Scripts of Kingship: Essays on Bernadotte and Dynastic Formation in Peace and Revolution

MIKAEL ALM & BRITT-INGER JOHANSSON (EDS.)
Prologue
“The principle of association is a remedy for the ills of our time”

“Personne n’a fourni une carrière semblable à la mienne.” These words, spoken by Charles XIV John on his deathbed in February 1844 and well known in Sweden and Norway, contain a good deal of truth. They also contain a comparison, and comparisons, too, can be of scholarly value. I shall attempt here to capture some of the more distinctive features of the regency (from 1810) and subsequent reign (from 1818) of this monarch, taking some account of conditions in, above all, the countries bordering on his two kingdoms. What, if we approach the subject from a synchronic point of view, was it possible to do on the Scandinavian Peninsula which, at the time, could not be achieved in its immediate vicinity – and why? In addition, certain diachronic comparisons will be drawn. What was it the debaters of the early nineteenth century turned against in their own native past – ideas and institutions which still survived, but which many wanted to see torn down or reformed – and how can the researcher’s insights into later times help provide a greater understanding of the situation during this period?

At the very beginning of the nineteenth century, the Nordic countries were visited by travellers from the continent, among them academics active
in Greifswald in Pomerania, a city ceded by Sweden following the Napoleonic Wars. These scholars, who had seen serfdom (Leibeigenschaft) abolished in that province only at the eleventh hour of Swedish sovereignty, must have been wide-eyed in amazement, not least at the very different conditions under which ordinary people lived on the other side of the Baltic, in organisational forms both old and new. They saw varying patterns of political behaviour at the local, regional and state levels, and my discussion here will be structured along similar lines.

Immediately after the political revolution (statsvälvningen) of 1809, a Swede who was to emerge as one of the most ardent liberals of the nineteenth century felt that, after “the revolution or change of regime” of that year, people could breathe again, and observed that “no day passed without the appearance of a pamphlet”. He was, it is true, somewhat overstating the case – and to begin with his career was held back by his pro-British stance – but his words nevertheless capture quite effectively the general mood and the new situation. In its terror of revolutionary ideas from the continent, among other spectres, the Gustavian autocracy (1772/89—1809) had retreated as far as could possibly be imagined from the spirit once enshrined in the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766; now, if anything, the situation was the very reverse. What was needed at this point was a new, open dialogue about how society was to be reformed and developed. Such considerations had indeed been paramount when, both during Sweden’s “Age of Liberty” (1718–72) and under the Oldenburg autocracy of Denmark (1660–1848), freedom of the press legislation had been introduced in the eighteenth century – legislation which of course in practice had only benefitted the few who were able to make their voices heard in a public dialogue, that is to say, just a few per cent of the population.

1 E. M. Arndt, Reise durch Schweden im Jahr 1804 1 (Berlin 1806; in Swedish 1807); id., Om bondeståndet och dess representation i staten (Strengnäs 1817); F. W. von Schubert, Reise durch Schweden, Norwegen, Lappland, Finnland und Ingermanland, in den Jahren 1817, 1818 und 1820 1 (Leipzig 1823; in Swedish the same year, in Dutch 1824); id., Schwedens Kirchenverfassung und Unterrichtswesen, nach früherem und gegenwärtigem Zustande aus den Quellen und nach eigener Ansicht an Ort und Stelle beschrieben 1—2 (Greifswald 1820—1822; in Swedish 1822, 1825). See also H. Kliemann, Koordinaten des Nordens. Wissenschaftliche Konstruktionen einer europäischen Region (Berlin 2005).

Autocracy had not choked off every form of societal activity—despotisms rarely or never do—and while the Swedish political upheaval of 1809 can justifiably be discussed in terms of a "bourgeois revolution", it had no devastating consequences for certain vital organs of society. Earlier autocracies—like the hard line of Charles IX at the beginning of the seventeenth century and the austere rule of the Caroline period (1680–1718)—had made valiant but vain attempts to stifle local self-government, which had for centuries, in varying forms, been a living reality and a practical necessity in a country as extensive as Sweden. The Gustavian regime had been no more successful, though it had certainly tried, in silencing either what were sometimes referred to as "unicameral" (enkamriga) parish meetings, or town and city councils, which likewise often devoted their efforts to "legislation of their own, more zealous than lawful". The challenge now, at a time of rapid population growth—when central control of everything was no longer possible and it was necessary to harness the energies of the majority of the population—was to breathe new life into such bodies and give them greater powers.

The expression "political culture" has been used a great deal over the last couple of decades, and the question is what meaning has been and is attached to it. Bearing in mind how diverse societies could be under a feudalism that could be organised in so many different ways, it is inappropriate to talk about the political culture at any given time; rather, we must assume that there were as many different political cultures as there were material structures. That this was the case in Sweden (including Finland of course, prior to its annexation by Russia) at the beginning of the nineteenth century is clear. The number of people with the right to vote varied widely from parish to parish, from town to town, from one socio-economic setting to another—from a handful of voters in parishes dominated by the nobility, for example, to hundreds in those with a preponderance of Crown peasants and freeholders (krono- and skattebönder). And before the system of voting based on assessment units of

---


4 For one such characterisation, see Kongl. Maj:ts befälningshafvandes uti Elfsborgs län till Kongl. Maj:ts i underdånighet afgifne fem-års-berättelse för åren 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830 och 1831 (Stockholm 1833).
land (mantalsröstning) had evolved into the purely capital-based arrangements of the 1860s (which were not democratized until the early twentieth century), it underwent a number of modifications. The greatest changes occurred in what to the modern eye seems a fairly ragtag system of urban administration: in that context, it could be extremely difficult to determine whether particular decisions had been reached in the framework of, to use present-day concepts, private or public law (a dichotomy which the people of the time would scarcely have recognized).5

Developments in Local Society

In Finland, the very old system just described, which did not incorporate any fixed arrangements for state control, proved of fundamental significance for the development of a civic spirit in this “precious remnant of our people’s ancient order of local self-government” (kommunalförfattning).6 This was a logical consequence of Emperor Alexander I’s solemn pledge at the meeting of the four estates at Borgå (Porvoo) (Borgå lantdag) in 1809 to preserve the constitutional status of the grand duchy, but it was equally natural that, as “autocrat over all Russians” and with no intention of giving his new subjects too free a rein, he made the population no promises that they would be allowed to organise themselves. It is not surprising that the “father of the people”, the philosopher and publicist Johan Vilhelm Snellman, in his Läran om staten (“State Doctrine”, 1842), should in a Hegelian vein identify the organs of self-government established by the state, i.e. parishes and towns, as the most suitable forums for a national civic education – institutions which would subsequently be reformed in parallel with their counterparts in what remained of Sweden to the west.7 The citizenry were in a sense

---


6 Motiver till Förslag till förordning om kommunalförvaltningen på landet i storfurstendömet Finland, 27.1.1860 (Helsingfors 1860).

7 For general accounts, see T. Jansson, Agrarsambhlets förändring och landskommunal organisation (summary: “Agrargesellschaftlicher Wandel und Landgemeindewesen. Einige
declared to have “come of age”, for example, with the institutionalisation in the 1860s of the remedy of judicial review of local authority decisions (kommunala besvärsinstitutet), a system whereby the state did not interfere in local decision-making until someone had made a complaint about a specific decision – internationally, a remarkable phenomenon. One of the German travellers mentioned earlier marvelled at the fact that serfs in Russian Ingria in the early nineteenth century were able, by virtue of the Swedish Church Act of 1686 which still applied there, to take part in the election of priests.

In Norway, with which Sweden had been joined in a personal union in 1814, the situation was radically different. There, as in Denmark and the Atlantic “dependencies”, the Oldenburg autocracy had in all essential respects stifled local self-government as early as the 1660s, and after 1814 it would be almost a quarter of a century before state administration through bailiffs made way – as it would do even in authoritarian Denmark – for more popular, representative elected assemblies. These bodies were subject to comparatively strict state control, however, through the approbasjonsrett of the county prefects (amt- and later fylkesmann), that is, their “right to approve” decisions taken at the local level – in effect, their duty to continuously monitor local government. When the Uppsala historian and debater Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783–1847) – a kind of Swedish Bentham – visited Denmark in 1825, he was surprised at how “all ... power is wholly concentrated in the hands of the government and the sovereign”. He found the Danes “quite charming”, but, brought up as he was in the social order that caused such amazement to the Germans, he concluded that they were, “every one of them”, “civiliter mortui” – in other words, dead as citizens. “Denmark,” he observed, “is a weak kingdom, not only because

---

S. Sjöberg, Det kommunala besvärsinstitutet (Stockholm 1948).
Schubert (1820–1822) 2, pp. 429 ff.

One wonders with some surprise what the basis is for the claim which Bo Stråth makes in Union och demokrati (Nora 2005), p. 546, when describing the system of local government that so pervaded the whole of both Swedish and Norwegian society, “that the tradition of local self-determination was even stronger in Norway [than in Sweden, T. J.] on account of the greater remoteness of the central authorities”.

189
30. A contemporary map of the Nordic countries — from the left: Norway, Sweden and Finland — at the time of Bernadotte’s arrival. CHARTE VON SCHWEDEN UND NORWEGEN. NACH DEN BESTEN ASTRONOMISCHEN ORTSBESTIMMUNGEN ENTWORFEN VON I. C. M. REINECKE, WEIMAR 1809. (Lithography in colour. Krigsarkivet. Utländska kartor, bd ii, nr xxii. Photo: Krigsarkivet, Stockholm.)
of its limited extent, but also on account of its constitution and nature”, and the country “resembles a body full of marrow, but without bones”. The final conclusion he drew from these impressions of the varying political cultures of the Nordic countries was that “wherever traces of local self-government are to be found, even in despotic states, they are relics of a better, freer age”.11 In 1843 the Danish king was advised to open “a Tivoli to give people something else to think about than politics. The garden proved popular – but not the king.”12

The new organs created in Denmark and Norway can in no way be compared to the often “amorphous and exciting parish meetings” (sockenstämmor), the “practical church services” of Sweden and Finland, as these open meetings chaired by the usually popularly elected priest of the state church were not uncommonly referred to,9 and at which, until the reforms of the 1810s and 1820s, unanimity was required for binding decisions. In Denmark and Norway by contrast, the new order was built to a much greater extent on what, despite the autocracy, had emerged by way of local decision-making in the towns – fitting in better with the broader European picture of how, to use a German expression, the countryside underwent a gradual Verbürgerlichung. In Sweden and Finland, it was more a matter of the towns and cities undergoing what might be called a Verbäuerlichung, which can be said to have begun in 1843, when parish meetings became compulsory in urban areas as well. Geijer grasped this point as early as 1839: “Not in the borough, but in the rural commune lie the seeds of a representative constitution.”14 Urban administration was characterised more by the influence

13 See, for example, Högvördiga preste-ståndets protokoll vid urtima riksdagen i Stockholm år 1834 (Stockholm 1834–1835) 1, pp. 335 ff.
of the state, through the magistracies, than by the relative freedom to be found in the countryside, and it was therefore from the latter that models for reform were drawn. The administration of the towns can be regarded as one of the chief reasons for the anathema which the future Utopian Nils Herman Quidoing pronounced against, among other things, local self-government in Sweden.\footnote{Arkiv för kommunal-lagsstifning, first fascicle (Örebro 1841). See also T. Jansson, “Quiding, Nils Herman”, Svenskt biografiskt lexikon 29 (Stockholm 1997).}

From the 1830s on, then, local administration in Denmark and Norway was developed by the establishment of representative bodies (small “elected delegations”, as the perplexed Finns called them when they were looking for models for their own reforms\footnote{Underdånigt Forlag till Forordning, om Kommunalförvaltningen på landet, i Storfurstendömet Finland (Helsingsfors 1860).}). This limited the number of political cultures far more than in Sweden and Finland, although even in those countries there was some tightening up of the system. In 1817 in Sweden (and in 1826 in Finland), parochial church councils (kyrkoråd) were institutionalised as executive organs elected by parish meetings, which also involved the introduction of the majority principle. This executive function was strengthened in 1843 with the establishment of parish boards (sockennämnder), likewise elected by parish meetings. The new boards assumed a real role after the Poor Relief Act (fattigvårdsförordning) of 1847 gave them responsibility for local social welfare policy, to use a somewhat anachronistic term. In Finland, from 1852, they were referred to as poor relief boards (fattigvårdsdirektioner), expressing more bluntly what they were chiefly to concern themselves with.\footnote{One illustration of the Swedish and Finnish peasantry’s political room for manoeuvre at the local level is the “parish war” between 1788 and 1847, during which people from other parishes, chiefly the poor, could be prevented from moving across parish boundaries.}

Another point to be noted is the secularisation that we find in the legislation of 1843, which provided for an elected chairman of the parish board, a departure from the earlier practice in local affairs whereby such a role would automatically be assumed by the vicar. There is often cause, therefore, to question the conventional assertion that “rule by priests” was the norm in parish contexts at this time; rather, in certain areas at least, “rule
by leading local figures” (noblemen, wealthy peasants etc.) could prevail.\(^{18}\) In the ongoing “judicial revolution”, a decisive step had been taken towards the separation of secular and ecclesiastical affairs that was to come in the 1860s. Ordinary citizens were emancipated, if you like, in this respect as well. At the same time, though, some critics saw the growing influence of the central authorities over local self-government as a “statification” of society, as Jürgen Habermas would later put it.\(^{19}\) It has to be remembered that in Sweden and Finland, local self-government forms part of “the public sphere” (det allmänna) in quite a different way from in neighbouring countries, where “the state” (staten) is more clearly responsible for local administration.

Despite the dismemberment of the Swedish realm in 1809, in other words, we find closer parallels in the subsequent development of society between Sweden and Finland than we do between Sweden and Norway, the two “sister nations” (brödrafolken, broderfolkene) of the new union. This is a point that is all too rarely made, but which needs to be emphatically underlined.\(^{20}\) One aspect of the Norwegian scene that can be compared to the situation in Sweden after the political revolution and the early reintroduction of freedom of the press, however, is the scope that was created for voluntary associations following the adoption of the constitution (grunnloven) at Eidsvoll on 17 May 1814, when such organisations were allowed to develop in the “free public sphere”.\(^{21}\) Concerning the “night-watchman state”, which has never been fully developed anywhere, it has been argued that that state is best which governs least, and of the liberal Norwegian state it has been said that, as part of the general emancipation of the time, it fairly soon began to “dissociate” itself from a range of functions for which it had previously assumed the primary responsibility – and that in that situation, society was forced to “associate” itself.\(^{22}\)


\(^{19}\) Jansson (1987a), pp. 120 ff.; J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main 1990), chapter V.


These new voluntary initiatives to reorganise society saw the light of day during the period of very strong population growth and partly new ways of making a living that followed the Napoleonic Wars. The words of the Swedish bishop and poet Esaias Tegnér at the time about the effects of “peace, the vaccine and potatoes” have become almost proverbial, and at this juncture a philosopher in Uppsala suggested that the system was in the process of “grinding the masses into atoms”. The consequences of that trend, which could not be allowed to lead to anarchy in Charles xiv’s two societies – both of which were strong and “open”, though in different ways – were what the new monarch and the debaters of the day had to get to grips with. One of the baits the king used as he angled for support in the public discussion in which he participated was his motto “L’amour du peuple ma récompense” ("The love of the people is my reward").

The situation can be described as a kind of triangular drama, enacted in a pyramid. At the top, in every country, we find the state, which relates to society in two ways: on the one hand, through its public-law relationship to local self-government in parishes and towns, and on the other, through its dealings, based more in private or association law, with voluntary associations of one kind or another – the organisational life that was beginning to be developed by people who were increasingly seeking to escape from the role of more or less oppressed subjects and instead beginning to see themselves as fully-fledged citizens in what Hegel called die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, and what historians have referred to as das gesellige Jahrhundert, the century of associations or societies. These previously unknown associations have often been regarded as a manifestation of what Habermas has termed a bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit – a justifiable conclusion, if that term is translated “civil

---


("medborgarlig" and not "borgerlig" in Swedish) public sphere", since it was at this time that the civism and civil society began to emerge that are still very much with us today.\textsuperscript{25}

In the early nineteenth century, national aspirations to carve out new identities were also emerging, a trend illustrated by the very frequent use of "Swedish", "Finnish", "Norwegian", "Danish" etc. as epithets in the names of associations. The time had now passed when "the person of the king was the only unifying link", and when a country was held together solely by "religion and possibly war".\textsuperscript{26} It should be underlined, moreover, that the two nations making up the Swedish–Norwegian union always developed entirely separate organisational structures – no union-wide political culture of any kind was created. While Charles xiv may have wanted to see a closer relationship, it was a matter of separate states brought together in "the united kingdoms" and not, as in the British case, of a single United Kingdom.

It has already been indicated that the different countries developed in partly different ways, and that in Swedish local communities, where organs based in both public and association law were open to a wide cross-section of the population, considerable scope existed for citizens' initiatives. Furthermore, it goes without saying that there were models to be found in other countries, and that it was necessary to pick and choose among the many options available. Those in positions of responsibility in the united kingdoms of Norway and Sweden were highly selective when it came to adopting arrangements developed elsewhere. The Finns and Swedes had little to learn from abroad about organs of local self-government, which in other countries were often conspicuous by their absence; the Norwegians and Danes, meanwhile, were influenced by innovations which, on the continent too, came in the wake of failed absolutist regimes. The first Bernadottes found themselves, literally and metaphorically, on a peninsula surrounded – with

\textsuperscript{25} Jansson (1983), pp. 12 f. For Nordic associations in the nineteenth century, see the special issue of the \textit{Scandinavian Journal of History} (1988), with contributions by Hrefna Róbertsdóttir (Iceland), Hans Try (Norway), Niels Clemmensen (Denmark), Henrik Stenius and Ilkka Liikanen (Finland), Torkel Jansson (Sweden in a Nordic comparison) and Ingrid Åberg (emergence of the female citizen).

\textsuperscript{26} Riksarkivet, Theodor Westrins samling, 31: "Om Kommunalförhållanden inom Skandinavien" (1874).
the exception of Britain – by autocracies of varying character, and this left a very clear imprint on what emerged in the corner of the above-mentioned triangle where state and self-organised civil society met.

Charles John, faced with the constant challenge of occupying two thrones, found himself in tight corners at times. On the one hand, he had to establish himself and his dynasty among the great royal houses of Europe; on the other, he had to meet, on a constitutional basis, the demands of his two societies, where the exclusive and fundamentally static principles of estate and guild no longer sufficed as a foundation for societal organisation. After his fraternisation with Alexander I in Åbo (Turku) in 1812 – a kind of nineteenth-century treaty of friendship, security and mutual assistance – which meant that Finland was left alone and could continue to develop in accordance with its native, Swedish model of society, and which also gave him a free hand in the west, he was happy to be able to turn to the emperors on the Neva when he felt that his citizens’ initiatives went too far. The laconic reply he received on such occasions, though, was that, “having given the people a constitution, he surely had to uphold it”. And among the king’s last recorded words was the observation: “j’ai gouverné un peuple jaloux de ses droits”.27

When, by contrast, inspiration was to be found for solutions to the societal ills which older institutions were unable to address, the heir to the throne, in search of new ideas and practical examples, sent a steady stream of his Swedish and Norwegian civil servants to individualist and liberal Britain – a country which had in fact developed something of an export trade in models for the organisation of society.28 When this process had begun to bear fruit, it was summed up in the immortal words of the earlier-mentioned Geijer in his lectures to students and royalty in Uppsala in 1844 on “The inner workings of today’s society”29 (from which the quotation in the title of the prologue

is drawn). He argued that the newly emerging voluntary associations were to be regarded as the “advancing auxiliary troops”, while “the state was busy disentangling the bankruptcy of the corporations”. It may be noted that Geijer did not proclaim this faith in the free forces of society until 1839, that is to say, a year or so before Snellman’s commitment to the state in Finland, referred to earlier, and that when he preached the same gospel in his lectures five years later, it was under the heading of “the inner workings of today’s society”. The basic conditions for a political debate and a necessary process of reconstruction through the vehicle of the voluntary association, in other words, were very different from before\textsuperscript{30} – and rather unlike those to be found in neighbouring countries.

Nowadays, we take it for granted that politics can be freely discussed in the most varied of contexts, both formalised and more informal, but in the early nineteenth century that was by no means the case. Although Charles John maintained that “public opinion” was to be regarded as \textit{la reine du monde}, the queen of the world, it was necessary to have alongside her in the driver’s seat a king powerful enough to prevent the fast-moving load from overturning. A notorious instance of this was the right to withdraw periodicals (\textit{indragningsmakten}) which the new regent soon imposed, and which from 1812 until 1845 gave the Court Chancellor (\textit{hovkanslern}) the power to suppress periodicals that were deemed “a threat to public security” – although the champions of freedom quickly became very inventive when it came to circumventing that power.

It has to be stressed that “liberal”, “liberalism”, “liberality” and all the other words we come across in the sources are not to be interpreted anachronistically as referring to “liberalism” in the modern sense.\textsuperscript{31} The intended meaning, rather, is “the right to freely say what one wishes”, and thus a wide range of ideas could be encapsulated in these expressions. Coming at them from a later


period, we need to handle the concepts and terms of that time with the greatest of care, as they have often undergone considerable shifts in meaning. Just as most people were agreed that the new voluntary association, transcending the old guilds and estates, was — as a form — useful and necessary, even indispensable, there was often significant disagreement about the norm, i.e. the ideological content with which the various associations, and the columns of the emerging newspapers, were to be filled. As always, it was difficult to agree on the goals, even if the means employed could be the same.

In fact, not everyone was agreed even on the means, at least not when the promotion of human morality was at stake. Certain prominent theologians, for example, were unable to subscribe to the view of the association as a “remedy for the ills of our time”. To one, the new form, the “public sphere”, was perfectly acceptable, while another, though happy to see the voluntary association put to use in the building of canals and railways, could not possibly countenance it for moral purposes, as this was too much like “taking vows, popery and Jesuitry” — for it was the duty of a true Lutheran to attend to such matters in direct dealings with his Maker.32 This scepticism towards the association still survives in Pietist-inspired Schartauan areas of south-western Sweden, as it does within the Grundtvigianism of nearby Denmark, which also cultivates the idea that individual responsibility must take precedence over that of the collective, and which to this day forms much of the core of the Danish national identity.33

The identity-creating function of religion — and law34 — has been significant, and considering the practical role which the state church long continued to play in people’s everyday lives — most societal functions were, after all, linked to it — it is hardly surprising that the earliest voluntary associations were established in the religious sphere. As early as 1808, that is to say, when

32 For this discussion between J. H. Thomander and H. Reuterdahl, see Theologisk Quartalsskrift 3 (Lund 1838), pp. 201 ff. and 252 ff.
the Russians were invading across the eastern border and it was necessary to spread "the comforting knowledge of the Gospel", the Evangelical Society (Evangeliska sällskapet) was founded for the purpose of distributing "small godly tracts". When, despite its efforts, God's word still failed to reach the growing population, the organisation was reconstituted in 1815 as the Swedish Bible Society (Svenska bibelsällskapet). If only the whole of Holy Scripture, with its answers to all the riddles and difficulties of life, were made available to every man and woman, then the problems of society would be solved.

These two associations are testimony to the advent of a new era. Even among the membership of the Evangelical Society, people from Finland – which in reality was already lost – are conspicuous by their almost complete absence, while in the case of the Bible Society, Sweden’s union with Norway left clear traces from the outset in the list of honorary fellows (though not among the ordinary members). Naturally, servants of the church of various kinds are very much in evidence, but it is also noticeable how, as early as 1808, wholesalers and factory owners were permitted to take their seats at the same meeting tables as “Excellencies of the Realm” (rikets herrar) and other exalted personages – they were of course welcome, not least, as funders of these societal institutions which were so badly needed at a time when the state, already so burdened with expenditure, did not, to quote Geijer’s words in 1844, need “any more on its plate”. In modern Bourdieuan terms, one could talk of economic capital being rapidly and efficiently transformed into both social and cultural capital (in northern Sweden it has always been said that “money is the only thing a really poor person has”, which is why it has to be converted into other assets to be of any significance).

By 1815, the increasingly affluent were even more conspicuous – a reflection of how new groups in society were continuing to be socialised into the circles underpinning state and society in a way that was not entirely self-evident in more authoritarian political systems. In 1833, when the Governor


36 Förteckning på Evangeliska Sällskapets ledamöter, ifrån början af 1809 till slutet af 1815 (Stockholm 1815).

37 Berättelse och Redovisning af Svenska Bibel-Sällskapets Comité (Stockholm 1815).
of Stockholm (överståthållaren) was barely able to count the philanthropic societies launched and run by the city’s inhabitants, the Danish crown prince was in secret talks with his country’s chief of police about the possibility of trying out associations as an instrument of poor relief policy.\(^{38}\) One Nordic region, two worlds.

Charles John’s view of how public opinion was to be managed is made very clear by the example of the Bible Society. The honorary fellows of that organisation were socially extremely strong, including royalty among their number. Immediately after his arrival, the first Bernadotte realised the importance of responding to society on new terms, by stepping down to meet his citizens in their new associations, and there would be many instances of that happening.\(^ {39}\) At the same time though, by shaping the social make-up of these “authorised” or “state-promoted” societies – and also by having “Excellencies of the Realm” and others retrained in their meeting rooms, in both Sweden and Norway – he had seen to it that the peaceful order of society was not put at risk. Representatives of the Bildungs- and Wirtschaftsbürgertum began to walk hand in hand.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, an initial step can be said to have been taken in a process of self-organisation of Swedish and Norwegian society that came about in an era of individualism or the “principle of personality”. As we have seen, this first step was very often taken by the most powerful social elite, but the activities arising from it were nevertheless located outside the state, which was an acknowledgement of a civil society. When similar initiatives were taken in Russia, for example, these “non-state organisations” (Unstaatlichkeiten), as the fearful referred to them, were made part of the state apparatus – a situation we could compare with what today’s non-governmental organisations, NGOs, might be able to achieve following the collapse of Soviet society. What is more, the initial step described coincides


\(^{39}\) See Per Sandin’s essay in this volume.
very closely with the first phase observed by Czech historian Miroslav Hroch in his studies of nationalism.40

In the case of the Bible Society, we find that (socially powerful) women already make up one in twenty of its registered members, one of the earliest signs we have of a civic nation in the making which not only transcends estates and corporations, but also gender. Social change had resulted in a socio-economic regrouping of both sexes. As the master shoemaker was gradually transformed into a factory owner, it no longer fell to the lot of his wife both to assist in day-to-day production and to make porridge all day long for “the journeymen who ate at the master’s table”. Instead, there began to emerge a category of women who were able to employ servants, a group that one scholar has compared to relatively unoccupied, but often quite well-educated, Biedermeier dolls.41 It goes without saying that these women would soon be seen as a resource in the building of society, and we only have to wait until 1819 to find them mobilised in the Women’s Bible Society (Fruntimmers­bibelsällskapet) – founded not least because bibles did not spread themselves under the auspices of the association founded in 1815. Princess Sofia Albertina, sister of Gustav III and Charles XIII, was immediately elected as the “supreme member” of the new organisation. Women themselves did not necessarily always applaud these initiatives, however, for there are countless examples of how dubious they could be at this early stage about the expectations placed on them by the men of a new age.42 But there was no stopping the march of time, and a prototype now existed for all the philanthropic women’s associations (fruntimmersföreningar) that saw the light of day shortly after the earlier-mentioned poor relief reforms, introduced in the late 1840s, when

once again there was a concern to prevent public expenditure spiralling out of control. Like many men, women became involved, willy-nilly, in the political culture of this new era.

Despite the efforts of the female Bible spreaders, however, a solution to the growing problems of society remained elusive, and in the various political cultures of the day it was concluded that more targeted measures were called for. Drunkenness, always a social problem, but with different consequences in changed, more industrial-capitalist conditions of production, called for the establishment of separate associations (it was not possible, after all, to create a guild for the “boozers”, “guzzlers” or “souses”, as these poor people were often called). In 1837 the Swedish Temperance Society (Svenska nykterhetstållskapet) was founded, soon to be followed by organisations such as the Norwegian Association against the Consumption of Liquor (Den norske Forening mod Brøndevinsdrik). These societies had their forerunners in numerous smaller associations established at the local level – including at parish meetings – and “associative behaviour” of this kind found nourishment in that great bastion of liberty to the west, the United States, which knew of no other form of societal organisation than that founded on free choice.43

The American advocate of temperance Robert Baird, touring northern Europe in the 1830s, was not received with equally open arms everywhere, however. “God alone can save from sins of every kind, and societies to combat drunkenness are therefore almost superfluous, indeed even harmful,” and they should not “be given any real sanction by the state”. Such was the response to his proposals when he arrived in Copenhagen, where, as has been indicated, there was a general scepticism towards voluntary associations in the still existing autocracy. In that country we find only a hundred or so organised friends of temperance. In the Baltic provinces of Russia, signed pledges to abstain from strong liquor were seen as a threat, both by the state authorities, with their fear of conspiracy and even their own shadow, and by the vodka-distilling barons of local society – a concern paralleled in Denmark

---

43 For a fuller account of the developments described below, see T. Jansson, "Idé och verklighet i det tidiga 1800-talets Norden. En och samma nykterhetsanke i olika stater och samhällen", in C. G. Andrae et al. (eds.), Arkivet, historien, rörelsen. Sven Lundquist 60 år (Stockholm 1987b).

202
by claims that the temperance movement was “hostile to industrial interests”. In Finland, as has been suggested, the basic attitude was the same – voices were raised from time to time, asking why almost everything was permitted apart from the communal reading and contemplation of God’s word. When Baird visited Charles xiv, on the other hand, he was awarded the highly prestigious medal *Illis quorum meruere labores* (“For those whose work deserves it”) for his highly beneficial efforts, which in the united kingdoms had soon resulted in hundreds of thousands of temperance pledges – an excellent barometer of the widely diverging political cultures existing at this time within a relatively limited geographical area, in the two worlds which today’s comparatively homogeneous Nordic region still comprised.

The pledge-taking abstainers just mentioned make it necessary to clarify the difference, in terms of political culture, between the associations of the early nineteenth century and those of more recent times, not least the “popular movements” (*folkrörelser*) that have long been so influential in Sweden. “To enter into an agreement” (*att ingå en förening*), which in the early nineteenth-century temperance movement, for example, was the natural thing to do, was synonymous with agreeing to moderation or abstinence with regard to intoxicating beverages, and little else – that is to say, it was a comparatively passive act. “To join an association” (*att gå i en förening*) by contrast, which became the norm in the mass organisations of the later part of the century, when the teetotallers had entered the stage, involved throwing oneself very actively into the work of an organisation which often took up all of one’s spare time, and becoming part of a significant political culture that existed at a number of different levels. The difference became clearly apparent when the older system of associations gave way to forms with which we feel more familiar to this day.

If the Temperance Society can be seen as one of the embryos of what much later was to be the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), then the Society for the Promotion of Monitorial Education (*Sällskapet för växelundervisningens befrämjande*), founded in 1821, can be regarded

---

as a precursor of the National Board of Education (Skolverket), as it served in practice as the highest authority on matters of education for the wider population before the adoption in 1842 – as part of a larger poor relief “package” – of the first state ordinance on elementary education (folkskolestadgan). As political cultures evolved, voluntary initiatives could, as we have already seen, be absorbed into the state apparatus. After gathering intelligence on the Bell-Lancaster educational methods developed in England, one of the scouts sent out by the king suggested that “all good-for-nothings, such as masters, journeymen, fire-watchers and the like, who have mistaught part of the human race for long enough, should be removed from the list of teachers”.\(^{45}\) Clearly, words could be delivered with at least as much force almost 200 years ago as in the educational debates of today.

Following the death of Charles xiv in 1844, few if any associations of the “authorised” or “state-promoted” kind considered thus far were created. Now the time was ripe for a second step in the self-organisation of society, just as we can discern a second phase in the development of a national consciousness – a national consciousness that came to be shared by increasingly wide groups in society. The ground was already prepared, however: the Swedish Temperance Society, for example, normally very much an establishment-led organisation, had in the northern province of Hälsingland in particular – where there were “no nobility at all” to be found – largely been taken charge of by self-confident country people. The latter could sometimes adopt an extremely anti-authoritarian stance, as we see for example in the activities of “revolutionary curates” (of the state church)\(^{46}\), to say nothing of the religious “Erikjansonists” (erikjansarna) of the same province,\(^{47}\) who refused to accept authorities of any kind and who consequently, in the end, opted for the hardships of exile in the United States. Students of this period will also be familiar with the deep social commitment of both Oskar i (1844–1859) and Queen Josefina, a commitment which, at least until the turbulent


\(^{46}\) Jansson (1985), section 3.3.5.1.

events of 1848 across Europe and at home, manifested itself in various forms of philanthropic activity, which were not without significance for the inventiveness of ordinary citizens. It was in fact during this time — with the passing of the 1858 Citizenship Act (*medborgarskapsförordning*) — that the term “citizen” (*medborgare*) displaced “subject” (*undersåte*) as a legal concept, and in that connection it also became even clearer that the Norwegian and Swedish “sister nations” really were separate entities.

In the ongoing process of socio-economic restructuring, educational circles (*bildningscirklar*) and workmen’s associations (*arbetareföreningar*) of a previously unknown kind were born. An association-based form of education developed, with quite different social strata now as the prime movers. One socially aware doctor, referred to as the “water doctor”, saw the deepening destitution of the growing masses of workers in Stockholm and, in 1845, founded the Stockholm Educational Circle — “a public temple of knowledge” — along with, among others, Per Götrek, who in his very early translation of *The Communist Manifesto* saw “the voice of the People as the voice of God” (*Folkets röst är Guds röst*). Extremely interesting in a broader European context is the fact that the royal family was also involved when this second step in the history of self-organisation was taken. The approach of the early Bernadottes to society can perhaps be summed up in the motto of the present king: “For Sweden — with the times” (*För Sverige i tiden*).

As the old sayings remind us, knowledge is power and unity strength, and the activities of workmen’s associations and educational circles up and down both countries of the union quite clearly gave rise to, and were part of, a public debate about the broader development of the two nations. In Sweden, workmen’s associations became a typically urban phenomenon, as economic development refashioned the social structure sooner in the towns and cities than in the countryside. This helps to explain why these organisations were linked to and drew some inspiration from the Thrane movement (*thranitterbevegelsen*) of Norway — a phenomenon based very

---


much in country areas and with its roots in the rural impacts of unchecked capitalist development, which had above all cut ordinary people off from participation in local political life, i.e. restricted the political culture.

The Bible Society had once upon a time given rise to more specialised organisations, and the same thing happened with these later associations. Now an emerging Scandinavianism was one of the causes to be embraced – a liberal movement wherever it appeared, and one which Charles xiv regarded as excessively anti-Russian. National “Scandinavian societies” were founded, these in turn spawning the more political “reform societies” that saw the light of day in the debate about changes in the system of national representation, fuelled by the February revolution on the continent. Some, not least Oskar 1 and his son and successor Charles xv (1859–1872), even dreamed of a pan-Scandinavian union under a Bernadotte monarch. Many a Norwegian, however, viewed this movement with scepticism, reluctant to see too wide a radius of operation for the Bernadotte dynasty. In Finland, Scandinavianism developed to only a very limited degree, owing partly to the Russian presence in the country and partly to the emerging Fennomania, which included both culturally isolationist elements and those loyal to the central government in Petersburg.50

Voluntary associations, then, had been radicalised, and liberalism – once in many respects an offensive movement – had become very much a defensive one. A capitalist bourgeoisie, represented by “the liberals of the 1850s” (femtitalsliberalerna)51, was now in place. A consensus outlook was becoming more widespread, manifested among other things in a tendency to describe everyone, from the boss down, as “workers”. This became untenable, though, as the socio-economic differentiation of society continued on the home front and workmen’s associations were replaced by workers’ communes – with the result that the ideal of consensus had to make way for compromise and horse-trading. Meanwhile, in the wider world, the Paris Commune was proclaimed

seets markering av 1905 (Oslo 2007).
51 The expression was coined by Victor Svanberg in his “Rydbergs romanfragment ‘Benoni Strand’ och femtitalsliberalismen”, Samlarren new sequence 2 (1921).
preceded in 1864 by the First International among those who, in the varying landscape of political cultures, believed they could see that the nation, which had now entered its third phase, had been hijacked by others with whom they were unable to sympathise. In organisational terms, the time was now ripe for mass organisations, “popular movements”, of a kind we recognise to this day.

To continue on the subject of the royal family’s relationship to the voluntary association movement, a government decision in 1886 to extend state funding to the earlier unknown democratic teetotallers was one which Oskar II (1872–1907) was at a loss to understand. Now, though, the political culture was shaped by different forces than before; it was “no longer the king’s business to distribute money, it was the government’s responsibility ... The Swedish Temperance Society had been reduced to one association among others”. The same year, the later famous Social Democratic leader Hjalmar Branting appeared for the last time at a meeting arranged by the liberal-inspired workmen’s associations – before going on, on another occasion, to give his almost revolutionary speech on the subject of “Why the labour movement has to become socialist”. By this time moreover, in mass organisations of every kind, there had developed a relationship between a sovereign annual meeting and a working board that could be called to account – a relationship we consider natural even now, but which scarcely existed in the infancy of the voluntary association.

In parallel with the emergence and broadening of a national consciousness, then, the third step had been taken in the societal self-organisation of the nineteenth century, and since local society in Sweden encompassed both a large and relatively open sphere governed by public law and, by international standards, a broad spectrum of politically active voluntary associations, the developments that occurred in this country were quite distinctive. This can perhaps best be illustrated by the schematic table below, which describes the situation in terms of political cultures and attempts to capture Sweden’s position in relation to its neighbours. In simplified terms, it can be said that Sweden had the past – which in many respects lived on and was reformed – in common with Finland, and the future – which also needed to be developed – in common with Norway.

TABLE I: *Sweden as a “Middle Kingdom” after 1809/14*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NORWAY</th>
<th>SWEDEN</th>
<th>FINLAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*In common with Finland:*
Old constitutionalism, i.e. a strong system of local government (especially in rural areas) = public spheres based in public law.

*In common with Norway:*
New “night-watchman states”, i.e. a strong system of voluntary associations (especially in towns and cities) = public spheres based in private/association law.

**Distinctive characteristics:**
Strong bodies based in public law and private/association law = strong associations in a strong system of local government = a role for “popular movements” or mass organisations at various levels of state and society, a “Sweden of Popular Movements”.

**Developments at the Regional Level**

The criticism of central government’s influence over local society was to be extended to the sphere of county administration, which the liberals similarly wanted to see developed into regional self-government and into a political culture worthy of the name at that level as well. To speak in Habermasian terms again, it was a matter of “societalising” part of the state.

The general expansion of the state apparatus in the early seventeenth century had included a formalisation of state administration at the county level. Within each county (län), “His Majesty’s Governor” (Kungl. Maj:ts befälhavande or landshövdingen) was to oversee a range of matters that were of concern to the central authorities. The new geographical order had, moreover, been part of an attempt to break down provincial identities going back to the medieval provincial laws (landskapslagar), along with the political cultures with almost federalist traits which they had once embodied and even promoted.

As for the church, attempts had been made in the seventeenth century to tie it even more closely to the state by creating a “consistorium generale”, although this was something the clergy had managed to resist. Over the same period, a
more uniform guild system had been established. All of these developments were totally unacceptable to nineteenth-century liberals, who saw in them too strong a presence of the powers that be up and down the country. Invoking medieval arrangements, among other things, critics of the strong state that had existed since the Vasa Age, i.e. from the 1520s on, began in the 1820s to call for popularly elected county councils (landsting) as a counterweight to the state-run county administrative boards (länsstyrelser). Such councils were finally set up in 1862/63, but until the end of the First World War they were to be chaired by the state-appointed governors, a constraint that was soon to be described as their “mark of slavery”. Nonetheless, these councils can be seen as a partial societalisation of the state – just as the earlier-mentioned endeavour of central government at this time to increase its influence over local self-government could be regarded as a certain “statification” of society. The latter process, however, was helped along by the fact that, following the representational reform of 1865/66, the seats of the lower house of the new parliament (riksdagens andra kammare) were occupied by partly the same people who sat as councillors at the local level – a tendency, as Habermas might have put it, to interlace previously incompatible entities.

Looking once again at early nineteenth-century Sweden, we find that the ground was prepared for regional self-government as well, partly by a mythologisation of past ages, and partly through more recently created bodies for the promotion of regional cooperation, such as the county agricultural societies (hushållningsällskap). The latter had begun to be established in late Gustavian times, and were seen after 1809 – not least by Charles John – as important tools in an endeavour to “reconquer Finland within Sweden’s borders”, that is, to breathe new intellectual and material life into a country that had stagnated and contracted. Because these societies, as a kind of semi-official regional body existing in both Finland and Sweden, operated on the borders between state and private, it was considered possible to develop them and give them greater powers – a view held, not least, by the radical lawyer

54 J. Stattin, Hushållningsällskapen och agrarsamhällets förändring (summary: “Economic societies and changes in Swedish agrarian society during the first half of the nineteenth century”) (Uppsala 1980), especially chapter III.
Johan Gabriel Richert, whose thoroughly anti-corporate publication from 1822 has been seen as the first truly liberal programme in Sweden. When county councils were created in that country, they were quite unique from a Nordic standpoint, in that their members were chosen in separate elections. In Norway, when the local self-government which the peasantry in particular longed to see was reinstated in 1837 – following a good deal of obstruction from both Charles xiv and the “civil servant state” (embetsmannsstaten) – the result was “presidencies of the prefectures” (amtsformannskap), which can perhaps best be regarded as a fusion of Sweden’s county administrative boards and county councils, i.e. of state power and social forces. The two countries of the union, in other words, did not grow to resemble one another more closely over time. In Finland, where it was not possible under Russian sovereignty to invoke institutionalised county councils from the Swedish period that could have been reformed, the native Swedish tradition of a variety of local government federations (kommunalförbund) has continued to the present day.

At the regional level, too, purely voluntary organisations were formed for various purposes, not least relating to the education of the population at large. Such bodies were not uncommonly headed by leading scholars of the day, and, as has been suggested, it was argued as early as the 1820s that schools had to keep pace with developments in society since, to quote the botanist and future bishop Carl Adolph Agardh, they were “dependent on the culture, but not the other way round”. The new schools were said to be “a new republic, where everything is at work, everything striving upwards, where industry and genius leave incompetence and sloth behind, and where merit takes its natural place”.

The regionalist trend was also reinforced by the press – the “third branch of government” (tredje statsmakten) as Geijer put it in 1838, a concept akin to (and normally translated by) Thomas Carlyle’s “fourth estate” – which from

---

55 [J. G. Richert], Ett och annat, om Corporationer, Privilegier, Nämnd i Domstol etc. etc. etc. i anledning af Consistorii Academici i Uppsala Betänkande, om den Academiska Jurisdictionen (Stockholm 1822); Jansson (1985), p. 18.


the time of Charles XIV onwards had grown ever stronger. The “council” and
the “representation”, Geijer wrote, were enriched by a “unifying discourse”,
which in turn helped to lend greater depth to the national political culture,
as editors up and down the country quoted news items from one another’s
papers and pieced together a more uniform picture of Sweden “from Ystad to
Haparanda”, i.e. from the south to the north. At the same time, the “student
nations” – student societies drawing their members from different parts of
the country, and to a large degree constituting political cultures in their own
right9 – did their bit to swell this growing movement by beginning to use
flags adorned with the arms of their respective provinces.

However progressive certain bishops may have been, the episcopates as
such did not escape the liberals’ criticism.60 The basic attitude was the same
as when the champions of reform scrutinised His Majesty’s Governors: the
power of the state was too great and too clearly in evidence; lay people should
be given a greater say, just as common folk should in secular contexts; and the
cathedral chapters were more like state-run county administrative boards than
popularly based councils. According to Richert, the estates of the “national
representation” had a direct parallel in the equally outdated system that
required priests to serve in the diocese in which they were ordained.61 Even a
future conservative archbishop could argue in his youth that the Church Act
of 1686 had no doubt been well suited to the needs of its day, but that the state
church was now in the process of “becoming mummified”.62 A dialogue about
a new cultural climate in the widest sense, in other words, was under way in
every quarter. Unlike in Finland and Denmark, however, where the autocrats

unifying discourse. On local press and the formation of the bourgeois public sphere in northern
Sweden during the first half of the nineteenth century”) (Stockholm 1989).
59 J. Sjöberg, Makt och vanmakt i fadersväldet (summary: “Power and Subordination in the Age
of Patriarchy: Student politics in Uppsala 1770–1850”) (Uppsala 2002).
60 J. Evertsson, “En damm mot tidens ström” (summary: “A dam against the currents of time’.
Criticism of the episcopate in the Swedish estate and unified church/state society of the mid
19th century”) (Åbo 2002). See also id., Bishops, Politics and Anti-clericalism in Nineteenth
Century England and Sweden (Falun 2005).
61 Richert (1822), p. 10.
62 H. Reuterdahl, Om det theologiska studium med särskilt hänseende till Sverige (Uppsal 1832), pp.
84 ff.
Charles XIV as king of Sweden, portrayed according to the established practice of European state portraits. The portrait specifically follows a type prevalent in Sweden since the 17th century, with recognizable royal props identifying him as king of Sweden. His French uniform is the only departure from earlier precedents. As customary, the king is standing on an oriental carpet, much the same as we find in 17th century royal portraits, with the Silver Throne of Queen Christina behind him. A table to the left is covered with a velvet cloth, embroidered with golden crowns, on which rests a cushion with the king's and the queen's crowns. (Oil painting by Fredrik Westin, 1840s. Nationalmuseum, Strömsholm 7. Photo: Svenska Porträttarkivet, Stockholm.)
32. Charles XIV, represented as king of Norway. At first glance, this portrait seems very similar to the previous one, but the environment is in fact subtly different. The palatial setting is set at a lower key, with pillars instead of the columns, with a more modern flowered carpet instead of an oriental one, with a gilt baroque armchair instead of the Silver Throne, and with a smaller velvet cloth covering the table where the Norwegian crown of the king and the queen rest. In all, the iconography hints at Norway being both a different domain than Sweden, and a lower ranking part of the united kingdom. (Oil painting by Fredrik Westin, 1844. Örebro Slott. Photo: Svenska Porträttarkivet, Stockholm.)
preferred to see “broad” but controllable national churches (folkyrkor), rather than outright separatism, in Sweden the more pronounced emergence of Nonconformism (frikyrklighet) from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards would, as had earlier been the case in Britain, set the country apart to some extent – some even spoke, in analogy with “non-state organisations”, of “non-church organisations” (okerkligheter).

Developments at the State or National Level

As early as the political revolution of 1809, the parliament of four estates had begun to be questioned in such a way that, sooner or later, a solution would have to be found to the problem of representation. Over a period of more than half a century, a succession of ideas were put forward as to how the growing number of unrepresented groups might be incorporated in this centuries-old, basically static institution, some of which, to a modern-day observer, seem to come perilously close to the ridiculous (one suggestion, for example, was to establish a fifth estate for the unrepresented). What finally – in 1865/66 – brought about the collapse of the whole system was the fact that, since the days of Gustav III, the privileges of the estates had in reality been so severely eroded that they basically no longer served to distinguish one Swede from another.

Differences within the population, in other words, were becoming ever smaller, and uniformity – very often expressed in terms of nationality – was growing, and as a result the case for separate representation was becoming increasingly difficult to argue. The authoritarian years following the “Age of Liberty” had seen four-estate parliaments which by and large tended to rubber-stamp the measures put before them, and when, after the political revolution, these assemblies once again became a power to be reckoned with, the basic framework for discussing questions of the day and formulating tangible proposals had changed. The significance of the press has already been touched on. What may be noted here is all the political debate that could now take place, for example in the societies and associations discussed earlier, and all the ideas that could be put forward now that the four estates were meeting more frequently than before and with a constitutional regularity. We noted in the introduction the enthusiasm for debate that was reflected in the daily publication of pamphlets, and it is readily apparent that the years when
the Swedish estates and the Norwegian Storting met, in particular, generated a profusion of such publications that can best be described in terms of mass communication.

The call for a fundamentally new Riksdag Act (riksdagsordning), set out by Johan Gabriel Richert and the radical baron Carl Henric Anckarsvärd in 1830 in their Förslag till national-representation (Proposal for a National Representative Body), is as well known in Swedish constitutional history as the earlier-mentioned work by Richert. The thinking came largely from Norway, where a (modified) unicameral system had been in place since the national constituent assembly at Eidsvoll in 1814 (although some at that time would have preferred to see a form of representation based on estates). In Sweden, however, the time was not yet ripe for such a system.

To look to Finland for inspiration for a debate about the question of representation was futile. There, “constitutional night” (statsnatten) had descended, and would continue from the meeting of the four estates at Borgå in 1809 until the revival of that institution in 1863, in the general liberalisation following the Crimean War. Nor did authoritarian Denmark have anything to offer, although the autocracy of that country had found itself compelled to set up advisory estate assemblies (stamderforsamlinger) after such bodies had been created within the German Confederation, to which the Duchy of Holstein belonged. From 1835 on, on the advice of Fürst von Metternich and Nicholas 1, no fewer than four such gatherings were held in different parts of the country, but they were carefully fragmented into different chambers and estates, as a safeguard against the national spirit that inspired such fear — the trouble caused by France’s assemblée nationale was of course fresh in the government’s memory. Naturally, in the eyes of Swedish liberals, the national aspirations of Norway, expressed in a national parliament, were the only way forward, and one which in 1821 had even resulted in the abolition of the nobility.

When the “Age of Liberty” ended with Gustav III’s coup d’état in 1772, that is, when “the powerful estates of the realm” (riksens maktågande ständer) no longer existed as a political reality, the regularity with which they met was also lost. It was re-established by the Riksdag Act (riksdagsordningen)

---

61 For a general account, see H. Jensen, De danske Standerforsamlingers Historie 1830–1848 1–2 (København 1931–1934).
of 1810, which, like the Instrument of Government (regeringsformen), the Freedom of the Press Act (tryckfrihetsförordningen) and the Act of Succession (successionsordningen), was given the status of a fundamental law. To begin with, it was stipulated that parliamentary sessions were to be held every five years, with the possibility of extraordinary sessions in between (in 1845 – as in Norway in 1814 – three-year intervals were introduced). It became clear, not least from the torrent of pamphlets already mentioned, that the people now represented themselves, a situation diametrically opposed to the earlier one, during the era of a “representative public sphere”, when, in Habermas’s terms, the prince had represented power before the people, rather than for the people.

Political debate, in other words, took place to a much greater extent than before in what have to be regarded as societal, civic forms of the public – between one individual and another in a variety of associations, and in pamphlet form. In modern terms, interests were now both allocated and aggregated in forums going beyond the meeting places of the estates and the Storting. The “free public sphere” had grown considerably – the “parliament of the street” having broadened the concept of politics – and it was in this free zone in particular that the political culture grew into something it had not been for a long time (if indeed it had ever involved as many people as it did in the early nineteenth century). Ennoblement also declined during Charles xiv’s later years, and the first untitled councillors of state began to be appointed.64

As early as 1792, when freedom of the press made a brief return following the assassination of Gustav iii, it had been claimed that “the four estates of the realm are the ruin of the realm”, and after the events of 1809 that debate could be resumed. When the four-estate parliament assembled in 1815, it was argued that Gustav iv adolf (1792–1809) had “stifled the national spirit”, the “national need” that was “precisely the same in all free peoples”, and which had been of great benefit “to our brothers, the Norwegians”. In addition, “opposition” was said to be “in keeping with the spirit of the age”, and in the

64 For a recent account of the nobility’s capacity to adapt to new conditions, see G. Norrby, *Adel i förändring* (summary: “Nobility under Transformation. Noble Strategies and Identities in 19th century Sweden”) (Uppsala 2005).
same breath it was declared that, for a “true, that is, a just” opposition, there
needed to be “patriotism, enlightenment and courage”. Here, then, we find
ideas, words and actions which, only a year or so earlier, had been impossible
to air and realise.

One of the more fleeting phenomena of Swedish press history was the
periodical Nationalföreningen (roughly, “National Union”), which appeared
in just seven issues in 1834. Its contents provide a snapshot of the changes
which the people of the new age were demanding. The editor, the clergyman
Carl Petter Agrelius, contended that the four estates of the realm were
“divisive”, and the journal saw it as its duty “to unite more strongly Sweden’s
different and divided national forces, into a harmonious whole”. This
harmony could only be achieved in “associations, or unions” of the kinds
exemplified above, and at the top of the pyramid envisaged was a form of
representation of the people in the shape of the Nationalföreningen of the
title – a “national union” or “national assembly” – for “a person, albeit one of
brilliant genius and talent, is nevertheless an individual”, who “needs to be
in connection with others, in order to become, in the hand of Providence, a
tool to spread good deeds to humanity”. The old saying that solitary is strong
no longer applied.

Furthermore, a national consciousness and a practical order of the kind
described would strengthen the ties between the still very different countries
of the union: “Those who seek to instil in us a suspicion of the people and
constitution of Norway, are no patriots, but a malicious league,” it was
argued at a time when nationalism had yet to become, if the expression may
be permitted, “aggressively competitive”. But the editor’s liberal embrace
was wider even than that: the Swedish and Scandinavian national assembly
(which of course took its name from the assemblée nationale mentioned earlier,
a body that struck fear into the heart of so many a traditionalist) should, he
suggested, be extended “to the nations of Europe, indeed, of the whole world.

65 Ludvig Johan Boije, Om allmänna nyttan af den politiska uppmärksamhetens offentliga an-
vändande, eller opposition (Stockholm 1815), pp. 1 f.
66 Eventually, nations were to use every means at their disposal to demonstrate their superior-
ity: for one variant, see H. Höjer, Svenska siffror (summary: “Sweden by numbers. National
integration and identification through statistics, c. 1800–1870”) (Hedemora 2001).
Sweden, as a liberal state, should consequently seek a closer union with the other European nations that espouse liberalism. The position was closely akin to the one Quiding was later to adopt. The nations had now “recovered their human dignity [...] Previously, they were regarded as appendages of thrones, as gangs of slaves that could be abused”, and in such a pronouncement a modern reader readily recognises the elements of the nineteenth-century debate which Habermas has brought into his above-quoted discussion about a “representative”, prince-led, public sphere. In this context it should also be noted that, in the fullness of time, like the Erikjansonists, the editor of Nationalföreningen was to emigrate to the United States, when he found that he was getting nowhere with his highly radical ideas for reform. His inner conviction lived on, though, in his plans to launch in New York, where the United Nations would one day build its headquarters, a periodical titled Folkens allmänna förening (“The General Unification of All Peoples”). An alternative Swedishness, something that had been intended to become an alternative political culture, had once again had to emigrate.

Epilogue
“Personne n’a fourni une carrière semblable à la mienne”

In a national perspective, and from a modern-day vantage point, Charles xiv may be perceived as a conservative figure, his period as one of inertia, and his societies as not particularly open. Contemporary references to “Brahe power” (Brahevälde) – alluding to the king’s close adviser, Marshal of the Realm Magnus Brahe – and “bedroom rule” (sängkammarregemente) have become familiar phrases, engraved in our collective memory. If on the other hand, as I have attempted to do, we consider his two kingdoms in a broader, comparative perspective, we discover that a good deal was able to be developed at various levels in both Sweden and Norway which for a long time

was unthinkable in neighbouring states, and that the Scandinavian Peninsula offered better conditions for a “free public sphere”, and hence for “open societies”. The two countries thus became easier to get a fix on, in terms of the potential for political cultures to evolve, and it is perhaps also easier to understand why – by analogy with Louis Philippe of France – Charles xiv has sometimes been referred to as the “bourgeois king” of Sweden and Norway, at the helm of two de facto new states.

The free public sphere grew at all times within a constitutional framework, and it gradually changed with the demands of the period. Swedish and Norwegian society did not become democratic and their citizens did not become equal (it may be asked whether they ever have in every respect), but a debate about the existing scheme of things could be conducted more freely at every level than in many other parts of the world. The two kingdoms, moreover, developed into completely separate nation states, and although Charles was keen to see a convergence, little came of the “amalgamation” which so many Norwegians feared. Such a process was something the Finns could perhaps just as easily have begun to talk about, given the way Sweden and Finland continued to develop along such similar lines during and even after Charles xiv’s reign, and from the Åbo meeting of 1812 onwards quite strong guarantees against Russification were in fact in place. This first Bernadotte king, in other words, was very much involved in the birth of three new states in the Nordic region.

Like everyone else, Charles xiv developed and was part of various “networks”, various political subcultures, which increasingly came to consist of actors drawn from structures of relatively different kinds. State and society met in a way which, for all the tensions, has during certain periods continued to characterise the terms and goals of the political culture. He certainly “furnished a career” unlike that of most others, a verdict that can be upheld even in a modern analysis. It was a career that can be compared to an advanced slalom run, in which he had to steer his way between gates guiding him now in one, now in another direction; sometimes they would lead to far-reaching reforms of centuries-old institutions, sometimes to complete innovations, arrived at in discussions with representatives of a citizen nation. Sweden became to a large degree the “Middle Kingdom” that it was almost predestined to develop into, as old and new were permitted to flourish side by side, often in symbiosis with one another.
The earlier-noted view of the Emperor Nicholas about a monarch having to uphold the constitution he has given his people also serves to describe in a nutshell how, under the prevailing circumstances, a constructive dialogue could and had to be developed at this time between king and people, state and society. It is not possible to measure in quantitative terms how much the masses in many cases appreciated Charles xiv, but, as his motto makes clear, he himself at any rate wanted l’amour du peuple – the people who in 1810 had elected him as successor to the throne – to be his récompense.