

## Chapter 14 : The death of ideology?

*"A great and true idea, once pronounced, is immortal."*  
Oscar (I), Crown Prince of Sweden-Norway.

Chapters 1-7 describe a number of societal ideologies which can be summarized as: one country, one people, one religion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was (almost) so. The interpretation has been that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century religion was replaced by its secular competitors - liberal democracy, Nazism, Fascism & Communism - which would also inaugurate the Millennium. As depicted in chapters 8-13, the monarchy found itself at a disadvantage, but had sufficient political support to survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, albeit in the weakened form depicted in chapters 15-21.

The later discussion has focused on monarchy in its capacity of a societal ideology (=taken for granted; see also chapter 21) and having had a greater impact on Sweden's democratic development than is recognized. Democratic parliamentarianism, where everyone would have their own way, initially had such poor support in large groups, fearing that it was tantamount to the upper classes having their own way, that it might well have ended up as in Germany, with the country becoming ungovernable. Now, as in the age of liberty, the king legitimized the system.

Societal ideology is a vague concept, but can have quite robust effects. After Ådalen, for example, it was not forbidden to use military for police purposes, it was only politically unthinkable. Among the current societal ideologies are the nation state, parliamentarianism & willingness to compromise. The monarchy is supposed to be important to all three: As a national symbol, to legitimize government decisions & to strengthen the state – enabling compromise, which normally weakens it. Conservatives were for a long time sceptical that such an arrangement was possible, but here they were wrong.

Strengthening the state to enable compromise may seem a little odd. Other countries have used more drastic methods. Possibly the Swedish desire to compromise would be identical to a lingering "Boströmianism", meaning that state interests must always take precedence over party, class and personal interests. The chapter follows this line of reasoning as far as has been possible to discern it – the (un)political role, future & true nature of the Bernadotte monarchy.

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### A. THE ESTATES SOCIETY (1809-1865)

Two influential discourses on the Swedish state were formulated during the estate society (=the 1809-1865 monarchy). On the one hand, the mixed aristocratic and republican nature of the state (Geijer) and on the other hand, the state as infallible and a guarantor of individual freedom (Boström). Geijer was widely publicized in his lifetime, but never started a school. Boström, on the other hand, had several Phd students who with small changes carried his ideas forward. Boström's state ideology, the state as an administrative apparatus rather than as a political forum, was until the dissolution of the union considered a reasonable description of Swedish politics. (See chapter 5.)

Geijer & Boström are now both history. Sweden like the United Kingdom is considered a republic in disguise & special interest groups (whatever their real influence) have no special status. Boström's ideas about the ideal state continue, however, to rear their head. There is a continued criticism that the current form of government is prescriptive rather than descriptive (see chapter 18).

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## B. THE CLASS SOCIETY (1866-1918)

Political systems are a mixture of power and ideology. 1866-1918, the monarchy was politically supported by an upper class, a peasant class & a poorly defined middle class; ideologically by a group of government employed academics - officials, priests & professors. Since all higher academic posts were appointed by the government (=Oscar II), loyalty to the royal house was a must. Fryxell's Uppsala ultraist became during Oscar II known as "Professor Conservatives". The most influential in this context were Christopher Boström's PhD students, now appointed professors (Axel Nyblaeus, Sigurd Ribbing, Carl Yngve Sahlin & Lawrence Heap Åberg), the holders of the Skyttean professorship in eloquence and political science (Wilhem Erik Svedelius, Oscar Alin, Simon Boëthius & Rudolf Kjellén) and two historians (Hans Forsell & Harald Hjärne). Geijer had no PhD students. His activities seem to have been too fragmented & his position as "Enlightenment Conservative" too controversial.

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### Boström's PhD students

Although Boström before his death had made his former PhD students promise never to change anything in his state doctrine, but they never were that loyal. Nyblaeus' attitude was that: "For my part, I have studied Geijer too much to unquestioningly pay tribute to Boström's doctrine other than to the general philosophy, and I can only regret that this has been hidden [by irrelevant details] in the application to concrete reality."<sup>1</sup> Boström's request becomes more understandable, however, bearing in mind that his state doctrine was prescriptive, rather than descriptive. An ideal, rather than a political program. The students kept their word, however. The only changes made were aimed at eliminating obvious anachronisms. In 1908, a support society, Boströmsförbundet, was founded, with a last sign of life in 1917.

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The Social Democrats devoted much energy to making fun of monarchy, hoping that this would have some effect, which it did not. Better effect had attacking its ideas (=ideology). The main target was Boström. However, there was never any organized attack. Boström seems to have fallen victim to the zeitgeist & his German philosophy. A digression on the progress and aftermath:

According to the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), knowledge was a combination of psychology and ideology (=empiricism & conception). The German philosophy of nature considered concepts as metaphysics. As Einstein put it: They are neither true nor false, but sometimes useful in reasoning. Boström's organic state

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<sup>1</sup> Elvander 1961: s. 52.

science cannot therefore be read according to the letter, but must be interpreted. The metaphysical packaging long made the message immune to criticism. Then it made no sense.

The henchmen were the philosopher Axel Hägerström and his PhD student Adolph Phalén. Hägerström represented a direction in philosophy, the so-called Uppsala school or emotivism, which denied metaphysics, general concepts, eternal values, etc. Boström's ideas must be seen as subjective value judgments in the absence of empirical value judgments. Phalén extended the criticism to Boström's subjectivism, by which he said that value judgments must not be based on a private opinion, but must be shared by several, i.e. founded in some form of empiricism. The Marxist version of this was that Boström's political science was an example of subjective class thinking. Boström was reduced to an intellectual curiosity, and with him his organic state science. The same fate affected Geijer & Hjärta.

Several leading social democrats/liberals (Herbert Tingsten, Gunnar Myrdal & Ingemar Hedenius) studied in Uppsala, were influenced by Hägerström's philosophy, and considered themselves able to attack the existing society and its ideas on this basis. Tingsten devoted himself to political science, Myrdal to sociology, Hedenius to religion. Constitutional law was also affected. Since Uppsala-skolan did not recognize eternal principles, Swedish law became synonymous with exercising political power. This was made abundantly clear in the Torekov compromise (see next chapter 15), which was never motivated by anything beyond the discontent of the Social Democrats themselves. Older conservative lawyers have always called for some kind of discussion of the principle behind it all.

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### The Skyttean Chair

Swedish political scientists were for a long time also historians, members of the Swedish Academy, members of the Parliament & as teachers, lecturers & advisers, personally acquainted with members of the royal house. The *crème de la crème* of political science was the holder of the Skyttean Professorship of eloquence & political science. It was owned by Wilhem Erik Svedelius (1862-1882), Oscar Alin (1882-1900), Simon Boëthius (1901-1915) & Rudolf Kjellén (1916-1922). Most famous is Kjellén:

Kjellén was the last Swedish political scientist to seriously assert an "organic" political science in a traditional German-conservative spirit. In a commemoration, his ideology is summarized as: "He had "nationalism in the blood". The philosophy of enlightenment and ideals associated with the French Revolution were abhorrent to him. Against the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity of 1789, he set order, righteousness and national community - what he called "the ideas of 1914."<sup>2</sup> Since Kjellén was a friend of provocative formulations, it is difficult to know how hard he was on this particular version of his ideas. It is true, however, that he spent his life criticizing democracy as a divisive force, but which could possibly be balanced by opposing forces (see chapter 6). Primarily then a strong state & a loyal people. In the end, however, he did not believe that democracy was a stable form of state but had to fall apart. The interwar period proved him more than right in this regard. There is an ongoing discussion on the reason (see chapter 21).

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<sup>2</sup> Edström 2014: s. 19.

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### Fighting historians

The historians Hans Forsell & Harald Hjärne also devoted themselves to political science, but of course to a lesser extent than the political scientists themselves. Together with Kjellén, Hjärne is considered to have been one of the professors with the greatest political influence. As a historian, he made himself known through his Charles XII research (see chapter 3). I shall confine myself to his political activities. Since this had liberal elements, his legacy is rather better than Kjellén's:

”Which of the two great ideologists Hjärne and Kjellén has exerted the greatest influence on Swedish conservatism after the breakthrough of democracy? The question can also be formulated as follows: Who was the most far-sighted, whose opinion was the best match for subsequent political developments? The answer seems clear: Hjärne foreshadowed the victorious main line of the conservatism of the following decades, the moderate, capable of adapting to democracy and promoting social and ideological equality and reconciliation. Several of his disciples became prominent politicians or publicists; Through them, his thoughts continued to influence conservative politics.

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Rudolf Kjellén had no significant disciple, neither in science nor in politics. It is though possible to count Adrian Molin and Rütger Essén as disciples of Kjellén. It then gives an indication of the direction in which his influence went. It was the anti-democratic, nationalist, pro-Nazi minority within Swedish conservatism which had Kjellén as pioneer and inspiration.”<sup>3</sup>

Which seems to me a backward way to point out that the Hjärne in his lifetime had no political influence & hardly afterwards either. He seems as divided as Geijer. As far as research is concerned, the questions posed by the Hjärne are dead, while the questions posed by Kjellén are alive.

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### C. THE INTERWAR PERIOD (1918-1939)

A change of system involves the old system being discredited, either through its own ineptitude, or through the propaganda of the new system. The change of system in 1918 from monarchy to democracy received its special character because it was so long drawn out. In fact, it had been discussed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. No one could be unaware of the options & what they meant. Once the system shift arrived, it was difficult to say anything that had not been said 1000 times before. In contrast to 1809, the politicians did not devote themselves to discrediting the old system (which was their own), but portraying the system change as another democratic reform in the best of Swedish traditions. An official verdict on the monarchy as a system, a ”de-monarchization”, was never in the cards.

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<sup>3</sup> Elvander 1961: s. 486.

## The system shift

The peaceful course of events - the whole system change took place within the framework of normal parliamentary politics - has been explained by:

- That the Bernadotte had been good rulers. The problem was the electoral system, not the royal house.
- That the 1809 Constitution had a "democratic potential".
- That Sweden had a long tradition of local self-government that would now be extended to the kingdom as a whole. "Democracy was in the Swedish blood."
- That the commoners had historically supported the monarchy in self-defence against the nobility. Although the nobility was gone, the tradition of supporting the monarchy remained.
- That the political class was afraid that further delays would bring on a revolution.

During the 1920s and 1930s there was an animated debate about Sweden's two democratic "creation stories". Either Sweden had been libertarian, democratic and well-ordered as long as it existed, exemplified by the Engelbrekt rebellion 1434-1436, the Arboga meeting 1435 (=the first Parliament), Gustaf Vasa's reforms 1523- 1560 & the introduction of Parish meetings during the 1600s or the 1909 general strike, protesting conscription, the military budget & everything else, popular representation & parliamentary government meant something radically new. There is no comment by King Gustaf V on what he thought, except that he accepted the situation. In 1929 and 1959, Gustaf VI formulated the position of the Royal House as "Sweden has always had an independent peasantry. Now it also has an independent working class."<sup>4</sup> & "The development that has taken place is in particular based on the thought: that the people themselves should be responsible for their destiny."<sup>5</sup>

There is a tradition of the left that Sweden in 1917 faced a revolution, the Seskarö riots & the military's preparations are mentioned, but nothing been confirmed. A minimum for a revolution should be leaflets, demonstrations and the arming of the revolutionaries. Nothing of the sort has been verified. The Seskarö riots took place far from the capital & had no political ambitions. The Social-Democrats were allowed to take charge themselves of their May 1 train. There is a legend that Gustaf V had packed his suitcases in order to escape to Germany if necessary, but this too seems invented.

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## A misguided right

The Swedish political map was rather reminiscent of the German Weimar Republic. Universal suffrage and parliamentarianism had left both the left and the right in disarray. From 1918, Swedish politics consisted of a left-wing of liberals, reformist social democrats, communists & anarchists; a right-wing of pragmatic corporate & peasantry, apolitical conservatism, reactionary far right & pro-Nazi. The central ground was occupied by the state officials including the royal house. The political debate was meagre, but in 1925 there was a need to at least adjust to the situation whatever that implied. Conservative politicians considered the lack of legitimacy of the newly established democracy in large electorates to be their main

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<sup>4</sup> Prins Gustaf Adolf 1930.

<sup>5</sup> Kung Gustaf VI Adolf. Dagens Nyheter, 1959-05-31, s. 12.

problem, which in the long run threatened the entire state. I quote the future editor-in-chief of Svenska Dagbladet, Ivar Anderson:

”Political democracy, based on Rousseau's dogma of the infallible will of the people, has not provided guarantees for the State to go about its business. It has deprived the masses of belief in the old authorities, but it has not given them any new ones. ... Having for a long time used the forces of dissolution in the fight against the existing social order, the politicians of democracy have difficulties making their supporters obey even their own institutions.

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Conservative politics cannot be indifferent to these [political] tasks. We do not believe that democracy is the ultimate solution to the problem of governance, but we do realize that there is no other way to go about at the moment. It is not advisable to speculate on some kind of catastrophe in the hope that democracy, if left to its own devices, will soon break its neck. Conservative politics must assist any efforts to give the state power, firmness and authority. When the reform chariot begins to slither downhill, conservatives should not applaud it, but take a firm hold of the reins to prevent it from ending up in the trench.”<sup>6</sup>

The corresponding politics was to strengthen the authority and independence of the state within the framework of the 1809 Constitution. I exemplify with ”the corporate right” (Arvid Lindman & Karl Hildebrand), ”the youth-movement right” (Hjalmar Haralds & Adrian Molin) and two Nazi sympathizers (Fredrik Böök & Rütger Essén).

The ”Corporate Right” wanted to strengthen the middle class influence in the 1<sup>st</sup> chamber but keep the king out of party politics; ”The youth-movement right” wanted one man rule according to the 1809 constitution, something akin to Charles XIV John, with the working class as a 5<sup>th</sup> political estate, Sweden -Finland as a regional power & the king as an interpreter of the popular will; The Nazi sympathizers were anti-democrats, war romantics & darwinists.<sup>7</sup> Possibly one can sum up the climate of ideas as that within the youth right there was a majority for anti-parliamentary democracy in the German spirit: ”The king represented a state will raised above the people's will, ”with deeper spiritual roots than the ballot”.<sup>8</sup>

The depression & the war years then put a lid on the discussions and after the peace, the right, for lack of alternatives of their own accepted liberal democracy. Gustaf V appears, except in connection with the 1925 disarmament, which he considered ill advised, to have remained passive.

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### A misguided monarchy

After the end of the war, Gustav V retreated to private life. Queen Victoria was in poor health and ended her life in Italy in 1930. Gustav V, on the other hand, made himself known as an active senior citizen: Hunted & fished, played tennis & croquet, enjoyed car sports, collected antiques, embroidered, listened to music, watched film & took holidays every year

<sup>6</sup> Anderson 1925: ss. 442-443.

<sup>7</sup> Kihlberg & Söderlind 1961; Torstendahl 1969; Olsson 2000; Nilsson 2004 & 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Kihlberg & Söderlind 1961: s. 60.

in Nice. This was combined with a crowd-pleasing initiatives such that he in 1932 he offered to cut the appanage. Gustaf is little known for his cultural work but he allowed researchers access to the Bernadotte Archives, which resulted in three extensive royal biographies: Torvald T:son Höjer's on Karl XIV Johan; Anders Lundebeck and Karl Hildebrand's about him himself. Hildebrand tried to interview him about his political views, but Gustaf refused. Interested parties had to settle for a collection of anecdotes.<sup>9</sup>

The parliamentary situation was unstable (13 governments 1918-1936) & Gustaf had much to do with the appointments. Most of his time was spent reading newspapers, audiences, correspondence, representation & military inspections. During the winter months, anyone could go up to the castle every Tuesday to meet him. The name was recorded in a book & you sat down in the waiting room. This was how Kurt Haijby came to meet him.<sup>10</sup> 1926 he relinquished the command of the Swedish Navy to concentrate on the army. In 1939, he retired from audiences.

There are a number of articles that on his 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary try to describe Gustaf's character & official role. I quote the diplomat Rütger Essén & the journalist Ludvig Nordström. Essén described Gustaf's character such: "He was an illusion-free man with a strong sense of duty, not easy to fool or even flatter, simple habits, modest, with a sense of humour and a sure instinct for personal worth and political facts."<sup>11</sup> Nordström described his new role as full of the contradictions that still are with us:

"Our time offers the bizarre spectacle, that the elected heads of state exercise royal power, while the hereditary kings lack real political influence. The role of the remaining Kings, under the rule of democracy, become something other than political. It has become moral, psychological, spiritual. It was not difficult to be monarch during the days of autocracy. From a moral point of view. The difficulties then lay in the foreign and military spheres. Now the problem of the King's office lies in the purely human sphere. In general, is it clear how much of internal and external effort, good will and selfless vision is demanded of a man born as lord and king, to accept the position of only one among many officials of a fully-fledged democratic state? To obey the will of the people and yet stand above it as self-conscious symbol of the historical continuity of the kingdom? To subordinate all feelings, possibly also affections, to an inalienable duty? To cooperate with the elected representatives of the people from the most diverse circles, of the most diverse degrees of education? To represent all history and at the same time to be a symbol of the present and be able to feel, think and act as human being among all these diverse people?

These problems have been the life of the current King of Sweden. It has been testified by his collaborators in the government that he has solved them admirably. ... He has become more Mr. G. than His Majesty. And the fact is, that on all the pictures in uniform he seems embarrassed, while in sports he appears alive, because you know, how then he thrives."<sup>12</sup>

I.e. Gustaf was not only powerless after the transition to parliamentarianism. He *enjoyed* it. Also a way to square the monarchic circle. It is probably significant that the biographies of Charles XV written this period were in the same spirit - that king & people lived in harmony.

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<sup>9</sup> Prawitz 1943.

<sup>10</sup> Finn. En dag som kung. Dagens Nyheter, 1924-03-16, söndagsbilagan: ss. 1,7.

<sup>11</sup> Essén 1933: ss. 182-183.

<sup>12</sup> Ludvig Nordström. Han som skapat en ny kunga-typ. Vecko Journalen, 1933:24.

But it happened for Gustaf as for Karl XV and later Carl XVI Gustaf. All were associated with democratic reform. All, possibly in retaliation, were retroactively supplied with a comprehensive "popular" sex life. Gustav V's reputation as both cuckold, fornicator and gay Nazi is hard to beat, however.

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I will give Prime Minister Hansson the last word:

"Of course King Gustaf is a conservative man, but conservatism is an evil only when it lacks the will to understand, adapt and convey. Such, however, is not the conservatism of King Gustaf, which is steeped in understanding, consideration and tolerance. He is a democratic king - not in his political views but in his personal orientation. As a constitutional monarch King Gustaf of Sweden has not only accepted that the kingdom should be governed by the people's will. He has also actively worked for majority governments in the spirit of democratic parliamentarianism. Rooted in a time so different from ours, he has grown together with the new society in such a way that it has gained him general popularity."<sup>13</sup>

Hansson even tried to get the social democratic party congress to abandon the demand for Republic, but failed.

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<sup>13</sup> Hansson 1938. [Kraftigt förkortad.]



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