union leadership has studiously acted in the spirit of the Saltsjöbaden agreement in enforcing contract terms and proscribing "illegal" strike activity.

As a result, Sweden claims an international record with respect to the infrequency of strikes and retaliatory lockouts. In contrast to a total of 3,095,000 working days lost in Sweden

through strikes in 1932, an annual average of only 536,000 working days was lost during the entire 1956-66 decade and 141,000 per year between 1966 and 1973.

In turn, national affluence has enabled government agencies to extend and expand the social services launched between 1934 and 1960. Aggregate expenditures on social services rose from 544 million Kr in 1938 (approximately \$104 million at the time) to 41,266 million Kr in 1972 (approximately \$8,543 million).

The Ideal Society

Augmenting the redistributive effects of compensatory social services is the "democratization" of access to secondary and higher education in Sweden. In 1930, fully 91 percent of the adult population had only a primary school education and fewer than 1 percent had a university degree. The educational reforms of the 1950s and 1960s have significantly changed that picture. By 1974, 50.2 percent of the population 16 years and older had completed at least 8 years of school; 14.3 percent had completed at least 9 to 10 years; 27.1 percent had progressed to a gymnasium (an advanced secondary school, equivalent to a two-year American college); and 8.8 percent had obtained some form of higher education.*

There has been a sharp increase in the number of female students. At the turn of the century, only 8.9 percent of those completing secondary school were women. By the 1930s the percentage had increased to 29.8, and by 1966-70 it reached 45.8 percent. The percentage of women among those receiving university degrees had grown from 23.5 in the 1940s to 40.5 by 1966-70.

Whether material affluence, extensive welfare services, and more equal access to education have yielded the Swedes something close to an ideal society depends very much on one's point of view. Clearly, from the historical perspective of widespread rural poverty in the 19th century and mass urban unemployment in the 1930s, Sweden has made enormous progress. The government's dual commitment to material growth and full employment is the envy of union leaders in much of the industrialized West. Sweden's health care is second to none; it boasts the world's highest investment in medical services, the lowest infant mortality rate, and easy

*In 1974, 89.3 percent of the U.S. population had completed 8 years of schooling; 57.5 percent had completed high school; 18.7 percent had completed two years of college; and 10.9 percent had completed four years of college.

SWEDEN'S SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS

Universal Health Insurance

Financed by individual contributions, employer fees, and subsidies from both the central government and local authorities. Payments under the national health program cover outpatient services at hospitals and district medical offices, subject to a uniform fee of 15 Kr per visit (\$3.06);* all hospitalization expenses, including childbirth; 50 percent of dental expenses; and all prescription charges above 20 Kr (\$4.05). In addition, health insurance provides a daily allowance amounting to 90 percent of a person's lost income during sickness and pays up to seven months' income compensation to whichever parent leaves work to care for a newborn infant.

Minimum Old-Age Pensions

Payable at 65 years of age—9,880 Kr (\$2,010) per year for single persons, 16,120 Kr (\$3,280) for married couples. Since July 1, 1976, basic benefits have been augmented by supplemental pensions (financed largely by employer contributions), which increase retirement income to two-thirds of the annual average of a person's 15 highest-income years.

Children and Family Allowances

Paid mostly out of central government revenues. These include an annual payment of 1,200 Kr (\$243) per child to all parents or guardians, regardless of need; rent subsidies for low-income

*The rough dollar equivalents used in this article are those of August 30, 1977, when Sweden devalued its currency by 10 percent.

access by citizens to doctors and dentists.

The sum of these achievements, as Harold Wilensky notes in *The Welfare State and Equality* is that Sweden "not only distributes medical care more aggressively and fairly, but also invests heavily in health-relevant programs of housing, nutrition, health education, and child care, and draws the income floor for everyone higher and more uniformly; in short, it assures the least privileged of its population a higher standard of living."⁴

But from the perspective of "utopian" social engineering, the Swedish welfare state is far from perfect. It is expensive, impersonal, and, in important respects, seriously flawed. In the eyes of its critics, basic reforms are long overdue.

families; payments for home-help services, day nurseries, and playschools; and miscellaneous services, such as vacations for children and housewives and school lunches. In 1972, more than 1,796,000 children under 16 years of age benefited from one or more of those services.

Unemployment Insurance

Supplements Labor Market Board activities by paying cash benefits to jobless persons who do not qualify for one of the "sheltered jobs" set aside for the handicapped or who are not immediately enrolled in a retraining program. The system of unemployment insurance remains voluntary, although it is likely soon to become compulsory and universal. Most Swedish workers are covered through membership in some 44 unemployment "benefit societies" organized by the trade unions. They are eligible for a maximum allowance of 130 Kr (\$26) per day for up to 300 days. Persons not covered by a benefit society may apply to a local labor market office for state-financed allowances of 45 Kr (\$9) a day.

Industrial Accident Insurance

Financed largely by employers, pays medical benefits, life annuities, and death benefits for accidents sustained at work and for occupational diseases. The number of industrial accidents increased from 129,298 in 1960 to 136,563 in 1968, but declined to 124,864 at the beginning of this decade. In 1971, industrial accident insurance paid compensation for 2,961,420 working days lost through injuries on the job.

An incipient crisis has been evident since the mid-1960s when nonsocialist critics and left-wing Social Democrats launched simultaneous ideological attacks on its perceived shortcomings. Although liberals and critical socialists disagree in their basic analysis of the causes of the crisis, they generally concur on its symptoms:

The high cost of welfare. Because 90 percent of the Swedish economy remains in private hands, the Swedish state is required to finance social services, national defense, and other government functions largely through taxation rather than through direct proceeds from nationalized industries and services, as in Eastern Europe.

To pay for the range of economic and social services administered by the various levels of government, the tax rate is correspondingly high. All Swedes and registered aliens earning more than 4,500 Kr (\$914) a year are required to pay both a local income tax at an average rate of 27 percent, as well as a national income tax, with rates ranging from 26 percent on annual incomes of 40,000 Kr (\$8,130) to 58 percent on incomes above 150,000 Kr (\$30,500).

Corporations also pay a direct income tax as well as multiple indirect taxes in the form of contributions to the various national insurance programs on behalf of their employees. Capital gains are taxable as ordinary income, including the entire gain on the sale of real estate. The most important form of indirect taxation is the value-added tax, which was introduced in 1969 in place of a national sales tax. The value-added tax, levied on all goods and services except exports, has increased from 15 percent in 1969 to 17.65 percent in 1971, and 20.63 percent in June 1977.

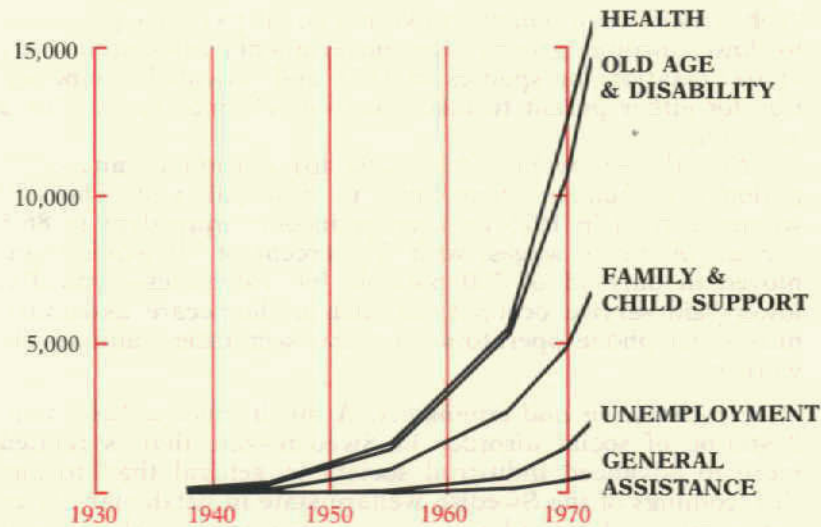
The effects of Sweden's heavy tax burden on individual behavior are predictable. Swedes of all economic brackets and political persuasions complain bitterly and try, when possible, to augment family incomes. An increasing number of housewives have entered the job market; factory workers and craftsmen take on two or three jobs concurrently, sometimes collecting sickness compensation while they are absent from one job but working at another; and many of those with capital and the requisite knowledge either invest abroad or practice varying degrees of income tax fraud.

Bureaucratization. Accompanying the extension of social services during the past four decades has been an inevitable growth in the size of the Swedish government and the centralization of political power.

Empirical indices show an increase in government consumption as a percentage of GNP from 16 percent in 1960 to 23 percent in 1973; a steady growth in the number of state employees, which presently comprise approximately 14 percent of the labor force; a merger of 3,000 local government units into some 280 larger, more efficient, but undeniably more remote regional governments; and a common tendency within both government and private interest groups to impose detailed policy directives and controls from above. In these trends lies the source of the simultaneous rightist and left-radical attacks on the alleged emergence of "corporatist authoritarian" tendencies in Sweden.

SOME COSTS OF SWEDEN'S "WELFARE STATE," 1938-72

Annual social expenditures in millions of kronor*



*The exchange rate has varied from an average of 5.16 kronor to a dollar through the 1960s to under 4 in 1977.

Persistent inequality. In the eyes of both radical and socialist critics, one of the most conspicuous shortcomings of the Swedish welfare state is its failure to achieve real social equality. A highly publicized study issued in 1970 on income distribution in Sweden clearly documented that a principal cause of inequality was periodic unemployment and variations in underemployment, suggesting that the government's official policy of full employment is less effective than the ostensibly low unemployment rate would indicate.

Another chronic source of complaints is social discrimination against women. Attitudes toward sex roles have changed significantly in recent decades. As Berit Gonenai and Birgitta Thorsell note in a recent article on "Economic Necessity and Women's Emancipation," the belief that women have the right to "demand employment again . . . after a period in the home," has gained increased recognition from the 1940s onward.⁵ This is also an economic consequence of the shortage of workers in industry and service jobs. Since 1960, both the

national labor federation and the national government have undertaken concrete steps to advance the emancipation of women. The federation abolished its earlier practice of setting separate wage scales for women and since 1969 has pursued a "solidaristic wage policy" providing equal pay for equal work to lower-income groups; the government introduced individual taxation for spouses in 1971 and provided compensation for either parent to take a leave-of-absence to care for a new infant.

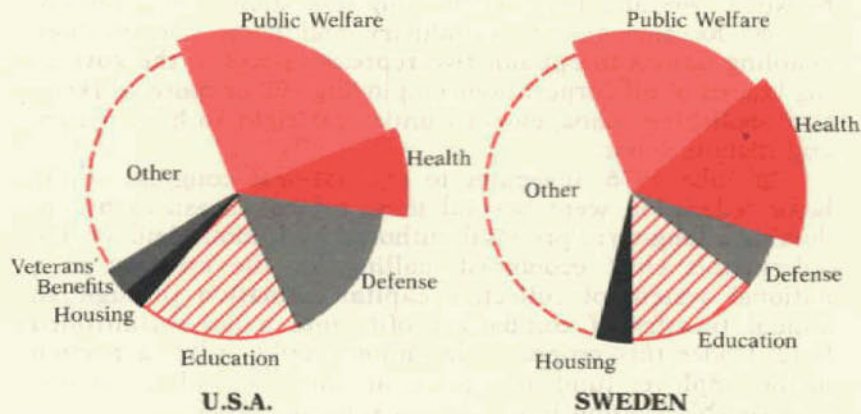
Nonetheless, women still suffer from economic and occupational inequality. According to Gonegai and Thorsell, women earned in 1975 an average income equivalent to 86.5 percent of men's wages, with 75 percent of all women employed in only 75 of 300 possible job categories—typically, lower-paid service occupations such as homecare assistants, nurses, telephone operators, cashiers, secretaries, and textile workers.

Worker alienation and criminality. A much more diffuse manifestation of social disorder in Sweden—one that is related more to advanced industrial society in general than to any shortcomings of the Swedish welfare state in particular—is an apparently widespread sense of powerlessness and personal frustration. Its causes are exceptionally complex, ranging from the psychological pressures of industry's demands for increased productivity to the decline of extended families and the loss of a personal sense of community caused by urbanization. Employee resentment of stress and inadequate control over local working conditions erupted into spontaneous wildcat strikes in 1969 and 1970 at the Volvo factory, at the docks in Göteborg, and at the state-owned iron mines in northern Sweden.

To the extent that criminality can be interpreted as a sort of anomic response to modern society, Sweden shares in the industrial world's trend toward increased lawlessness. Reported crimes increased nearly fourfold between 1950 and 1973—from 172,999 to 622,060—with the largest category encompassing various types of theft. Although violence against persons also increased from 12,665 to 33,130 incidents during the same period, the number of murders actually declined from 81 to 66.

None of these trends is, of course, unique to Sweden. All advanced nations manifest degrees of burdensome taxation, bureaucratization, inequality, and alienation. What is distinc-

**WELFARE'S SHARE OF PUBLIC OUTLAYS,
U.S. AND SWEDEN, 1975**



A comparison of total outlays (federal, state, and local) shows that the United States surpasses Sweden in the percentage of public spending devoted to education (18 vs. 14 percent), public welfare (25 vs. 20 percent), and defense (16 vs. 6 percent) but trails in health (8 vs. 16 percent) and housing (1.6 vs. 3.3 percent).

Source: U.S. data—Office of Management and Budget; Bureau of the Census. Swedish data—Embassy of Sweden, Washington, D.C.

tive in the Swedish case is the policy response to the perceived imperfections of the welfare state and the implications of that response as a possible pattern for other nations.

Although employer groups and the three nonsocialist parties came to endorse the Social Democratic concept of the welfare state during the postwar period, the nonsocialist and socialist blocs differ in their prescriptions for easing its contemporary malaise. Private corporations such as Volvo and Saab have already undertaken a radical reform of the manufacturing process by abolishing the traditional assembly line at experimental sites in an attempt to lessen worker alienation and decrease absenteeism. (The initial results are being debated.) Politically, the nonsocialist parties now in power would seek to correct imperfections in the established system by slowing down the growth of bureaucracy and by increasing private incentives to invest in further industrial growth (primarily through a reduction in the rate of marginal taxation).

Since the late 1960s, the Social Democrats and the national labor federation have acknowledged leftist criticism

that the basic source of inequality and worker alienation is the concentration of socioeconomic power in private hands. Accordingly, the Social Democratic Cabinet, largely at the federation's prodding, enacted a series of legislative measures between 1969 and 1976 establishing new sources of collective savings for investment in industry and home construction, enabling unions to appoint two representatives to the governing boards of all corporations employing 100 or more workers, and abolishing management's unilateral right to hire, assign, and dismiss labor.

In June 1976, delegates to the national congress of the labor federation went beyond these reform measures by endorsing a long-term proposal authored by Rudolf Meidner, the federation's chief economist, calling for the creation of a national system of collective capital formation through an annual transfer of company profits into a union-controlled fund. Under this proposal, the unions could utilize a portion of the employee fund to acquire, in time, controlling interest in Sweden's leading industries—a radical change.

The public's short-term electoral response to the contest between Social Democrats and nonsocialists over economic democracy versus liberal reform was to give a narrow parliamentary majority to the Center, Liberal, and Conservative Parties in the September 1976 election. Thus, for the first time in 44 years, a stable nonsocialist coalition displaced the Social Democrats from executive leadership. In part, the socialist setback can be blamed on the failure of the party leadership to endorse the Meidner proposal; Prime Minister Olof Palme had preferred to refer the complicated and highly controversial issue to a Royal Commission for expert evaluation. Thus, the leading Socialist newspaper *Aftonbladet* suggested after the election that a principal cause of defeat was lack of a party-union consensus on the question. In greater measure, however, the party's loss can probably be attributed to serious public reservations about the Meidner plan.

Several worries voiced during the campaign by non-socialist spokesmen were apparently shared by many rank and file workers. How, for example, would the fund be administered? What guarantees were there that it would not simply result, as Thorbjörn Fälldin,* the Center Party chair-

*Thorbjörn Fälldin, 51, a farmer and politician, was born in Hogsjö in northern Sweden. A member of parliament since 1958, he became chairman of the Center Party in 1971. He heads a three-party coalition, which outnumbers the Social Democrats in parliament, 180 to 152, with 17 other seats held by the Communists. New elections are scheduled for 1979 unless Fälldin loses his majority earlier through a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

man and now Prime Minister, put it, "in the substitution of one concentration of power by another?" To what extent would control of capital and the eventual controlling interest by unions in corporations lessen individual powerlessness at the factory level, if there were no accompanying effort to strengthen democracy within the labor federation itself?

The Welfare "Society"

Despite the lack of clear answers to these basic questions, the introduction of some such fund seems sure to emerge as the next significant reform of the Swedish welfare state. A 1976 report issued by the Swedish Association of Employers advocates the creation of a voluntary program of collective savings based on contributions from individual wages rather than company profits. Encouraged by that report, Prime Minister Fälldin predicted in April 1977 that a system of employee funds could be implemented on such a basis as early as 1980. For their part, the Social Democrats remain keenly interested in the issue. They have announced that they will conduct an extensive discussion on the merits of alternative collective-savings programs among the party's rank and file before submitting a new report at their 1978 congress.

The introduction of employee funds, in whatever form, will by no means resolve the tension between national achievement and imperfection that now characterizes Swedish society. No immediate utopia is conceivable. Sweden—like other advanced nations—must as a matter of national survival maintain the complex economic and social structures that are a principal source of inequality and alienation. But within these existing constraints, the ideological competition between the Social Democrats, with their commitment to economic democracy, and the nonsocialists, with their emphasis on classical democratic liberties, may yield some margin of qualitative change.

As Harold Wilensky notes, such changes could transform the welfare *state* into a welfare *society*. The challenge, he writes, "is to humanize the welfare state and make it more effective at a time when costs are climbing, and simultaneously (to enable it to) cope with the universal issues of civilized survival."⁶

That *both* the Social Democrats and nonsocialist groups are committed to a continuing strategy of active social change is the real relevance of the "Swedish model" to other industrialized countries. What is instructive about the Swedish case

is not the particular blend of economic and social policies, which each nation must achieve in light of its own resources and requirements. What is striking is the historical willingness of Swedish leaders—in politics, business, and labor—to respond creatively to continuing public pressures for change. In my view, a significant test will come as the Swedes try to broaden their historically successful welfare state formula—material growth plus “compensatory” social services—to accommodate citizens’ demands for increased control over their own lives.

1. Arnold J. Heidenheimer, “Secondary School Reform: Why Sweden? Why Not West Germany?” in Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Hugh Hecllo, and Carolyn Teich Adams, *Comparative Public Policy: The Politics of Social Choice in Europe and America*, New York: St. Martin’s, 1975, pp. 46–47.
2. *Jämlikhet: Första rapport från SAP-LO’s arbetsgrupp för jämlikhetsfrågor* [Equality: First Report of the Social Democratic Party and National Federation of Trade Unions Working Group on Questions of Equality], Borås: 1969, p. 107, quoted in Kurt Sjöström, *Socialpolitiken i det kapitalistiska samhället* [Social Policy in the Capitalistic Community], Göteborg, 1974, p. 112.
3. Olof Palme’s speech at a 1970 conference in Göteborg on “Social Care in the Future,” quoted in Sjöström, p. 113.
4. Harold L. Wilensky, *The Welfare State and Equality*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 102.
5. Berit Gonegai and Birgitta Thorsell, “Out of the Kitchen and into the Labor Market: Economic Necessity and Women’s Emancipation,” *The American-Scandinavian Review* (forthcoming).
6. Wilensky, p. 118.



THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

by Steven Kelman

Few Americans, even those who know a bit about Sweden, have ever heard of the Swedish economist, Gösta Rehn. Nor have they heard of the so-called Rehn model named after him. But understanding the controversial Rehn model is crucial to understanding where Sweden has come from and where it may be going.

First, the Rehn model of the economy has embodied Sweden's recipe for combining economic growth with increased wage equality—and full employment with controlled inflation. It has also illustrated the Swedish ability to develop programs which satisfy both trade unions and business.

Second, the breakdown of the consensus over the Rehn model in the late 1960s signaled the current era of uncertainty, in which the ability of Sweden's political institutions to come up with new programs and reforms acceptable to a wide range of organized Swedish interests is being put to a severe test.

Rehn argued, as long ago as 1951, that Swedish unions ought to abandon opposition to technological change in industry, while not "going soft" in wage negotiations with low-wage, low-efficiency firms. Furthermore, Rehn believed that inefficient firms should not be allowed to ask the government for handouts in order to survive. They should either improve their efficiency or go bankrupt.

According to Rehn, the government was expected to carry out an "active labor market policy" by finding temporary work for the unemployed in public works projects, by retraining workers as necessary, and by providing grants to cover moving and relocation costs for the unemployed when they found jobs. There was something here for both labor and big business. Labor got full employment, increased wage equality, and the benefits of economic growth. Big business got assurance of continuing technological change and a supply of workers for expanding industries.

After its initial adoption in the mid-1950s, the Rehn model worked splendidly for a time. During the late 1960s,

some unexpected things happened. After small inefficient local firms in northern Sweden went bankrupt, their former employees duly landed in highly paid industrial jobs in the big cities. But many of these workers soon discovered that they preferred small-town life back home. Technological change at the factory level also created dissatisfactions. Work sometimes became more boring or faster paced, or both. Finally, it was discovered that the union policy of negotiating equal wage increases for workers in both weak and strong firms tended to hurt the weak, low-wage companies and provide excess profits for strong companies, which could afford even higher wages.

A "Green Wave"

These difficulties became apparent at a time when the Center Party, one of the three nonsocialist parties opposing the Social Democrats, was in the process of articulating the Swedish version of an environmentalist, antigrowth, "small-is-beautiful" critique of Sweden, that most modernistic of modern societies. The Green Wave, as it came to be called, featured demands that Sweden reverse the general trend towards industrial and population concentration by putting massive governmental resources into a movement to spread industry and social services evenly throughout the country, so that people could stay in small towns, close to nature, if they wanted to. The Green Wave's spokesmen also urged that Sweden reverse its "march into the nuclear society" by abandoning atomic power as a source of energy—this in a country where such sources now provide more electricity per capita than anywhere else in the world (twice as much as in the United States).

The reaction against the effects of technological change on workplace conditions occurred mainly within the union movement and the Social Democratic Party. It took the form of calls for "co-determination"—a demand for union involvement in everything from setting the pace of work to deciding when to set up new shifts or abandon production lines. In

Steven Kelman, 29, is a doctoral candidate in political science at Harvard, where he received his B.A. in 1970. Born in New York City, he is the author of Push Comes to Shove: The Escalation of Student Protest (1970) and Behind the Berlin Wall: An Encounter in East Germany (1972). He will spend the coming academic year at the Institute for Social Research in Stockholm before assuming the post of assistant professor of government at Cornell in 1978.

effect, this meant the end of the Rehn notion that unions should not attempt to block technological change.

This year, labor-management negotiations are underway concerning the content of co-determination agreements, and one of the most interesting changes worth watching in Sweden in the coming years will be the effect of co-determination on Swedish industry and working life.

Other issues growing out of reactions to the Rehn model remain as open sores in the Swedish political system. The Green Wave thrust the Center Party from a position as the smallest of the nonsocialist parties to that of the largest. Some parts of the Center program, such as increasing grants to industries willing to locate in depressed regions of Sweden, had already been introduced earlier by the Social Democrats. But the nuclear power issue still festers, plastered over by an almost comic compromise between the Center and its two coalition partners, who favor continued reliance on nuclear power. After pledging in the 1976 election campaign that he would never agree to the continued construction of nuclear power plants, the Center leader, Thorbjörn Fälldin, now Prime Minister, said that the plants should be built to save the jobs of construction workers—but should not be allowed to come into use.

Buying Union Control

In 1971, Rudolf Meidner, the senior researcher of the *Landsorganisation* (the national labor federation) and an old associate of Gösta Rehn, was assigned the task of finding solutions to the "excess profits" problem caused by the uniform wage-increase negotiating strategy.

Meidner's scheme for dealing with excess profits—the handing over of new issues of company stock to a union-controlled fund—would permit those unions to achieve eventual voting control of most Swedish companies. Clearly this plan would bring a fundamental transformation of the Swedish economic structure. It remains to be seen if the national labor federation and the Swedish political parties can reach a satisfactory compromise on this issue.

All these discussions about Sweden's future take place against a background of economic uncertainty, as in other Western countries. One should be skeptical about suggestions that Sweden's high tax burden, wage levels, and fringe benefits spell an end to the steady economic growth that has propelled Sweden near the top of the GNP-per capita league.

Such predictions have been voiced regularly by critics of the Social Democrats ever since the 1930s.

Nevertheless, serious questions remain. In 1975 and 1976, wage increases in Sweden far outstripped increases among Sweden's leading foreign competitors like West Germany, a difficult situation for a country as dependent on foreign trade as Sweden. Typical of Sweden's increasing difficulties overseas is the plunge of Volvo auto exports to America. In 1973, Volvo sold almost as many cars in America as in Sweden; now, a combination of a buoyant home market and weak U.S. market has transformed the ratio to nearly 2:1 in favor of domestic sales. U.S. Volvo sales slumped 27 percent in 1976. Even more ominous: Volvo lost about one-fourth of its American dealerships. In August 1977, partly to help export sales, Sweden devalued its currency by 10 percent.

Moreover, Sweden is moving away from the Rehn model policy of not subsidizing weak industries; there have been massive government subsidies to shipbuilding and steel. There is also a small but noticeable trend toward making up for lost markets in the industrialized world by essentially "political" sales to Third World countries like Algeria and Cuba; the foreign government is the purchaser, and the purchase often constitutes a gesture of appreciation for Swedish support. (Sweden, which backed the winning side in Angola with both public statements and money, negotiated a major sale of Volvo trucks to Angola last year.) One by-product of this is that it may reduce Sweden's freedom to adopt independent stands on issues of importance to Third World countries.

Yet overall, the visitor to Sweden in 1977 is struck not by the impression that a social experiment has broken down or run out of steam, but rather by a bubbling surfeit of new experimental beginnings. Most of the new areas of serious concern in Sweden also crop up in America—not only the small-is-beautiful and industrial democracy issues, but also, for example, the shifting roles of men and women.

Sweden approaches these new questions without the pristine certainties of days gone by, and with an economy that is just hobbling along. What the Swedes still have in their favor is a set of political institutions that appear better adapted than ours to produce wide agreement on new courses of action and a strong residual optimism, which reminds one of the hopeful innocence for which Americans were once famous.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

SWEDEN

From Viking times to the Volvo era, Sweden's story is one of a hardworking, self-absorbed people's successful effort to make the best of modest resources, a harsh climate, and the limits fixed by geographical and cultural isolation.

The long, earnest Swedish search for a workable society and a prudent relationship with the outside world is described in Franklin D. Scott's **SWE-DEN: The Nation's History** (Univ. of Minn., 1977), a 654-page compilation of facts, figures, charts, maps, photographs, and narrative enlivened by vivid anecdotes.

One of Scott's recurring themes is Sweden's ability to alter its strategic position as changes occur in Europe's military balance. After the Napoleonic wars (in which Sweden lost Finland to Russia but emerged with a 100-year union with Norway that was peacefully dissolved in 1905), the Swedes worked toward a policy of neutrality. They maintained this policy throughout World War I and, despite Nazi occupation of Denmark and Norway, during World War II. Later, avoiding the Cold War, Sweden stayed out of NATO, stressed its neutrality (but cheered on Hanoi in the Vietnam conflict), and tended to its defenses, including an air force now said to be one of the world's strongest after those of the United States, Russia, and Britain.

Scott's single-volume treatment of the whole course of Swedish history, from icebound beginnings to the conformist, tax-burdened welfare state of the present day, is necessarily fragmented. A more unified approach to a shorter span of time is taken by Vilhelm Moberg in **A HISTORY OF THE SWEDISH PEOPLE: From Odin to En-**

gelbrecht, vols. 1 and 2 (Pantheon, 1972, 1974). Moberg's approach is imaginative and romanticized, as might be expected from Sweden's best-known writer of historical fiction. One of his novels, **THE EMIGRANTS** (Simon & Schuster, 1951, cloth; Popular Library, 1971, paper), was made into a powerful film familiar to U.S. audiences.

"Had I been born in another milieu or come from another social class, I should have written quite another history," writes Moberg, whose parents and relatives were peasants and servants. Theirs was a somber heritage. During the 19th century, despite heavy emigration (450,000 Swedes left home, mostly for America, between 1867 and 1886), Sweden's rural population doubled. In 1870, farmers who owned or rented their land numbered 1,396,000; the total number of crofters, servants, and landless laborers (who were required by law to take any job offered them) was 1,288,000.

The earlier, epic time in Scandinavian history—when the great Viking "dragon ships" set sail for the coasts of Iceland, Greenland, Britain, Ireland, and northern France and penetrated the Mediterranean—is vividly portrayed in Johannes Brondsted's illustrated **THE VIKINGS** (Penguin, rev. 1965, paper).

Brondsted discusses the main themes that have been elaborated to explain Viking expansionism (700–1200 A.D.). In his view, changing conditions in commerce were the crucial factor. Sweden's role in the Viking age was less dramatic than that of the Danes and Norwegians. The latter, the "West Vikings," roamed afar to plunder, explore, and eventually to colonize; the Swedes, or "East Vikings," were more active as

middlemen in the lucrative trade between the Baltic and the Levant.

Sweden's democratic institutions go back before the Vikings to the village *ting* (or council), the forerunner of the modern Swedish Parliament. Joseph B. Board, in his excellent introductory study **THE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF SWEDEN** (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1970, paper only), gives due attention to this historical background in relation to today's political system. Board acknowledges that "the state is easily the most powerful single entity" but also points out that "Sweden, like America, is a pluralist society par excellence."

The Scandinavian nations today cooperate through the Nordic Council, but comparative analysis of Scandinavian politics dispels the myth of a single "Nordic" world-view. Nils Andren analyzes contemporary elements of commonality and divergence in **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden** (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964). Denmark, Sweden, and Norway are constitutional monarchies; Finland's parliamentary system includes a strong president whose function is to remain above the fray of party politics; all five parliamentary systems are based upon variants of proportional representation; the greatest similarity exists between Sweden and Norway.

The single best account of the evolution of Sweden's Social Democratic Party (SAP), prime architect of the welfare state, remains Herbert Tingsten's classic study, first published in 1941, **THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS: Their Ideological Development** (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster, 1973).

"The predominant trend in Swedish politics has been a convergence toward the middle, not the provocation of extremist tendencies," he writes. The SAP,

closely identified with bread-and-butter trade unionism, eventually chose the road of nonradical, non-Marxist reform. However, from the framing of the platform at the fourth Party Congress in 1897 to the first participation in a coalition government in 1917, the SAP's deliberations were characterized by intense, often vitriolic debates over both theory and tactics. In the end, the principles of democracy prevailed over the doctrines of orthodox socialism.

The "progressivism" of social reform in Sweden is rooted in a basically conservative approach to the political order. Dankwart A. Rustow argues in **THE POLITICS OF COMPROMISE: A Study of Parties and Cabinet Government in Sweden** (Greenwood, 1969, reprint). Rustow describes "that most fundamental yet elusive quality of Swedish politics—the harmonious interplay of rival forces, the tradition of government by discussion and compromise."

Some observers of the Swedish system have hailed it as near-utopian. One who has taken it as a nightmare warning to the West is Roland Huntford. In his **THE NEW TOTALITARIANS** (London: Penguin, 1971; New York: Stein & Day, 1972), the theme is Brave New World, the place Sweden, the time now. Where columnist Marquis Childs, in **SWEDEN, THE MIDDLE WAY** (Yale, 1936, 1961), saw fresh and innocent social democracy, Huntford finds a decrepit system made evil by unrestrained official megalomania. According to Huntford, the SAP, as the chief agent of social and economic security, strengthened its monolithic grip by appealing to the Swedes' fear of change: "Concerned only with economic security, the Swede is prepared to sacrifice most other things in life"; "Swedes like social control."

The country's economic growth through the second half of the 19th

century—when Sweden, long poverty-ridden, achieved her industrial breakthrough well after the United States and England—is treated in Eli F. Heck-scher's **AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF SWEDEN** (Harvard, 1954). Martin Schnitzer provides a more contemporary overview in **THE ECONOMY OF SWEDEN** (Praeger, 1970), out of print but available in most libraries. Schnitzer covers the tax system (less progressive than the British and offering strong incentives to private industry), resource allocation, the labor market, and the importance of the export trade for domestic prosperity.

Outside the realm of politics and economics, a sense of Sweden can be found in its sociology and literature. An easy place to begin is a short book by British Swedophile P. B. Austin, **ON BEING SWEDISH: Reflections Towards a Better Understanding of the Swedish Character** (Univ. of Miami, 1968). A typical Austin observation: "The last thing a Swede is prepared to dispense with is his *själsliv* (literally, soul-life). The very impossibility, indeed, of translating . . . *själ* (soul/mind/spirit/psyche) into any non-Scandinavian tongue suggests . . . what chasms there are between being Swedish and being anything else." Another instructive—and entertaining—book by Austin is **THE LIFE AND SONGS OF CARL MICHAEL BELL-MAN: Genius of the Swedish Rococo** (Malmö: Allhems, 1967). Two hundred years ago, the roistering poet Bellman (1740–95) wrote: *Am I born, then I'll be living / Well and truly on this wise / To my Eve like Adam cleaving / Here in paradise. / . . . By my bottle let me slumber; / By my girl will I awake: / When sad thoughts my brain encumber / Time an end will make.*

Also illuminating are the popular short stories that comprise the *Gösta Berling Saga*, part of the work for which Selma Lagerlöf won a Nobel Prize (1909), and the books of Pär Lagerkvist, another Nobel Prize-winner (1951) and the grand old man of Swedish letters. A translation of Lagerlöf entitled **THE STORY OF GÖSTA BERLING** (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1951; Westport, Conn.: Hyperion, 1977, reprint, cloth & paper), is available, as are Lagerkvist's **BARABBAS** (Random, 1955, cloth; Bantam, 1968, paper) and **THE DWARF** (Hill & Wang, 1945, cloth; 1958, paper).

Finally, there are the copious works of Johan August Strindberg (1849–1912), Sweden's greatest dramatist, who touches upon most, if not all, of the major Swedish preoccupations, including the war between the sexes and the tensions of social class. Several good paperback selections of his plays are available.

The gloomy dramatist's themes and characters are reflected in the world-famous films of Ingmar Bergman, who in his youth directed many productions of Strindberg. The first film written by Bergman to appear in the United States was *Torment* (1947). *Scenes from a Marriage*, a typical Bergman study of psychic conflicts and personal morality, captured a large U.S. television audience earlier this year.

Swedish films are everywhere. But not very much of the sizable recent Swedish literary output is available in English. Happily, this gap is being filled by the University of Minnesota Press, which plans to release anthologies of contemporary Swedish prose (edited by Gunnar Harding and Anselm Hallo) and poetry (edited by Karl-Erik Lagerlöf) late in 1978.