

Political Outsiders in Swedish History,
1848-1932

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Edited by

Lars Edgren and Magnus Olofsson

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

LARS EDGREN AND MAGNUS OLOFSSON

This is a book about political outsiders. Being an outsider is here understood in a dual sense. The “outsiders” considered in this text were outsiders in their own times, but also – and perhaps even more so – outsiders of the dominant story lines of Swedish history. The idea behind the book is that an assessment of their role can serve a dual purpose. Such an investigation can lead to a reconsideration of people and movements that, during their time, and although they were in many ways marginal, helped to shape Swedish politics and society. After all, it is always the case that those in opposition play a crucial role in shaping dominant groups, their perceptions and actions. Yet, discussions of their respective historiographical outsidership will also further a critical understanding of influential versions of Swedish history.

Swedish history has of course always been interpreted in many different ways, and to single out any one dominant story is open to challenge. However, in this volume, the starting point is taken to be an interpretation that takes its vantage point from historical groundings of the twentieth century Swedish welfare state, commonly referred to as the Swedish model. Since the respective authors frequently return to this theme, a very brief outline will only be offered in this introduction. What we think of is an understanding of Swedish history as uniquely shaped by consensus, cooperation, negotiation, non-violence, and continuity. This is a long tradition which, for many, was deemed to be a pre-condition for the successful building of modern Sweden. From the late nineteenth century, the Social Democratic Party became the main actor in the story. Initially a party intent on revolutionary change, it rapidly turned into a reformist party. An emphasis on these aforementioned particular Swedish traditions contributed to the successful establishment of the party’s dominance in Swedish politics, and the Social Democrats could thus easily be incorporated as a new element in a long tradition. They would act as the standard bearer and carry on the traditions of consensus, cooperation, and non-violence.

Historical interpretations are potent forces in shaping contemporary understandings of nations and their purpose. Presumably all countries have dominant interpretations of their history. In the USA, one can think of mythologies of Founding Fathers and consensus interpretations; in England, there existed the Whig interpretation that was influential for a long time, while in France the role of the Revolution shaped national understandings of this country's history. Yet, these interpretations have also been hotly contested, both in public and scholarly debate. Herbert Butterfield's critique of the Whig interpretation is a classic of historiography. In France, the bicentennial of the Revolution engendered sharp debate on how to integrate this historic event into interpretations of French history. Perhaps the most striking example is that of Germany and the struggle over interpretations of the Nazi experience. While the discussions on this were probably most fervent during the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980's, this is still an ever present debate.

Swedish historiography is therefore in no way strange in having dominant interpretative schemes, relevant for contemporary society. What is perhaps less common is that there has been relatively little public or scholarly debate about these overriding interpretations. Certainly there have been challenges. With the rise of Marxist historiography in the 1980's, a leftist critique of the role of the Social Democratic Party developed. It had failed in radically transforming capitalist Sweden, and this was in need of an explanation. Interpretations of Early Modern Sweden stressing consensus, came under attack from young Marxist scholars, who understood Sweden at that time as a conflict ridden class society. Another example of critiques of dominant interpretations was the commotion concerning sterilisation as an instrument of population policies. This discussion made headlines even outside Sweden, presumably because the articles that initiated the commotion explicitly associated sterilisation with Social Democratic welfare policies. With these, and a few other exceptions, we believe it is fair to say that synthetic interpretations of Swedish history have been lacking both in scholarly and public debate. This has allowed a dominant interpretation to remain both unchallenged and curiously unarticulated. Synthetic ambitions are not usually characteristics of Swedish historians.

In this volume, our purpose is to reflect on possibly different ways to understand Swedish history leading up to the Social Democratic period of dominance, starting in 1932. We are not suggesting a new synthetic interpretation. The authors rather point to a number of lost causes that are problematic to integrate into a consensus interpretation. Authors suggest that a more comparative approach might make Swedish 'exceptionalism'

appear less persuasive, and some authors suggest different ways to conceptualise the establishment of the Social Democratic dominance.

Some of the papers focus on specific cases (Edgren, Olofsson, Lundberg, Blomberg, and, to some extent, Nyzell), while others take a more general approach (Nyzell, Hilson, and Miles). The cases are not chosen as to be representative of all possible outsiders. Rather the cases all represent and investigate radical protest against established society. We look at a radical democratic tradition of the nineteenth century (Edgren, Lundberg, and, to some degree, Olofsson), agrarian protest in the 1860's (Olofsson), syndicalism in the early twentieth century (Blomberg), and a strike which led to a violent confrontations in the 1920's (Nyzell). These were all expressions of radical challenges from outside mainstream politics, yet they were also marginalized in later historiography. They were thus outsiders in the dual sense of the title of this volume.

Another candidate that could be labelled as an example of radical outsiders is the communist movement in Sweden. Indeed, it could be claimed that communism has been difficult to incorporate in the main story line of Swedish history. Nevertheless, the movement has attracted a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention. It is probably safe to say that the Communist Parties have been the object of more dissertations and scholarly works than any other political party in Sweden.

The various essays of the volume approach their respective outsiders in different fashions. Lars Edgren takes as his starting point a case study of the dramatic circumstances surrounding the establishment of the radical newspaper *Fäderneslandet* in the small university town of Lund in 1852. After being moved to Stockholm, the paper was the leading radical newspaper for several decades and was for a time even the largest Swedish newspaper. The radicalism of the paper was directed against the political establishment; in particular, the office holders (sw. *ämbetsmän*). The paper attacked the misuse of power and moral failures of those in power, and was consequently branded by dominant groups as “a paper of scandal”. Edgren uses his case to draw broader conclusions. The political and moral critique of the paper was based on a linking of the ‘people’ to a historical tradition of defending liberty against – often foreign – oppressors. While it is easy to find European parallels that also have a similar outlook on society, Edgren argues that this tradition has been obscured in leading interpretations of Swedish history, since it does not fit into interpretations focusing on the role of the Social Democratic tradition as crucial in the formation of modern Sweden. Munck af Rosenschöld has remained an outsider of history.

The theme of radical democracy is developed in Victor Lundberg's chapter on the army captain Julius Mankell. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Mankell was periodically an important political voice in Sweden, both as an armed sharpshooter (sw. *skarpsskytt*) and a democratic "friend of the people" (sw. *folkvän*). After his death, he was eulogized by broad sections of radical Sweden. Lundberg uses Mankell's life to illustrate a radical political tradition that is today rather forgotten. Mankell was part of this tradition from its birth in the 1850s to its demise in the 1890s. In the ideological melting-pot in the 1850s, socialist, liberal, radical, revolutionary, republican, utopian and anarchic ideas circulated. In that milieu, a confrontational, republican and democratic radicalism based on populism, and manifested in an anti-elitist rhetoric through the conception 'the people', arose. That radicalism still lived on in the shape of the national Swedish Suffrage Association of the 1890s, of which Mankell was a leader and unifying force. Thus, Mankell's life ran parallel with Swedish nineteenth century radicalism. And the comments around his death and funeral also signals the demise and sinking into oblivion of that tradition. While praising Mankell, both reformist left-wing social liberals and social democrats of the day saw him as a remnant from the past. Lundberg's main argument is that Mankell's tradition of radicalism has subsequently remained a political outsider, since that brand of popular, confrontational nineteenth century radicalism calls into questions the picture of a Swedish past as characterized by non-confrontational politics and negotiation. Hence, Mankell and that particular tradition of radicalism has come to be vastly undervalued and its importance neglected by dominant, teleological traditions among historians and politicians alike, whether liberals or social democrats.

In his essay, Magnus Olofsson discusses the largest and most drawn-out conflict over landownership in Swedish history, a conflict that, however, has been almost entirely ignored in historiography. The conflict saw tenant farmers and rural poor making claims of landownership on the large estates in the southern part of Sweden in the 1860s. Olofsson reconstructs the cultural framework of the participants, to reach their view of the society that they lived in and how they legitimized their struggle for landownership and their often illegal methods. They claimed a right of landownership which was not recognized by the legal system, but was legitimized by their culture. It was, according to them at least, society that was at fault, not they. This was a source of strength in their struggles. Olofsson points to the similarities between these agrarian struggles and those in other European countries, which has not usually been recognized. The Tullberg Movement shares the same fate of being an outsider in the

historiography with many others and is merely one example of how social strife from Sweden's contentious nineteenth century has become a casualty of a teleological history writing that has repeatedly downplayed conflict in the past.

In the first three essays, nineteenth century radical traditions with roots before the socialist labour movement are in focus. With the essay by Eva Blomberg, we encounter an opposition within the labour movement itself. The central actors in her essay are syndicalists, who, by their rejection of not only bourgeois society but also of reformism and traditional trade union strategies, posed a serious challenge within the trade union movement in Sweden during the 1910s and 1920s. Syndicalism considered ordinary strikes too costly; instead non-agreement and direct action, such as, the use of sabotage, depopulation and blockades, were preferred methods. Syndicalism grew particularly strong during the Great War in the iron mining industry. Manpower was in short supply and worker turnover high. Large numbers of young men with little previous experience of mining and the high turnover gave rise to overcrowding, wretched conditions and interpersonal problems. Blomberg shows that there was a perceptible shift in the conflict repertoire of the miners during the war years, from individual to collective action, from foot-dragging, drunkenness and assault to walk-outs, strikes, depopulation and blockades, the two latter being favourite methods of syndicalism. At the core of syndicalist action was, Blomberg argues, a quest for dignity. Syndicalist methods and behaviour were centred on gaining respect as human beings and asserting a strong, male identity. Swedish syndicalism would not remain strong, however. Yet, as Blomberg points out, they have survived, remaining as an outsider movement. Perhaps their individualism can prove attractive in the present society, she reflects. While it is easy to see their demise as a logical outcome of their outsider position towards dominant themes in Swedish history, this is probably the result of retrospective vision. For a time they did indeed pose a serious challenge to the reformist trade union movement and the employers. It is only by their failure that they have become historiographic outsiders.

Stefan Nyzell takes as his point of departure the Möllevängen events in Malmö in November 1926. A prolonged strike led to violent confrontations when a strike breaker accidentally killed a striker. This is, however, only the background for a critical discussion of a teleological tendency in the Swedish historical debate concerning collective violence. This theme, present in the previous essays, is here more directly developed. There are, Nyzell argues, many similarly violent confrontations to be found in Swedish in the period 1925–1932 and also 1908–1917.

Nevertheless, Swedish historical research has tended to place the emphasis on the absence of collective violence. This is because the emergence of the Swedish model has been a central issue, and has come to be the defining view on Swedish 20th century history, both in Sweden and internationally. Even historians with critical perspectives have not taken instances of collective violence as the departure for their studies. This has led to a teleological tendency in historical writing. Examples of conflict and violence have been downplayed and examples of compromise have been emphasised. Indeed, some historians have found the roots of the Swedish model in the 19th century or even early modern times, making it an expression of a very old, Swedish mentality. And, importantly, the Social Democratic Party has made skilful use of the past and has, since they came into power in the 1930s, continually downplayed instances of strife and violence. At the macro level, the one on which most research has actually been conducted, Sweden's past looks peaceful enough, but at the meso- and micro levels, a different picture emerges, which is, of course, what the initial story of the events at Möllevången shows. Hence, Nyzell argues that there is a pressing need for more research to be undertaken focusing on local examples of contentious politics and collective violence in Swedish history before a full picture can emerge.

While Nyzell looks at the historiography from the perspective of political violence, Mary Hilson in her contribution takes the historiography from the vantage point of the crucial events in the early 1930's, which has usually been seen as the establishment of the Swedish model. The social democratic election victory in 1932 and the crisis agreement between the social democrats and the Farmers' Party (Bondeförbundet), became the starting point for a very long dominance of Swedish politics by the Social Democrats. These events have been written into a grand narrative of Swedish history, emphasising consensual tradition based on a tradition of a free and influential peasantry. The events of the early 1930's have thus been seen as a culmination of a peculiar Swedish *Sonderweg* to modernity, a story which reappears, critically evaluated, in most of the contributions to this volume. Hilson argues that this story appears much less appealing, if Swedish developments are put in a more comparative perspective, focusing not so much on determinations from the past but on contemporary contingencies. There were real potentials for radical alternatives, both from left and the right. And only in retrospective do the events of 1932/1933 appear as crucial. Hilson argues that while an alternative version of Swedish history focusing on conflict cannot at present be advanced, there is every reason to believe that marginalised people and movements were important in shaping the society of their days,

but have been neglected in existing historiography. The ‘lost causes’ and the ‘blind alleys’ become hidden from history, as illustrated in the other essays of the volume.

In the final chapter of the book, Lee Miles provides an ‘outsider’s’ view of the themes of the book. While the other authors are all historians, Miles is a political scientist and is therefore engaging the other essays from an interdisciplinary perspective. He follows two main lines of argument. First, he develops the importance of the themes in the book, especially as spelled out by Nyzell in his contribution, for political scientists understanding of Swedish history: He argues that historical perspectives can further an understanding of the cross class appeal of the Social Democrats in Sweden, and the development of non-violent political methods. The past experiences, recorded in the essays of this volume, could serve as examples of how not to do politics. By being made outsiders, they actually reinforce the mainstream.

Yet Miles does not let the issue rest here. He extends the major themes of the essays into the realms of discussing contemporary politics. The Social Democratic Party has been successfully challenged by the non-socialist opposition. Miles suggests that this can be understood as a change of underlying themes. Politics are moving towards a more divisive form of consensual politics, strikes are returning as a way to handle conflicts, while Sweden is at the same time losing its reputation as an exceptional country. Historical interpretations might, by focusing on outsiders, help others understand these developing themes and trends. And it might well be suggested, and taking up the arguments outlined in the chapter by Miles, that these current changes in the political system, are opening up space for a critical re-evaluation of Swedish history. This volume might be seen as a contribution to a further discussion of Sweden’s past. Outsiders become visible when cracks in the political culture appear.

This collection of essays started out on the initiative of Victor Lundberg, Stefan Nyzell, and Magnus Olofsson, who organized a session at the European Social Science History Congress in Amsterdam in 2006. At that session, Mary Hilson served as commentator and Lars Edgren as chair. For publication further essays were included. The contributions were discussed at a seminar in London in June 2008, funded by grants from the Political Studies Association’s (PSA) Scandinavian Politics Specialist Group, in connection with which we would especially like to thank the chair of the PSA-SPSG, Nicholas Aylott, for his help, and the Centre for European Studies at UCL. The seminar was organised by the Department of Scandinavian Studies, UCL. The editors wish to thank all the participants

of that seminar, but especially the commentators Lee Miles and Christine Agius. The editors want to advance their special thanks to Mary Hilson and Lee Miles, who, at a critical point in the project, offered to help with language editing as well as contributing comments on this introduction and the papers by Edgren, Olofsson, and Lundberg. Their generous help was invaluable!

THE USES OF SCANDAL:
NILS RUDOLF MUNCK AF ROSENSCHÖLD,
AND THE RADICAL DEMOCRATIC TRADITION
IN SWEDEN

LARS EDGREN

Among the reference books at the University Library in Lund one can find the old catalogues of the university. In the catalogue for the fall term of 1852 the last name in the list of students is crossed over by determined pencil strokes. In the margin of the page is written: “effaced and relegated”. This unusual act in a book that ordinarily raises little emotion, actually serves to highlight the name that has been “effaced”. Below the pencil strokes one can easily read the name: “Nils Rudolf Munck af Rosenschöld”.¹

Nils Rudolf Munck af Rosenschöld (1815–1894) was, in his own time, a celebrity of sorts, a well known radical politician and founder of one of the most important newspapers in nineteenth century Sweden. In 1852 and 1853 he was probably “the greatest show in town” in the small university town of Lund in southern Sweden. Early in 1852, he founded the paper *Fäderneslandet*. Literally the name translates to “Land of our fathers”. The paper soon became controversial, and at the end of the year, Munck af Rosenschöld was expelled from the university for his activities as a newspaper publisher. During the spring the paper was prosecuted several times for violations of the Freedom of the Press Act. The court proceedings gathered large crowds in support of him. At one time, the crowd actually tried to force their way into the court room. Munck of Rosenschöld concluded that it was impossible to continue publishing the paper in Lund and transferred it to Stockholm. There, *Fäderneslandet* soon established itself as the dominant radical paper; a position it maintained

¹ *Lunds kongl. universitets katalog för höst-terminen 1852*, Lund 1852, p. 33.

until challenged by the Social Democratic press in the 1880s. Indeed, during the 1860s, it was actually the largest Swedish newspaper.²

In current interpretations of Swedish history, Munck af Rosenschöld and his paper are barely noticed and have only a minor part to play. Very few people know of his name.³ In local histories, his story is not remembered.⁴ One is tempted to say that he is actually “effaced” from history. Yet, the events in Lund related to his journalistic activities raise the possibility to examine Swedish history from a different perspective from the dominant ones. In this chapter, I will attempt to use the events to open up a discussion of an important political tradition in Swedish history.

Fäderneslandet was labelled as a “paper of scandal” since it printed information about individuals that were considered invidious to their reputations. In this chapter, I will try to interpret this scandalous material as an important part of a particular understanding of society. I do not claim to be studying the birth of a new political tradition, but I do suggest that the period around 1850 was a formative period for a radical democratic tradition, of which Nils Rudolf Munck af Rosenschöld was an important flag-bearer.

Radical and critical political traditions were not new to Sweden in the 1850’s. A radical press had existed for quite some time, and in the 1830’s radicalism could evidently mobilize popular support in the streets of Stockholm, as illustrated by the so called ‘Crusenstolpe riots’ in support of a radical journalist. But there was an upsurge in radical activity around the year of the European revolutions of 1848. At that time, several new radical papers were established in Stockholm, appealing to artisans and workers with their radical critique of established society. Some declared themselves as ‘socialist’. Associations were also formed that appealed to urban workers. Some of these were Educational Associations (sw. *Bildningscirklar*) with no open political purposes, but a number of Worker’s Associations (sw. *Arbetarföreningar*) were also formed.

In Stockholm, there even existed a section of the Communist League, which was responsible for the first translation of the *Communist Manifesto*

² Sture M Waller, *Den svenska pressens upplagor 1824–1872*, Göteborg 2001, p. 91.

³ In the major Swedish encyclopedia, *Nationalencyklopedin*, his name occurs only in a brief article on the noble family from which he belonged, and he is even misnamed Nils, instead of Nils Rudolf, as he always wrote his own name. In the most recent multi volume history of Sweden, he cannot be located in the index (*Bonniers svenska historia*, 10, Stockholm 1968).

⁴ Krister Gierow, *Lunds universitets historia*, 3. 1790–1867, Lund 1971; Carl Fehrman, *Lärdomens Lund*, Malmö 1984; Ragnar Blomqvist, *Lunds historia*, 2. *Nyare tiden*, Lund 1978.

into any language in 1848. In March of that year, Stockholm also experienced several days of violent disturbances. The army was called in and 18 demonstrators were shot to death and many more injured. Nonetheless, the popular protests received no support from more established politicians and the authorities had no trouble in maintaining control. Even if there was a fear of radicalism among the authorities and repressive measures taken, efforts were still made to mobilize workers for political action.⁵ This is the immediate context in which Munck af Rosenschöld's activities must be seen. *Fäderneslandet* was typical of the attempts to establish a radical politics based on a popular appeal at that time. What is perhaps more remarkable is that the paper was established in a small university town far away from the radical activities in Stockholm.

Munck af Rosenschöld was not unknown to the public before he turned newspaper publisher. He was born in 1815 as the son of a professor at the University of Lund. At the age of sixteen he was enrolled as a student at the same university. His family was noble, and as a representative of his family in the House of Nobles (sw. *riddarhuset*) he participated in the parliamentary sessions of the 1840's. There he earned a certain notoriety among other parliamentary members, because of his radicalism and fiery oratory. He left the House of Nobles after the disturbances of March 1848, surrounded by suspicions that he was responsible for instigating the events.

He now returned to Lund and finished his studies. In 1850 he earned the degree of Master of Philosophy, at that time the highest degree in the Faculty of Philosophy. But his further attempts at an academic career floundered, and probably this was the cause of his marked enmity towards several of the professors of the university.⁶

⁵ Åke Abrahamsson, *Ljus och frihet till näringsfång. Om tidningsväsendet, arbetarrörelsen och det sociala medvetandets ekologi – exemplet Stockholm 1838–1869*, Stockholm 1990; Carl Landelius, *1840- och 1850-talens bildningscirklar och arbetarföreningar*, 1–2, Stockholm 1936; Axel Pählman & Walter Sjölin, *Arbetarföreningarna i Sverige 1850–1900. En undersökning av den liberala arbetarrörelsens historia och Kooperationens första skede*, Stockholm 1944; Torkel Jansson, *Adertonhundraålets associationer. Forskning och problem kring ett sprängfullt tomrum eller sammanslutningsprinciper och föreningsformer mellan två samhällsformationer c:a 1800–1870*, Stockholm 1985; Helge Almqvist, "Marsoroligheterna i Stockholm 1848", *Samfundet S.t Eriks årsbok* 1942, pp. 69–144.

⁶ Ingemar Oscarsson, "Munck af Rosenschöld, Nils Rudolf", *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, vol 26, Stockholm 1987–89, pp. 6–8.

A radical outsider confronts the University of Lund

The first issue of *Fäderneslandet* was published on March 8 1852. On the top of the first page the name of the paper was printed in large letters. The subtitle read “Newspaper for the Scandinavian Northern countries Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland”. The paper declares itself as a part of the Scandinavian movement, a nationalistic movement proclaiming the unity of the different Scandinavian peoples. The explicit inclusion of Finland is suggestive. Finland, once a part of Sweden, was at this time a Grand Duchy ruled by the Russian tsar, and a realization of a Scandinavian national program including Finland, would necessitate a war against Russia!⁷

Directly below the name of the paper a motto is seen: “Freedom, Work, Justice.” A rough woodcut illustration puts the finishing touch to the head of the page. A lion – a common symbol of Sweden – is depicted below a tree while a large snake strangles it. From the foliage of the tree, a hand is extended with a sword raised against the snake. On the snake’s body can be read: “violence, injustice, unrighteousness, and tyranny.”⁸ On the sword is written “Freedom of the Press”. The symbolism is fairly obvious: the paper, *Fäderneslandet*, is going to raise the free word to fight against the oppression that the Swedish – or perhaps, Scandinavian – nation is subject to.

During the first months of its publication, the paper turns out to contain little of national or international news material. Political and economic essays are interspersed by a few news items, comments on the university and its teachers, and satirical comments, often oriented against named or easily identifiable individuals or in general against those in power in Sweden. These “scandalous” comments could certainly kindle strong emotions. The author and newspaper publisher in Helsingborg, O P Sturzen-Becker, on October 24 1852, wrote in a private letter to his colleague in Malmö, Bernhard Cronholm, that if it had been in France then he would have shot Munck af Rosenschöld. He added that duels ought to have been allowed when it came to personal insults.⁹

During the fall of 1852, the paper prints articles denouncing the students of the university and their alleged unruly behaviour in the streets.

⁷ During the Crimean War, Munck af Rosenschöld agitated for Swedish participation in the war against Russia, and tried to raise volunteer soldiers to aid the allied war effort. The French and British governments showed no interest in, or support for, his attempts. Oscarsson, p. 9.

⁸ In Swedish: “Väld, väld, orätt och tyranni” och “Tryck-Frihet”.

⁹ Bernhard Cronholms collection, University Library, Lund.

But the attack is as much directed against the university that does not punish the guilty students. At this time, the university, through its *konsistorium* (Senate), still functioned as a court of law in all criminal cases involving members of the student body. Sweden was, during this period, experiencing a political struggle between, on the one side, the defenders of the older corporate society, where individuals and their rights were dependent on the corporate groups to which they belonged, and, on the other, the proponents of a society based on individual rights. The jurisdiction of the university senate belonged to the corporate organization. But it was a privilege that was on the brink of disappearance. New statutes were already printed and would come in force on January 1, 1853.

Many students were obviously appalled by the accusations published in *Fäderneslandet*. Action was taken among the students, and on December 14 1852, a letter was written by representatives of the students to the vice chancellor (*rector*), urging the university to relegate Munck af Rosenschöld. The Senate, consisting of all 26 professors of the university, had to act in a hurry, especially since their status as a law court was to be revoked at the end of the year. A very hurried legal process followed. On December 20 Munck af Rosenschöld appeared before the Senate. He refused to answer questions, claiming that what he printed in a newspaper was not subject to the Senate's jurisdiction. He was protected by the Freedom of the Press Act of 1812, one of the fundamental laws of Sweden, and thus above any ordinary law.

The Senate did not accept this interpretation. It claimed that it had disciplinary power over all students, and the fact that Munck af Rosenschöld, as a student, printed and distributed a paper, undermining public morals, was a crime against the university statutes. He was sentenced to relegation forever from the university. Under the current statutes, this also meant that he was banished from the town of Lund! In order to be valid, the banishment had to be enforced before the end of the year, before the new statutes came into force. This meant that the verdict would have legal force before Munck af Rosenschöld would have the time to appeal it.¹⁰

The legal proceedings of the Senate were, to some extent, questionable. Quite clearly, the whole proceedings were based on what was written in

¹⁰ Consistorii maioris konceptprotokoll (A2A:123) 18/12, 20/12, 21/12, 22/12, 27/12, 28/12 1852, Lunds universitets arkiv. Kansliet (Arkivdepå Syd). Comments on the verdict by the Ombudsman in *Rikets ständers Justitie-ombudsmans embetsberättelse för år 1854*, Stockholm 1855, pp. 47–57, and *Rikets ständers Justitie-ombudsmans embets-berättelse för år 1856*, Stockholm 1856, pp. 77–79 (in *Bihang till samtliga Riks-Ståndens protokoll... 1856–58*, 2:1:2).

the paper, which ought to have been protected by freedom of the press. The argument, later advanced by one of the professors, that the paternal discipline exercised by the Senate was based on ethics and morals necessary for the development of humanity itself, and thus above the fundamental laws of the country, only underlines the weakness of the legal position of the Senate.¹¹ But this is not the place to go into the legal aspects of the story; suffice it to say that the decision was challenged by the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*justitieombudsmannen*), and that the verdict of the Senate was finally upheld only by what appears to have been a technicality.

The verdict was not the end of the story. It rather served to intensify the conflict. Munck af Rosenschöld immediately appealed against the verdict, and also published furious articles against it in his paper. One of the articles carries the heading “An academic assassination”.¹² In January a letter was sent from leading citizens in Lund and neighbouring Malmö to the Minister of Justice (sw. *justitiestatsministern*), urging the authorities to prosecute *Fäderneslandet*. There are 122 signatories to the letter, representing the university, school teachers in Lund and Malmö, church ministers, the landed nobility in the surrounding countryside, army officers, and merchants, almost all of the latter from Malmö. Only one master artisan is among the names.¹³ On March 3 1853, the first prosecution against the paper was brought to the city court in Lund. Several more prosecutions followed. Soon much of the activities of the court were taken up by cases involving Munck af Rosenschöld, either as a defendant or as a counsel of the defendant.¹⁴ The sessions were well attended and violent incidents occurred, creating further prosecutions at the court. On April 4, Munck af Rosenschöld was kicked from behind and fell down the stairs as he left the court house. On April 25, the doors to the session room were closed when the room was filled. Supporters of Munck af Rosenschöld attempted to force the door in order to be present to protect him from further violence. After the session, he was greeted by people outside the courthouse with hoorays, and accompanied to a house nearby, where he presented himself to his supporters from a window. A journeyman tailor was prosecuted for calling out, “Long live the

¹¹ Consistorii maioris renoverade protokoll (A1:147) 16/12 1853, Lunds universitets arkiv. Kansliet (Arkivdepå Syd).

¹² *Fäderneslandet* December 31 1852.

¹³ *Snällposten* January 13 1853.

¹⁴ According to Swedish Freedom of the Press Act, each newspaper had a legally responsible editor. The actual editors of papers were usually not legally responsible for what was printed in them.

republic, defend Rosenschöld”. From the evidence presented at the trial, it appears that the republic was actually never mentioned, but it is quite clear that Rosenschöld was hailed by the crowd as “the defender of justice”.¹⁵

The day before these events, *Fäderneslandet* published probably the most defamatory article of all. It accused one of the professors of the university of sodomitic practices with a butcher apprentice. The apprentice had required money from the professor in order not to reveal what had happened. *Fäderneslandet* publishes the text of a promissory note issued by the professor. This revelation had been foreshadowed for some weeks by vague references in the paper to “a citizen of Sodom” and to “unknown Z.” – ‘Z’ being the initial letter of the professor’s name.¹⁶

The events in late April seem to have been the climax of the events at the Lund court. Towards the end of May, the Malmö paper *Snällposten* reported, with obvious pleasure, that the crowd gathering at the court proceedings now was much smaller and that public attention was subsiding.¹⁷ In May, the first sentences were passed against the responsible editor of *Fäderneslandet*. The editor was found guilty and sentenced to heavy fines. During the following weeks, several more verdicts followed. Munck af Rosenschöld ceased publishing *Fäderneslandet* in Lund in May. During the last weeks of its publication, occasional leaflets, printed on paper that was not stamped by the authorities, replaced it. These papers were thus considered illegal in themselves, and further prosecutions followed. During the summer he moved to Stockholm where he restarted publication of his paper in the fall of 1853. His court proceedings in Lund continued. In a case where he was personally charged, he was, in early 1854, brought by prisoner’s cart all the way from Stockholm to Lund, when he refused to appear at court when summoned. This ended in an embarrassing failure to the authorities. Munck af Rosenschöld appeared before the court, only to be informed that it could no longer deal with the

¹⁵ On the events of April 4, *Fäderneslandet* April 8 1853, *Snällposten* April 7 1853; Protokoll i brottmål 14/4 1853 no 63 (Alab:4), Rådhusrättens och magistratens arkiv, Lunds stadsarkiv (LLA). On the events of April 25, *Snällposten* April 28 1853; Protokoll i brottmål 12/5 1853 no 105, Rådhusrättens och magistratens arkiv, Lunds stadsarkiv, (LLA).

¹⁶ *Fäderneslandet* April 24 1853. Previous references on March 4 and 25, and April 17. It is impossible to determine if there might be any truth to the allegations. According to *Fäderneslandet*, the promissory note should have been delivered to the county governor on September 9 1850, when the apprentice required execution of the debt. I have not been able to locate the note in the archives of the county government, which certainly throws some doubts on the story.

¹⁷ *Snällposten* May 17 1853.

case, since the members of the court had been prosecuted by the court of appeal (sw. *hovrätten*) for errors in its earlier treatment of cases involving him, and therefore could no longer be considered impartial. According to reports in *Fäderneslandet*, Munck af Rosenschöld was enthusiastically greeted by “burghers and journeymen” with singing and a dinner party.¹⁸

The legal proceedings were quite complex, and Munck af Rosenschöld was skilled at making things troublesome for the judges. Moreover, the courts and authorities were not united in their interpretations of the law. When the University Senate required judicial assistance from the county governor (sw. *landshövdingen*) in order to execute the banishment sentence, the governor refused to comply, believing such an implementation to be illegal.¹⁹ The Parliamentary Ombudsman, as already stated, considered the banishment illegal, and the judges at Lund city court (sw. *rådhusrätten*) were finally sentenced for errors in their handling of the cases by the court of appeal (sw. *hovrätten*).²⁰ Yet for the most part, the legal battles can be categorised as failures for Munck af Rosenschöld. He lost all the Freedom of the Press cases, and personally was fined considerable sums.

Images of society in *Fäderneslandet*

The events in Lund might be seen as only minor incidents with no real consequences. Munck af Rosenschöld left little trace on the local scene. However, as already mentioned, *Fäderneslandet* enjoyed a long and successful period of publication. Its journalism, focusing on printing defamatory news concerning individuals, was not unusual. Similar papers often had a wide circulation, and they were seen by some as a major problem with many of their enemies labelling them as *scandal papers*. Munck af Rosenschöld did get considerable support already during his brief period as newspaper publisher in Lund. In 1853, the paper had reached a circulation of 650 copies. Although in itself a very small number, it was considerable by the standards of the day.²¹ Munck af

¹⁸ *Fäderneslandet* February 16 1854. *Snällposten* February 9, 11, and 16 1854 (where the celebrations are not mentioned).

¹⁹ Samuel Gustaf von Troil, ”Minnen af landshövding Troil”, *Minnen från Carl XIV:s, Oscar I:s och Carl XV:s dagar*, 2, Stockholm 1885, pp. 111–113.

²⁰ Oscarsson.

²¹ Waller, 2001, p. 91. According to Oscarsson 1000 copies were printed, but it is not clear what sources he has. *Fäderneslandet* was in 1853 the largest paper in Lund. Only *Snällposten* in Malmö seems to have been larger in the southern province of Scania.

Rosenschöld's confrontational journalism created a rift in local society. Such a crisis always reveals the degree of existing tensions. In the main part of this paper I will attempt to explain the appeal of Munck af Rosenschöld's message to contemporaries, and thereby discuss a political tradition that has received insufficient attention in Swedish history, since it has not neatly fitted into the dominant patterns of existing and mainstream interpretation. The politics of Munck af Rosenschöld was quite confrontational, and it also met violent, sometimes even in a literal sense, opposition.

In order to understand the appeal, it is crucial to look at the manifest ideology.²² In the very first issue, *Fäderneslandet*, as was customary in newspapers at the time, a declaration of political intentions was printed. It proclaimed a radical nationalistic program. The 'nation' addressed was not Sweden, but the Nordic countries. But it was immediately stressed that what was important was not the nations in themselves, but "the struggle of the nations against their oppressors". Only when all nations were united as one, their struggle against oppression would have ended in victory.²³ In spite of this initial declaration of Scandinavian nationalism, it proved to be quite a minor theme in the paper. The nationalism that can be found in it was rather a Swedish nationalism, where a certain interpretation of Swedish history was an important underpinning of its ideology.

The initial declaration contained another element which, on the other hand, represented the major political theme of the paper. Among the failings of society, *Fäderneslandet* identified "...warped office-holders, a greedy Government, a rotten polity, obsolete institutions, twisted customs, and a neglected, un-cared for economy."²⁴ While not being a particularly detailed analysis, it is clear that the failings pointed out are almost all directly related to the political institutions of the country. The economy is mentioned, yet apparently the problem is that the political institutions have not managed the economy in a proper way. To Munck af Rosenschöld, the building of railways was an important way of improving the economy, and substantial space in the paper was dedicated to promoting improved communication by rail.

The theme of *office-holders* can be identified as the most persistent theme of the paper, and many of the legal proceedings against the paper

²² For a brief sketch of *Fäderneslandet* in its first years of publication, Abrahamsson, pp. 256–257.

²³ *Fäderneslandet* March 3 1852.

²⁴ *Fäderneslandet* no 1, March 8 1852. "...en förderfvad Embetsmannakorps, en penningnsniken Styrelse, ett murket Statsskick, föräldrade inrättningar, förvända bruk och en vårdslösad, försummad hushållning".

concerned libel against office-holders. The Swedish word used, *ämbetsmän*, denotes a person carrying out an official commission to perform a public function. Ordinarily, the word only denotes higher/senior office-holders – the lower/junior ones being called *tjänstemän*, yet in *Fäderneslandet*, *ämbetsman* was given a very broad designation, including a large group of people and virtually everyone carrying out a public function. The term of ‘office-holders’ therefore included diverse groups, such as, the employees of the university, the city magistrates and other city employees, as well as military officers, etc.

According to the paper, office-holders were given a power which they could freely abuse in order to enrich themselves. As a result, the common people were oppressed. The language used in the paper to describe society, is neither consistent nor sophisticated. It is based on a dichotomous model of society, identifying a dominant and a dependent group. The words used to denote these groups are quite mixed. An article titled “How are the lower classes of people treated?” gives a number of examples of this descriptive language.²⁵ The dominant metaphor is “higher” and “lower”. Sometimes the paper writes “the so called lower”, in order to distance itself from the derogatory impression given by the word “lower”. Actually, as it is implied in the paper, such an evaluation is incorrect, since the “lower” are actually deemed to be morally “higher”. The word “class” is frequently used; however, one must be wary of interpreting this as representing an expression compatible with a systematic class interpretation. Alongside “class”, the paper uses “estate” (sw. *stånd*). The word “vanity of estate” (sw. *ståndshögfärd*) is used to describe the self-esteem that characterizes those of a higher standing. “Estate” and “class” are used interchangeably to denote a two-tiered model of society. Class can also be used to describe a subgroup, such as, in the word “servant classes” (sw. *tjenstehjons-klasserna*). Class is used with little precision, and apparently with a preference for the plural.²⁶

To this dichotomy other words are linked. One such dichotomy is “rich” and “poor”. The two groupings are divided by their economic wealth and resources. The “higher” groups are also described as “powerful”. A number of metaphors are used to describe the plight of the

²⁵ ”Huru behandlas de lägre Folkklasserna”, *Fäderneslandet* no 3, January 21 1853.

²⁶ Ulrika Holgersson has analyzed the way the word ‘class’ was used in popular press in the early twentieth century and has stressed the vagueness of its use. Ulrika Holgersson, *Populärkulturen och klassamhället. Arbete, klass och genus i svensk dampress i början av 1900-talet*, Stockholm 2005.

“lower classes”. They are treated as “slaves”, “serfs”, “domestic animals”, and/or “victims”. There can be no doubt about the sympathies of the paper.

“Worker” was a word much used and discussed in mid-century Sweden. We can find, at this time, that a claim was made that “workers” constituted a separate group in society which needed to organise itself as such. The first associations of “workers” were formed during this time; for example, the Stockholm association (*Arbetareföreningen*) in 1850 and an association in Malmö in 1851.²⁷ Nevertheless, the meaning of the word was not quite so easy to determine. Who would qualify as a worker? In an article entitled “Work”, *Fäderneslandet* developed its own interpretation.²⁸ Society was claimed to be one big work shop with God as the superior master of everyone. In such a society, everyone was supposed to work, not only for himself, but also for the common good. However, not everyone fulfilled their purpose. Those who did not work were deemed to be tapping the resources of society. In the article, they are described as “a cancerous tumour”, and, as such, represented a threat to society. Using a metaphor which must have been easily understood by Munck af Rosenschöld’s artisan supporters, the non-workers were described as heroes of St. Monday (sw. *frimåndagshjältar*); namely as workers who wasted the surplus and profits of a week’s work in debauchery. Actually, the article suggests that everyone is equal in society, since it is an association of workers; however, those who are living off the fruit of others’ work and yet are bold enough to perceive themselves to be superior and, hence, despise the ordinary worker, are condemned. With a reference to the recent French revolution, *Fäderneslandet* proclaimed that a new time had arrived. Work was now recognized as precondition of society. Work was now both a duty and a right!

The language describing society is quite vague. Yet if one asks who the paper might have considered to be the “higher” classes of society, there is really no doubt that they are almost always equated with the office-holders, especially since, as previously noted, the paper takes them to be a very broad group. The source of their power and influence would thus be the state. They were given a position of power as servants of the state, although they also used their position in order to enrich themselves and abuse “the lower classes”. This whole structure of power allegedly had its roots in monarchy itself. Kings would see themselves as noble and good and the more power they came to possess, the greater would be the

²⁷ Pählman & Sjölin, pp. 106 and 113.

²⁸ *Fäderneslandet*, no 7 and 9, February 18 and March 4 1853. Cf. *Fäderneslandet* no 4, May 3 1852 “Arbetarens rätt”.

distance between the orders of society and, proportionately a higher degree of vanity and pride could be found.

Nils Rudolf Munck af Rosenschöld and his paper, *Fäderneslandet*, represented a scathing critique of contemporary Swedish society. The great majority of the people were oppressed by a small minority. However, the source of this oppression was fundamentally political; it was the power bestowed by holding state offices that also made such oppression possible. The ultimate source was monarchy itself. While a direct republican position was probably difficult to print, the paper clearly contains and hints at having republican sentiments, and also includes numerous, often thinly veiled, revolutionary threats.²⁹ As noted above, it was claimed that, during the court trials in Lund, that “the Republic” was being hailed. While this cannot be proved, it is clear that the fears of those listening to the crowd were not mistaken. The paper clearly had republicanism within its ideology.

The ideology proclaimed by Nils Rudolf Munch af Rosenschöld is easily recognizable in a European context. This is a typically radical political tradition. It contains a fundamental critique of society, and even suggests that a revolutionary transformation might be necessary, but the source of oppression is clearly based in political life. This is very similar to the radical tradition in England which has been stressed by Gareth Stedman Jones in his classic study of Chartism, and developed in later research.³⁰ Of course, this was not a tradition discovered by Jones; he merely highlighted its prevalence within the political language of Chartists. E P Thompson and Iorwerth Prothero had previously stressed the role of the radical tradition of Thomas Paine among artisans.³¹ Similar ideas can be found in the French republican tradition, and, to some extent,

²⁹ A direct praise for republican government – “the core image of all society” – in *Fäderneslandet*, no 3, April 26 1852. Radical politicians of the great French Revolution, such as Saint-Just and Robespierre, were praised in the same issue. On July 26 1852, an article entitled “The art of making revolutions” appeared. Based on French experiences, it is a brief outline of how an urban revolution could be carried out. On August 9 1852, a speech is printed, celebrating the February revolution in Paris 1848. There is also an example of a hint of a coming revolution in “Hvad tänker Utländningen om Sverge?”, no 22 August 16 1852.

³⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism”, in *Languages of class. Studies of English Working Class History 1832–1982*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 102–107.

³¹ E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York 1963, pp. 762–768 and passim; Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London. John Gast and his Times*, London 1979, pp. 83–88.

also in Germany.³² Nevertheless, one should not assume that this “radicalism” necessarily takes the same shape everywhere. We are not dealing with a unified movement or an ideology with canonical writers. The radicalism of *Fäderneslandet* is made distinct by its emphasis on office-holders and the limited relevance that was given to any form of economic oppression.³³

An important word in radical traditions is “the people” (sw. *folket*). In British historiography, there has been a lengthy discussion of the relative importance of a language of class compared to a language of the people, where, in particular, Patrick Joyce has emphasised the persistence of “the people” as a unifying concept in radicalism.³⁴ In *Fäderneslandet*, ‘people’ was an important word. The paper refers to Munck af Rosenschöld as “the friend of the people”. There is discussion of the freedom and the rights of the people, there is talk about “the oppressors of the people”, and it is also claimed that the king and the office-holders ideally are supposed to be “servants of the people”.³⁵ There is very little precision in the use of the word, no clear delineation of who belongs to the people. But what can clearly be seen in these examples is that “the people” is not equated with all Swedes. Munck af Rosenschöld is defending a group with a subordinate position. There are those who oppress the people, whereas in practice they ought to be their servants. Apparently there is no contradiction between the word people and the dichotomous model of society previously discussed. “The people” is quite simply another way to refer to the “lower” groups of society. It is not a word emphasising unity and consensus in society. However, its vagueness implies that it potentially could appeal to very many broad groups, and tended to avoid discussion of potential splits and division within “the people”. One could, for example, also claim that well off farmers, merchants, and artisans belonged to the people. Whether they actually responded to such an appeal is quite another matter.

³² Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades. Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830–1871*, Princeton 1993; Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment 1848–1852*, Cambridge 1983, p. 12; Madeleine Hurd, *Public Spheres, Public Mores, and Democracy. Hamburg and Stockholm, 1870–1914*, Ann Arbor, 2000, p. 46.

³³ Jones discusses how English radicals tried to incorporate economic oppression into their fundamentally political critiques.

³⁴ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914*, Cambridge 1991.

³⁵ *Fäderneslandet* no 8, February 25 1853; no 36, November 22 1852; no 38, December 17 1852 (the last two examples).

Society was divided into two: namely between the oppressors and the oppressed. The source of power was given to office-holders by the state, and the final authority was given by monarchy. Nevertheless, Munck af Rosenschöld not only criticized society, he also had an idea of how a better society should be established. Crucial to his understanding of a better society was a notion of “justice” (sw. *rättvisa*). This was the last of the three words on the banner head of the paper, together with Freedom and Work. Freedom from oppression for the people, recognition of the right to Work of the lower classes, and finally Justice for all, were the rallying cries. Justice is another rather vague notion, but in *Fäderneslandet*, justice was very closely associated with the legal system. Munck af Rosenschöld was obsessed by the law, and during the spring of 1853, he spent most of his time in the Lund city court. He continuously stressed the need for justice, but as we have seen, he was, in practice, not very successful in his dealings with the law. The fines he eventually had to pay personally were very high, and the penalties meted out to the responsible editors of the paper were rather harsh. It is reasonable to ask if he actually believed in the justice of the Swedish courts. What did people outside the court imply when they hailed Munck af Rosenschöld as “the defender of justice”? I believe that the answer to this question goes directly to the core of his strongest held beliefs.

Justice and the rule of law has commonly been an important part of interpretations of Swedish history. It is claimed that Sweden has never been subject to absolutist and arbitrary government, but rather that the rulers were constricted by a legal system that they were bound by. The law has its roots in the Germanic peasant communities. By the Middle Ages, Sweden was already a state ruled by justice, where the king and the people, side by side, upheld legal norms.³⁶

A mythical story emphasising the role of law has been told repeatedly to illustrate this understanding. The story was originally told by the Icelandic thirteenth century historian Snorre Sturlasson. He told of how the leader of a Swedish *ting* (law court), Torgny lagman, challenged the king and forced him to agree to a peace treaty. Torgny lagman became a symbol of the rights of the Swedish peasantry and the way that they were capable of challenging governing authorities through the law courts. This story was attractive to Munck af Rosenschöld. To him, Torgny lagman represented a time when power still resided in the people and kings were their servants. What perhaps made the story, as told by Snorre, even more

³⁶ See for example the history textbook most frequently used in secondary schools, C T Odhner & K G Westman, *Lärobok i fäderneslandets historia för realskolan*, 26. uppl., Stockholm 1937, pp. 260–62.