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Sweden's Americanization

"The Changing Swedish Electorate: Class Voting, Contextual Effects, and Voter Volatility" by John D. Stephens, in *Comparative Political Studies* (July 1981), 275 South Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

In 1976, after 44 years in power, Sweden's Social Democratic Party (SDP) lost to a Central Party coalition—a loss that was narrowly repeated in 1979. Some scholars suggest that growing affluence has made conservatives of Sweden's blue-collar class, the traditional mainstay of the SDP. It is true that the working class no longer votes in a block as it once did, says Stephens, a Brown political scientist; but, more significantly, neither do white-collar workers. He anticipates an "Americanization" of Swedish politics.

Since World War II, working-class Swedes have enjoyed educational opportunities, rising incomes, and an increase in social mobility that have begun to blur old class distinctions. But the biggest change in Swedish society has been the growth of trade union membership in the white-collar professions. TCO, the white-collar union, now represents 25 percent of Sweden's labor force. Where once white-collar individuals voted their social status (i.e., anti-socialist), they now vote their economic self-interest—as employees. The problem for the Social Democrats is that "voting left" no longer necessarily means voting SDP.

As labor organizations have grown, Sweden's middle parties have made adjustments. SDP policies, ironically, have helped. The socialists stressed rapid industrialization and economic growth. Some of the results—the dehumanization of the work place, unplanned regional change, and, especially, an ambitious nuclear program—created allies on the Left (such as the ecology movement) for the Central Party.

Leftism is increasing in Sweden, says Stephens, but party voting is declining. Votes are becoming less predictable, and many Swedes seem to be making their political choices near the end of campaigns. Frequent changes of government are likely to be the result, particularly under a new constitution that mandates short (three-year) terms in office. Elected officials, Stevens concludes, will be tempted to watch opinion polls instead of trying to pass coherent national programs, and to depend increasingly on "American style" media blitzes and personality politics.

Moscow's Errant 'Satellite'

"Communism and Ethiopia" by Paul B. Henze, in *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1981), Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Widely displayed Soviet flags and portraits of Marx and Lenin suggest that Ethiopia (1980 population: 31 million) is rapidly turning into a full-fledged Soviet satellite. But Henze, a former U.S. diplomat in Addis Ababa, argues that, in reality, the interests of military ruler Mengistu

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Located close to oil-rich Saudi Arabia, Marxist Ethiopia is armed by the Soviet bloc. But Western aid may be this impoverished land's best hope for developing its farms and oil fields.

Source: J. Bowyer Bell, *The Horn of Africa—Strategic Magnet in the Seventies* (1973).



Haile Mariam and his Soviet bloc allies are steadily diverging.

Mengistu rose to power shortly after the September 1974 coup that deposed Ethiopia's pro-Western emperor Haile Selassie. By 1977, the former major had antagonized Washington, thanks to his Marxist leanings and his brutal repression of local foes. That April, Ethiopia severed its U.S. military ties and began receiving \$2 billion worth of Soviet weaponry. In 1978, Soviet arms and 13,000 Cuban troops helped Mengistu repel an invasion by neighboring Somalia, a former Soviet client.

Yet despite Soviet exhortations, Mengistu has not created an Ethiopian communist party. He has retained Selassie's government ministries and their Western-educated civil servants. Ethiopians can read *Time* and listen openly to Western radio broadcasts. Moreover, Mengistu has permitted the nation's Coptic Christians (70 percent of the population) and Muslims to worship freely.

In fact, Ethiopia's religiosity (church attendance began increasing steadily during the late 1970s) is sure to frustrate further "communization." So will growing nationalism. In addition, writes Henze, Mengistu remembers that bountiful Soviet arms shipments during the early '70s (plus Ethiopia's internal strife) encouraged the 1978 Somali attack.

Above all, Western aid represents the best hope of solving Ethiopia's economic woes. Moscow's nonmilitary aid remains miserly; Ethiopia must finance the upkeep of its Cuban troops. The nation could boost revenues by increasing farm exports and finding and producing oil at home. But Ethiopian farmers need incentives, and strict controls have deterred Western oil companies from prospecting.

Finally, the Soviet-Cuban presence has prevented Mengistu from removing a big obstacle to recovery—the persistent revolt waged by the

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northern province of Eritrea. As long as Ethiopia is *seen* as a Soviet puppet, the Arab regimes backing the Eritreans are unlikely to press them to accept the regional autonomy Mengistu may be willing to offer. And the rebellion will continue to drain Ethiopian resources.

On Strike in Nazi Germany

"The Workers' Opposition in Nazi Germany" by Tim Mason, in *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1981), P.O. Box 69, Oxford OX2 7XA, United Kingdom.

Although the Nazis brutally smashed German labor unions after coming to power in 1933, worker unrest—in the form of strikes, slowdowns, absenteeism, and assorted goldbricking—became so widespread that it hindered Germany's rearmament drive until the outbreak of World War II. So relates Mason, a *History Workshop Journal* editor.

Mass unemployment during the early years of Hitler's rule enabled the Nazis to keep German workers in line with threats of dismissal and police intervention. But by 1939, Hitler's massive war preparations had created one million new jobs. Employers found themselves at the mercy of laborers, who began changing jobs, on average, once every 12 months. Many employees were simply exploiting their new market value for better pay and benefits. But workers also resented the constant harassment from bosses under pressure to meet ambitious Nazi production targets.

Despite police intimidation, strikes became common in Germany after 1935. Nazi archives reveal 192 strikes and "strike-like" protests between February 1936 and July 1937. Most involved fewer than 50 workers, and the Gestapo's arrival held the majority to under a day. But they so worried Berlin that, in 1936, the Nazi press was forbidden to print reports of French strikes. Work slowdowns were also frequent, and, as late as September 1939, when Nazi tanks rolled into Poland, 20 percent of Berlin's armaments workers were taking off each day after payday.

Many employers responded with major concessions. From 1936 to 1939, average weekly blue-collar earnings jumped 17 percent. Firms began offering health insurance and even installment payments on Volkswagens. Nothing worked. Beginning in June 1938, as world tensions mounted, Berlin abolished the eight-hour day, cut wages, and started conscripting workers for priority projects. But workers' protests in September 1939 forced the government to relent. Only by turning to slave labor in the early 1940s did Hitler solve his manpower problems.

German workers' actions were not overtly political, writes Mason, nor were they demonstrably antiwar protests. But they indicate that many laborers were unwilling to fully subordinate themselves to the demands of the Nazi system. And they show Hitler's failure to mold a classless Germany, bound tightly by superpatriotism.