

Political Comedy in Sweden



At present, and for the foreseeable future, I happen to be reading Charles Moore's magnificent three-volume biography of Margaret Thatcher. It contains about three-quarters of a million words, and virtually every page is fascinating; even the descriptions of Thatcher's contributions to the driest-sounding policy debates are illuminating in ways big and small. This is partly because Moore is at once a perceptive portraitist and a splendid prose stylist and partly, of

course, because Thatcher was a truly great woman, brilliant and complex, who is worth understanding both because she helped reshape the world and because few things are more valuable than acquiring insight into the minds of remarkable human beings.

It's probably outrageously unfair to contrast Thatcher with Magdalena Andersson, who on Wednesday – as a result of a quirk in Swedish law, about which more presently – was the first female prime minister of Sweden for a mere seven and a half hours. But with Thatcher occupying such a large space in my mind at present, it was hard not to think of her as I read the latest strange news from Stockholm. Since I wasn't very well acquainted with Andersson's career, I poked around a bit online. I wasn't surprised with the results. Unlike Thatcher – who before running for elective office worked in her father's grocery store, studied X-ray crystallography at Oxford, carried out laboratory research for a couple of chemical firms, and practiced law in London – but like the overwhelming majority of Scandinavian politicians, Andersson is a bland technocrat whose political career began when she was a schoolgirl.

Remember the Norwegian summer camp at which the terrorist Anders Behring Breivik managed to murder 67 teenagers in 2011? They all belonged to the Workers' Youth League, the junior division of the Norwegian Labor Party. In Scandinavia, most successful political careers begin in middle or high school, if not earlier: if you're a teenager who's ambitious for power (a frightening thought), you join some party's kiddie auxiliary, learn to parrot the party line, drum up support among the other brats, and suck up to the grown-ups. What if you don't entirely agree with the party line? What, indeed, if you feel that the country's being led in the wrong direction and that none of the established parties is resisting that tendency in the right way? Too bad. Go start your own party. And good luck with that, for the entire political and media

elite will come after you with everything they've got.

Such, alas, is the fate, in Scandinavian politics, of original thinkers, Cassandras, would-be national saviors. But if you're a total hack – hey, no worries. Just go along and get along. No need to learn anything about, say, infrastructure if you want to be Minister of Infrastructure, or about energy if you aspire to become Minister of Energy. (Yes, it's just like being in Biden's cabinet.) All you need to do is to play ball. It's the colorless drones, the yes-men and yes-women, who get ahead; the system makes it virtually impossible for somebody like a Ronald Reagan (who discovered the evil of Communism as president of the Screen Actors Guild, and whose acting chops made him an eloquent spokesman for liberty) or Donald Trump (who learned how economies work, and how to negotiate with snakes, by running a real-estate empire) to attain power. If the Swedes could figure out how to kick political careers off in day care – or, even better, in the womb – they'd do it.

In any event, that's pretty much the story of Magdalena Andersson, who joined the Social Democratic Youth League at age sixteen (a late bloomer!), became president of its Uppsala chapter four years later, and – well – advanced from there in the usual fashion until on November 10 Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, also a Social Democrat, resigned, and Andersson was invited to form a new government. On Wednesday, after she'd put together a coalition of left-wing parties, the Riksdag, or Parliament, formally elected her PM by a single vote. And a few hours later, she had to resign. Why? Because the Riksdag had approved a new national budget negotiated by the right-wing opposition – including the Sweden Democrats – and this was too much for the Greens, who promptly withdrew from Andersson's coalition. The Sweden Democrats, you see, are anathema to all righteous Swedes – and nobody's more righteous than the Greens. (Never mind that the Sweden Democrats enjoy roughly four times as much support as they do.)

Anyway, under Swedish law, the withdrawal of the Greens

obligated Andersson to step down as PM and allow a new vote to take place. She now wants to head up a one-party minority government. As of this writing, she seems to have enough support in the Riksdag to pull it off. Which just leaves one little question: who, exactly, in the meantime, is in charge of the country? According to Andersson, "it's still Stefan Löfven" (although *le mot juste* would seem to be "again," not "still"). Unsurprisingly, this situation is unprecedented in Swedish history. And it happened for one reason, and one reason alone: the elite contempt for the Sweden Democrats. It's not just the Greens who hate them: the Moderates, who are the second largest of the eight parties in the Riksdag (the Social Democrats are #1, and the Sweden Democrats are #3, with the Greens at #8), have made clear their [hostility](#) to any increase in the Sweden Democrats' political influence – for precisely the same reason that D.C. Democrats and never-Trump Republicans tried in 2017 to subvert the rightfully elected president.

In the U.S., Trump's enemies had to resort to major-league, behind-the-scenes, elaborately choreographed Deep State shenanigans to undermine his presidency and prevent his re-election. In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats have been kept down by much simpler means – a *cordon sanitaire*, as it's called, whereby all the respectable, upstanding parties gang up to squeeze out the deplorables. And what makes the Sweden Democrats deplorable? Well, just like Trump, they speak indelicate truths. And they have the bizarre idea that the primary purpose of a country's government should be to serve its citizens – not to move their jobs abroad, to sacrifice their security for the sake of others, or to transfer massive amounts of their earnings to immigrants and foreigners.

In short, Sweden First. The very words sound heretical in a country whose people are indoctrinated from childhood on to be models of self-abnegation. Sweden has the world's most expensive welfare state, but the money is spent

disproportionately on immigrants. While schools, pensions, and health care for native Swedes are ruthlessly cut back, the Riksdag increases the flow of immigrants; while Swedish retirees are warehoused in old shipping containers (no joke), families just off the plane from Mogadishu get townhouses. Yes, Sweden prides itself on having “the world’s first feminist government,” but when cabinet officers went to Tehran to meet with the mullahs, all eleven of the women wore hijabs – for, in the Swedish view, Western feminism must always yield respectfully to Islamic patriarchy, however tyrannical.

It’s this self-destructive madness that the Sweden Democrats are opposed to. And as quality of life has steadily deteriorated, more and more Swedes have recognized that their insanely idealistic national project is leading them into a dystopia, and – for all the obloquy in polite circles that comes with being identified as a Sweden Democrat – have dared to join the Sweden First chorus. For the time being, to be sure, the praetorians are still keeping the proles out of the palace, but their moves – culminating in the Greens’ precipitous withdrawal from the new government and the comically brief prime ministership of Magdalena Andersson – seem increasingly desperate and, frankly, ridiculous. We can permit ourselves to hope that these latest developments are a sign that the Sweden First folks are indeed closing in on real government power – although, given how far gone Sweden already is, it’s reasonable to ask, in the immortal words of Hillary Clinton: “What difference, at this point, does it make?”

First published in the [*American Thinker*](#).