

Summary

The book describes six aspects of the Swedish Bernadotte monarchy: the personalities, ideology, its political role (until 1918), its symbolic role (after 1918), how the monarchy is maintained & how it is opposed. The main question is whether its survival can be explained by ideology, loyalty of its followers, state utility or “inertia”. The explanation (in accordance with the view of political scientist Herbert Tingsten) is assumed to be:

- Parliamentary democracy is a societal ideology of the political system.
- The monarchic ideology (the state as incarnation of the Swedish identity) is far better anchored in the political system than the class struggle variants advocated by their republican competitors - liberalism, socialism, communism, Nazism & fascism. In fact, a Swedish identity (one state, one country, one people, one culture) can be regarded as another societal ideology alongside parliamentarianism.

The alternative version is that the monarchy is on its last leg:

- The Swedish Republicans seem to be waiting for the “destructive forces of time” to do its job. Nothing, according to them, lasts forever - not even the monarchy. It has already been wiped out as a political option. Its distinctive character (=its mystery) is gone by transparency, lack of money & the bourgeois marriages. Now remains to work for the monarchy & its sympathizers to be so belittled, humiliated, discredited & ridiculed that the symbol value disappears and the monarchy goes the same way as the nobility & the state church.

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In addition to the main question, there are some, possibly worthwhile, partial results:

- The interwar period it was a common argument that democracy & free debate by definition led to political division, but that the monarchy was a way of uniting the country around a common symbol and thus strengthening the state.
- The notion that the monarch of a constitutional monarchy has a neutral position above national special interests; that he therefore (symbolically) represents the nation as a whole & that he also guarantees the rights of the people can be derived from Hegel's philosophy of law (1821) & his theories of “the perfect prince”. In Sweden, this theory is called “Boströmianism”. There is also an English influence from Burke and others.
- Sweden is a liberal parliamentary democracy. Who knows what this democracy under the “right” parliamentary majority may come up with? Ever since John Stuart Mill's book (1859) “On Freedom” there has been a lively discussion with slogans such as “the oppression of the minority & the majority are equally hateful to me” & “freedom from the oppression of officials”. Parliamentary majorities were, according to Mill, as great a threat to freedom as absolute monarchy, clerical or noble rule. An non-political head of state, passive resistance & inviolable rights were, however, a protection.
- Since parliamentarianism was not written into the constitution until 1974 (apparently to avoid conflicts with an older generation of both conservatives & radicals), the role of the king within the political system has been controversial right up to the present & prevented a discussion of his mandate.