

The Swedish Story: From extreme experiment to normal nation
Jan Sjunnesson

Tells you why Sweden is so different, and illuminates the process of progressive thinking elsewhere

Sjunnesson talks about the characteristics of the Swedish people: modest, shy, not given to overstatement. And then he delivers a book which offers the appeal of embodying those values that he describes.

The book is modest. It is relatively inexpensively produced, and inexpensively edited. The author could have done a better job had he got a native English speaker to proofread it. However in general it was a very logical, methodical, and extraordinarily well-documented account of how things are in Sweden. Every page rings with the authority of a lifetime of experience and the books he cites in twelve pages of bibliography.

The book starts with a survey of Swedish history, starting with the Vikings about 12 or 13 centuries ago. He talks about their isolation and their warlike character but also their extremely egalitarian nature. He traces the personality traits of the Swedes back through history. He says that they evolved through the long cold winter nights, the enforced isolation of small villages and so on. The ability to get along with one's own company and of self-sufficiency were great virtues. He does not mention anything about evolutionary psychology, although I would say that he could certainly draw quite a bit from the work of E. O. Wilson and Robert Trivers. The Swedish temperament and personality worked well for in environment that Swedes had chosen to inhabit. An industrious, hard-working, and extremely altruistic and mutually supportive people, were exactly what it took to survive in these northern fringes of Europe, beyond the advanced civilizations of earlier eras.

The isolated Swedes were more democratic from a very early age than their European neighbors. The farmers were independent, and they had a voice in selecting their monarchs and their leaders in the period before the emergence of a middle-class. He dates the emergence of modern Sweden to the beginning of the 19th century, when it ceased to be so isolated, and came to depend more and more on trade with the rest of Europe. Sweden modernized, catching up with the rest of Europe, through the First World War. It then blossomed from 1930 to 1970, under a string of strong social democratic governments.

The labor unions were and are very strong, a reflection of the strong feelings of equality and fraternity among the people. Though labor unions had a major influence in politics, they worked intelligently with the employers, leaving the employer the right to hire and fire and to generally manage the business. This resulted in the growth of export oriented businesses at an average annual growth rate of 4%. This was the period of World War II, in which Sweden maintained its neutrality. Though it made some rather morally dubious compromises with both the communists and the and the Fascists, it stayed out of the war. During this time the government took responsibility for more and more of what had previously been done by civil society. Volunteer organizations such as the care centers were systematically

unionized and nationalized, leaving the people less autonomy, less control over their own lives. What emerged was a situation in which everybody was permitted to be an individual, independent, but quite dependent on the government. This persists today. High taxes and equal incomes and the high cost of living mean that people do not have private savings. The author says that although Sweden has a higher level of income, Italy has much more private savings per citizen. This results in a dependence on the government. Personal independence is manifested mainly through the individual not being tied down by family or social obligations. Independence of thought is another issue – neither highly prized nor highly evident.

Dependence on the government means that there is increasing self-censorship. The high water mark of liberalism was under the Olaf Palme governments in the 70s. The government had taken over just about every aspect of society, and became more and more strident in silencing dissenting opinions. There is a strong tendency toward conformism in Sweden anyhow, and the government and the labor unions were able to use unofficial methods, or official, persecutions, to quiet people that they didn't like. Today, for instance, anybody questioning the wisdom of unbounded immigration from Muslim countries is classed as a racist, a hater, and subject to lose his job, be indicted, prosecuted and imprisoned or fined.

Two of the most influential people he cites are Gunnar and Alva Myrdal. Alva was a child psychologist, Gunnar was an economist who became the Prime Minister, and remained influential in Swedish politics for many years. They had been to the United States for a long period of time where they were disciples of John Dewey. This led to Alva's progressive ideas on education and child-rearing. Gunnar was like most Swedes, very egalitarian, and unacquainted with peoples of very different ethnicities. Invited to the United States by the Carnegie Foundation, he wrote *An American Dilemma* about the problem of American black people. He was critical of American society for what he perceived as the unequal treatment of blacks, but optimistic that Americans would do the right thing and work their way through it. He assumed equal ability, and therefore attributed the blacks' lack of progress to racism. His book raised the consciousness of the entire world about the situation in America, and was one of the intellectual foundations of the US civil rights movement.

This idealism, the self-righteous idealism affected Sweden's attitude towards other regimes as well. Sweden was strongly anti-apartheid. It had resisted, or been too late to become involved in, colonialism as practiced by the other European countries. Their material success, and the lack of social problems in their homogeneous society, led to exaggerated moral preening. They were as indignant about the American interventions in Vietnam as about the American legacy of race. Idealistic, without practical experience with either. Though Sweden had made an attempt at building a European empire in the 17th and 18th centuries, those chapters were long forgotten.

The United Nations high commission on refugees has repeatedly praised Sweden as being a model for accepting refugees. They accept perhaps one hundred thousand refugees per year from various wars in the Middle East and Africa. A number of Somalis, Nigerians, and others. They accept these people on the hypothesis that after a few generations they will become good Swedes. They accept them also on the premise that their own population is aging and they need some young workers to take over. The reality

is that the average male immigrant takes seven years to land the job, which means that many cannot land them whatsoever. Political correctness forbids any mention of the fact, but there are a disproportionate number of such immigrants among the drug dealers, rapists, thieves and other malefactors in society. The author notes on page 165 that his career is likely to be affected by the publication of a book noting these facts. He has enough credentials that he should be able to find a job teaching for administering or working with immigrants, but his candid observations will certainly make him suspect.

Sweden has dumbed down its schools. This happened even before the surge of immigrants, and it was done for reasons that echo more of John Dewey. They want to play down the differences between children, even of Swedish background. They played with the curriculum and gradually taught less and less in grades one through nine. They ended tracking, so that all kids are together. The result is that Sweden cannot graduate enough engineers for local markets. The schools have not provided the foundation needed to study hard sciences. Conversely, they are flooded with graduates in the social sciences.

The author saves the discussion of his extensive experience as a school principal and teacher with immigrant children for his afterword. However, there, in his matter-of-fact way, he talks about how difficult it was to attempt to teach them. They became very Swedish in their insubordination after only a few months exposure to Swedish culture. They did not achieve levels of performance similar to Swedish kids. He said that only 50% succeeded in some subjects and only 30% would succeed in all subjects so they could pass on to the next grade. Disorder was endemic in the schools and violence was not infrequent.

The author's solution to the problem proposed solution is to attract one million immigrants the way that Canada and Australia have done. Those countries are well known for screening immigrants for the likelihood of their success. The author favors Chinese and Indian immigrants, with some Central Americans.

I note that there are several factors to take into consideration. Yes, the Chinese and Indians do make successful immigrants in the United States and Canada. The Chinese are almost universally successful. With the Indians, a country of a vast number of ethnicities, it turns out that those who have made it to Canada and the United States are usually among the successful groups. Indians who remain in the mother country don't do as well.

A list of three works which would very much enlighten the author's discussion are, in order of increasing political incorrectness, would start with *Cultures And Organizations* by Gert Hofstede. He notes that different peoples have quite different ways of operating. I would note that among the problems that are mentioned in this book, certainly some have their origins in different cultural traditions. Most cultures are radically different than the Swedish, and Muslims will simply never become Swedes. The author himself presents the World Values Map from worldvaluessurvey.org. He does not seem to appreciate how durable the values are, though his history of Sweden indicates exactly that.

Next, as evolutionary psychologists will tell you, peoples differ very much in temperament. People evolved culturally and temperamentally just as they evolved in other characteristics. Canadian Philippe Rushton has explored this theme in the second un PC book *Race, Evolution and Behavior*. The Swedes evolved to fill a niche in the north of Europe, homogeneous, altruistic and trusting. Inviting other people then, wherever they come from and whatever their talents, may not be a solution. Others are more guarded, more suspicious of outsiders. Nowhere in the world does one see widespread successful integration of recent immigrant minorities. The United States probably has the best record of any country in history for absorbing new people. It was very successful absorbing northern European immigrants. The Germans, the English, and the French are so well mixed that we lose track. More recent arrivals, the southern Europeans about a century ago, did not integrate quite as quickly or as thoroughly, but again they did all right. The Jews succeeded, as they always do, but remained apart, as they have historically done.

The northern Oriental immigrants to the US, the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, have all succeeded. They have not integrated as thoroughly. They still marry among each other and they still retain quite characteristically Oriental values. Fortunately those values include hard work and minding their own business. They are not they do not participate in community life to the extent of the Caucasian Americans, but they more than carry their weight in society. They would be an asset to Sweden, but they would never become Swedish.

The Hispanic immigrants, from South America and Latin America, and the native Indians from which they are descended, have not integrated well in American society. The Native Americans course were there before the Europeans arrived, but they are so reluctant to mix, merge and compete that they have put themselves on the sidelines. Literally – they remain on their reservations, dirt poor, rather than mix. The South and Central Americans who are of mixed blood do a better job of mixing with mainstream society, in that they will take jobs in the cities, but they are temperamentally and otherwise different. They generally seek the company of other Hispanics.

The same remains true of African-Americans. They are temperamentally different than white Americans. This cannot be attributed to their to slave history or anything else, as their attributes are visible and Negro peoples throughout the world, whatever their colonial or slave history. It characterizes blacks in Africa today.

This brings one to the least politically correct book of all, the one which has a great deal to say one which informs the success of immigrants in every country in the world. That is the question of intelligence. Intelligence researchers have been have known for 40 years, in which time there has been almost unwavering in what they in their conclusion, that different groups of people have quite different levels of intelligence. They range from a high of about 115 among Ashkenazi Jews down to a low of 57 as the average of people in Equatorial Guinea. If Sweden is to import people, they should make sure that they are intelligent enough to fill the roles in society that need to be filled. Looking to China and the best of India, as Sjunnesson recommends, is a good way to do this. Conversely, they should re-examine their

wishful thinking about the immigrants that they now have. Those people could have been predicted not to be successful in Swedish culture, and have turned out not to be successful. The claim that their failure is due to supposed Swedish racism simply cannot be true. The Swedes have no history of racism – quite the opposite –and the deficiency is inherent in the immigrants themselves, something that it shouldn't take a racist to point out. It was common knowledge from Herodotus' time to the 1950s. Why has the world, with Sweden at the forefront, chosen to forget what they knew and ignore what they see?

This book is extremely valuable for an American. It puts the social issues of our country in a world perspective.