

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

Sweden—a fourth Rome?

Some in the Swedish "elite" console themselves that a Soviet takeover would mean promoting their own status.

'Sweden is the Fourth Rome, we got our religion from the Third," i.e., Moscow. This is the thesis of a July 6 op-ed in *Svenska Dagbladet*, in which author Sven Fagerberg declares the Swedish Social Democracy ideologically dead and Sweden virtually a totalitarian one-party dictatorship, whose only saving state religion is rooted in the East.

Although Fagerberg's description of the symptoms is close enough to the truth, his prescribed cure would aggravate the illness.

Fagerberg outlines how Byzantium, the Second Rome, "actively contributed to forming the Third Rome, old Russia and Moscow, developed to perfection in the Soviet state." But Byzantium is still alive in Sweden, too:

"No other country is so permeated with religion as Sweden. Possibly Iran, with its Koran-babbling mullahs, can compete with our socialists in fanaticism, in the unwavering and omnipresent faith. . . . Socialism dominates the Soviet Union and Sweden. In both cases, it is an all-penetrating religion, contrary to reason but backed by false, religious arguments, appealing to primitive feelings."

So far, so good. Fagerberg's view of the Social Democracy's totalitarianism and susceptibility to Eastern influences is to the point, if not very profound.

A challenge that could hardly be left unanswered, the op-ed was responded to on July 8 in *Aftonbladet*, mouthpiece of the Social Democracy.

Under the interrogative title, "Sweden: a Fourth Rome?" culture-page writer Karl Vennberg essentially answers in the affirmative, posing the counter-question: Why not?

Vennberg's "defense" of Social Democratic Sweden is that the Eastern church represents a higher civilization than the Western one. He joins Great Russian chauvinist author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in arguing for the purity of Russian mystical culture, before Russia was occupied by destructive Western communism as imported by Lenin.

"Sweden, in other words, is a Byzantium deprived of everything but sheer evil," Vennberg rants. "The only question is to what extent this can be derived from Byzantium itself. There was Byzantine art . . . an irreplaceable ancient heritage . . . a church in which faith remained more pure and alive than in corrupted Rome."

In the original op-ed, Fagerberg, a former refrigerator engineer who turned to Zen mysticism and began issuing books criticizing modern society, does not confine himself to blasting the work of Sweden's domestic fundamentalists. He also imagines himself to have found the seed-crystal of totalitarian Sweden in Christianity, whose inherent authoritarianism has propagated itself through Constantinople and Moscow to Stockholm:

"By nature, Christianity is monotheist and totalitarian. Thou shalt have no false gods before thee. Polytheism, like in Greece, is necessary for a working democracy, for the free

competition among contrary but good wills to produce optimal solutions."

So, Fagerberg proves himself an uninhibited anarcho-liberal, who finds Christianity undemocratic. But what of truth? A democracy that, like that in Athens, refuses to be informed by reason, invariably produces rule by the mob.

Fagerberg and his opponent share the same inability to comprehend Reason as something imparted to man by God, to be employed in perfecting the creation. In the egalitarian land of Fagerberg and Vennberg, the confused disciples of Christ, in a weak moment, might have passed a vote restraining the Holy Spirit, so as not to upset popular opinion.

The key to Fagerberg and Vennberg's fault is their concerted denial of the *Filioque*, the active concept of the Trinity insisting that the Holy Spirit—God's creative principle—proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, God made man.

Without the *Filioque*, creation is monopolized by the Father, and an impotent mankind is doomed eternally to passively gape at God's work.

These opposite views of man are reflected in the contrary social and political orders of the West and the East. While the Eastern church never accepted the *Filioque*, and was, thus, never Christian, the decline of the West today corresponds to efforts to extinguish the *Filioque* from the creed of the Western Christian church.

In their united front against the *Filioque*, Fagerberg and Vennberg merely document the bankruptcy of Sweden's cultural elite. The totalitarian system of the East has indeed made inroads into Sweden, but no Fourth Rome is on the agenda. Sweden's weak-kneed "elite" seems to desire nothing more than adoption as a satrapy of the *Third Rome*.