

National Day of Sweden

06 JUNE 1996

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT



General Facts on Sweden

Geography and Climate

Sweden has an area of 450,000 km² (174,000 sq. mi.) — similar to California, Cameroon, Iraq, Spain or Thailand. Half its land surface is covered with forest. Less than 10% is farmland. Nearly 100,000 lakes dot the countryside, which is relatively flat. A long mountain chain in the northwest reaches heights of up to 2,111 m (6,926 ft). There are thousands of islands along the jagged coast. The warm Gulf Stream in the Atlantic gives Sweden a milder climate than other areas equally far north. Stockholm, the capital, is at almost the same latitude as southern Greenland but has an average temperature of about +18°C (64°F) in July. The winter temperatures average slightly below freezing and snowfall is moderate. Far northern Sweden has long and cold winters and bright summers of moderate temperatures; in June and July daylight lasts around the clock.

The People

Sweden has a population of 8.8 million, with about 85% living in the southern half of the country. Around 90% belong to the Church of Sweden, which is Lutheran. Swedish is a Germanic language. Like other industrialized countries, Sweden has a low birth rate which, however, has been slowly rising since the 1980s. Life expectancy is high about 75.9 years for men and 80.9 for women. Since the 1940s, immigration — mostly from neighboring Scandinavian countries but also from elsewhere in the world — has accounted for over 40% of the population growth. Sweden has two minority groups of native inhabitants in the north: the Finnish-speaking people of the northeast and the Sami (Lapp) population.

Parliamentary Democracy

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. The King, Carl XVI Gustaf, today has only ceremonial functions as Head of State. Parliament consists of one Chamber, whose members are directly elected by proportional representation for four-year terms as from January 1, 1995. Sweden has universal suffrage and the voting age is 18. Voter turnout is traditionally very high, 85-90%.

After the 1994 elections the Social Democratic Party was returned to power and formed a minority government with 162 of the 349 seats in Parliament. The Social Democratic Party has held power alone or in coalitions during the periods 1932-1976 and 1982-1991, while the nonsocialist parties were in government 1976-1982 and 1991-1994.

There are 13 ministries and these are small units mainly concerned with preparing new government bills. Enforcement of the laws is handled by 100 or so relatively independent central administrative agencies and the 24 county administrations. Each county also has a popularly elected council entitled to levy an income tax and is responsible chiefly for health care in its area. Today Sweden has 288 municipalities covering the entire country (including rural areas), each with a popularly elected council which collects an income tax and operates such public services as schools, child and elder care, utilities, housing, and cultural and leisure activities. Immigrants resident for three years in Sweden have the right to vote and run for office in local elections.

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen investigate suspected abuses of authority by civil servants. Other ombudsmen protect the public by keeping a watchful eye on consumer rights, ethnic and sex discrimination, press ethics, and the rights of children and young people, and persons with disabilities. Most government documents are open to inspection by the public and press at any time.

Foreign Policy and Defense

The end of the Cold War and of the political division of Europe has created new perspectives for Sweden's foreign and security policy, and new opportunities to participate in the process of European integration. A referendum was held in November 1994 resulted in a vote for Swedish membership in the European Union and Sweden is a full member of the EU as from January 1995. Prior to membership, the EEA agreement already provided the legal framework for far-reaching economic integration between Sweden and the EU countries. The free movement of goods, services, capital and persons had been achieved in many respects. As a full member Sweden participates in the EU decision making process and can more effectively influence and contribute to the further development of European in-

tegration. Sweden's policy of non-participation in military alliances remains unchanged. It will take up observer status in the defense organisation WEU, but not membership. After the dramatic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, Sweden has taken an active part in the task of securing democracy and new security structures for the continent as a whole, for example through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process and in the Council of Europe.

Sweden's strategic location between the North Atlantic and Russia is one of the major factors determining Swedish security policy. A strong and independent national defense system is a fundamental element of Swedish security policy. The armed forces are based on general male conscription. The defense budget totals 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Sweden is an active participant in international cooperation. Strong support for the United Nations is one cornerstone of its foreign policy. Other basic elements are promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, international disarmament and protection of the environment. Sweden appropriates almost 1% of its Gross National Income (GNI) for international development aid. It is also a member of many other international organizations, such as the OECD, EFTA and the World Bank. There is far-reaching cooperation between the Nordic countries in social welfare, cultural affairs and a joint labor market.

Industry and the Economy

In the past 100 years Sweden has evolved from a largely agrarian country to one where less than 3% of the labor force is employed in agriculture. Huge increases in productivity have nonetheless kept Sweden more than 80% self-sufficient in food. A new agricultural policy was enacted in 1990, which reduced state subsidies and adapted agricultural production to the international market.

During the second half of the 1980s, the economy experienced excessive domestic demand leading to the need to tighten government economic policies. Due to capacity restrictions the upswing in industrial output soon leveled off, and the growth rate remained moderate compared to other industrialized countries during the same period. The overheating of the labor market eroded the cost competitiveness of Swedish industry and contributed to a deep recession between 1990 and 1993. Another major factor was overbuilding and a resultant drop in real estate values, which severely affected the financial services sector. After a fact devaluation of the krona late in 1992 and a substantial policy reform, an export-led recovery has been initiated in 1994. The manufacturing sector peaked some time around 1960 in terms of its share of GDP and total employment. In recent decades Sweden, like other industrialized economies, has evolved rapidly into a service- and knowledge-oriented society. Between 1960 and 1993 employment in the service sector rose from about 1,700,000 to 2,800,000, while manufacturing employment fell from around 800,000 to less than 800,000. This trend toward a service economy mainly took the form of a growing public sector, since key welfare-oriented services such as health care and education have been provided mainly under public auspices. Manufacturing still plays a dominant role in exports. In 1993 manufacturing accounted for more than 80% of total merchandise and service exports. In 1993, 45% of industrial output was exported, compared with 8% of services. Meanwhile 40% of domestically used industrial products were imports, compared with 11% of service consumption. While most manufacturing has been exposed to mounting competition, this process has only recently begun in the service sector.

Of Sweden's traditional basic industries, forest products still play a major role in the economy. The engineering industry (excluding shipyards) has expanded and to day accounts for nearly half of manufacturing, but the fastest-growing manufacturing sector is pharmaceuticals, which remains rather small in terms of output and employment.

Sweden is among the world's biggest spenders on industrial research and development in relation to national output (3% of GDP in 1989). About 80% of R&D expenditures are related to transportation and telecommunications equipment, pharmaceu-

ticals and machinery. A small number of industrial groups also account for most R&D spending, with ABB, Ericsson, Volvo, Saab-Scania, Astra and Kabi-Pharmacia among the leaders.

Natural Resources

Sweden has rich natural supplies of coniferous forest, water power, iron ore, uranium and other minerals but lacks significant oil and coal deposits.

The only iron ore mines still in production are situated in the far north. Their production is mainly exported. There are also a number of mines with sulphide ores in central and northern Sweden.

Sweden's vast forests of spruce, pine and other softwoods supply a highly developed sawmill, pulp, paper and finished wood product industry. Despite high domestic consumption, Sweden exports about 60% of its forest products.

Cheap hydro power was a major factor in Sweden's industrial development. Today around 15% of the country's energy supply comes from its hydroelectric plants, many of them on the main northern rivers. Over 40% of energy consumed in Sweden comes from imported oil, 7% from imported coal and coke. Sweden's twelve nuclear reactors provide over 15% of total energy or almost 50% of electrical energy. The rest of the energy supply comes from biofuels, peat, waste heat, etc. After an advisory referendum in 1980, Parliament decided that the use of nuclear power should be phased out by 2010. That does not appear to be the end of the matter, however, for the subject is one which continues to give rise to debate.

Education

Nine years of schooling are compulsory for all children from the age of 6 or 7. Over 90% go on to the upper secondary school, which offers both vocational and academic courses. Schools are run by municipalities and provide free instruction, books and lunches.

A separate municipal adult education system enables adults with inadequate schooling to reach the same level of education as young people.

Altogether there are almost forty institutions of higher education in Sweden, operated by the State and providing free instruction. About half the students are women, and a large

number are people over 25 taking advantage of special admission rules for those with work experience. Almost one fourth of adult Swedes have a higher education. Private, government subsidized adult education associations arrange study circles for 2.5 million course participants a year.

MESSAGE

Today, the 6th of June, Swedes all over the world celebrate the Swedish National Day. Before 1983 this particular day was celebrated as the Swedish Flag Day. The reason for the choice was twofold: the election of Gustaf Vasa as Sweden's king on the 6 June 1523 laid the foundation of Sweden as a separate state; and on the same day in 1809, Sweden adopted a new constitution which included the establishment of civil rights and liberties. In the capital Stockholm and in towns and villages, men, women and children are joyfully celebrating, in early summer weather, our National Day.

The Swedish community takes pride in celebrating this day in Bangladesh. Many of us are doing so together with Bangladeshi friends as a symbol of the excellent relations between Sweden and Bangladesh. These relations have grown during the last 25 years into a solid partnership, based on mutual understanding and respect. Our development programmes, which started immediately after the independence of 1971, are concentrated in three main sectors: rural development, primary health care and education. An important feature of Swedish development cooperation in Bangladesh is poverty alleviation encouraging and emphasizing women's participation in national development. Since long Swedish NGOs are working in the country.

Many of the leading Swedish companies are represented in Bangladesh. During the last years there has been an increasing number of commercial contacts. I do hope these contacts will broaden into stronger economic links benefitting our two nations. Swedish and Bangladeshi military personnel have worked together in many places under the UN peace-keeping flag and a number of Bangladeshis are studying in Sweden every year. Bangladeshis living in Sweden form an increasingly important element of our bilateral relations. All these reflect the strong and friendly relations existing between our two countries.

I will end this message with a personal

note. My wife and I are leaving Bangladesh later this month after three and a half years. We have travelled extensively from Teknaf in the South to Kurigram and Dinajpur in the North and from the Sundarbans in the West to Rangamati in the East. It is a most beautiful and hospitable country. The people are resilient, hard working and want to live in peace and in a democratic society. We have met many interesting people and learned a lot for ourselves. To all our friends, Ann-Charlotte and I would like to extend our warmest thanks for your friendship and hospitality.



Bjorn Sternby
Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh



King Carl XVI Gustaf

King Carl XVI Gustaf was born on April 30, 1946, at Haga Palace, near Stockholm. He was the youngest child and only son of the Hereditary Prince Gustaf Adolf and Princess Sibylla of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha. Carl Gustaf has four older sisters, Margaretha, Birgitta, Desiree and Christina. Prince Gustaf Adolf was killed in an airplane crash in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1947. Princess Sibylla died in 1972.

Carl Gustaf became Crown Prince of Sweden when his grandfather, King Gustaf VI Adolf, acceded to the throne in 1950. Following the death of his grandfather, Carl Gustaf acceded to the throne on September 15, 1973, at the age of 27. He chose the motto: "For Sweden — in keeping with the times". By this declaration the King stressed his desire to meet with the demands on a modern monarch.

Alfred Nobel and the Nobel Prizes

Alfred Nobel, nineteenth-century Swedish industrialist and creator of the prizes that bear his name, was the inventor of dynamite (patented 1867). This explosive has played and continues to play an important role in the industrial development of the world.

The use of dynamite has augmented the supply of iron ore and other minerals needed for the increased construction of machines, locomotives, railroad cars and motor vehicles. It has also facilitated the construction of railroads and highways across the continents and thereby allowed mass distribution of goods. Through his invention, Nobel was thus a benefactor of mankind, just as he stipulated that the winners of the prizes established by his will should be.

EXPERIENCE had taught Alfred Nobel to dislike and distrust lawyers, and late in 1895 he made out his final will without any professional advice or assistance. This will, which replaced two previous ones made in 1889 and 1893, stipulated that the income from his estate, which on his death in 1896 amounted to SEK 33.2 million, should be divided annually into five equal parts and distributed "in the form of prizes to those who during the preceding year have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind." He prescribed that the prizes should be distributed as follows:

"One part to the person or persons who shall have made the most important discovery or invention in the field of physics; one part to the person who shall have made the most important chemical discovery or improvement; one part to the person who shall have made the most important discovery in the domain of physiology or medicine; one part to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency; and one part to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for holding and promoting peace congresses." His will also prescribes that in the distribution of the prizes "no consideration whatever shall be given to the nationality of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he is a Scandinavian or not."

Legally, however, the will did not actually bequeath the estate itself to anyone, and when it was read in January 1897, it was strongly contested by some of his relatives. Furthermore, Nobel had not approached the different institutions concerned to ascertain if they were willing to assume responsibility for awarding the prizes. Politicians criticized the idea on the whole, and King Oskar II of Sweden and Norway was sceptical of it for

various reasons. More than three years elapsed before the matter was finally settled, and it was then decided to organize the Nobel Foundation as legate and administrator of the Nobel fund capital, while the various bodies named in the will agreed to undertake the responsibility of awarding the prizes. A decisive role in securing the final victory by the establishing in 1900 of the Nobel Foundation was played by Nobel's young collaborator, Ragnar Sohlman who was named by Nobel Executor of the Will. Sohlman later became the Executive Director of the Foundation.

The Process of Selection

Those qualified to propose candidates for prizes are: previous Nobel Laureates in their respective fields; members of the prize-awarding bodies and of the Nobel Committees in the relevant spheres; professors in the various fields either at specific universities or those selected through special invitation by the respective prize-awarding bodies; chairmen of representative authors' organizations (literature); members of certain international parliamentary or legal organizations (peace); members of parliament and governments (peace). Anyone proposing himself for a Nobel Prize is automatically disqualified. It should be observed that only individuals belonging to these bodies have the right to propose a candidate — not the organization as such. Since neither the Swedish nor the Norwegian authorities have any influence whatsoever on the prize decisions, no official representation or support in favor of a certain candidate is of any avail.

The Committees examine the proposals which have to be at their disposal before February 1, and by early autumn their reports are submitted to the respective prize-awarding bodies. After the merits of the candidates have been discussed, the bodies announce their final decisions in mid-October. All proceedings of the prize-awarding bodies are secret.

Hearty felicitation to the Government and the friendly People of Sweden on their National Day



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