

Peaceableness as a Weapon in Wars of Swedology

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Abstract: This article brings forward a set of examples from the “Swedological” literature that had its golden era circa 1930–1980 – i.e. non-Swedish interpretations of Swedish society (or features of it), done in order to fight ideological wars on non-Swedish soil, using Sweden as a *case in point*. The theme of Sweden as a peaceful nation, both in its internal developments and in its role in the world, was a crucial feature of the genre from the outset. It has been possible to interpret Sweden’s neutrality policies (including heavy production and exports of arms) in different ways. This has also been the case with Swedish attempts to take responsibility in the world, showing global conscience (e.g. through criticism against international bullies or through foreign aid). The theme of peaceableness has, over the decades, been a tool in fights between “Swedophiles” and “Swedoclasts”, both sides applying a certain “logic of debunkery” in their mutual attempts to disclose the opposite camp’s depictions as myths.

Peaceful Sweden and the war of “Swedophiles” and “Swedoclasts”¹

Sweden used to be known as one of those poor European countries, abandoned by big chunks of their populations for a better life across

¹ The main contents of this article were originally presented at a conference arranged by The Nobel Museum and Södertörn University, “Cosmopolitanism in a Wider Context: Conceptualizing Past and Present”, Stockholm, 24–26.11.2011. I have benefited from discussing its theme with students at the University of Michigan in 2004, 2011 and 2018, as well as with students at Vilnius University’s Centre for Scandinavian Studies – where I have had the privilege to be a recurring guest lecturer in its vibrant milieu, imbued with the generous spirit of Ērika Sausverde.

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the Atlantic. Nothing of interest. But with a foretaste in a theme issue of the *National Geographic* in 1928, and a breakthrough in the press coverage from the Stockholm Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in 1930, Sweden suddenly became all the rage in the USA. “Smorgasbord” became a culinary fashion (and one of the few Swedish loan words in English). In discussions related to the Depression and the early New Deal, some depicted the country as a Utopia, rhyming “Sweden” with “the Garden of Eden”. As an argument in support of the “second” New Deal, the journalist Marquis Childs published a counter-image in his political bestseller *Sweden: The Middle Way* in 1936. He claimed that Sweden had become the world’s only really working laissez-faire economy, due to forces counteracting capitalism’s self-destructive tendency towards monopoly. The main example, and central theme of the book, was the consumers’ co-op movement. Childs saw parallel balancing influences in other popular movements as well, especially the trade unions. A constructive role was also assigned to the state, as Conservative, Liberal and Social Democratic governments, showing strong continuity over several decades, had intervened in production, only marginally, but in a way that created competition, rather than quenching it. Sweden was anything but a Utopia. On the contrary, the virtue of “the Swede” was his practicality: his focus on solving problems in a reasonable way, by means of earthbound dialogue between all interests concerned. Thus, in Childs’s take, the little kingdom illustrated the possibility of combining true democracy with economic efficiency, even to turn grass-roots action into a crucial lever of wealth creation (Östlund, 2014).

Childs’s *The Middle Way* would become the major classic of an international genre. In the late 1960s another American, David Jenkins – one of its most astute contributors – dubbed it “Swedological writings” (Jenkins, 1968, 17). The texts within this multifaceted genre were written by non-Swedes and used Sweden as *a case in point* within debates in other countries. Her case was used to wage ideological wars on foreign soil. But the *points made* in depicting and analysing various aspects of Swedish society differed in an astounding and instructively erratic way. Often it became obvious that the truth about *Sweden as such* was of marginal interest (if of any interest at all). The main question was in what ways was it possible to deploy the Swedish case, always relating new statements to clusters of claims already in place. The genre would thus be formed by “Swedophiles”, using different aspects of Swedish life, or Swedish society in general, as a model to follow, and by “Swedoclasts”,

who were just as eager to single out Sweden, or things Swedish, as a deterrent, as a road leading astray. Even writers who attempted to be neutral and balanced – such as Jenkins – had to realize they had entered an ideological battlefield, finding their way in the line of fire between partisans on both sides, all claiming to debunk myths created by the other side.

The golden era of *Swedology* would roughly span the five decades from 1930 to 1980. By all measures, the external attention attracted by the country during those years was disproportionate to its size and importance. The motor behind it all was very obvious: the economic Cinderella story of the nation. Her success was visibly founded on industrial and technological prowess. This was mirrored in the fact that Swedophiles and Swedoclasts all agreed on one basic condition of the debate: Sweden was perceived as the land of far-reaching industrial modernity. Most Swedologists tacitly agreed on treating the Swedish case as *a crystal ball*: in *il paese del futuro* (“the land of the future”, Altavilla, 1967), it was possible to discern futures for other countries on track towards economic, social, political and cultural modernity – rosy or thorny futures, opportunities or risks. In the years around 1970 Sweden was the second-richest country in the world. Even the angriest Swedoclasts could not, in those years, avoid admitting that the Swedes actually were *the richest people* in the world, as Sweden – in stark contrast to the USA, which had the world’s highest GNP – had practically eradicated poverty, allowing all citizens to enjoy the wealth of the nation. Thus, it became crucial to Swedoclasts of this generation – a choir reaching a crescendo – to turn Swedish material progress and obsession with efficiency into a vice. Making a case for economic failure was hardly an option. This soon changed. After the international economic crisis had finally reached the country in earnest, around 1976, Sweden turned into just another advanced industrial nation, having its ups and downs. Then the external attention dwindled rapidly. But the traditions of Swedology lingered. Patterns from the golden era of the genre were occasionally reactivated after 1980. One such case was when shocking “facts” about eugenic sterilization policies in the Welfare State between 1935 and 1975 suddenly became topical in media around the world in 1997 (Broberg & Tydén, 1998).

In the decades since 1980, patterns of Swedological writings have increasingly been applied to the Scandinavian or Nordic countries in general – often putting the happy Danes, the rich Norwegians or the well-educated Finns in the front seat. Such efforts to turn Scandinavia in general into a “model” to follow have not necessarily referred to Sweden

in particular, as they pretty much always did before 1980. This trend has possibly been reversed a bit in recent years, since issues of immigration and cultural diversity have become the centrepiece in a new wave of Swedoclasm, with critics like Donald Trump bringing Sweden back into the focus of attention (Rapacioli, 2018). The theme of this debate is quite foreign to the writings of the Swedological genre's golden age, despite its dependence on inherited patterns. Interwar and early postwar contributions did often count cultural and "racial" homogeneity among the explanatory factors behind supposedly unique features of Swedish society. Only in the decade around 1970 did Sweden's assumed cultural conformism and traditionally harsh treatment of its ethnic minorities turn up in Swedoclastic arguments, and Sweden's increasingly non-assimilationist stance towards immigrants (e.g. offering home language classes in the school system) in Swedophile depictions. When such issues did turn up, they were closely related to the feature in Swedological writings that is the topic of this essay: the theme of *peaceable Sweden*.

Readers of Swedological writings from the 1930s through the 1970s would see the basic story repeated ad nauseam – and extended in time, decade after decade. Sweden had not been at war since 1814 – a record beating even Switzerland by some decades. The puzzlingly peaceful divorce with Norway in 1905 had been one of the events that had attracted global attention to Scandinavia before the 1930s. Since the early nineteenth century, Sweden had been neutral, more or less consistently applying the principle of non-alignment in peacetime, aiming at neutrality in times of war. But in contrast to Switzerland, her neutrality policies did not exclude an active role on the global scene. The two European nations with confusingly similar names soon took on roles as peace mediators. Sometimes they did so together, and often in a hands-on fashion. An example of this was their shared responsibilities as protectors of the demilitarized zone between the two Korean states after 1953 – a still ongoing assignment. But the Korean War had actually been one of Sweden's aberrations from strict neutrality. She had been a partisan in the camp officially fighting in the United Nations' name, although she never contributed armed troops (only a field hospital and similar forms of assistance). This was consistent with a well-established stance. A relatively strong and consistent support for the League of Nations in comparison with many countries during the interwar years (we will soon see some testimonies to this) was followed up with becoming one of the UN's most devoted founding members after 1945. Swedish soldiers in

blue berets on peacekeeping missions would soon be a common sight in conflict zones all over the globe. Dag Hammarskjöld's achievement as perhaps the strongest secretary general in the UN's history (1953–1961) would become a symbol of the organization's potential. After his dramatic death during the Congo Crisis in 1961, the Norwegian parliament's Nobel committee awarded him the peace prize posthumously – a rare exception. Sweden had already received three such prizes, and in 1982 Alva Myrdal would bring home another one for her work against the nuclear arms race – a mission linked to that of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), founded in 1966.

One factor would seriously complicate the general image of Sweden as the land of peace. Few Swedologists neglected to point it out and many tried to interpret it. A central phenomenon within the basic reason for paying attention to Sweden in the first place – her industrial success – was linked to her neutrality policy, namely her proportionally large production and export of military goods. Sweden is still today one of the world's largest arms exporters in relation to her population size. Particularly during the Cold War, the “Swedish hedgehog” claimed to secure its independence by making its own machine guns, cannons, bandwagons and fighter aircraft – needing an international market for the policy's economic buoyancy, and creating well-paid, high-tech industrial jobs as well as profits for capitalist investors at the same time. On the other hand, there were always speculations about how intimate Sweden's relationship with the Western bloc really was, since postwar visions of forming a “neutral pact” with her Nordic neighbours had crashed, and Norway and Denmark had joined NATO in 1949. Like almost every Swede, most Swedologists assumed the relationship to be closer behind the scenes than it was in public. But few would have expected it to have been as elaborate as it actually was shown to have been in investigations carried out after the Cold War – an era when Sweden would gradually become a more loyal partner within the NATO community than many of its formal members (Petersson, 2018). After the Cold War it also became a less complex option, trying to combine formal neutrality with membership in the European Union (Sweden joined in 1995). During the second half of the golden age of Swedology, security policy issues had been a major reason for Sweden to (mainly) keep its distance from the EU's formation process.

Sweden's security policies and place in the world were seldom the major issue in Swedological writings. But it was a fairly constant and visible feature within the genre. It was linked to other features in intimate but

complex ways. In creative manners, Swedologists used the theme as one of the bludgeons at hand, fighting the opposite camp in the continuous combat between Swedophiles and Swedoclasts. It will not be possible to carry out a complete survey of how it was done in this article. The ambition is rather to make a probe into the Swedological activities during the genre's golden era, making some observations that may be useful in future examinations of this curious and elusive historical phenomenon.

The middle way: champion of peace or Hitler's fifth column?

A land of negotiating problem solvers and labour peace

The first Swedological full-length book, attempting to turn the kingdom of the Bernadottes into *a case in point*, an example carrying a message to the world, was probably Agnes Rothery's *Sweden: The Land and its People*, published in New York in 1934. Soon in her portrait, Sweden's peaceful history came into focus. Rothery claimed that the country was both old and new, showing the wisdom of age and the vitality of youth:

Unravaged by wars for over a hundred years its men have had a chance to attain their full bodily stature; its laws have had a chance to become rational. The money which other nations have blown up in gunpowder has been used by this nation for education and the nourishing of art. Sweden is small and those who judge everything by size must use another criterion to appreciate her. If they will approach her humbly they will find much to learn and even more to enjoy within the confines of her lovely fringed and ravelled shores. (Rothery, 1934, 5)

In a chapter titled "Preparing for Peace", Rothery reflected more closely on Sweden's development from a warrior nation, a great power in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, to something quite different. Old garrison cities and naval bases like Kristianstad and Karlskrona had lost much of their significance:

... since, in 1925, [Sweden] prepared for peace by a sensible reduction and reorganization of both her army and navy and hopes ultimately to do away with all wars and preparation for them. To be sure, two thousand men are employed in the manufacture of munitions at

the Bofors plant on orders that are three years in advance. But most of these orders under the Geneva Traffic in Arms Act are for other nations. (Rothery, 1934, 150–151)

Thus, an ambiguity that would remain present in most takes on Swedish peaceableness was introduced from the outset, although the tension between non-belligerence and providing others with arms did not seem to bother Rothery. In the same context, she quoted one of the articles that had recently singled out Sweden as a positive example in political debates. Under the heading “Sweden: Where Capitalism is Controlled”, Marquis Childs had stated his first Swedological position in *Harper’s Monthly* in late 1933. He had also invoked the theme of peace in the opening of his argument:

The Scandinavian countries [Sweden, Norway and Denmark] have developed during the past hundred years more or less apart from the violent national and political passions of continental Europe. Aside from a healthy national rivalry, they have lived in peace and harmony. (Childs, 1933, 749)

Childs returned to the theme in the end, at the moment when this article contrasted most starkly against the argument that he would make two and a half years later. Supporting the “first” New Deal in 1933, Childs’s point actually came closer to conveying the message that many superficial latter-day readers, anachronistically, have read into his famous book. Here he actually claimed that Sweden was taking a middle road between the USA and the Soviet Union, pointing to the new Social Democratic cabinet’s ambitions to create a measure of discontinuity in Swedish history. Dealing with the emergency of depression – launching a “drastic unemployment programme” – they were “trying to restore purchasing power” in a way that Childs said resembled what J. M. Keynes had proposed (three years before the book that launched Keynesianism as such):

But the Social-Democrats have not forgotten their ultimate goal. It is possible that, if world capitalism now gains a breathing space, there may be completed in Sweden the gradual and orderly transition from one type of economic life to another. The very fact that such a transition may be possible is enormously heartening. (Childs, 1933, 758)

Any revolution instigated by the Social Democratic party, no matter how peaceful or gradual, would never be a part of Childs's argument in *Sweden: The Middle Way*. Continuity rather than transition from one system to another, and grass-roots action rather than central dirigisme as a source of gradual change, became themes when he finished his book in late 1935. With regard to the value of the cabinet's crisis policies in helping Sweden to a smoother way through the depression than most countries (a key element in his message), Childs was fairly sceptical. In a manner that would later become common wisdom among historians, he assumed that the general economic effects had been marginal, although he deemed the policies to be sound for other reasons. In any case, a theme about peaceful internal societal development had a strong presence between the lines throughout the book. The emphasized non-Utopian nature of Sweden's exemplariness was related to "the Swede's" lack of interest in lofty visions and ideological schemes, and focus on concrete problem solving. His rationality was not looking for ideal perfection, but for reasonable solutions through arguments gained in discussion and negotiation.

Childs would carry on stressing this theme. In 1938, he added a chapter in the second edition of *The Middle Way*, roughly integrating recent steps towards a more elaborated welfare state, such as population policy measures inspired by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, into his main message. But those matters were not his main interest after his success in 1936. The following years he worked on a sequel, which was published in the autumn of 1938. The title was *This is Democracy: Collective Bargaining in Scandinavia*. The matter at hand was, as he stated from the outset, "the status of labor and the problem of trade-union organization". The background was the new rules of the game established in the US, as a part of "the second New Deal". The Wagner Act of 1935 in particular had created a new landscape in industrial relations. Childs attempted to introduce Scandinavia in general, and Sweden very much in particular, as a source of inspiration. It was certainly not expected to be possible to imitate the example in the US, but it pointed towards hopeful possibilities. One of the main themes in the book was a sudden, dramatic historical shift. The Swedish labour market had for decades been probably the most conflict ridden in the world. Due to an unusually high level of organization among both parties, in the Capitalist camp as well as that of Labour, it had been characterized by recurring strikes and lockouts on a mass scale, making the economy of the nation bleed. As from 1936,

industrial relations were rapidly heading towards a state of constructive coexistence between the parties, even some form of cooperation.

But Childs had been too eager to bring the gospel of Scandinavian labour peace over the Atlantic, a fate he shared with a commission on industrial relations in Sweden within the Roosevelt administration (U.S. Department of Labor, 1938). A few weeks after his book was published, the Swedish federations of trade unions and employer organizations made it out of date. They did so by signing the epoch-making basic agreement that was the outcome of two years of negotiations at the Saltsjöbaden resort, near Stockholm. With the Saltsjöbaden peace treaty, “the Swedish Model” within the labour market was established in December 1938. The basic agreement would be completed with four follow-up agreements during the subsequent decade. The fundamental feature of this “model” was the rule that the parties should deal with their own problems through negotiation, without interference from the state. “The Swedish Model”, in this sense of the term, was all about limiting the role of political decisions and the public sector. (Social policies such as state-regulated minimum wages would be a non-issue in Sweden, and remain so today. State authorities would soon play mainly a *service role* in this context, e.g. meeting the private sector parties’ joint interests of creating “mobility” within the labour market of the 1950s and 60s. During those decades’ avalanche of urbanization, the Labour Market Board (AMS) would lead concerted efforts together with shrinking municipalities in the countryside, and expanding municipalities in the cities, in order to deal with the social challenges of deracination and resettlement. Interventionist labour market legislation initiated by the trade unions in the mid-1970s – prescribing forms of co-determination and regulating aspects of hiring and firing – would in fact terminate the labour market model in its classic Saltsjöbaden sense.) Childs had been too keen to share his experience as an observer of the formation of *the Saltsjöbaden spirit* of “common understanding” (*samförstånd*). But American readers would soon get rich opportunities to study the contents of the Saltsjöbaden agreement. A translation of the peace treaty’s whole text was published for the 1939 New York World’s Fair, in a book by Sigfrid Hansson, director of the state’s Social Board, the prime minister’s brother and for decades a leading ideologist of the trade union movement (Hansson, 1939). Two scholarly studies went into great depths with the marvels of the new order in 1941 and 1942: Paul H. Norgren’s *The Swedish Collective Bargaining System* and James J. Robbins’s *The Government of Labor Relations in Sweden*.

The message in Childs's forgotten book could not have been affirmed more strongly. The phenomenon of labour peace would remain a cornerstone in Swedological writings for decades to come. Few contributions failed to mention it. Two reasons for this are obvious. Firstly, this was something that was unquestionably *unique*, even sensational, in Swedish society. With member rates soon approaching a hundred per cent among blue-collar workers, the trade unions appeared to work in harmony with a mirror-image set of organizations on the opposite side. Secondly, the spirit of common understanding in industrial relations was intimately linked to the marvel that attracted foreign attention to the Swedish case in the first place: her industrial Cinderella story. From 1938 to 1976 Sweden's path from rags to riches bore testimony to two facts that Swedologists were forced to accept and challenged to interpret: economic progress was clearly compatible with high levels of trade union and employer organization, and was also compatible with elaborate and centralized forms of collective bargaining. In David Jenkins's earlier mentioned book *Sweden and the Price of Progress* from 1968, the chapter on "The Great Labor Peace Apparatus" was a cornerstone. The phenomenon had not become less remarkable over the years. Jenkins described the chummy relations between the leaders of the trade unions and the employer organizations as "the business world's counterpart to the bearded lady or the three-headed calf". He talked about "the spirit of Saltsjöbaden" as something bafflingly genuine: "[A]n effort by a suspicious investigator to uncover the truth beneath the surface amiability and mutual respect is apt to come upon a solid core of amiability and mutual respect" (Jenkins, 1968, 133).

Wartime interpretations: a land of hope or treason?

In the final years before the outbreak of World War II, a whole set of Swedophile books were published on both sides of the Atlantic. But it would not be until the dramatic spring of 1940 that the first volume in the genre with a strict focus on peace and international relations was available. Its author, Alma Luise Olson, can be said to have been the first contributor to the genre of Swedology, as she had written the main piece in the *National Geographic's* theme issue in 1928 (Olson, 1928). Due to her family background and language skills, her focus was Swedish. But she tried hard to make *Scandinavia: The Background for Neutrality* a book in which the Nordic countries – including Finland and Iceland – were treated as equals. They were *together* forming the phenomenon she aimed to draw attention to. Olson had obviously been working on the

manuscript for years. But the conditions for making the book's argument had shifted dramatically since the bulk of the text had been written before the outbreak of the war. The final text appears to have been delivered during the weeks immediately after the end of the Winter War, in which Finland had successfully defended her independence against the Soviet Union (despite formally losing the war), and in the weeks before the occupation of Denmark and Norway by German troops, on April 9. A supplement was added somewhat later, immediately before printing, in which the story was continued beyond April 9.

The main argument, phrased before Sweden became the only country to stay out of the war, was basically this. Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden had together set an example for the world. In the recent phase of history, they had shown a practical and constructive path to genuine and stable peace. Olson's point was that the Nordic countries – not long ago a field of recurring wars among the heirs of the fierce Vikings – had begun to materialize a new kind of union. In a way, it was a more constructive version of the Kalmar Union of the late medieval era. What made this community so attractive was that the sources of peace came from beneath, growing upwards. Formal deals and arrangements top-down played a marginal role. Together the countries had created a kind of pact, turning their corner of a militarized world into a peaceable oasis. Together they were defending the ideals of neutrality and peace, together doing everything they could do to prop up the all-too-weak League of Nations. Summing up the theme of "A United North" in her introduction, Olson turned to Finland for a fitting metaphor. Under the heading "Kantele" she admitted that the "New North" would be "treated lightly" in an era of diplomacy shaped by great powers "arming to teeth and testing their cannons and bombing planes to give more point to their assurances that they are steering the international ship of state into the safe harbor of peace". The Nordic example could be dismissed as a "primitive" contribution to statesmanship. But it called to mind the five-stringed instrument Kantele, usually tuned in minor, which in the Kalevala legends were invented by the gentle Väinämöinen, "who believed that harmony and not brute force rules the world" (Olson, 1940, 44).

Olson thus portrayed each of the Nordic countries quite generally, in order to understand what had made the model case of the peaceable North possible. The phenomenon was mainly seen as a matter of culture and attitudes, growing out of peculiar patterns of societal development.

In a chapter named “A Strong State”, Olson started out with the Swedish case. In a passage written with the Finnish Winter War as a backdrop, she discussed the fact that neutrality was still “the slogan”. Olson referred to the Scandinavian representatives’ plea to the League of Nations in December 1939 for help for Finland as being consistent with two decades of work for war prevention, disarmament, arbitration and conciliation, striving to avoid turning the League into an instrument for punishing members. This led to a vindication of the Swedish position:

Today Sweden, together with the rest of the North, would be the first to cooperate in any constructive plan for union in Europe that does not stress collective defense but aims at law and justice. Bounded by the many isms east and south and west – all reducing themselves plainly to the one idea of imperialism – the Swedish State, a strong State, has every moral and humane right to refuse to serve as the battlefield for any clashing ideologies or for any alien armed forces whatever. (Olson, 1940, 115–116)

Having said this, Olson was eager to stress the Swedish support for Finland’s cause, in the form of both aid and sympathy with her “courageous stand” against the Soviet pretence of “helping to set up a people’s government”, disguising crass strategic military goals. Olson actually failed to point out that Sweden’s stance in this case was her formally most clear-cut aberration from strict neutrality policies (and remains so), as she declared herself to be a non-belligerent party in the war, not a neutral one. Sweden did not send armed troops. But her aid and semi-official mobilization of volunteer soldiers were clear acts of partisanship. This may not have fitted Olson’s argument, as she carried on with an oblique reference to the recent state of peace within the Swedish labour market: “Swedish capital and labor are combined in loyal support of the ideals of free government, freedom of speech and democracy in the whole of the North, for these traditions of the centuries are now threatened by the totalitarian aggressors” (Olson, 1940, 115–116).

Anticipating many Swedophile arguments over the following decades, Olson indicated that the Swedes were choosing neutrality, not in order to avoid responsibility, but on the contrary as a way to *take* responsibility. In her view, Sweden was the backbone of a Scandinavian zone of neutrality, with five nations working together to twist the globe in the direction of peace founded on justice and freedom for all – in particular for small

nations in a world of bullies. In the postscript that took the story beyond April 9 – “Wherein the Background for Neutrality becomes a Target in Flank Warfare” – Olson described the Swedes’ new situation in a way that may be read as a defence against anticipated criticisms: “A loyal Sweden that pleads for Northern peace and freedom and neutrality, as ideals to be recaptured, has not ignored the tragedy that has befallen Denmark and Norway”. The book ended by stating that “the story of Scandinavia and the unconquerable spirit of the North, though temporarily muted, is not ended. Only while the battles rage, the voices pleading for peace are silenced” (Olson, 1940, 337–338).

Sweden’s way to navigate the stormy waters of World War II *did* meet criticism. The first full volume with a Swedoclastic intent was actually published in 1943. Its whole message was to debunk images created by Swedophiles, in order to warn the allied countries – in particular the American opinion – not to trust Sweden as a truly neutral country, or to trust the Swedes in any respect at all. The sarcastic title was *Stalwart Sweden*. The author was a left-wing German refugee named Joachim Joesten. He was married to a Swedish woman and had spent some years in Sweden before going to the USA. He used his experience, contacts and frame of reference from his time in Sweden to support the many public voices of suspicion that were actually heard in America. He offered a more elaborate argument. Laying bare *the logic of debunkery* that is still forming most Swedological writings, the book’s main strategy was to smash images established by Swedophiles. The theme was explicit from the outset. Joesten warned of any illusions about Finland being anything else than an enemy. Finland was not an exception, fighting its “private war”, as she now fought against the Soviets and the British in alliance with Nazi Germany:

The people who continue blandly to credit this dangerous nonsense usually are also the staunchest [sic] believers in the Swedish myth. This myth has sprung from various sources. Its roots reach back to the early thirties, when roving reporters and “social tourists” discovered Scandinavia, which had been, to centuries, almost ignored by the world. The foreign visitors, searching the globe for a place where people lived peacefully and prosperously in an atmosphere of social progress and international co-operation, found Scandinavia, and, in particular, Sweden, came very close to their dreams. They were enchanted by what they saw and heard, and they eagerly rushed

their findings into print. That was the era of “Sweden: The Middle Way”, and similar eulogies. Overnight a little known and neglected country rose to the rank of a world sensation. Here, between the latitudes 55° and 69° North, was Utopia. The glowing picture which the enthusiastic Utopia-seekers drew of Sweden was, on the whole, justified, though many of the books were written in a spirit of uncritical admiration for everything Swedish. As the years went by, however, the picture almost imperceptibly changed: the light lost much of its luster, the shade expanded and grew more opaque. But the Middle-Way enthusiasts never even noticed the transformation. The lengthening shadow that fell over the Swedish picture was Hitler’s. The tourists and the fiction writers did not notice it, but the statesmen and political observers did – or at least some of them did. They began to wonder how Utopia would stand up in the great test to come. When the Swedes realized that their prestige in the world was getting a little tarnished, they launched a methodical and, on the whole, effective propaganda drive to keep the picture of the old Sweden alive in foreign minds. Thus what originally had been the truth about Sweden gradually became the Swedish myth. (Joesten, 1943, 2–3)

It is notable here that Joesten, who later during the war came forward with his sympathies for the Soviet Union, was explicitly *not* inimical to the *internal* workings of Swedish society. He fought against the remaining trust in Sweden as an actor in the international arena. But Joesten reinforced his argument by drawing attention to the activities of the American-Swedish News Exchange (ASNE), which had opened its office in Manhattan in 1922, with a corresponding office in Stockholm. These offices were run by a foundation that counted many of the major figures of official Sweden among its founders, ranging from the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Nathan Söderblom, to the Social Democrats’ party leader and first prime minister Hjalmar Branting (both of them soon Nobel Peace Prize laureates). The Swedish state was one of the financial benefactors. But just as important was the economic support from Swedish industry and trade interests. They saw a business investment in cultivating positive images of Sweden abroad, in particular in the USA. On a regular basis, the ASNE supported journalists writing about Sweden, supplying them with selected photos and pieces of information. Many books on Sweden, including Childs’s *The Middle Way*, were supported in a similar way (Kastrup, 1985).

Joesten described the ASNE as being controlled by Swedish authorities, and thus uncompromisingly loyal to the state. But, contrasting with Olson's way of alluding to the harmony between capital and labour in Sweden, he also stressed the extent to which it was financed by capitalist interests, "a representative cross section of Swedish big business". Joesten listed them in detail: Axel Axelson Johnson, SKF, Svenska Amerikalinjen, AB Bofors Nobelkrut, SCA, Electrolux, Broström-koncernen, AB Separator, LM Ericsson, AB de Laval's Ångturbin, Sandvikens Jernverk, AB Ljungströms Ångturbin, Elektriska Svetsnings AB, and also Kooperativa Förbundet – the consumer co-op organization that had been the crown jewel of Swedish society in Childs's *The Middle Way*. Joesten also claimed that the three wealthiest and most influential of these businesses were all controlled by Axel Wenner-Gren, who had been blacklisted in the USA and Great Britain "as an individual doing business with the Axis". The core of Sweden's role as Nazi Germany's fifth column was obviously crass economic interests. According to Joesten, the picture of Sweden cultivated by the ASNE was completely misleading:

That a small country like Sweden should do its best to build up prestige in the eyes of a determining power like America is understandable and justified; but not to the point where miscalculations may result with possibly catastrophic consequences. I am keenly aware of all that is good or even excellent in Sweden. If, perhaps, I dwell in greater detail on the shade of the picture than on its light, it is because the ASNE and sympathetic writers already are doing all they can to bring out the rosy colors. If this had not been done to excess, there would be no need at all to present the case against Sweden. Nor would this be necessary if we were still at peace. In times of war it is sound policy to look at both sides of the medal, even at the cost of destroying a dear and hallowed illusion. I am also aware that in doing this I lay myself open to the charge of vindictiveness, because of my personal experiences in Sweden, which have not always been of a pleasant nature. (Joesten, 1943, 6–7)

Joesten never said what his unpleasant experiences were. But he promised to deliver facts in the case against Sweden. Through over 200 pages he acted as the devil's advocate against Sweden's alleged sainthood. Most things that would later be regularly mentioned in darker domestic images

of Sweden's record from the war were discussed. Joesten certainly included the obvious and drastic deviations from a strict neutrality policy in compliance with Germany, such as the traffic with permittents (unarmed soldiers) from Norway between 1940 and 1943, and the transit of a complete armed division, Engelbrecht, in sealed railway carriages from Norway to Finland in the summer of 1941. Joesten also discussed the censorship of newspapers, having printed anti-Nazi material or criticism of the Swedish concessions, and the suppression of entertainer Karl-Gerhard's mockery from the cabaret stage of the Germans and their influence in Sweden. The widespread Nazi sympathies within the Swedish society were stressed. They could be traced even to the ranks of the war coalition cabinet (which included all parties except the Communists). Joesten's final message retained a glimpse of hope, though. But against the backdrop of what had been said on the previous pages, it was tiny:

Sweden is no poor, harmless lamb at the mercy of the Nazi wolf. She is no more in an inescapable vise than Germany herself is in now. Sweden, I hope to have shown in this book, is a powerful, if small, nation. In the past she has pursued a coolly selfish and even callous policy. In April 1940 and in June 1941 she let two great opportunities go by for tipping the balance in favor of a better world. A third, and last, such opportunity is in the offing. May Sweden see the light.
(Joesten, 1943, 205)

A model for the post-war world?

Not many years would pass before the mill of positive images of Sweden was running again. As before the war, this happened with eager assistance from the ASNE. In 1949 probably the most enthusiastic portrait ever was published, Hudson Strode's *Sweden: A Model for a World*. This volume was written during a trip on which the author was accompanied by the ASNE's new director, Allan Kastrup, who happened to be home for a summer holiday. It was dedicated to the former director, Naboth Hedin – a major villain from Joesten's book. The quality of Strode's depiction was disputed, even within the ASNE circle. The co-worker in Stockholm who had been Marquis Childs's main helping hand in the mid-1930s, Nils Horney, wrote a somewhat acerbic review. In particular, he pointed to Strode's tendency to actually *claim* that Sweden was a kind of materialized Utopia, where everything was well ordered, beautiful and nice

(Horney, 1949). Such claims were in fact rarely made by Swedophiles during the golden era of Swedology – if ever, after Childs’s polemic against it in 1936 – although most Swedoclasts, like Joesten, tended to postulate that their adversaries did so all the time.

In the same year, another American book was published with keen assistance from the ASNE and Nils Horney. The author, David Hinshaw, was a pacifist with a Quaker background. The title conveyed the main message, *Sweden: Champion of Peace*. This was the first – maybe the only – whole book on the case of Sweden specifically as a moral lesson for *world affairs*. In 1949 Olson’s vision was dead: the Nordic defence pact that Sweden had striven for after the war had proved to be impossible. Denmark, Norway and Iceland became NATO members. Finland remained neutral, but in a subdued relationship with the Soviet Union in exchange for her liberty to remain a Western democracy with a capitalist economy. Sweden was starting her career as the sole player in her own game of non-isolationist neutrality, soon tending towards “active neutrality”. Hinshaw’s original argument may have been very similar to Olson’s. More than most Swedologists, he started out talking about Scandinavia in general. The Scandinavian example was basically said to illustrate something that had been claimed by left-wing pacifists for decades, namely that *social justice – development* in the sense of solving social problems and creating real individual life opportunities for all – was a precondition for long-term and stable peace, if not eternal peace. People with an increasing rate of problems solved tended to be gradually more and more peaceable:

One Scandinavian contribution [to mankind], potentially by far the most important of all their contributions, is their creation of a formula for world peace. Its potency is overlooked because it rests on such a simple truth: world peace can be built on a foundation of domestic tranquility – that is, peaceful relations within a nation. This is the magic ingredient with which lasting peaceful international relations can be created. I advance no claim that the Scandinavian peoples set out to create an international peace formula, if their discovery can be called that. Nor do they hold that they have discovered one. On the contrary they insist, and the record supports their point, that they have centered their efforts on treating the individual citizen with the justice, integrity, tolerance, and consideration that they say is his rightful due. (Hinshaw, 1949, 3)

Hinshaw suggested that the Scandinavians had made successful efforts to subdue a “combative spirit” inherited from their Viking forbears. This training had made them less likely to get angry at anyone. He carried on, stressing that the Scandinavian example was about much more than loyally supporting the United Nations:

When a man is not angry at anyone he does not seek a fight. If he does not seek a fight, he is less likely to get into one, either home or abroad. Thus their peace-formula is a by-product of a way of life; just as sainthood is achieved by being rather than in striving to be. This indirect Scandinavian approach to world peace, which starts with the individual and ends with the state, rests on the opposite pole of the League of Nations or the United Nations approach, which started with the whole world in their design to reach the individual man. Which is the better or more practical method is not a point of discussion here. The world method was mentioned to bring out, by contrast, the nature and effectiveness of the Scandinavian method. If the world method will work, it might become universally effective in a much shorter time than could the Scandinavian one. But the Scandinavian method is more durable because its strength comes from individual conviction rather than from complicated organizational procedures. Related to domestic tranquility as an aid to peaceful living is the need for man to close the yawning and threatening gap that separates his scientific and engineering progress and his spiritual and social development. This the Scandinavian peoples have been rather successful in doing. (Hinshaw, 1949, 3–4)

Through almost 300 pages, Hinshaw told his readers about the ways in which Swedish society and the Swedish experience conveyed such an indirect message to the world. Among other things, he delivered a take on Sweden’s role during World War II that may be read as a belated polemic against Joesten’s alleged refutation of the idealizations of “the Middle-Way enthusiasts”, applying *the logic of debunkery* from the Swedophile angle. Naturally there was a chapter on “Swedish Labor and Capital”, stressing the theme of industrial peace. But before Hinshaw went into details, he made clear what the virtues of international relevance, embodied by the Swedish nation, really were:

To the doubting-Thomas reader who holds that because of her geographical position and her smallness, little Sweden’s record is of

no consequence peacewise, I ask only that he read the book before he passes final judgment on this point. I make this request because I believe the Swedish peace story that I have sensed and tried to interpret, which rests on her people's ardent desire to solve problems without bitterness, will convince him that neither the geographical position nor the physical size of a country has any important relationship either to the extent of a people's wisdom or to the high value they place on certain neglected virtues such as patience, perseverance, caution, integrity, and cooperative action. (Hinshaw, 1949, 7)

It was possible to argue in this manner concerning Sweden even before she really had developed her peculiar role in the Cold War era. Someone who believed Hinshaw's message about "Tranquility at Home – Peace Abroad" would hardly hesitate to ask the Swedes to negotiate peace or to guard peace agreements throughout the world. The era of Hammarskjöld and Swedish blue berets seems to have been well prepared in terms of arguments and expectations.

Virtues and vices of "active neutrality" in the Vietnam War era

The land of future: heaven and hell

Nevertheless, the 1950s would witness a wave of Swedoclastic counter-mobilization. As general enthusiasm about Sweden as an exemplar mainly blossomed among left-leaning Liberals in the USA, Labourites in the UK, Socialists in France and Social Democrats in West Germany (rebranding themselves after the Swedish sister party's model with the Godesberg programme of 1959), much of the effort to turn the Swedish case into a deterrent would be made by their conservative adversaries. This tendency was gradually reinforced, year after year, since the Social Democrats kept on forming the cabinets in Sweden, imparting the impression that they were thus also forming Swedish society after their own will and blueprint. (This naïve illusion would soon also dominate Swedish historiography.) But the patterns of Swedology were complex. Forces to the left would soon also show interest in debunking what appeared to be a peaceful, non-revolutionary, non-Marxist, alternative path to socialism. For example, the leading British Labour Party ideologist Anthony Crosland's pleads for trust in the Swedish example in *The Future*

of *Socialism* in 1956 would become one of the first targets of the *New Left Review*, featuring an ambitious attack on “Mr. Crosland’s Dreamland” by the young Marxist Perry Anderson in 1961. In any case, Sweden became *the* symbol of the far-reaching welfare state. Most Swedoclasts warned that the Swedish case featured too much socialism, while quite a few on the contrary saw too little of it – if any at all. In the era of the Cold War, Sweden attained an ambiguous position in terms of putative socialism. Her security policies (including arms exports) and peculiar form of neutrality were seldom ignored in interpretations of this.

The predominant strategy in Swedoclastic arguments was to raise the question of whether the Swedes really were happy in their supposed paradise – stating that they actually were not. Seeking comfort, Swedes typically drank heavily and indulged in unbridled sex – if they did not kill themselves. Sex, alcohol, drugs and suicide were soon parts of a widespread national stereotype. The theme of sex got a breakthrough in 1955, when an article on “Swedish sin” in *Time* magazine responded creatively to the introduction of mandatory sexual education in Swedish schools (Hale, 2003). Swedophile replies were often ambivalent, both absolving Swedes from accusations of promiscuousness and claiming their fairly relaxed attitudes to be sound. A less complex target was arguments about high suicide rates, although the strategies to debunk those as a sign of unhappiness shifted. In 1960, President Eisenhower used the established stereotype of sex, alcohol and suicide in a “fairly friendly European country” to get back at one of his most influential critics, Marquis Childs (Östlund, 2014, 181–184). That an ultra-modern Swedish mentality was cold, callous and streamlined – a negative expression of technological progress – became a related theme in a host of analyses of the Swedish psyche. One example is the British philosopher Kathleen Nott’s *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place: A Private View of Sweden* from 1961, written from a strongly modernist-rationalistic point of view, that could have been expected to predispose to sympathetic attitudes. A somewhat similar view, then stated from a far-left position, was offered in Susan Sontag’s “Letter from Sweden”, published in 1969 in the major counter-culture magazine *Ramparts*.

Opening his aforementioned book from 1968 by taking stock of claims made about Sweden during the 1950s and 60s, David Jenkins complained about the “silliness that permeates some of the Swedological writing” (Jenkins, 1968, 17). New takes were published all the time. It is unclear whether Jenkins’s survey included Enrico Altavilla’s book *Svezia:*

Inferno e paradiso, published in Italy in 1967 – and in Franco’s Spain in 1969, in a translation that would remain in print well into the 1980s. This book immediately inspired a Mondo film – the “shockumentary” genre launched in Italy in the 1960s. Using the same title as Altavilla’s book in Italian, *Sweden – Heaven and Hell* gained some global success in 1968 and 1969. Director Luigi Scattini exploited the commercial potential of Swedoclasm, in particular the theme of Swedish sin. The basic idea was probably to sell soft porn (by Italian measures of the 1960s), legitimizing naked breasts by means of indignation. But Scattini’s film also deployed a whole arsenal of claims made to Sweden’s disadvantage in Swedological writings, twisting them some extra turns. Sweden was an affluent high-tech nightmare. Old people died alone, abandoned by their families. The police terrorized car drivers with alcohol tests while ignoring real criminality. Heavy drugs permeated society. Drunkards spread shoe polish on bread in order to extract alcohol. Gang rapes turned young women into outrageously active lesbians as adults. Beautiful blond girls preferred black men to the “Latin lover” (in a scene clearly addressed to Italians considering going to Sweden as guest workers). People killed themselves en masse. The Swedes were certainly not happy, although the sexual part of their compensations was ambiguous. The film also made quite an affair of Sweden’s peaceable image and neutral status. Staying out of every war, the Swedes had been able to use their stunning resources and technological skills to prepare for a nuclear war. They had built a whole world of comfortable air-raid shelters deep down under the granite. The vision of the future at the end of the film was, thus, that the only survivors of the coming nuclear apocalypse would be the Swedes. Reconnecting to the theme of sex (naked girls on islet rocks in the Stockholm archipelago), the Swedes were expected to repopulate and take over the world, rapidly. Sweden was turned into *il paese del futuro* in the most literal way imaginable.

Global pseudo-conscience as a safety valve in Dystopia

Sweden as a crystal ball, revealing the future, was also the basic approach, but in a far more serious way, in the most elaborate anathema of the post-war Swedological literature (Östlund, 2007). In 1971, the British journalist Roland Huntford, a conservative Catholic with a background in South Africa, published *The New Totalitarians*. Its success would almost rival that of Childs’s *The Middle Way*. Before a slightly revised new edition reached American and British readers in 1975, it had been published

in German as *Wohlfahrtsdiktatur: Das schwedische Modell*, in French as *Le nouveau totalitarisme*, in Norwegian as *Formynderstaten* and in Danish as *Fagre ny Sverige: Demokrati eller Demokratur?* The contents were sensational enough to render a translation (although an extremely free one) in Swedish as well, titled *Blinda Sverige* – “Blind Sweden”. An exception in its genre, it thus also reached the only audience for which it was *not* written, the Swedish one. The argument of *The New Totalitarians* was fairly sophisticated, applying a peculiar logic of its own. Even negative Swedish reviewers admitted that kernels of truth shone through. Around them, Huntford had spun a remarkably dark portrait. In stark contrast to Swedoclast pioneer Joesten, Huntford ignored the existence of the genre he contributed to. He indicated the profoundly polemical nature of his analysis only indirectly. But the whole argument was built as an attempt to *debunk the Swedophiles’ debunkery of the Swedoclastic debunkeries of the Swedophiles’ purportedly Utopian images*, thereby revealing Sweden to be a true Dystopia.

Huntford’s overarching claim was simple, though. Whereas the Soviet Union and her satellites had roughly materialized the nightmare of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, characterized by brutal force and suppressed discontent, Sweden was something far worse. She was the real-world version of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. The problem with the Swedes was thus *not* that they were unhappy in their admired society. Quite the contrary. They were in truth *very* contented and nauseatingly proud of their society. The rulers in Huxley’s nightmare used all means available to make their subjects *love their servitude*. This was also the predicament for Sweden. In the Soviet bloc people hated their servitude. In Sweden they loved it. Sweden had taken the route to extreme technological modernity, and realized its totalitarian potentialities completely. The Swedish case made a future visible that would meet the rest of the world if it followed the same track. The main cause making extreme modernity possible was a bit paradoxical though. The Swedes were extremely *backwards* on the inside, according to Huntford. They had medieval minds. Their souls lacked the slightest vestige of individualism. They were true *collectivists* by nature. Sweden was not at all a *Western* country, in stark contrast to Norway and Denmark. Historically, Sweden was a part of the same Eastern world of pre-modern collectivism as Russia. This assumption was underlined by terminological choices. For example, Huntford called state *boards* like Socialstyrelsen and Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen “directorates”.

But collectivism by virtue of inborn easternness was insufficient to make modern Swedes love their servitude. They had also had to be mentally manipulated by their “rulers” since the 1930s. The Social Democrats were portrayed as the modern inheritors of the old Swedish autocratic state and its bureaucratic power machine (including the Lutheran church). Mind control was applied in the spirit of *Brave New World*, and the key term in the book was *social engineering*. The main means of manipulation were wealth and welfare, material abundance and social care doled out by state expertise. On that foundation, more advanced forms of mental manipulation were developed – through the educational system, through culture policies and through mass media. One feature of Orwell’s *Dystopia* was also applicable in the Swedish case, namely a form of *newspeak*, in which “security”, *trygghet*, was the cornerstone. According to this logic it was possible for Huntford to twist familiar Swedoclast themes in new ways. The problem with suicides was *not* that there were so many. It was that they were committed in *a certain way*, for certain reasons. Swedes killed themselves, taking a desperate escape for individualists in a world of mental conformity. The problem with teenage sex was *not* higher rates of premarital intercourse in Sweden than elsewhere (it was a global trend). It was that young Swedes had sex in *a certain way*, carrying out the will of the “rulers”. They enjoyed free, completely shameless, and thus mechanical and callous sex, *using it as a safety valve*. Hidden frustrations in a completely controlled existence were regulated in this way. This was mainly discussed in a chapter on “The Sexual Branch of Social Engineering”.

Much was taken for granted in Huntford’s implicit polemics. The readers were, for example, expected to know that Sweden was often assumed to be a paragon of true democracy. They were expected to know that her peaceable history and attempts to take responsibility in the world were respected and idealized by Swedophiles. Furthermore, readers were supposed to be familiar with Swedoclasts’ *ordinary* way of denouncing Sweden as an actor on the international scene. Huntford’s readers were supposed to have heard claims that Sweden shirked from her responsibilities through her neutrality policies, while taking a free ride, leaning on NATO for her security anyway. They were expected to have been exposed to the idea that Sweden was loyal to the Western democracies only on the surface, revealing the country’s true nature as a soft-socialist state in attacking Western powers as racists, colonialists or imperialists. In Huntford’s concerted argument, the theme of

“international Sweden” was discreet but ubiquitous. If nothing else, it was present through the many pointers to Sweden’s fundamental easternness and non-westernness. In Huntford’s argument, though, the *active* part of Swedish neutrality policies was turned into a *tool of internal mental control*. As such, it was treated as an immediate parallel to the supposed function of unbridled sex among young Swedes. Presumed Swedish isolationism through neutrality was not just a betrayal of her duties as a Western country – a matter of surprise and indignation. It was not at all a deviation from norms *applying* to her. On the contrary, it was a logical behaviour, motivated by internal reasons determined by the nature of Swedish society. Active neutrality was another safety valve, clearly revealing Sweden not to be a Western country at all, a worse case than the Soviet Union herself. This was *not* a matter of small vices, minor aberrations, but indications of immense and fundamental ones.

In the chapter on “Economic Security and Political Servitude”, Huntford discussed *trygghet* as the untranslatably emotional keyword in Swedish *newspeak* – indicating the kind of safety of a harbour in the storm, the security in the womb. First among the things *trygghet* was claimed to refer to at a societal level was its meaning in the context of international policies, not social welfare: “In the political sense, *trygghet* means neutrality, the avoidance of war and insulation from the troubles of the outside world” (Huntford, 1971, 169). Key to massive manipulation of Swedish minds was the task of erasing the national memory. Sweden’s “rulers” were creating a new breed of people by eliminating all sense of historical consciousness, i.e. beyond the Social Democratic Party’s supposed *Machtübernahme* in the early 1930s. In a chapter called “Education in the Service of Conditioning” Huntford told his readers that uniformity of opinion had still been achieved in the late 1950s by means of traditional nationalism, e.g. nostalgia for Sweden’s era as a great power. But this had changed rapidly:

A decade later, this had swung over to a guided internationalism, expressed as solidarity with the underdeveloped countries. It is an illustration of the powers held by the central authorities in directing what is to be taught. The Directorate of Schools decreed this particular ideological shift, and it was obediently enforced. Schoolchildren and school-leavers all over the country displayed the same homogeneity of opinion as they had always done, and it was at the bidding of the State. (Huntford, 1971, 217–218)

Huntford described how the Social Democrats had found cultivating interest in “underdeveloped countries” to be “politically profitable”, and how the fast implementation of this illustrated the extent to which the state bureaucracy was independent of parliamentary control, and thus a tool of the ruling party. He continued:

By the late 1960s, most teenagers (and younger voters) supported aid to the underdeveloped countries, as they had been taught at school. This makes an interesting comparison with England or America, where attitudes among corresponding groups are generally those of indifference with minority groups that are fiercely hostile or in favour. But the younger Swedes are uniformly and overwhelmingly in favour of overseas technical aid, with a degree of emotionalism that may surprise the outsider. This is closely related to neutrality. ‘Neutrality,’ says a professor at Uppsala University, ‘is like cutting off a piece of the personality, and to make up for it we have to find some ways of extending our feelings of responsibility – it’s an urge peculiar to Sweden. That explains the obsession with the underdeveloped countries. It is an approach to the world outside. By identifying ourselves with a unit larger than Sweden, we can satisfy a need for significance.’ (Huntford, 1971, 218–219)

A bit later this argument was linked to the larger theme of Sweden being anything but just another Western country:

By and large, the educated older Swedes passively regard Western Europe as something alien, to which a small number may regretfully wish they belonged; younger people display an actively hostile attitude. This has largely been achieved by school instruction that the only European accomplishment has been to exploit other continents, so that the sins of the West have been visited on its virtues. By association, all Western European values have been made suspect, and what otherwise would have been awkward political heritage has been discredited. (Huntford, 1971, 230–231)

The main supporters of this “attack on the West” were mass media, in particular school radio and TV. But in Huntford’s view, the attack was just a part of a broader phenomenon, which also explained the Swedish aloofness towards the EEC, the precursor of the EU:

As mentioned before, it has been made respectable in the interests of international equity, and the atonement for European sins. But it has not widened Swedish horizons, it has merely shifted them. By diverting attention to other quarters of the globe, and inducing a specious glow of solidarity with faraway peoples, it has deepened Swedish isolationism by cutting links with Continental neighbours. Trade and economics have been no antidote. The expansion of Swedish trade with Western Europe, and the resultant commercial interdependence, have not been accompanied by an intellectual approach to the Continent; but rather the reverse. These developments have not gone unnoticed by the outside world. A French diplomat taunted a Swede in Brussels when Sweden made her half-hearted approach to the Common Market, by saying: 'You would make such good Asians or Africans. Why are you such bad Europeans?' (Huntford, 1971, 231)

The theme of "guided internationalism" as a safety valve was also used in a chapter called "Agitprop and the Perpetuation of the Regime". Here the obvious backdrop of the discussion, the Vietnam War, was more explicitly referred to. The agitprop of Swedish socialism was the adult education organization of the labour movement, the ABF. In Huntford's eyes, this was an anti-democratic tool for keeping the Social Democrats in power under a veil of formal democracy. For example, it had played its role in a strategy during the elections of 1968, and less "violently" in those of 1970, applying the old principle that "foreign affairs divert attention from domestic difficulties". But in the Swedish case, the problem was hardly a shortfall, and the diversion not war on foreign soil:

What the regime was faced with was not so much embarrassing bread-and-butter issues as a nameless frustration mostly (but not entirely) found among the youth. It was inherent in the restraints of Swedish society. When everything is too well organized, *ennui* is almost bound to appear. And there is in Sweden a taboo on the discussion of fundamental domestic issues, born out of a terrible fear of rocking the boat. Within Swedish society, there is no room for iconoclasm, indignation and the yearning for commitment. Unless suitably guided, feelings of this kind could be exceedingly dangerous for the government. (Huntford, 1971, 151–152)

Huntford supported the argument with quotes from Prime Minister Olof Palme, speaking of people's "right to be dissatisfied", and how fighting against sources of dissatisfaction created unity. Attacking the "idea of the death of ideologies" Palme had, in both the 1968 and 1970 election campaigns, celebrated the idealism of youth, who were indignantly watching "the horrors of the modern world" on TV and caring about "what is going on in Africa and Indochina". Palme concentrated on "other people's iniquities" in order to deflect unrest at home, according to Huntford. This train of thought was immediately linked to another of Huntford's leitmotifs. In his view, Sweden was ruled by the most truly Marxist party in the world, something that was not contradicted by the country's formally privately owned, capitalist industry. In a spirit of obsession with efficiency, private business was controlled by an elaborate web of *corporatist* strings, of which the Saltsjöbaden order of labour peace was only the foremost set. Business leaders were no rebels in the Social Democrats' Sweden. Huntford quoted a director of Bofors, the arms industry company, who in spite of his pro-American stance and lack of left-wing sympathies thanked God for the "Anti-American and Vietnam protest": without this "outlet", keeping "the heat off us", anything could have happened. This concerted attitude among Swedish leaders explained why Sweden, "despite neutrality, adopted a militant anti-American pose over Vietnam". Mass media supported this, as did the ABF, whose textbook for study circles on "More Equality for a Society with More Justice" presented America as the villain – not only in Vietnam, "but in all fields where a cathartic bogeyman was useful" (Huntford, 1971, 153).

In the concluding chapter, the theme of Sweden's relations with the world was drawn into the forefront more than anywhere else in *The New Totalitarians*. Huntford riveted his view of how dangerous the Swedish path to the future was by pointing to the Swede as both a natural and a conditioned shirker from all sense of *true* responsibility in the world. The Swedes were on the one hand hubris-stricken navel-gazers, emotionally chilled to freezing point, and high on the drug of *trygghet*. On the other hand, they were raging enemies of all the core values of the West, while excusing themselves by creating the appearance of fighting for something even more universal than that. According to Huntford, neutrality had "exactd a price":

It has produced a kind of moral castration, so that collectively the Swedes may feel an urge to act, but lack the power to do so. These

disabilities may be self-inflicted, but are none the less galling. They are compensated by a specialized use of conscience. (Huntford, 1971, 340)

But conscience in the “normal sense” of a spiritual guardian of personal actions was “scarcely acknowledged” in Sweden. Here it meant “conscience to the world”. As a collective, rather than individual concept, it always meant condemning others – France, Britain, the USA. The Swedes’ “conscience” was always “on the side of the angels”, always directed to “remote corners of the world, from which no immediate danger may be anticipated” – Algeria, Vietnam, Rhodesia. White America was attacked “for the Negroes”. Passion blurred the distinction between “righteous and self-righteous indignation”. With targets chosen by “rulers” and intellectuals, mobilizing a corporatist system of organizations linked to the state, unanimity was established in a way that turned conscience into an “exercise in mass emotion”. In this context Huntford made another exception from the basic idea that Sweden was a Huxleyan nightmare, whereas Soviet-style totalitarianism had only reached the Orwellian level:

Swedish conscience is, in fact, catharsis through ritual hate. It is akin to the ‘two minute hate’ of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed, during the Vietnam war, the popular Swedish dislike of President Johnson had something of the grotesque fury against Goldstein in Orwell’s novel. ‘I feel so *emancipated*,’ a Swedish housewife once said in a newspaper interview after a particularly violent demonstration before the American embassy in Stockholm. (Huntford, 1971, 341)

A self-righteous but fairly admirable world citizen nation

Probably not many Swedophiles attempted to debunk Huntford’s debunkery explicitly. After the international economic crisis had reached Sweden in earnest in 1976, Swedoclasts were suddenly able to lean on economic arguments, not needing to turn industrial progress into a part of the problem, in the way Huntford had to do. At the same time, for the same reason, the interest in Sweden began to dwindle. It would be fair to say that the last word of the Swedological genre’s golden era went to Marquis Childs, in *Sweden: The Middle Way on Trial* from 1980. “Sweden and the World” was the subject of the final chapter. Here, as in the rest of the book, Childs’s attitude to Sweden was basically positive. But he also stressed a set of reasons to take a distanced, problematizing attitude – especially as Sweden still might be suited to serve as a healthy

example in many *specific* respects. Childs emphasized the relative continuity in Swedish policies, generally, including foreign affairs, after the Social Democrats had finally been pushed into opposition in 1976. The book did not reveal the fact that Childs had been a fairly outspoken voice against the Vietnam War from his tribune as a prominent syndicated columnist. He established that Olof Palme's actions concerning Vietnam had meant a caesura in Sweden's role in the world. In Childs's view this revealed something about the country in general. There was more to it than just the solo actions of one individual:

The Second World War had convinced many Swedes that the major powers were ruthless, without scruples of any kind, driven simply by a desire for conquest, with the possible exception of America. Nowhere, not even in the fiercest antiwar centers in the United States, was feeling against the American action in Vietnam stronger than in Sweden. One reason was the presence of several hundred – the exact number was never established – American deserters and draft dodgers. But even without their participation, and apparently at times incitation, the protest in the form of repeated demonstrations would have occurred. Swedish newspapers and the Swedish state-owned television and radio gave the war thorough coverage. In the Swedish view, here was a great power, a superpower, using the most lethal of modern techniques, short of nuclear weapons, to subdue a small Asian country resisting the American invasion with comparatively little help from any source. (Childs, 1980, 139)

Childs stressed how TV images of the atrocities had fuelled the anger among those who felt the injustice. The issue was said to have united “every political faction from extreme left to right”. An anti-American sentiment was, for example, mirrored in the demonstration that met the new US ambassador to Stockholm, the African-American Jerome H. Holland (according to Childs in 1968, but it should be 1970), when he was called “House nigger”, and the even stronger protests that had met Henry Kissinger in 1976. (For deserters and the Holland case, see Scott, 2001; Burton, 2009.) Childs also quoted from the speech that Olof Palme delivered in 1968, shortly before he became party leader and Prime Minister, at a demonstration where he walked side by side with the North Vietnamese ambassador to Moscow, stirring up the first diplomatic crisis with the USA during the war. Childs noted that Palme's

criticism was phrased in a language that at that time had been heard on every university campus in the USA. Childs also described the second crisis, in Christmas 1972, when Palme, “comparing the bombing of Cambodia to the genocide practiced by the Nazis”, made President Nixon retract his Stockholm ambassador and exclude his Swedish counterpart in Washington from normal diplomatic exchange. But early in his review of events, Childs had stressed a Swedish ambivalence towards the USA. Memories of World War II were not the only reason:

It became a love-hate relationship, for what Swede could forget the great reservoir of Swedish Americans in the new country, many in positions of importance both in the private and public sectors, even as American bombs were falling on Hanoi. (Childs, 1980, 139)

No person embodied the Swedish ambivalence more clearly than Gunnar Myrdal. His career from the epoch-making study of the racial question, *An American Dilemma*, to his analysis of the economy of poverty in the three volumes of *Asian Drama* was sketched out in a positive manner. Myrdal did on the one hand identify strongly with American culture and academia, but on the other hand he was one of America’s most initiated critics, particularly concerning Vietnam. In matters of international responsibility, he represented a certain brand of Swedish self-confidence, even a kind of smugness, according to Childs. He quoted from Myrdal’s Nobel lecture, receiving the prize in economics in 1975: “The Equality Issue in World Development”. Myrdal had given his home country a “high remark”, in particular with regard to avoiding giving foreign aid “the justification of self-interest”. A “nationalistic motive” could never “with any credibility be presented to the Swedish people”, according to Myrdal (Childs, 1980, 148–149). A measure of ambivalence on Childs’s part was revealed when he established that Vietnam received by far the greatest amount of bilateral Swedish aid. But this aspect of Sweden’s international role was obviously what impressed Childs most – besides her staunch and multifaceted support for the UN. In his view, Sweden’s conscience was not about singing with the angels in order to release internal steam, as Huntford had claimed:

In its participation in international programs to improve the lot of people in Third World countries, Sweden has set a record few other nations can match. It has undertaken to keep its contribution

to the UN multinational organizations and to bilateral foreign aid at 1 percent of the country's gross national product. It is the only country that has attained this level. The United States in 1975 contributed [o].27 percent of GNP, Switzerland [o].19, Germany [o].40. The figure for the Netherlands was [o].75, for Norway [o].66. Even when, under the new coalition government, borrowing abroad became necessary to meet budgetary deficits, the goal of increasing foreign assistance by 25 percent a year was maintained. This meant that the total of foreign aid was roughly equivalent to the \$2 billion borrowed abroad in 1977. Sweden is one of the largest contributors to the United Nations Development Program and the United Nation [sic] International Children's Fund. Food aid, tied to various international food programs with Swedish contributions in kind, amounts to close to \$150 million in value. (Childs, 1980, 150)

A feature that also attracted Childs's sympathies was the Swedish stance towards the nuclear arms race. This was mainly embodied by Alva Myrdal – who would receive her Nobel Peace Prize two years later. Childs delineated her international career, as well as her and her husband Gunnar's links to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He referred to her book *The Game of Disarmament*, from 1976, quoting her concerning the paradox of a rational efficiency in the arms race alongside a lack of rational criticism of its lunacy. Childs also mentioned Alva Myrdal's part in abolishing the plans to make Swedish nuclear arms, which in the late 1950s and early 60s had been fairly advanced. This matter was in fact intimately related to a major theme in Childs's book, the intricacies of Swedish politics concerning *civil* nuclear energy. But the fact that Sweden was a relatively large producer of conventional weapons and military technology was a complicating factor in Childs's take on Sweden's international role, especially as it was an integrated part of her neutrality policy. Childs pointed to a paradox. He did so, preparing to talk about diplomatic interchanges instigated by Swedish trade with Saab fighter aeroplanes, which were partly dependent on American patents:

Much as it likes to stay outside the United States' quarrels with the Soviet Union, Sweden has more than once found itself caught in the middle. The supersonic plane, for example, was a remarkable achievement for a nation of 8,000,000. In a world bristling with armaments, Sweden with its high technology was not to be left out.

But in the context of Sweden's strict neutrality and the government's high-minded criticism of the military and foreign policy of other nations the creation of the supersonic fighter plane was bound to cause complications. This is part of the paradox of a people determined to preserve the values of the past when those values are being rapidly eroded away almost everywhere else. (Childs, 1980, 145)

But the balance tipped in Sweden's favour in Childs's judgment. At the beginning of the chapter on Sweden and the world he had indicated this by giving a new meaning to his old catchword, "the middle way":

In its relations with the rest of the world as much as in its internal affairs, Sweden has sought a middle way – neutrality in war, aid to those who need it in peacetime. Abroad as well as at home, it has been determined to live up to the standards set in arriving at a middle way, though preachments on foreign policy by a small power in the north of Europe have often sounded self-righteous. Much of its policy has been concentrated on the division between the industrialized West and the Third World, and with it have gone large sums of aid – large for a nation of 8,000,000 people – to try to raise standards in developing nations and particularly in agriculture. The cornerstone was neutrality, strict and unyielding. (Childs, 1980, 120)

These were remarkably generous words from a person who had spent decades as a belligerent enemy of conservative calls for *American* neutrality policies in the spirit of isolationism and anti-federal sentiment. As in Childs's take from 1936, peaceful Sweden was far from any Utopia. The reason for paying attention to her case was not a matter of bold visions. In contrast to Huntford's and other Swedoclasts' claims, Sweden was, in Childs's view, still a useful *case in point*, not least by virtue of showing what a responsible citizenship in the international community of nations *can* look like.

Pastoral landscapes for foreign battlefields

"The Swedish peace story", as Hinshaw called it in 1949, is a revealing strand in Swedological writings from the genre's golden era. It shows how recurring clusters of themes were used for curiously shifting

purposes. The topics of long-lasting peace, neutrality and Sweden's role in the world were present and intimately linked to a whole set of other themes in all modes of Swedophilia and Swedoclasm, regardless of what the motives were behind specific arguments concerning Sweden, or what the motives were for taking interest in the small kingdom on the northern fringe of Europe in the first place. Whether the Swedish mode of peaceableness was to be seen as a vice or a virtue, a deterrent or a model to follow, was never decided by any realities on Swedish soil. It was decided by the ends for which the Swedish case was brought out as an example, the ways in which this "case in point" was deployed as a weapon on battlefields beyond the Swedish borders. Two factors decided the possible ways in which the Swedish case was charged with meaning: (1) the topical issues within the debates going on in the non-Swedish contexts in which Swedologists intended to intervene, and (2) what had been claimed about Sweden in such contexts before, the imaginary landscapes the country's name could be expected to conjure up in the readers' minds. The genre was characterized by its fundamentally polemical nature. A *logic of debunkery* was practised by Swedophiles and Swedoclasts, trying to disclose each other's depictions as "the Swedish myth" (a term introduced in Joesten's attack on the "Middle-Way enthusiasts" in 1943). That logic did also form the statements of Swedologists who attempted to paint relatively nuanced pictures – really taking interest in Swedish realities as such, beyond their possible uses as bludgeons elsewhere.

In this way, perceptions of geopolitical matters and security issues in Northern Europe became linked to matters such as workplace relationships and sex habits. This was mainly due to the role Sweden attained as a "crystal ball" of industrial and cultural modernity, until her economic Cinderella story ended and she became just another modern economy among others as from circa 1976. Such perceptions were always related to interpretations of Scandinavia or the Nordic countries as a zone on the map. Often Sweden was treated as the most significant or consistent example of phenomena that were basically Scandinavian. But in many cases, pointing out differences between Sweden and her neighbours, contrasts behind superficial similarities, was a strategy to stress that her example was really unique, and thus an instructive "case in point". A measure of *schadenfreude* in the other Scandinavian countries in the wake of Huntford's anathema from 1971 illustrates that, as does a late crop of Swedoclastic writings by Nordic authors in the 1980s.

Images from the classic era of Swedology linger. It will be interesting to see in what ways old takes on the pastoral landscape of Swedish industrial modernity and its place in the world may be reactivated in our time, as Sweden's new role as a multicultural society with a tradition of generous immigration policies tends to bring her back into the spotlight as perhaps a unique case, even among her Nordic neighbours.

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The film *Sweden – Heaven and hell* (1968), directed by Luigi Scattini, is available on a DVD published in 2008 by Klubb Super 8.