

Sweden the Unallied: Princes and Paternalism

By JOHN GUNTHER

I
Whether for good or ill, Sweden may be said to represent the highest type of state socialism yet seen in the world.

There is a king, true enough, and a real one. There is private property, which one may be sure is firmly entrenched. There is hardly a shadow of bolshevism. Nevertheless, through a remarkable series of paternalistic measures by various governments, Sweden has become essentially socialist. The present cabinet is conservatively inclined, but it is a stop-gap. If one wants to see how expertly a modern country can experiment with socialism, Sweden is the place to visit.

Imagine for a few moments that you are a Swede—and there are fewer more individual, more compact, more homogeneous nationalities—and inspect curiously your relations to your state.

State Aids from Birth.

First of all, when a Swede is born he becomes state property in a sense then and there. Sweden has the lowest birth rate of any country in Europe, 17.53 in 1925. In every town there is a child welfare board, and if a child is destitute the board takes care of the baby. Children born out of wedlock are assigned a "welfare guardian," according to a law in force since 1918. In any case, from the very beginning the state takes its residents on.

As the child grows up it goes to schools—run by the state. The excellent Swedish educational system will take the child from the age of 6 to 21, at state expense. Every parish has its primary school, state-inspected. There are two state universities, Uppsala and Lund. As one result of it all there is practically no illiteracy in Sweden. The rate is below 1 per cent.

If one takes a railway journey, in nine cases out of ten it will be on a state-owned car, engine and right of way. In Sweden only 1,461 kilometers of rail are privately owned. When a passenger takes a street car in one of the larger cities, Stockholm, Malmö or Gothenburg, the penny fare goes to the state. If one telegraphs, a state-paid operator sends the message over state-owned wires. Telephones are a state business from beginning to end, and the service is admirable. Stockholm has more telephones per capita than any other city in Europe, and in total number of phones exceeds every city except London and Berlin. There are 12,451 telephones, for example, in Rome; in Stockholm, 134,000.

But these are types of government ownership

and control familiar almost everywhere in Europe. Sweden is more individual, more subtle, in her control.

Rules Over Liquors and Drugs.

For instance, if one wants to take a drink, that is a state matter emphatically. Alcohol is regulated by a curious system to be described later. If one wants to buy a bottle of medicine, again the state enters in. All druggists' shops are state-operated, and only a specified number are licensed in each town. If one is ill a state hospital is around the corner. The ambulance man arrives and says, "Don't worry, madam—this is all free."

Many persons are interested in mining. Nearly every one in Sweden is. The great iron beds in Norrland are the economic life-spot of the country. They are not so much mines as quarries. Kiruna, for instance, is a mountain literally composed of iron and the iron is obtained merely by leveling the mountain down. Sweden has not actually reached state ownership of these and other mines, but it is very close.

The mining companies are given grants by the state, and in the chief one, the Trafikaktiebolaget Grangesberg-Oxelösund, the state owns the preferred stock. In addition, the state reserves the right to purchase the ordinary stock any time after 1947. Meanwhile the mines must supply the Swedish market first—even if at a loss—and they are state audited and controlled.

Help for Infirm and Old.

But more interesting are the adventures of Sweden in more individual paternalistic legislation. If a person is sick, the state pays the hospital bill (provided the citizen is needy), and in some cases pays sick insurance also. This dates from 1912. In 1913 a law was passed instituting compulsory old age and disablement insurance. When citizens reach 67, they must quit work—at least if they are one of the 3,710,000 on the state registers (63 per cent of the population).

With a systematic poor relief law in force, there are no aged poor in Sweden. In 1912 an accident insurance law was passed. Unemployment is considerable (about 55,000 just now), and the unemployed receive state doles. In addition the state fixes maximum rent for houses, maintains a special cabinet minister for social questions and inspects the newspapers. That is, a state committee functions "to preserve the liberty of the press."

In 1919 a forty-eight-hour week bill was passed for laborers, the most advanced in Europe outside Russia.

There is no getting away from the state in Sweden. For when one dies (if necessary) the state buries him.

High Taxes One Result.

All this has been by no means an unmixt blessing, Stockholm people are quick to say. For one thing, it makes people lazy. There is little incentive to save if a citizen knows absolutely the state will take care of his dotage; the bankers say that savings accounts have seriously gone down. For another thing, it has led to considerable labor and class struggle, since these measures did not go down the throats of the conservatives too easily. For still another, it has played fury with taxes.

All this paternalism must be paid for. Sweden is by no means a poor country, but neither is it overwhelmingly rich. And taxation has soared. In some cases income tax reaches—for small incomes—an average of 10 per cent. And Sweden is an expensive country. Wages are high, true enough, but living is higher. The index number for wholesale prices on a 1914 base is 339.2 a few years ago. It has sunk from that appalling figure, but it still is very high.

On the other hand, this socialization has produced immense benefits. One can tell a good deal about a country's spirit from very little things. We were in Sweden a month and just to see did we see a beggar.—*Chicago Daily News.*

(The next article in this series, telling how Sweden, with not a single political alliance and without engaging in war in 113 years, has led in outlawing war, will appear in November.—*Ed.*)

NICHOLAS ROOSEVELT ON MCINTYRE

Major General Frank McIntyre, chief of the bureau of insular affairs, is being booked for the Philippines governorship, which makes timely the following comment. Nicholas Roosevelt of the editorial staff of the *New York Times* in his recent book, *The Philippines—A Treasure and a Problem:*

"There has naturally been a tendency to blame Secretary of War Baker for Mr. Harrison's acts. Although technically responsible, as head of the War Department, Mr. Baker became so engrossed in America's war preparations shortly after the new law (The Jones Law of 1916) went into effect that he can hardly be held to account personally for the maladministration of the Philippines. The same is not true, however, of the Bureau of Insular Affairs. That great one of the most important in the War Department, has, as its special duty, to watch the administration of the Philippines, and to advise the Secretary of War about Philippine problems. The reports of the Governor-General come to the bureau, and the Secretary's instructions are drawn up by it.

"The very fact of Mr. Baker's absorption in war work made this organization's responsibility for checking Mr. Harrison's supineness all the greater. As far as the public knows the bureau did little to make the Secretary of War realize his own instructions (as contained in his long letter to Mr. Harrison) were being flouted and how the very things which he had sought to prevent were being brought to pass. "It stands to reason, therefore, that if anyone other than Governor Harrison could have checked the demoralizing progress of overhasty Filipinization of the Islands it was the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs."

Mr. Justice James A. Ostrand of the supreme court has returned to Manila from the United States with his daughter Margaret, who, graduated from her university course, has become his secretary. Mrs. Ostrand remained in America with their younger daughter, James, Jr., pursuing his course at Wake Forest. Justice Ostrand found remarkable interest in the Philippines in the middle west, a contrast with the indifference heretofore noted there.

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