

## 11. Social Democracy

### *Folkhemmet Sverige*

‘SWEDEN AS THE HOME OF ITS PEOPLE’ may be a clumsy translation of *Folkhemmet Sverige* [ˈfɔlkɛmːɛt ˈsvɛrjɛ] but it at least implies the ideals of security, belonging and community that lie at the heart of the nation’s great social-democrat project in the twentieth century.

As noted in Chapter 9 (p. 283), *gammaldans* was in the 1960s Sweden’s most popular genre by far. It was, I wrote, ‘a largely proletarian affair’ that had been ‘a sort of Saturday-night soundtrack to the country’s transition from a rural to an urban economy’ (p. 287). The dominant political force during that transition was Sweden’s Social-Democrat Labour Party (SAP),<sup>1</sup> including its youth organisation (SSU) which organised the midsummer *gammaldans* festivities advertised in Figure 64c (p. 289).<sup>2</sup> SAP was also involved in running the *Folkets Park* and *Folkets Hus* venues central to the nation’s popular culture. More importantly, the Social-democrats were closely linked to the Trades Union Congress (LO), the Worker’s Education Association (ABF) and, most notably after their election victory in 1932, to welfare measures in the fields of education, health, housing, pensions, etc. To grasp the radical effects of these reforms on Sweden’s popular majority, let’s focus first on the visually most striking area of reform: housing.

Figures 77a and 77b are snapshots of the sort of conditions endured by countless families at the mercy of landlords and developers exploiting an unregulated property market (‘free enterprise’) in the early decades of the previous century before responsible housing projects and policies were enacted by the Social-Democrat government in the 1930s (e.g. Fig. 78).

1. *Sveriges socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti* or ‘SAP’. The Social-Democrats governed Sweden continuously, either with an absolute majority or as biggest coalition partner, from 1932 to 1976; see also [W] *Social Corporatism*, [W] *Swedish Social Democratic Party* [190505], and footnotes 2, 6, 7. For orthographic distinction between *Social Democrat*, *Social-Democrat*, *social democrat*, etc., see Glossary, p. 470 ff.
2. Munksunds SDUK (see [W]sv *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbund* (SSU)). Midsummer 1931 was just a few weeks after the infamous *Ådalen shootings* ([W]sv). In 1931 the *Munksund* ([W]sv) sawmill and pulp mill employed 1,400. Piteå/Munksund, in northern Sweden, has been a traditional bastion of the labour movement.

Fig. 77. (a) Mother and six children outside their one-room shack, Stockholm, 1903.<sup>3</sup>  
 (b) Family eviction in the snow, Stockholm, 1910s.<sup>3</sup>

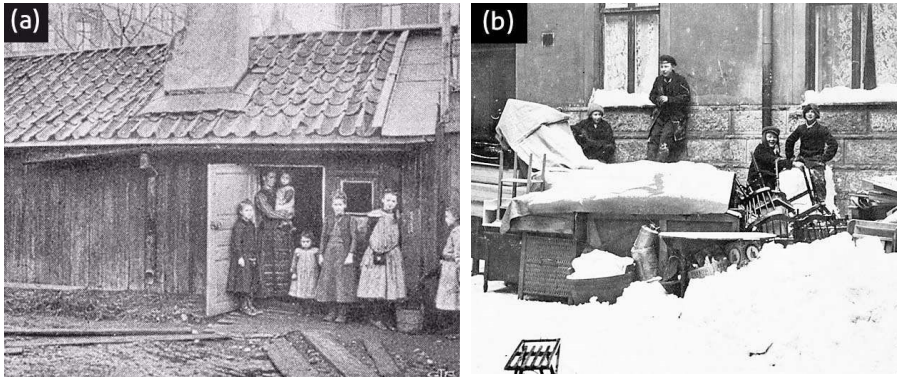


Fig. 78. Affordable housing for young families, Traneberg (Stockholm), 1937.<sup>4</sup>



Here it's worth bearing in mind that by 1903 (Fig. 77a), one quarter of the population had emigrated to the USA and that many of those emigrants had already fled rural poverty in search of work in Swedish cities, only to end up in urban misery, often as beggars or in prostitution. In short, 'America' had become the only solution for hundreds of thousands of Swedes whose mass

3. [a] From *Bostadsförhållanden i Stockholm 1903*. 1 room; ceiling height 145-185 cm, 7 occupants; 8.8 m<sup>2</sup> / 6.6 m<sup>3</sup> per person; [b] © Axel Malmström, Stockholms stadsmuseum.
4. Högklintsvägen, Traneberg; © Nils Åzelius, Stockholms stadsmuseum.

emigration didn't fully peter out until around 1930.<sup>5</sup> It's also worth considering that the little girl carried by her mother in Figure 77a would have been in her thirties if she survived until 1937 when the new housing project shown in Figure 78 was completed. Maybe that little girl, by then herself a mother, could have moved with her own children into one of those nice, new, clean, modern, solidly built apartment blocks, where the young family could have rented an affordable flat with double glazing, central heating, bathroom, indoor toilet, electricity and hot-and-cold running water.<sup>6</sup> Her children, born around 1920, would have progressed with her from a precarious and degrading 'before' to a secure and decent 'after'. Such unequivocally positive change, coupled with reforms in health, education and social insurance, all motivated by core values of equality and solidarity, engendered a sense of loyalty, trust and pride in the political system that had lifted them out of material misery. Social-democrat ideologues envisaged this new society metaphorically as a home where every citizen, including the girls in Figure 77a and the women and children in Figure 78, could live decent lives and feel part of a justly run national community. That community became popularly known as *Folkhemmet*★ *Sverige* (≈'Sweden as the home of its people').<sup>7</sup> Its values would be passed on from the little girl's children to her grandchildren, i.e. to my Swedish contemporaries, born in the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> However...

By the mid 1960s, when the little girl's grandchildren were in their twenties, Social Democracy had become harder to assess in uniquely positive terms. One problem was that the circumstances under which it had been able to implement its egalitarian reforms had changed (§2, below), another that the *realpolitik* it felt obliged to adopt often involved action that flew in the face of the movement's core values of democracy, solidarity and equality. Some of those problems, summarised next (§§ 1-7), paint a rough picture of the political background against which the cultural confrontation between Swedish mainstream popular music and *progg* music, discussed in Chapter 12, can be better understood.

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5. For Swedish emigration and urbanisation facts, see Beijbom (1996) and Ylander (2003).

6. The building in Fig. 78 looks like a typical *HSB-hus*; see HSB★ in Glossary (p.458).

7. For analysis of the *Folkhem* concept, promoted in 1920 by Social-Democrat father figure and party leader Per Albin Hansson (☐sv, 1885-1946), see ☐sv *Folkhemmet* [190521].

8. One obstacle to all this passing on of values might be the need to repress the shame and trauma of having had to live in penury: 'it's too painful to even think about', so to speak.

### *From equality to monopoly*

[1] *Saltsjöbaden*. Much of Social-Democrat politics in twentieth-century Sweden was bound up with efforts to stabilise the nation's labour market. In the early decades of the century, emigration was clearly a crucial issue (p. 356). Workers wanted to get rid of the atrocious conditions driving so many to leave the country, while capitalists saw the haemorrhaging of the nation's work force as prejudicial to production and profits. The main disruption to industry at that time came from the numerous strikes against starvation wages, abysmal working conditions and deficient or non-existent social security. The Social-Democrat response was to focus on a stable labour market as point of common interest between labour and capital. The trade-off for capitalists was that in return for increased contributions to the public purse they would be spared industrial disruption and be able to manage business more efficiently. For workers, progressive reform in health, housing, education, etc. was contingent on a healthy national economy and on concord in the labour market. It was in 1938 at Saltsjöbaden\* that a central agreement was finally reached between the Trades Union Congress (LO) and the Confederation of Swedish Employers (SAF).<sup>9</sup> The Saltsjöbaden Agreement (*Saltsjöbadsavtalet*) became a cornerstone in the Social-Democrat *folkhem*\* project.<sup>10</sup> One major problem with the agreement was that, by radically centralising labour market negotiations (central bargaining), it often blocked and even outlawed democratic initiatives from union members at the local level, a development that led to its own sort of unrest (§§2-3).

[2] *Disappearing conjuncture*. The conjuncture underpinning the original Saltsjöbaden Agreement (§1) did not last forever. As long as the demand for labour was high and unemployment low, as long as the national economy was expanding and before it was swallowed up by global capital, the 'Saltsjöbaden spirit' of class collaboration could be followed using a Keynesian model of state intervention (state corporatism\*) to mop up the mess made by capitalism and its Holy Market.<sup>11</sup> When conditions changed or when the

9. The Saltsjöbaden Agreement (☐ 190519) is called *Saltsjöbadsavtalet* in Swedish. LO (*Landsorganisationen*) is the national umbrella organisation for Social-Democrat-affiliated trades unions. SAF stands for *Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen*. *Saltsjöbadsandan* ('the Saltsjöbaden spirit') is shorthand for the centralised class collaboration between labour and capital.

10. *Folkhem* ≈ Sweden as the home of its people. See Glossary p. 455 and footnote 7.

work force was ridden over rough shod, the class collaboration model failed, as manifested in the Metal Workers' strike of 1945<sup>12</sup> and the strike at LKAB (1969-70).<sup>13</sup> A recurrent symptom of system malfunction on such occasions was the mistrust felt by union rank and file towards the union bosses (*fackpampar*) they paid to represent them in centralised bargaining.<sup>14</sup>

[3] *Monopolisation*. The 'democracy' in 'Social Democracy' was supposed to mean more than just voting in elections every few years. It was also originally supposed to involve power sharing and increased economic equality. Some parts of the Saltsjöbaden Agreement directly obstructed that process, not least the infamous Paragraph 32 which gave employers the unilateral right to hire and fire as they saw fit.<sup>15</sup> Another blow to economic democratisation was the abandonment of the Employee Funds scheme (*löntagarfonderna*), according to which an increasing proportion of company profits was to have been shared with the workers and their unions.<sup>16</sup> Instead, Sweden became, under successive Social-democrat governments, one of the world's most monopolised capitalist nations. By the early 1960s, the vast majority of the nation's wealth was in the hands of just a few families.<sup>17</sup>

[4] *Commie bashing*\*. Another sad aspect of Social-Democrat politics was the marginalisation of anyone advocating *democratic socialism* — a SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY — rather than a *capital-friendly bourgeois democracy* tempered by egalitarian reform — SOCIAL DEMOCRACY as, so to speak, capitalist society's emergency and waste management service providers.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, progressive reforms could be (and were) attacked, worn down or neutralised as

11. Mopping up the mess caused by capitalism is one of the liberal democratic state's main tasks. See, for example, *How FDR Saved Capitalism* (Lipset & Marks, 2001) and fnnt 19.

12. Strike involving 120,000 workers, Feb-June, 1945; see [W]sv *Metallstrejken 1945* [190519].

13. LKAB = *Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag*: state-owned iron mining company with mines at Kiruna and Malmberget in Swedish Lappland. The LKAB strike ([W]sv *Stora gruvstrejken 1969–1970*) was particularly embarrassing for the Social Democrat establishment because: [1] LKAB was a nationalised industry that tried to impose an unreasonable piece-work system and treated the workers disrespectfully; [2] central union bosses declared their members' industrial action 'illegal' even though the workers had voted democratically and unanimously in favour of the strike.

14. *Fackpamp* is a popular pejorative word meaning trade union big shot/fat cat.

15. [W]sv *Paragraf 32*. The 'illegal' LKAB strike actually helped get rid of Paragraph 32!

16. See [W]sv *Löntagarfonder* and [W] *Employee Funds* [190523].

17. See Hermansson's (1965) account of Sweden's 15 families (Wallenberg, Bonnier, etc.).

18. Clarification (2019): US senator Bernie Sanders (Vermont) describes himself as a democratic socialist but is in fact a social democrat.

the power of private capital became greater than that of the state.<sup>19</sup> However obvious that observation may seem in hindsight, if you dared criticise as an illusion the belief that justice and equality were attainable *solely* through reform inside the system, you'd be cast out by the Social-Democrat establishment and branded a troublemaker or communist. Social-Democrat commie bashing became commonplace, even policy, after World War II as Sweden looked west for Marshall Plan money.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in 1948, several years before the USA's worst witch hunts, prime minister and Social-Democrat party leader Tage Erlander proclaimed: 'We have to turn every trade union into a battlefield against communism'.<sup>21</sup> Social-Democrat commie bashing meant treating socialist allies as traitors. That demonisation also prevented the dialectic between reform and revolution from being used as a catalyst for developing dynamic strategies for democratisation. Put bluntly, class collaboration became Social-Democrat doctrine: *samförstånd* ( $\approx$  consensus, unanimity) became a canonic concept. Consequently, during the Cold War it wasn't the ravages of finance capitalism but the war-ravaged USSR that became target for demonisation. This political spin also distorted historical truths about World War II, most notably through virtual silence about the 25 million Soviet war dead (13% of the population) compared to the 451,000 Brits (0.9%) and 400,000 US Americans (0.3%) who lost their lives but who, unlike the Soviets, repeatedly 'won the war at the cinema'.<sup>22</sup>

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19. 'The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism: ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or any controlling private power.' (F D Roosevelt: 'Simple Truths message to Congress', 1938-04-29).
  20. Sweden was one of the countries included in the Economic Cooperation Act, signed into law on 1948-03-04 by President Truman ([\[W\]](#) *Marshall Plan* [190527]).
  21. See Berg (1982) and Blomqvist (nd: 118); see Erlander's *Kampen mot kommunismen* ('The struggle against communism' [\[W\]](#) *bj63piW6mP0* [190519]), 1948-03-08, <1 year before the event in footnote 20). Commie bashing is understandable (but not excusable!) if you consider only the Stalinist stance held by a significant minority of communists at that time.
  22. **[a]** [\[W\]](#) *World War II casualties* [190527], section 'Human losses by country'. % = Deaths ÷ Population × 100. Top nation on the WWII deaths list is Poland with 17% deaths (1 in ±6), followed by the Soviet Union (1 in ±8 or 13%) compared to the UK (<1%) and the USA (0.3%). Allied lives sacrificed (in Normandy, Burma, Coventry, etc.) are of course no less important than Soviet deaths. There were simply much fewer of them. (For the concept of 'winning war at the cinema' see page 245.) **[b]** After the war (1947-53), and in return for state-of-the-art US reconnaissance equipment, 'neutral' Sweden ran numerous spying errands in the Baltic for the USA against the Soviet Union ([\[W\]](#) *sv Catalinaaffären* [190602]).

[5] *Neutrality*. Although Sweden was officially neutral during World War II, its government, with Social Democrats at the helm, let the Nazis use the nation's railways for: [1] transit of combatants between Germany and occupied Norway;<sup>23</sup> [2] transit of Nazi troops and arms through Sweden to fight alongside their right-wing nationalist allies in Finland against invading Soviet 'commies'.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, 90% of Sweden's wartime iron ore export went to Nazi Germany whose steel industry relied to a large extent on high-grade Swedish ore to manufacture arms for the *Reich's* theatres of war, including Finland, the USSR, North Africa and the *Luftwaffe's* bombs over Britain.<sup>25</sup> After the Nazi defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, Swedish neutrality veered towards the winning allied side. Here it's important to add that Sweden's ethically dubious compromises with neutrality during World War II — 'non-belligerence' might be a more accurate term — can be seen as *realpolitik* that also had some positive outcomes.<sup>26</sup>

[6] *The IB Affair*. In 1973 two investigative journalists revealed that the Swedish government had since the 1950s been running a secret intelligence agency — IB (*Informationsbyrå*) — that was unaccountable to Parliament. IB's illegal activities included: [a] wiretapping individuals on the political left ('commies'); [b] infiltrating left-wing organisations ('commies') and inducing them to commit criminal acts; [c] breaking into foreign embassies;

23. Transit type 1, a *k a permittenttraffik*. Between 1941 and 1943 Swedish Rail (SJ) carried more than a million German soldiers in each direction between Trelleborg (southern tip of Sweden) and Norway, using the following routes: [1] via Gothenburg and Kornsjo to Oslo; [2] via Östersund and Storlien to Trondheim; [3] via Boden and Riksgränsen to Narvik (see *Sveriges militära beredskap 1939–1945* (1982: 498), cited in [W] *Transit of German troops through Finland and Sweden*). There's no room here to discuss the highly irregular transport of German artillery via Storlien, nor the clandestine shipment of heavy water (for nuclear bombs) from Rjukan (Norway) or Ljungaverk (Sweden) to Germany.
24. [a] Transit type 2 mainly used the iron ore line (*Malmбанан*) from the North Sea port of Narvik (Norway) via Kiruna (Swedish Lapland) and Boden; thence to the Swedish-Finnish border at Haparanda-Tornio. This transit was a flagrant breach of Sweden's neutrality because it involved 'the transfer of Germany's fully armed and combat-ready 163rd Infantry Division' ... (source, see fnnt. 23). [b] One illustration of 'common cause' between Nazi Germany and Finnish nationalists is the clandestinely recorded conversation between Hitler and Finland's General Mannerheim on the occasion of the latter's 75th birthday on 4 June, 1942 ([W] *Hitler and Mannerheim recording*; [M] oET1WaG5sFk [190531]).
25. 43% of all iron ore used in Germany's wartime industries came from Swedish mines. Statistics are taken from *Sweden's iron ore exports to Germany, 1933–1944* (Karlbohm, 1965).
26. The positive outcomes include: [1] saving most Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Jews from extermination; [2] preventing thousands of Swedes from becoming casualties of war; [3] receiving many children as refugees from war-torn Finland.

[d] conducting espionage abroad; [e] collaborating closely with the CIA and Shin Bet. Such activities were predictably denied by those implicated and the two investigative journalists were just as predictably jailed for ‘threatening national security’.<sup>27</sup>

[7] *Development double standards.* While Sweden had for many years been – and still is – one of the least miserly OECD nation in terms of overseas development aid,<sup>28</sup> its relation to the developing world does not always paint a pretty picture. [7a] One example was the 1966 conflict at LAMCO’s Nimba iron mines in northern Liberia between Swedish management and the local labour force.<sup>29</sup> [7b] At around the same time, the military dictatorship in Brazil was selling off their nation’s public assets to foreign business at bargain prices. Swedish corporations swooped down like vultures, increasing their investments in the country by a factor of eleven between 1969 and 1974.<sup>30</sup> Those investments exacerbated the widening gulf between Brazil’s rich and poor in several ways. For example, some Swedish companies targeted Brazil’s moneyed minority by producing profitable luxury items like phones (Ericsson),<sup>31</sup> floor polishers (Electrolux) and single-use wet wipes (Cederroth) instead of offering affordable products that might have been useful to the majority of Brazilians.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Sweden contravened its own arms trade regulations by allowing weapon manufacturers to export to dictatorships in Latin America, including Brazil.<sup>33</sup> But perhaps the most striking example of development double standards is [7c] the mismatch between progressive Social-Democrat politics and Swedish ‘business

27. The journalists were Jan Guillou and Peter Bratt. Shin Bet is, like *Mossad*, part of the Israeli Security Agency. IB fed Shin Bet information about targets to bomb in Egypt and the Palestinian territories. IB reported only to senior Social-Democrat cabinet members, notably to Defence Minister Sven Andersson and Prime Minister Olof Palme. ‘No member of IB has ever been indicted, nor has any politician or government official, despite the revelation of widespread extra-constitutional and criminal activity’ (☒ *IB Affair* 190602).

28. Source: ‘Foreign Aid: these countries are the most generous’, *World Economic Forum*, (2016) ☒ [weforum.org/agenda/2016/08/foreign-aid-these-countries-are-the-most-generous/](http://weforum.org/agenda/2016/08/foreign-aid-these-countries-are-the-most-generous/) [190602]. In 2016 Sweden gave 1.4% of its gross national income in foreign aid, Norway and the UAE 1.1% each, and the UK 0.7%. The USA did not feature in the top 12.

29. See ☒sv *Liberian American Swedish Mining Company* (LAMCO) [190602] and Bohlin (1967).

30. Brundenius (1978: 104–105), based on document *Fiscalização e registro de capitais estrangeiros no Banco Central do Brasil*, 1976. Among those Swedish corporations are: Ericsson do Brasil, Saab-Scania, SKF Rolamentos, ASEA Eletrica, Electrolux, Facit, Monark, Atlas Copco, Sandvik do Brasil, ESAB, Fagersta-Vulcanus, Alfa Laval, Produtos Perstorp, Dynapac, Interprint (Bonnier), Astra Química, Cederroth, Aços Kanthal.

31. There were no mobile phones in 1970s Brazil and *favelas* weren’t connected to the network.



as usual' in relation to Chile in the 1970s. As described in connection with the US-backed fascist coup in 1973 (pp. 245-261), you had on the one hand two Swedish government officials — ambassador Harald Edelstam and prime minister Olof Palme— acting with remarkable courage to save innocent people from the Chilean junta's torture chambers and death camps;<sup>34</sup> on the other hand, the same Swedish government had seen fit to block export of Chilean copper during the democratic *Unidad Popular* period (1970-73), only to start re-importing it *after* the fascist coup.<sup>35</sup>

### *The postwar generation*

[8] *The postwar generation* factor is really a second phase of the 'disappearing conjuncture' issue discussed in §2 (p.358). That's because the 'grandchildren' of the little girl in Figure 77a (p.356), i.e. Swedes born in the 1940s and early 1950s, grew up under very different circumstances to those of their parents and grandparents. To save space I'll account for those differences in the briefest possible terms (§§8a-d, next).

[8a] The new generation had no first-hand experience of the struggle and sacrifices involved in securing the radical reforms symbolised by the change from Figure 77 to 78 and sketched on pages 355-358.

[8b] *Solidarity*. Many in the new generation were troubled by the sort of ethical contradictions just summarised (§§2-7). Brought up to respect basic values of justice, equality, solidarity and democracy, and to believe in their

32. [a] For a full account of the inegalitarian effects of Swedish business practices in Brazil 1964-1976, see Brundenius (1978). [b] The 1976 report *Crescimento e pobreza* from the Episcopate of São Paulo found that a head of family had to work 84 hours in 1964 to earn enough for his own and his family's monthly survival; that figure had risen to 97 hours in 1968 and to 155 hours per month in 1974. [c] See also 'Breakfast at Ibotirama', pp. 26-31, esp. pp. 28-29, incl. ftnt. 9. [d] Floor polishers were useless if you had an earth floor and single-use wet wipes incomprehensible if you had to save and re-use to make ends meet.
33. Swedish weapons export regulations state that no defence material can be sold to states 'in which extensive and severe human rights violations occur' (as in Brazil under the military) or to states 'in conflict with another state' ... or 'embroiled in an international conflict that might lead to armed conflict' ... or which 'has internal armed conflict' (Wendell, 2012). It seems that Swedish authorities (today: *Inspektionen för Strategiska Produkter*, ISP) often turned a blind eye to these principles when granting export licenses.
34. For the execrable events in Chile, see pp. 245-257. For an account of Edelstam's actions, see pp. 253-256. For Palme's role in facing up to the bullies in Santiago and Washington, including the possibility of Sweden declaring war on Chile, see 🐼 *Palme* (2012), especially the 90" cut I've posted with English subtitles at [📄/Clips/EdelstamPalmeChile.mp4](#) [190604].
35. Svedberg (2009: 107). See also p. 246 in this book, esp. ftnt 48.

country as humanistically less unprincipled than other OECD nations, they took those values to be applicable to the whole of humanity. As one of the most widely sung Swedish solidarity songs of the late 1960s put it, ‘Vietnam is near you, right outside your window’ (ex. 201).<sup>36</sup>

Ex. 201. FNL-grupperna (1968/1972): *Vietnam är nära* (v1, incipit; ♪ Theodorakis)



That spirit of solidarity was also relevant to the liberation struggle in Latin America, including Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador and other places where countless crimes against humanity were committed in the name of what Argentina's butcher-dictator Videla called 'Western and Christian civilisation' (pp. 224-225). It also involved other causes of equality and justice, such as Civil Rights and the anti-apartheid movement. The new Swedes grew up with a TV in the home and had greater access than previous generations to knowledge informing opinion not only about international solidarity but also about issues of gender, sexual orientation and the environment.

[8c] *Education and class identity*. There was between 1945 and 1968 a fourfold increase in the number of young Swedes successfully completing their *college* education,<sup>37</sup> and between 1960 and 1970 a 310% increase in the number of Swedes attending university.<sup>38</sup> These developments accompanied the gradual change to a service- and knowledge-based economy from one that had largely been based on manufacturing.<sup>39</sup> They also signalled the emer-

36. The lyrics of verse 1 run: *Vietnam är nära, utanför ditt fönster blåser vinden rök ifrån Haiphong* | *Vietnam är nära, nära som ett löfte om att förtryckarna ska störtas från sin tron en gång*, i.e. 'Vietnam is near you, right outside your window smoke blows direct from Haiphong | Vietnam is near you, as close as a promise that the oppressors will sooner or later be toppled from their throne.' Personal statement: I haven't sung *Vietnam är nära* since 1974 but I'm still (2021) deeply moved by its tune and words, even if I'm only singing it inside my head as I type these words. I can certainly hear my sister-in-law singing the song (p. 3).

37. *College* in the US sense, i.e. *gymnasium* (Sweden), *lycée* (French), *key stage 5* (UK). Completion statistics for total population in Stockholm: 1945: 10%; 1955: 17%; 1968: 40%; 1998: 60%; source: *Andel 19-åringar i befolkningen med examen/slutbetyg från läroverk/gymnasium* 📄 [stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/6483](https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/6483) [190704].

38. From 37,000 students in 1960 to 120,000 in 1970; source: 'Revoluten som förändrade högskolan' in *Publikt* (2014-04-17), periodical for Swedish state employee union ST (*Statstjänstemannaförbundet*) 📄 [publikt.se/artikel/revoluten-som-forandrade-hogskolan-21323](https://publikt.se/artikel/revoluten-som-forandrade-hogskolan-21323) [190704].


gence of a new, well-educated social group whose members would have to confront downward social mobility and descent into the precariat.<sup>40</sup> For earlier generations, education at post-secondary levels had been a sign of privilege,<sup>37-38</sup> so older socialists and Social-Democrats were often sceptical about the class loyalty of the new educated generation who seemed to have ‘airs of superiority’, like being fluent in at least one foreign language, able to visit countries outside the Nordic area,<sup>41</sup> *au fait* with issues of right and wrong in far-flung places, etc. The new generation hadn’t had to struggle to live in decent housing, or languish under exploitative apprenticeship schemes, or do repetitive or dangerous manual work. Instead they could extend their teenage years, staying on at home without having to earn a living while they joined their peers on campus and listened to their favourite bands. And yet they complained and protested. Should they really be taken seriously? Could they really be trusted?

[8d] *Alienation v. agency*. One particularly harsh contradiction between the ideas of the new generation and those of the prewar generation of Social-Democrats is found in the critique of the sort of society that the new generation was inheriting. I’ll start this part of the account with two examples (202 and 203).

Ex. 202. Marie Selander (1971): *Törnrosa* (♩ Leif Nylén); incipit v.1.



*Törnrosa*, (*Dornröschen*, *Little Briar Rose*, i.e. *The Sleeping Beauty*) has, example 202 tells us, ‘taken a valium to ease her pain’ (fig. 79a). She spends all day ti-

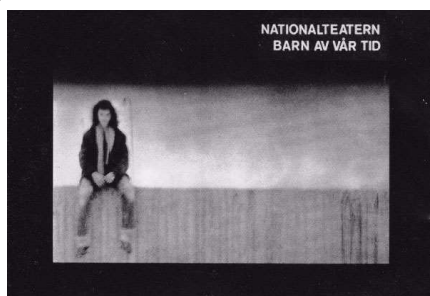
39. In 1951, 33.3% of the Swedish work force was employed in manufacturing. That proportion descended to 28.5% in 1976 and to 20.6% in 2000 ( [historicalstatistics.org](https://historicalstatistics.org) [190704]). Manufacturing jobs either disappeared through automation and rationalisation or were outsourced to nations with cheaper labour (e.g. Brazil, see §7, above).

40. On the proletarianisation of the middle classes, see Hulsroj (2018). *PRECARIAT*: ‘People living a precarious existence, without security or predictability, especially job security’, including the *COGNITARIAT* — ‘social group formed by people with high academic training, who receive a low salary not according to their educational level’ — (both defined in Wiktionary [190702]). As one Gothenburg cab driver told me in 1990: ‘These days you have to have a doctorate to feed the ducks’ (*Nuförtiden får man va’ fil. dr. för att få mata ankorna*).

41. Youth Interrail passes started in 1972. In the mid 1960s I took cheap student flights in DC-3s from the UK to Sweden (Gothenburg Torslanda) and The Netherlands (Schipol).

dying up and making herself look nice for the fairy-tale prince who never shows up to kiss away her loneliness and cure her anxiety attacks. Meanwhile, the thorn thicket throttling her life grows ever thicker and ‘as tall as a tower block’ in the concrete suburb she inhabits.<sup>42</sup> Single mother, she spends some of her child benefit money on a bottle of wine to share with the imaginary prince but ends up drowning her disappointment by drinking it all herself. At night she takes a sleeping pill but to no avail. She just sobs, her pillow soaked in tears. This narrative is set to a minor-key *folkvisa* tune (pp. 293–295) containing some rather un-Swedish tonal elements.<sup>43</sup>


Fig. 79. (a) ‘Sleeping Beauty’/*Törnrosa*; (b) ‘Kids of our time’/*Barn av vår tid*.<sup>44</sup>



Life is no less bleak for the ‘Child of our time’ pictured out of focus and off-centre on a grey wall in a concrete suburb somewhere out in northeastern Gothenburg (Fig. 79b). The picture is sleeve art for Nationalteatern’s 1978 album *Barn av vår tid* (‘Kid[s] of Our Time’)<sup>45</sup> whose title track includes the following short extract (ex. 203).

42. *Törnrosa*’s tall tower block is in Hässelby Gård, penultimate stop going northwest on the Stockholm Metro’s green line. ‘Concrete suburb’ is explained in the Glossary.

43. [a] The clockwise circle-of-fifths progression ending each verse in *Törnrosa* — Bb–F–C–G [–Dm], i.e. bVI–bIII–bVII–IV [–i] in D — is similar to the *Hey Joe* loop ♯: C–G–D–A–E: (Hendrix, 1966) and the ♯: C–F–G–Dm: of *Poor Murdered Woman* (Albion Country Band, 1971) whose tune, like *Törnrosa*, is basically dorian (1̇ 2̇ b3̇ 4̇ 5̇ Δ6̇ b7̇), a tonal trait foreign to the Swedish *folkvisa*. [b] *Törnrosa* includes a bizarre soprano sax track comprising an uninterrupted stream of busy jazz-impro-style quavers in the same register as the lead vocals. It’s unclear what the track adds to the recording, apart from an I’M-A-CERTIFIED-JAZZ-MUSICIAN message in a non-jazz style context.

44. The Roy Lichtenstein-inspired montage in figure 79a is cropped from the colour illustration *Valium Lover Ben Frost Is Dead*  weheartit.com/entry/134471620 [190707]. Fig. 79b is part of the album cover to *Barn av vår tid* (Nationalteatern, 1978).

45. *Barn* (cf. Scottish *bairn*) is a neuter noun whose indefinite singular and plural forms are identical, e.g. *Jag är barn* (‘I’m a child’) and *Vi är barn* (‘We are children’).

Ex. 203. Nationalteatern (1978): *Barn av vår tid* (at 2:18)

are treated quite humanely if they get into trouble with the law.<sup>52</sup> What can they — and the individuals singing on their behalf — possibly have to complain about after everything earlier generations had to confront in order to bring us from abject misery to where we are today (pp.355-357)? Well, the cause of their complaint is obviously whatever leads ‘the kids’ to act antisocially and whatever drives both them and Törnrosa into the quagmire of psychoactive substance abuse. Now, I can’t account in any depth for that ‘whatever’ in this musicology book but it seems to me that the problem lies in a *disconnect between self and society*, more particularly in an alienation of the individual from the intrinsically human trait of deriving pleasure and a sense of personal worth through being useful to and appreciated by others without that use value being subjected to quantification in monetary terms as exchange value.<sup>53</sup> It’s through such alienation that the ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and the wayward ‘child of our time’ both experience their social environment as hostile. They’re seen as social liabilities because they cost the taxpayer money and many of them see *themselves* as personal failures. The single mother probably even blames herself for the broken partnership that left her to bring up kids on her own.

### *Self and society*

There’s an obvious paradox in the sort of alienation just described. While *symptoms* of the problem have a clearly individual, personal and psychological aspect, their *causes* are more societal because: [1] thousands of other individuals in similar situations feel and react similarly (intersubjectivity as social objectivity); [2] publicly funded institutions have to intervene by distributing child benefits, running youth detention centres, subsidising prescription drugs, etc. Such measures are essential to the social waste

51. For prescription costs in Sweden, see [W](#)SV *Recept (läkemedel)* [190711].

52. Until 1982, young offenders were sent to *ungdomsvårdsskola* (‘youth care school’). As an active member (1963-65) of the Cambridge University Social Service Organisation (CUSSO), I came into contact with pupils at a nearby ‘approved school’. I also read about the Swedish *ungdomsvårdsskola* system which seemed progressive by comparison. I visited *Sundbo ungdomsvårdsskola* near Fagersta (Västmanland) in the summer of 1964. In 1982, *Särskilda ungdomshem* (‘special youth homes’) replaced the *ungdomsvårdsskola*.

53. See Marx’s fourth type of alienation between human beings and their *Gattungswesen* (≈ ‘species-character’) (Santilli, 1973). The quantification of a human’s worth in terms of exchange value is in itself alienating.

management services run by the state (§4 p.359) in attempts to plaster over the most obvious cracks in the social fabric of capitalism, but they do little to address the root causes of the alienation. I'm referring here to a 'lack of space' in which to 'derive pleasure and a sense of personal worth through being useful to and appreciated by others'. This intrinsically human trait may involve a little altruism but self-denial in the interests of a greater good is not the main issue in the sort of self-fulfilment referred to here. To explain: being of use to others means trying to make things better in the world around you, or at least to prevent them from getting worse. Such efforts involve confronting, criticising, questioning and challenging whatever is in need of improvement or whatever threatens an existing good. It's through such contestation that individuals can become *agents of change* with the power to make a positive difference in the family, the local community, or at work, or in a wider collective context, as long as there is political space in which such change can be negotiated.

Unfortunately, potential agents of positive change usually face two major obstacles. One is the monolith of established political practice like central bargaining, monopolisation of capital, abandonment of economic democracy projects, commie bashing, etc. As we saw earlier (p.358 ff.), these policies made participation in Sweden's political processes more difficult than had been the case when grass-roots democracy and 'single-issue' groups — unions, housing and education associations, etc. — challenged the previous status quo and contributed massively to the labour movement's remarkable prewar progress in terms of social and economic reform.

The other obstacle concerns social atomisation, in particular the effects of epistemically prioritising, as is the norm in liberalist Western culture,<sup>54</sup> the individual before neighbourhood, community or any other concept designating just one constituent category of humanity. Of course, the more populous concepts all involve individuals but fixation on the self, on the individual as *the* cardinal unit in human society, skews understanding of

54. As Madureira (2018: 366) points out, Aristotle (*Politics* 1253a18-20) posits the city (πολις) as 'prior in the order of nature' to the family/household and the individual. Individual-fixation is in other words a phenomenon of the bourgeois Enlightenment, not of Western culture in general. Nor is it a totalitarian concept: it's just that while the polis can survive if it loses an individual, the individual cannot survive in the polis if there is no polis!

links between self and society and obscures potential sites of contestation in which the individual subject can become an agent of change. The conceptual blocking of those sites means that Törnrosa is more likely to blame herself for her broken marriage than to join a feminist group demanding decent jobs and child care services for single parents. It'll mean that the 'kids of our time' will continue to destroy their brain cells with paint thinner fumes and to bash up pensioners instead of joining their peers and occupying City Hall until they get their youth centre back. But there is one institution that more than any other locks us into such self-fixated and self-destructive states of individualism: 'advertising', or, to call it by its rightful name, CONSUMERIST PROPAGANDA.<sup>55</sup>

Like everywhere else in the postwar western world, consumerist propaganda in Sweden has since the 1950s dominated the force field at the intersection between self and society. It's there that individual consumers ('customers') are triaged like cattle into psycho-sociologically determined herds of intersubjectivity (target groups, personality types, etc.) at which propaganda 'creatives' can aim their weapons of destruction and deceit. I will not aggravate the reader (nor risk a heart attack myself) by exemplifying such iniquity but I am duty-bound to underline that we hear/see brands shouting or pouting at us — and at millions of other atomised subjects in the herd — several thousand times daily.<sup>56</sup> Thanks to this carpet bombing, consumerist propaganda has so massively occupied the public headspace housing the dynamic between self and society that it can be hard to even imagine links between the two other than those constructed for consumerist purposes. We are instead primed as targets to bond with a brand through a 'look', a 'lifestyle', a celebrity or some other spurious symbol of identity and belonging. Those links and identities, determined *not by but for* us, are rarely

55. Don't believe those who say that advertising isn't propaganda. Listen instead to the father of modern 'advertising', Edward Bernays ([W](#)). "'Propaganda'", he said, 'got to be a bad word because of the Germans using it. So I came up with'... "public relations"... instead' (Bernays, interviewed in 1991 by Adam Curtis in *30 Years of the Self*, 1 (2002)). Besides, Bernays' seminal (and cynical) book about PR and the manipulation of the mass conscious, including the notion of 'engineering consent' is called *Propaganda* (1928).

56. According to Red Crow Marketing Inc., US-Americans are exposed to between 4,000 and 10,000 ads a day (Marshall, 2015). The figures are similar for Sweden, see *Så många reklambudskap nås du av dagligen* [🔗](#) /xrefs/ReklamDagligen.htm [190713].



made explicit. Indeed, ‘People must be trained to desire, not to need’ and ‘You have to play to people’s *irrational emotions*’ are position statements prescribed by prestigious business and PR gurus.<sup>57</sup> In other words, the emotional, implicit and psychological aspects of propagandist links between self and society are used to channel consumer regression into irrational states of desire: it’s an infantilisation process involving subversion of the individual’s object relations and it’s something our society seems to blithely accept as normal.<sup>58</sup> Such machinations and their apparent normalcy make it difficult to identify the true nature of the consumerist individual, even harder to contest it. But contested it was in Sweden around 1970,<sup>59</sup> *and through MUSIC*.

Now, the idea of music as a site of contestation for an emancipated notion of the individual can seem paradoxical if you focus *solely* on music’s famously emotional and non-verbal traits, or if you suffer from the MUSIC IS MUSIC syndrome.<sup>60</sup> Otherwise, as the semio-musical sections of this book suggest (pp.36-39, 75-218), and as any serious account of musical life<sup>61</sup> will demonstrate, the social organisation of music as a symbolic system involving emotional, somatic, non-verbal and connotative types of cognition is exactly what makes it a suitable site in which to create, negotiate and contest patterns of subjectivity. This dynamic is illustrated in 1970s Sweden when many young Swedes made music that in one way or another transgressed existing boundaries of sociomusical organisation. One recurrent symptom of the contradiction was when commercial record labels chose not to sign compe-

57. The first statement is by Paul Mazur of Lehman Brothers and was published in the 1927 *Harvard Business Review* (Curtis, 2002: 16:32); the second is by Pat Jackson, colleague of Edward Bernays (ftnt 55), interviewed in Curtis (2002: 09:20) (Jackson’s *emphasis*). Playing to people’s *irrational emotions* meant, says Curtis, referring to Bernays’ *Torches of Freedom* campaign to get women to smoke, ‘that irrelevant objects could become powerful emotional symbols of how you wanted to be seen by others’;... and, at 28:11, ‘By stimulating people’s inner desires and then sating them with consumer products [Bernays] was creating a new way to manage the irrational force of the masses. He called it the “engineering of consent”’. This was something that greatly interested Goebbels (*ibid.*, ±31:00).

58. ‘Object relations’: see Klein (1921); see also [W] *Object relation theory* [190721].

59. The contestation occurred even though substantive theories of commodity fetishism in the modern media and critical histories of ‘advertising’ had yet to be published. For example, Haug’s *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (‘Critique of commodity aesthetics’, 1971) did not appear in Swedish until 1975 (as *Kritik av varuestetiken*).

60. See pp.17-18. For definitions of ‘MUSIC’, see *Music’s Meanings* (Tagg, 2013: 43-53).

61. ‘Musical life’: in terms of production, dissemination, education, funding, social policy, etc.

tent new acts because their songs, popular in circles outside the music business's established channels of circulation, were judged to be a bad investment because they were incompatible with the taste profiles of previously known target audiences (see 'Progg and svensktopp', p.381 ff.).

Take *Törnrosa* (ex. 202 p.365) as a hypothetical case in point. The song is clearly a *folkvisa* (pp.293-295) because it's a metrically regular, strophic, multi-verse minor-key tune with Swedish lyrics; but it's just as clearly *not* a *folkvisa* because: [1] it's in the dorian mode ('un-Swedish'); [2] it features a *clockwise* circle-of-fifths progression ( $\flat VI - \flat III - \flat VII - IV [-i]$ : 'too rock'); [3] its backing includes an incessant stream of improvisatory quavers on sax ('too jazz');<sup>62</sup> [4] its lyrics put *Törnrosa* in a block of flats rather than, say, by a hand loom in a timber cottage or herding cattle in a cow pasture. Nevertheless, *Törnrosa* in early 1970s Sweden seemed to speak to a significant number of musicians and their audiences, most likely due to, rather than despite, its crossing of pre-existing style and genre boundaries.<sup>63</sup>

Such instances of 'different music' with different functions for different audiences but no place in the music business's commercial order of things were a central factor leading to the creation of Sweden's 'alternative' or 'progressive' music movement, commonly referred to by the single-syllable abbreviation *PROGG* [prɔg]. *PROGG* — the word is explained at the start of the next chapter — can be seen as one pole in the musical field of the 'Coca-Cola culture debate' which was often quite confrontational. That confrontation provides the contextual basis for a final discussion of 'meaning' in Abba's *Fernando*.

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62. See footnote 43 p.366.

63. For example, our band (☒SV Röda Kapellet) often performed *Törnrosa* live (1973-5). It was particularly appreciated by the more gender-politically aware members of the audience,