

Summaries

The Engelbrekt controversy

Anna-Carin Stymne

Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson is one of the most debated figures in Swedish history. One precondition for the controversy is the meagre source material available about him. Another reason for discord lies in the ideology of the historian. It is this aspect in particular on which the essay focuses.

To achieve my aim of describing and characterising the scientific discussion on Engelbrekt's actions and historical role, and to attempt to explain differences and changes in the impression (the interpretations) of Engelbrekt, I have elected to examine a number of texts that have been written by eleven historians and one literary historian. The investigation begins in 1832 (Geijer's *Svenska folkets historia*) and progresses forward to 1997 (Larsson's *Kalmarunionens tid*).

In Erik Gustaf Geijer's *Svenska folkets historia* (1832) Engelbrekt is "a man of great soul" who wants to "reestablish the ancient rights and freedom of the kingdom". Geijer's Engelbrekt struggles primarily against the aristocracy, who want a weak Crown, but it is also to some extent a national struggle. Geijer saw Engelbrekt in relation to the Stures and Gustav Vasa, thereby assigning him great importance for Sweden's continuing development towards national independence. Geijer's view of history was coloured by an authoritarian conservatism. To a large extent he wrote his history backwards, its objective being the age in which he lived. Henrik Schück's portrayal *Engelbrekt* (1915) has been greatly influenced by the national-liberal view of Engelbrekt that evolved during the last decades of the 19th century. Schück wanted to reclaim Engelbrekt from the advocates of socialist ideology. At the beginning of the 1930s, Sven Tunberg, Nils Ahnlund and Kjell Kumlien came to represent a nationalistic view of Engelbrekt with a social-conservative bias. Their (and also Gottfrid Carlsson's) view of history contains a clear developmental theme whereby the states' and the people's (the national character's) struggle for survival impelled development onward. In Gottfrid Carlsson's opinion, Engelbrekt hadn't wished to break away from the Union. Carlsson wanted to prove that it was possible to combine nationalism and union between the three Nordic states. With Gottfrid Carlsson we can detect a distinct, albeit implicit, comparison between Hitler and Engelbrekt.

The situation in Germany and Swedish nationalism also affected Erik Lönnroth's and Per Nyström's texts. Lönnroth took an early stand against what he saw to be the strong nationalistic glorification of Engelbrekt. In true Weibullian style, Lönnroth wanted to give a more Scandinavian view of the 1434 rebellion. Furthermore, he wanted to shift the focus away from the significance of Engel-

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rekt the person, highlighting instead a power struggle between regimen politicum and regimen regale. To Nyström, Engelbrekt is a revolutionary leader of the bourgeois revolution in Sweden. In Nyström's view, Engelbrekt's loyalty lay with the bourgeoisie, and it was their rights he fought for. Nyström makes no secret of being influenced by the Marxist view of history. Garnert/Myrdal, in their articles from 1973–1975, saw Engelbrekt as leader of the people's army of liberation. Although the authors' intention is to emphasise the importance of the masses not the leader, they ascribe great significance to the person of Engelbrekt for the successful outcome of the rebellion. In 1984 in connection with the 550th anniversary of the rebellion, Lars-Olof Larsson wrote the book *Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson och 1430-talets svenska uppror*. Larsson wanted to give renewed prominence to the historical personages in Swedish history. In his view Engelbrekt had inspired and enthralled subsequent generations of Swedes. Herman Schück is the only one of the authors who makes no exploration of Engelbrekt's personal motives. Schück does, however, comment on Engelbrekt's historical role, opposing Lönnroth's view that after the Vadstena meeting Engelbrekt was repressed by the council.

The investigation shows that several of the authors display similarities between their conception of Engelbrekt and their political ideology. What has interested me most is how the authors' political convictions colour their view of history. Not unexpectedly, the authors' view of history and their interpretation of Engelbrekt are closely connected to each other. Moreover their view of history is also closely associated with their political standpoint. Considering the lack of contemporary sources, it is especially interesting how differently the various authors have nevertheless interpreted these sources.

Changes and differences in the authors' impressions of Engelbrekt have been due to a very slight extent to the appearance of new source material. With the exception of Geijer (who for instance had not known about Osenbrügge's letters) the authors in the study have used the same sources. However, I have been able to establish that the authors' way of looking at and interpreting the sources is connected with their view of history and their political ideology.

The changing conditions of the time have proved to be of great significance to the standpoints adopted by the authors. For instance, events in history have contributed to changes in the political ideologies and more directly to the authors' personal view of history. By placing the authors in their temporal context, we can more easily appreciate their points-of-view. The general change in historical scholarship – an increasing tendency to point up economic and social factors – is yet another possible explanation. It is evident that the authors have been influenced by the contemporary view of relevant motive forces of historical events.

The lack of facts about Engelbrekt must naturally be accorded great importance. It also makes the task of interpreting Engelbrekt interesting from a historiographical angle since it gives the authors great scope to adopt their own, personal standpoint.

Scattering of strips – a way of organising corvée labour on Scanian estates

Mats Olsson & Inge Svensson

During the period when Scania belonged to Denmark the noble estates employed a system called "hoveri". The term comes from the words for court or manor and refers to unspecified corvée labour at the manor farm performed by tenant farmers. The work could be organised collectively under supervision. But the manor fields could also be divided into strips assigned to be worked by individual farmers. This is what is here called "indelt hoveri".

"Indelt hoveri" was a common way of organising work in the fields and meadows of Scanian domains, at least during the 18th and 19th centuries. On the large estates we have studied – Skarhult, Bergsjöholm, Dufeke and Knutstorp – the landlords had the farmland divided up, either by an official surveyor or by their own staff, into strips for corvée labour. This can be interpreted as a means by which the landlord was able to reduce his costs for supervision and negotiation.

Scattering these strips throughout the domain may have been a way of creating optimal schedules for the agricultural work, both throughout the year, because of natural and climatic differences between the fields, and from year to year, when crop cycles and fallow periods cause uneven labour intensity in the various fields. This can again be related to negotiation costs for the estate, since the farmers themselves would have felt that scattering the strips was the fairest way of sharing out the labour amongst them.

Pro-Nazism in Sweden during the 1930s; ideology and neutrality

Bengt Åhsberg

The Nazi-aligned parties in Sweden had little success in the parliamentary elections, attaining only about 1.5%. Research has nevertheless shown that there was a comparatively large number of people who, without being members of a Nazi-aligned party, expressed sympathy for Nazi Germany and Nazi values. This was particularly true of the upper and middle classes, and was most noticeable in the military among officers and non-commissioned officers. High-church and theologically liberal factions within the Church also adopted a pro-Nazi attitude. Many conservative Swedes also expressed their appreciation that Hitler had reestablished Germany's power and authority.

Although various explanations for this pro-Nazism have been put forward in different contexts, no comprehensive overall picture has been provided. This study attempts to offer such a picture based on concepts of mentality in a historical perspective. Taking the following themes as points of departure: the long period of pro-German orientation; anti-Semitism; fear of Russia and, eventually, fear of Communism, the aim is thus to try to identify mentalities and attitudes that were prevalent in the 1930s; to describe their growth, longevity and collective dimension; and from this perspective to seek explanations for this standpoint. The regard for democracy and the implementation of the neutrality doctrine have doubtless had their significance in this connection and will therefore also be discussed. Regarding these themes, the term "political culture" is probably more suitable than the concept of mentality.

Pro-German orientation in Sweden during the 1930s was a consequence of half a century of German influence in various sectors of society such as education, science, the arts, economics and the military. It was thus a long-term phenomenon. It was not associated with any particular party or ideology, but concerned large groups of people, in this case chiefly the upper and middle classes. The pro-German discourse gradually acquired the character of an unreflected attitude, well grounded in the social classes in question. To these people at this point in time a pro-German attitude was more or less natural. The Nazi assumption of power created problems, to be sure. Being a friend of Germany didn't necessarily mean one was a supporter of Nazism, but the borderline was elastic. There was a fairly broad grey area, which meant that, without being a Nazi sympathizer, an admirer of Germany could still hope for a German victory.

That people in Sweden reacted to such a small degree to the persecution and suffering that the Jews in Germany were subjected to, must be seen in conjunction with the widespread anti-Semitism in Sweden at the time. Its roots go back a long way. During the first decades of the 20th century it was embraced by increasingly wide circles. It grew in strength, keeping pace with the nationalism of the

period: conservative, rustic-romantic and anti-democratic. The Jews were associated with socialism, capitalism, urbanisation, free trade and other phenomena which accompanied the advance of industrialisation and which were seen as a threat to the existing order. With racial biology, which attracted great scientific interest during the first decades of the 20th century, anti-Semitism was underpinned with, in the strict meaning of the word, racist arguments. The Jews then came to be discriminated as a weak, inferior race.

Socialism, for its part, adopted an ambivalent approach to the question. Anti-Semitism here was based on Jews being equated with capitalism. The Jews were identified with international capital, which was considered to be dominated by them. Their alleged monetary egoism was seen as an expression of Jewish mentality.

Anti-Semitism was also prevalent to no small degree in literature and films, but flourished above all in the comic press, where mentalities and attitudes are clearly revealed. The Jews have heavy eyelids; large noses; lustful, greedy, fat lips; flat feet; crooked legs etc. They are depicted as wealthy, flourishing careerists and as rich usurers equipped with the typical attributes of a capitalist: top hat, spats, striped trousers, watch-chain and rings. To emphasize that it's about Jews, they speak with a strong Yiddish accent.

The fact that the anti-Semitic attacks that occurred in various connections didn't attract any particular attention suggests that anti-Semitism was largely accepted and sanctioned by the general public and that there was widespread tolerance towards it. It was a case of well-entrenched conceptions of long standing, shared by large groups of people – mentalities and attitudes that had become part of unreflected public opinion. This meant one could express some understanding for the way Germany handled “the Jewish problem”, referring as one could to the dominance of the Jews in various areas of German society.

Pro-Nazism in the upper and middle classes was also connected to the fear of Communism that prevailed in the 1920s and 30s, which in turn relates to earlier centuries filled with fear and hatred of Russia. Here, too, we are dealing with well-entrenched, long-enduring attitudes and conceptions, embraced by large groups of people. Another factor is the strong concern for Finland, which was based on age-old traditions passed on from the time when Finland was a part of Sweden. The support for Finland during the Second World War in the form of humanitarian action, financial credit and supplies of weapons, ammunition and other war material, combined with the fear of Russia, now in the guise of Communism, was an expression for an opinion whose mental sounding-board consisted of hundred-year-old conceptions of Finland's and Sweden's historical association in the past. Against this background it is understandable and not especially surprising that particularly in the upper and middle classes people felt Communism to be a greater threat than Nazism. Of two evils, Nazism and Communism, they chose what they thought was the lesser evil: Nazism.

The way in which democracy was regarded was also important in this context. Ever since the latter half of the 19th century, when people demanded increased democracy in the form of extended franchise and parliamentary rule, these demands were combatted frenetically within the conservative ranks. When universal suffrage was introduced, criticism in the right-wing press was particularly fierce. The 1930s were also marked by scepticism towards democracy and the parliamentary system. We are thus dealing with a political culture of long duration, which was embraced by a large group of people – in effect, the majority of the conservative establishment, including a large number of representatives of the Church. From these premises, then, it is not particularly surprising that people didn't react to the anti-democratic and totalitarian elements of Fascism and Nazism.

The Government's doctrinaire interpretation of the concept of neutrality also affected the attitude towards Germany. The doctrine of neutrality has been implemented in Swedish foreign policy for a long period of time. Although it has been questioned by minor groups on the odd occasion, and exceptions have been made, it has received deep-rooted popular support. The Government's firm emphasis on strict neutrality on various occasions during the war could thus be underpinned by a political culture of long duration. This explicit, strict neutrality found expression through Sweden not taking a standpoint on the ideological components of the war: dictatorship and democracy. So it could hardly have been perceived of as inopportune or controversial to be germanophilic and express one's sympathy for Nazi Germany. This is corroborated by the fact that even organised Nazis at a municipal level received local-government appointments. They held positions of trust and were socially accepted in society.

In all the discourses it was therefore a case of long-term processes, of large groups of people, and of entrenched attitudes and conceptions which extended across ideological and party boundaries. Taken together, they played an important part in shaping the pro-Nazi attitude in Sweden during the 1930s. They fashioned the political culture and constituted a sounding-board for ideas, opinions and political standpoints.

Some thoughts on Swedish image of Norway 1949–1950

Magnus Petersson

This article demonstrates that Swedish ministers and foreign ministry officials believed that the Norwegians did not take the negotiations concerning a Scandinavian Defence Union (SDU), in 1948-1949, seriously. The negotiations were instead, they believed, an instrument to placate Norwegian domestic opinion, in order to facilitate Norwegian membership in the Atlantic Pact. This led to a feeling of bitterness among the Swedes. At the same time, however, the Swedish interest in the SDU can also be interpreted as the result of domestic factors. Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén did not really believe that the Norwegians would accept a SDU, and may have reasoned that the Swedish initiative would serve as a good alibi for the Swedes in the future.

If the interpretation presented here is correct, it explains the -contradictory- Swedish bitterness vis-à-vis the Norwegians from a domestic politics perspective. In all likelihood, the Swedish leadership would very much have liked a SDU, but believed that its establishment was improbable. Regardless of the outcome, however, the negotiations concerning a SDU were advantageous from a domestic point of view. In the words of the Swedish historian Karl Molin “Without altering its fundamental policy, it [the government] had disarmed the opposition and simultaneously countered the accusation of being isolationist that Undén’s foreign policy so often led to.” If—against all odds—a SDU had been established, the government was in a position to profit domestically as well as in foreign policy. But, this the Norwegians stopped. Hence the Swedish bitterness.