

Correspondence

Sweden Inc.

To the Editors: I have read with great interest the article by R.H. Weber, "Sweden Inc., The Total Institution" (*Worldview*, March).

It is a reminder of how difficult it is to interpret any political situation. Weber confuses me. He argues against what he labels "corporatism" and sees as "fascism with a human face." But at the end I have no idea what his alternatives would be. He seems to have the traditional laissez-faire capitalism with its emphasis on the individual's rights and opportunities as his point of departure, but he borrows almost all his criticisms from Swedish Marxist-Leninists of various brands. By avoiding any discussion of alternatives and by identifying his own ideological/political position and by selecting sources and arguments he has been able to present a picture which is partly true but which most Swedes would reject for many reasons. And he has (possibly) furthered the arguments both of the extreme right and the extreme left....

It would be tempting to discuss the article paragraph by paragraph in order to rectify some of Weber's slanted interpretations and correct some wrong and misleading information, but that would require a lengthy analysis of Sweden. Let me mention, however, that the paragraph on the Church is totally incorrect. You become a church member by baptism (95 per cent are baptized), only church members pay Church tax in the proper sense (but all pay for civil register and cemeteries), and foreigners are encouraged, and even financially supported, when organizing their own religious communities.

Sweden has a long tradition of cooperation, negotiation, and peaceful settlement, and I would agree with Weber that there is a real "Big Brother danger" in Sweden. Political debate shows no real alternatives to the present system, and through agreement over the heads of people most prob-

lems are settled. There has been much trading between the Social Democrats and the opposition these last two years when the balance in Parliament happened to be 175 and 175. Some of us fear a future determined by technocratic and political pragmatism into which people are gradually bribed through social security and by the high standard of living.

But one must not forget that Sweden has a very old and deep-seated democratic tradition on all levels and that the people are highly educated and travel the world more than most people. Sweden is certainly provincial and self-centered in many ways, but compared to the American Midwest we seem to live in the midst of the world! The Swedes are politically alert and informed, but still there is lurking danger that they would opt for security and conformity rather than for upheaval and individualism if that was the choice. The talk about "the new totalitarian" must not be written off completely, but if there is anything to it the problems are shared with all developed countries conscious of the need for national as well as international justice.

There are limits to freedoms in every responsible society. In Sweden these limits are determined by the vast majority of people with access to more political and other information than almost any other people in the world. And most people are rather satisfied with the results of the political deals. It is also comparatively easy (for better or for worse) to create an opinion which leads to political decisions. The Vietnam movement was one example, and the concern for the environment another. In recent weeks a popular mass movement has stopped the expansion of the nuclear power plants until we know more about the negative side effects. In this sense Sweden is certainly more democratic than most other countries. The country is too small for the politicians to afford neglecting any sizable opinion, but this unfortunately also could mean that the population is small enough to be manipulated by the media.

Is this kind of society a model for the industrialized world or the Third World? What does the computeriza-

tion, the technocratic and very sophisticated processes of planning, the international economic interdependencies, the popular demand for social security, and the direct or indirect control of media mean to democracy in all our societies? Sweden may be ahead of many others and therefore worth looking at. It may also be ahead in this sense, that people have awakened to the risk and have actively involved themselves in throwing the lot of this rich country in with the exploited and oppressed ones.

Sweden Inc. is a more dynamic society than Weber thinks, with its problems no doubt, but precisely because of this a tremendous challenge for an experiment in mission to the world of tomorrow.

Jonas Jonson

*Lutheran World Federation
Geneva, Switzerland'*

To the Editors: Richard Weber's recent article on Sweden, "Sweden Inc.," is an unfair hatchet job devoid of any perspective. It is particularly uncalled for in a publication which purports to heal the wounds of an embittered world.

The world is looking for answers to rampant rancor and callousness, and while the Swedes may gild the lily in some of their public utterances, they do in their daily life what the rest of us talk about. Not the least of Sweden's accomplishments, in my view, is the attainment of the egalitarian goal of a mere 30 per cent gap between the highest and lowest paid worker. In a society with the highest standard of living in the industrialized world, this is no mean feat.

It would be tempting for the Swedes to retreat into their affluent shell, but instead they are in the forefront of every international effort to heal the world's wounds. The Swedes contribute more of their gross national product percentagewise than does any other industrial nation. Surely they deserve a footnote in your magazine for this worthy ambition. Weber implies that the Swedes are insufferably dull and controlled because of their social democratic government. They are, I object to say, a vital and literate

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pull—is a way of life. While Isaacs does a good job of describing the ideological shift of the ethnic Jew away from liberalism (but not to complete or conventional conservatism), he avoids other urban-related issues like Jewish poverty, treatment of the elderly, and the institutionalized anti-Semitism of bureaucratic agencies like the welfare or health departments of most big cities.

Despite this, *Jews and American Politics* is a clear and concise approach to a largely neglected subject. It is well written and entertaining. Isaacs updates *The Political Behavior of American Jews* by Lawrence Fuchs and avoids its statistical jargon. He extends and applies the perceptiveness of Charles Liebman's *The Ambivalent American Jew*. Above all, Isaacs goes a long way in breaking the barrier of fear he so aptly describes. The Jews, as other groups, can wash their dirty linen in public and come out of the ordeal with fresher linen.

Isaacs concludes that ethnic pride seems to be asserting itself over both shame and fear. Jews are exercising political power as Jews and for Jews. This augurs well for the future. As Jews continue to engage in a wide variety of political activities from anarchic violence to right-wing intransigence, à la Rabbi Korff, they become a less predictable group. They are less apt to be second-guessed, typed, or pigeonholed. And, in the American political arena, unpredictability means power.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Correspondence

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people whose press is filled with the hot clash of debate on not only their own domestic issues but a broad spectrum of world concerns. Doesn't this rate at least a phrase?

Modern Sweden has a world conscience and credibility which, coupled with its inner vitality, stands in stark contrast to the spiritual fatigue and cynicism that stalk the world. Too bad your writer so missed the boat. We would all welcome an honest look at Sweden, because its own citizens are the first to confess they are far from perfect.

Franklin Wallick

Editor
UAW Washington Report
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To the Editors: It was surprising to note that R.H. Weber, author of "Sweden Inc." is a lawyer. How can a lawyer be so naive as to expect readers to swallow the repeated insinuation couched in the primitive illogic: Fascists make their trains run on time. Swedes make their trains run on time. Therefore, Swedes are fascists.

Fascism does not live by order alone. Unless we are ready to accept the use of the word *fascism* as a meaningless shibboleth with the sole function of identifying its users as Communists, we should observe that for a system to be fascist it should include at least what Mussolini's slogan urged: *Crederre, combattere, obbedire*. Therefore, it is simply not true to say "the Swedes have perfected the essential elements of the economic strategies employed by the Fascists, etc." An essential element of fascist economy lacking in Sweden is fascism's encouragement of struggle and fighting with concomitant imperialism and militaristic mystique. A society which forbids its children to see cowboy movies out of concern lest they be exposed to violence can hardly be accused of fostering one of the essential elements of

fascism.

Weber's reference to "the duty of silence" (*tystnadsplikt*) sounds like the exposure of a sinister Mafioso institution essential to a totalitarian state. As one who has been bound not merely to the ordinary *tystnadsplikt* but to an absolute "duty of silence," I submit that there is more to Sweden and its laws than the one side Weber so ardently cartoons. During my training for the priesthood in the Church of Sweden, I saw what a big deal the Swedes made about the rights of the individual to privacy by their elaborate emphasis on the inviolability of the priests' duty to remain silent and the seriousness of the legal procedures that stem from the Draconian laws that long protected parishioners from the tongue of the priest. Swedes are aghast at American pastoral training procedures which allow bedside hospital conversations to seminarians to become case histories for general scrutiny.

Aside from the agitation within the Church of Sweden to separate from the state with no real assurance of being able to survive financially after separation, the Church of Sweden quite unintentionally provides further evidence that Sweden is not as monolithic as Weber maintains. The recent public snubs and expressions of disagreement with the Bishop of Stockholm by fellow bishops have shown that Swedes have healthy schismatic tendencies.

More evidence of behavior out of keeping with the thesis that "the entire Swedish nation aims to function as one corporation" is provided by none other than the Swedish Premier Olof Palme. Cabinet Minister Palme hardly acted as a cautious aspiring corporation manager when in 1968 he walked beside the North Vietnamese Moscow ambassador in an antiwar rally and delivered a long speech against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Nor did Prime Minister Palme seem to be unduly concerned over Volvo sales when he released a statement comparing the U.S. bombings of Christmas, 1972, to Nazi atrocities.

Weber is as eager as the *Reader's Digest* to spread the assumption that Swedish health programs ignore individual needs. I recall that when I was a student my Finnish wife chose to take

the option offered by the national health program and went as a so-called "private patient." At the University of Uppsala Hospital my wife's exercise of her option meant that there was no "impersonal conveyer belt treatment, interminable waiting for appointments, and the near impossibility of seeing the same doctor twice." My wife received the successful attention of one of the most renowned specialists in the world at a cost to me of a couple of dollars a day for her treatment and hospitalization. On other occasions I have had the opportunity to personally admire Swedish emergency room treatment. Americans may be amazed to hear that somewhere in the world there are *clean* emergency rooms.

Weber may be amazed to hear that K.F., which he accuses of total disregard for its employees, allows time off with pay for such things as medical and dental appointments and requires no other verification concerning these visits than the employee's word. Sedentary employees are encouraged to take exercise breaks that are supervised by gym instructors. Every school child receives a well-balanced lunch. "Good national health statistics" are obviously arrived at by counting healthy individuals who have received preventive medical attention as well as the "technically adequate attention" Weber sneers at. Weber's closing citation of a sharp increase in mental hospital admissions in recent years is not the clinching argument Weber presumes. It may indicate that Swedes' attitudes to mental illness and treatment have changed for the better instead of demonstrating a "human crushing process."

Joseph F. Anderson
Queens Village, N.Y.

To the Editors: R.H. Weber has a lot of interesting things to say about Sweden. I must admit that his facts about political and cultural life in my old home country are amazingly correct. At the same time, I know with my whole person, after reading the article, that something is very wrong with all the facts. The article is so badly slanted. The author has borrowed heavily from critical anti-government editorials in conservative newspapers in Sweden and presents that

one-sided picture as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I know it all very well; I was myself a politically active conservative party member in Sweden before I came here six years ago.

"Sweden is the world's most advanced example of the corporate state," says the author, and I think I agree with that. Given its size, history, climate, type of people, and natural resources I think it is a natural development for Sweden to have a corporatistic way of running the country. It is an interesting thought that the Swedish nation should function as "one corporation, with the government responsible for long-range financial planning, industry for day-to-day management, and the unions acting as personnel department." However, I think it is more accurate to talk about the Swedish nation in terms of a "family," not in terms of a "corporation." The country is simply too small to be a corporation. Of the nations of the world the U.S. is of corporation size, Sweden of family size.

It has also to do with how the Swedes identify themselves. Swedes used to talk about Sweden, more or less jokingly, as *folkhemmet*, "the home of the people." They identify themselves as a family, not always agreeing but having a taken-for-granted responsibility for each other. It was my American husband who made me aware of this family identification the first time. He was very perceptive. It surprises me that the term *folkhemmet*, this classical term in Swedish political-cultural debate for the last decades, is not even mentioned in the article....

The author does not have many positive things to say about Swedish society. Of course he mentions what every American writer remembers about Sweden: the high material standard of living. But as sure as Amen comes at the end of a prayer, there comes at the end of the article the triumphant revelation about what the Swedes have to pay for their high standard of living: mental illness, tranquilizer use, and suicide. As a Swedish physician well aware of the importance of mental health problems, I would smile at the charge if it were not both serious and incorrect. People do not usually commit suicide because they have too much in the way of material

goods, but more often because they have too little. Moreover, Sweden does not and never had the highest suicide rate in the world, even if President Eisenhower said so once and it has been repeated over and over again.

The author finds Sweden too much of an organized country, with too much stress on unity and solidarity and national performance and cooperation, and too much occupied with concerns of social security for everyone. And the conclusion of all that is that Sweden is, or is coming to be, a fascistic or nazistic state. And beware, America, of that danger! I do not find that charge accurate or interesting.

However, I do find it interesting that the author, as an American, writes about phenomena in Sweden which we here in the USA are in short supply of: *order, unity, nationalism, social security*. From my own experience I know what it means to work in a well-planned and organized medical care system in Sweden. The situation here, with underutilized private hospitals and overcrowded, understaffed city hospitals, handwritten hospital records, erratic quality of medical care, and so forth, make the working conditions for a doctor terribly frustrating, and the patient care ultimately suffers. With a little *order*, so much could be better.... With a little more *unity* we would realize that good education and housing belong to everyone. And would we make so much fuss about this bicentennial if we had a functioning *nationalism* which recognized the Indians as the first Americans, who were here long before 1776? With a little more concern about *social security* for everyone we should not allow the government to cut the funding for Food Stamp programs. We should with happy hearts pay a little more in taxes so our elderly could have a menu consisting of more than noodles and dogfood. Maybe the spiritual meaning of the whole story about Sweden was told long ago in the fable of the fox and the bear. A slightly adapted version here:

The fox looked upon Sweden and saw that there were plenty of grapes there: *order, unity, nationalism, security*. And he wanted all the grapes and tried very hard to get them, but he could not reach them. And the bear came along and

asked the fox if he wanted all those grapes. But the fox would not admit that he wanted all the grapes and could not reach them, so he said to the bear that the grapes were sour and that he did not want them. But to the Swedes the grapes were sweet, at least most of them, and they ate of the grapes with good appetite. And one of them wondered why the fox did not plant his own vineyard.

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R.H. Weber Responds:

Unlike Jonas Jonson, I do not believe that respect and concern for the individual's "freedom and dignity" are exclusive concomitants of laissez-faire capitalism. To label it as such has, by the way, been a favorite rhetorical device of corporatism's defenders for the past five decades, from Mussolini to B.F. Skinner.

Any "borrowing" done in my piece is clearly labeled as such. Credit is duly given to the British sociologists, Pahl and Winkler, who provided the basic analytical approach to contemporary corporatism in their discussions of current trends in Great Britain. It was my intention to provide a corrective to popular images of Sweden by applying their criteria to current developments in Sweden. I feel that it is beyond the scope of analytical journalism to propose alternatives, for Sweden or any other country.

And far from "borrowing almost all criticisms from Swedish Marxist-Leninists of various brands," I state quite clearly that the Swedish left has been remiss in failing to see their enemy as corporatism. But should some of my interpretations of specific facts coincide with those of a leftist, does this automatically render them invalid, as Jonson seems to imply?

There are two factual errors in Jonson's letter: (1) It is not at all necessary to be baptized in church to qualify for membership in the Swedish state church and therefore be obligated to pay the full ecclesiastical tax collected by the civil tax authorities for the exclusive use of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Every child born in Sweden is automatically registered as a church member unless the parents specify otherwise. The same is true of immi-

grants when they register for the census. One may, however, withdraw from membership by simple written declaration, but this will exempt one from merely a portion of the ecclesiastical tax. Every taxpayer must pay for the civil functions still performed by the state clergy. (2) The antinuclear power movement has not "stopped the expansion of nuclear power plants" in Sweden. On the contrary, the government has announced that Sweden, although already a net exporter of energy, will soon have the densest net of nuclear power plants in the world, even at the *reduced rate* of expansion to which it has agreed for the next five years only. This slowdown (not stop) is due at least as much to the present difficulty of borrowing large sums on the capital markets as it is to popular outrage.

Esselius-Peterson grants me that all my facts are right; she disagrees with some of the interpretations I place on them. Fine. Jonson says I borrow all my arguments from the left. Esselius-Peterson says I borrow all my arguments from the right. Could it be simply that the arguments in themselves are valid?

Esselius-Peterson's parable is nice but not pertinent. It is, however, a retort that pops up often in the Swedish press and information service "explanations" of foreign criticism of Sweden. The fact is that *I* live in this vineyard and Esselius-Peterson lives in New York City. *I* pay Swedish taxes and Dr. Esselius-Peterson no longer does. *I* now vote in Swedish elections; former Swedish resident Esselius-Peterson no longer does. Maybe she'd like to move back to the vineyard?

Turki's Palestinian State

To the Editors: The passionate "Portrait of a Palestinian State" by Fawaz Turki (*Worldview*, April) makes it clear why there is so much resistance to the establishment of a new state.

Nowhere does Mr. Turki condemn the inhuman acts of terrorism which have been perpetrated in the name of the Palestinian cause. Do years of frustration justify the killing of athletes at Munich or the machine gun-

ning of small children at close range? This kind of moral insensitivity which Turki shows makes anyone who expects to be a neighbor of his brothers think twice.

Then there is no clear indication that once the Palestinian state is set up it will not serve as a base for further outrageous acts against the Jews living in Israel—only this time they will be at the gates of Jerusalem and within arm's length of Tel Aviv.

People who are Israelis or their friends can hardly have any confidence in the type of people so emotionally described by Mr. Turki. If the Palestinians want to live in peace with their neighbors there will have to be some clear signs on their part that they are ready to foreswear terrorism; that they are ready to accept the reality of a Jewish state; and that they are ready to pursue peace. Mr. Turki's piece—though no doubt reflecting the present mood of his brothers—does not further his cause.

Seymour Siegel

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Fawaz Turki Responds:

Mr. Seymour Siegel's letter is a clear statement about the insensitivity and lack of insight that supporters of Israel-right-or-wrong seem to be afflicted with. They have come to look upon the continued suffering of others as a moral or political gain for themselves.

My article, "Portrait of a Palestinian State," was meant to be about what the title implied: a portrait of a state established by a people disenfranchised of their national rights and now seeking to transform their condition from a nation in exile to a state in part of their homeland, the West Bank and Gaza.

It is not for Israel or its supporters in this country to arrogate to themselves the divine right of determining other people's place in history. More than that, by supporting Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza they are supporting the occupation of a people by another—a situation that is one of the most repulsive manifestations of the human soul.

Mr. Siegel argues that in the event a separate Palestinian state is established, the Palestinians "will be at the gates of Jerusalem and within arm's length of Tel Aviv."

Definitely Mr. Siegel ought to be reminded that the Palestinian people are *from* Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, among other places in Palestine. They were born there. They have their traditions there. They are the native sons and daughters. And they have not only as much right, but a devil lot more right to be there than Russians, New Yorkers, and Rumanians who simply happen to be of the Jewish faith.

If Israel's right-or-wrong supporters continue to support Israel's denial of Palestinian national rights, Israel's bombing, napalming, and maiming of Palestinian children in refugee camps in Lebanon, Israel's military occupation and degradation of one and a half million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel's refusal to recognize the Palestinians' minimal rights for a separate state, then it becomes outrageous when these same individuals expect the Palestinians to stand there with hat in hand. You cannot expect the victim to give guarantees to the victimizer, the slave to love the slavemaster, the occupied to protect the occupier, and the wound to forgive the dagger.

The assurances, the reaching out, and the plea for peace should come from those who have terrorized and dehumanized a small people for the last twenty-seven years, and not from the Palestinians. They have been robbed of everything. They have nothing to offer.

The Hartford Appeal

To the Editors: My immediate reaction to the theological affirmations repudiating some of the "pervasive themes" and dubious assumptions which have become influential, if not dominant, in some sectors of the Christian Church today was highly favorable. I could at once identify some of my own concerns with many of those which were expressed. In a less articulate and comprehensive manner, I have voiced the same mis-

givings and objections to many of the trends in contemporary theology, although it would be my impression that the "aberrations" deplored by the eighteen signatories to the Hartford Appeal are less prevalent in 1975 than they were ten or even five years ago.

What amazes me is the reaction to the Appeal as published in the May issue of *Worldview* ("The Hartford Appeal: A Symposium—Part I"). The attempted rebuttals, at many points, strike me as distortions and a misreading of the intention and content of the Appeal. Incensed Harvey Cox resorts to abusive satire and labels the whole venture a "heresy hunt." Puzzled Gregory Baum professes to be unaware of any thought patterns or movements within theological circles which could possibly be indicted, or even implicated, in relation to the theses proscribed.

If the thirteen themes formulated at Hartford were allowed to stand alone without the explanatory paragraphs which are attached, that is, if they were severed from the total context of the Appeal, it would be quite understandable that they could elicit some irate retorts and be rightfully criticized as confusing and misleading. Viewed as an integrated whole, however, the declaration in its entirety should be commended for its careful wording and its balanced treatment of the issues to which it is addressed. Only a jaundiced eye, it seems to me, can presume to detect in its statements a relapse into anachronistic concepts or a denial of social responsibility. As I read it, what is being asserted with appropriate emphasis is that unless the capitulation to secularity is renounced, the avowed goals of the humanistic-minded liberators will be undercut rather than undergirded. The powerful resources at the disposal of committed Christians for helping to improve the human situation and to avert total catastrophe are diminished rather than amplified by minimizing or negating the dimension of the transcendent.

As one specific example, the secularizing impulse in the theologies of the sixties, especially in seeking to make Christianity palatable—or at least less repulsive—to Marxist humanists, neglected or abandoned al-

together the New Testament belief in resurrection and the life everlasting. Not only did "Christian" spokesmen of this type concur with Marxists that "otherworldly" faith was the "opiate of the people," they sometimes joined their "partners in dialogue" in limiting human hope exclusively to earthly experience within history or a rationally conceivable future. Overlooked was the contention of many faith-filled Christians that their belief in an ultimate destiny under God beyond death served as an impetus to cope with "worldly" problems and seek social justice. Therefore, they were not "escapists" who merely folded their hands in pious resignation, passively enduring the evils around them while awaiting their "heavenly deliverance." Thus, Theme 13—"the question of hope beyond death is irrelevant or at best marginal to the Christian understanding of fulfillment"—is indeed descriptive of a judgment often pronounced by the self-assured Christian secularists who looked rather condescendingly upon the "unilluminated obscurantists" who were still clinging to "scientifically discredited" notions of a resurrected life which extended into another realm of existence.

Much more could be said from the vantage point of one who served as a campus pastor in embattled Berkeley during the height of the radical movements. The University of California was assuredly a center for both valid and spurious forms of "liberation." What I am compelled to add is that my own observations and experiences, in particular, during the decade of the sixties (including constant association with Protestant colleagues in campus ministry and teaching a class at two different seminaries in the Bay Area) would tend to substantiate, rather than contradict, the applicability of the strictures so aptly formulated by the individuals associated with the Hartford Appeal.

I am somewhat less assured that the Appeal is as pertinent now as it was then.

Ralph L. Moellering

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