

The Elections in Sweden in September 1970. Politics in a Multi-Level Election

In Sweden, few elections can be compared with the one in 1970 as regards interest. The result has been the object of quite different interpretations – a situation seldom found in Swedish politics. The Centre Party emerged from the battle victorious. The Communist Party (VpK) managed to stay in the Riksdag, while the decline of the Conservatives continued. Gaining slightly more than 1%, the People's Party maintained its position. The party in power – the Social Democrats – suffered a considerable loss. The two minor parties secured no representation in the Riksdag, as the Christian Democratic League (KDS) did not make any progress and the Communist Society Marxists-Leninists (KFML), did not receive more than 0.5 % of the total vote. Though the turnout decreased somewhat, it was still over 88 %. This is a high level of election participation for Swedish conditions. Only once before (in 1968) was it higher.

If the local elections in 1966 and the parliamentary elections in 1968 are looked upon as deviating from normal, the elections in 1970 can be characterized as a return to what is often said about changes in Swedish politics – “there are no landslides”.

Due to basic structural transformations of the Constitution, the election took place in a climate new to the parties, the participants and the political scientists. In order to outline this remarkable situation this essay will contain a survey of:

- the constitutional reforms preceding the election;
- a Swedish election campaign without any kind of fundamental issue;
- the election results; and
- some concluding remarks.

1. The Constitutional Revision

A. The Reform of the Riksdag

A time-consuming, persistent and sometimes vehement debate preceded the appointment of a constitutional commission in 1954. This commission gave its report in 1963, presenting a new constitution containing quite a new form of government and a new construction of the parliament. The majority recommended a unicameral system of representation, while a few members supported a bicameral alternative. Most of the criticism of the bicameral system was directed against the time lag between the opinions of the electorate on election day and its representation in the first chamber. Of course, parties enjoying a steady increase in electoral support over an extended period wanted to abolish this chamber. At the worst, election results had an effect twelve years later. However, declining parties displayed a very moderate interest in a reform. At all events, they wanted time to find solutions to their advantage. Up to 1960, the bourgeois opposition had – to some extent – been favoured by the system. Afterwards the Government Party “maintained its power and ruled by time-lagging opinions” – a stereotype in parliamentary discussions.

To gain time for consideration the Government appointed a committee in 1964. This committee delivered a report called “The Question of the Constitution and the Communal Connection”. Among the proposers of this so-called “Connection” was the Prime Minister, Tage Erlander. Faced with the coming of a unicameral reform, they wanted to preserve the connection between the Riksdag and the communal representation in some form. The expression “the Connection Boys in the Government offices” was jokingly attached to that staff of assistants around the Prime Minister who argued persistently for the alternative solution of the constitutional question. Many found this solution to be mysterious and only a few said they were able to understand it.

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After the party discussions during 1965–1966, when the complex of problems was explicitly structured in a number of measures, the so-called constitutional committee was appointed. This committee – still in operation – by-passed a total revision. As early as 1967 it had propounded a partial reform, which got carried in the Riksdag in 1968 and 1969. In addition to the codification of parliamentarism, the bicameral system was replaced by a unicameral one. The representation at all levels was to be elected by direct elections on the same occasion (the Communal Connection). After the solution of this protracted issue, the debate quickly centered on the problem of how this new factor would affect the election.

While the two chambers of the Riksdag consisted of 380 members, the number was now to be reduced to 350. The committee's proposal for 290 members caused a general feeling of discomfort. It was rejected by the Government and the Riksdag. The reason was mainly of a practical-egoistic nature, the problem being where "those outside" could be placed at rejection. It should be pointed out that the possibility of taking advantage of the political experience of the remaining members at lower levels constituted an argument for all parties. This fact facilitated the mutual adjustment of otherwise contending wills, which resulted in one election day for all levels at the same time (i.e. the elections to Parliament, the County Communal Councils, and the communes).

B. The Reform at the County Level

As appears from above, the regional level was involved in the constitutional debate from different aspects. At the time of the partial reform the debate displayed a keen interest in the decentralized state administration in the counties. A manifest need for more intensive and integrated regional planning showed itself in the decision of Parliament in the early sixties to start an active policy of economic localization and to amalgamate the Communes. The regional debate was further complicated by the following governmental reports, put forward in 1967 and later:

a) *The Report on the State Administration of the Council* proposed that the County Government Board, augmented by a body of laymen, should be responsible for regional planning and development, i.e. the responsibility should rest with the State as before

b) *The Report on the Democracy in the Counties* suggested that the County Communal Councils should have the administrative duties for the Counties. The power placed within the County Government Board by the former committee was in principle placed within the County Communal Councils by the latter.

c) *The Report on the State County Treasury* wanted to withdraw taxation, tax-collection and national registration from the County Government Board and to organize a regional Treasury with County Taxation Rights. The lay members were to be appointed by the County Communal Council.

d) *The Report on the County Division* proposed a reduction of the number of counties from 25 to 15, combined with a compulsory adoption of this principle of division on the part of the County Communal Councils.

It is understandable that the existence of so many proposals for regional reform along with the introduction of the unicameral reform greatly added to a profound feeling of riskiness on the eve of the election in 1970. It is true that, on the whole, no reform got carried, and, in all probability, not much will be realized even in the long run. Nevertheless the whole debate, varying in intensity since the 1950s, has questioned much that is old and ingrained at the regional level. Essential components of the problem of how to organize the influence of the citizen on regional social planning are the traditional position of the County Government Board since the seventeenth century and the rise and the activities of the County Communal Council since the nineteenth century.

A main feature of the whole debate has been the fear of a federalistic system with too far-reaching decentralization. This would involve risks of inequalities in economic and social standards between the different parts of the country.

Another dimension of the debate, of a more ideological nature, contains the old theme of bureaucracy versus democracy. This question, prevailing in many elections and particularly stressed in this year's campaign, can in principle be split up by distinguishing between a) decentralization to the County Government Board, and b) decentralization to the County Communal Councils and the communes.

C. The Reform of the Communes

During the period treated above in connection with the constitutional question, from the 1950s up to the present day, a fundamental transformation of the division of the communes has taken place. In 1952 there was a reduction of communes from about 2500 to 1000 and, ten years later, a new reform was decided upon. This reform brought the communes together in 282 blocs. In 1970 the number of communes amounted to 464, and by the beginning of 1974 there are to be 274.

As in many other industrialized countries there has been a considerable general structural transformation in the last twenty years. In view of an accelerated process of urbanization, the object of those who wanted to maintain the communes as institutions of local autonomy was to create communes with greater capabilities. Obviously, the costs of this transformation were heavy, especially since the wounds of the reform in 1952 had not yet been healed. In connection with this development the tensions have increased in the whole country owing to, among other things, mutual rivalry between potential central areas within the blocs; irritation at the adaptation of the geographical structure of the party organizations to new units; and the risks of a dominating position for central areas, at the expense of rural areas. One of the main sources of this unrest is the widely-known effects caused by the reduction of the number of representatives. As an answer to this general uneasiness a new structure of interest articulation – including town communities, new institutionalized groups and anomic groups – has arisen. The parties have looked upon this phenomenon now as a complement, now as a threat.

A further complicating circumstance was the impossibility for the parties to make easy comparative calculations of the number of seats. This was due to the changes of the constituencies for elections at the County Communal Council level as well as at the communal level. The nominations were protracted and competitive.

2. A New Election System

As has been stated above, one of the basic changes at the election in 1970 was the introduction of a simultaneous election day for all levels. This was what remained of the so-called Communal Connection. It was feared that national policy questions would dominate to such an extent as to drown communal policy problems. However, the simultaneous expression of opinion at all levels was considered a value. A three-year electoral period was fixed for all levels. The term of office on the two sub-levels had lagged behind one year in the earlier system. Now the term of office was coordinated with the electoral period. As was mentioned above, one chamber of 350 members was stipulated. Every permanent member has a substitute to replace him in case of absence for a sustained period. 310 seats are allocated among the constituencies, while the remaining forty constitute so-called adjustment seats, in order to balance the deviations from a desired fictitious national proportional representation. The seats are allocated on the basis of a method called "jämkad-uddatalsmetod" and distributed among the constituencies according to the number of those entitled to vote, not as earlier according to the population. Each Communal Assembly was to be entitled to fix the number of its representatives within certain limits. Previously there had

been no system of deputies at this level, but now such a system was introduced. It consisted of deputies for half the number of permanent members. The right of attendance at the Assembly was granted these deputies.¹

A barrier was added to the new election system to counteract the widely-known phenomenon of splintering caused by recently formed small parties. Only those parties that obtained at least 4% of the total vote could share in the allocation of seats. Fixed seats are allocated to a party which secures 12% of the votes in one constituency, even if it does not gain 4% of the votes on a national basis. However, the party cannot share in the distribution of the "adjustment seats". In the election, the barrier proved to be something of a catalyst in the debate on the presence or absence of the Communist Party in the new Riksdag.

Earlier, to be eligible to the second chamber a person had to reside in the constituency. In the new system this requirement was abolished and the regulations for eligibility were linked up with full age – 20 years. As early as in 1968 the franchise had been lowered to 20 years. Among the new technicalities, the extended possibility of postal voting ought to be stressed, giving everyone the right to a postal vote a month before the election day. On the other hand, the plan to use a mechanical voting technique, a system of cassettes, could not be carried into effect. The introduction of this system has been postponed until 1973. This being the case, the tremendous increase in the number of postal votes and the delay in the counting of the votes caused undreamt-of speculation on the final outcome.

3. Parties and Leadership

Change of leader and change of name are conducive to uncertainty in political life. In Sweden the political interest of the voters has focused on leaders to a very slight degree. However, the appearance of TV among the media seems to have caused a change in attitudes toward leader-images. Functionaries and election experts tend to stress the question: "Does he make a favourable impression on TV?" As there have been some changes in leadership recently, it might be of interest to outline the leadership situation.

Ever since the Conservative Party, "Moderata samlingspartiet", at that time called "Högerpartiet", managed to reach a compromise about the election of Yngve Holmberg as party leader, the election experts have tried on turn him into a TV personality. The effort was not considered to be very successful. At any rate, at the election the party thought Gösta Bohman more fit to be its representative, especially on TV. Afterwards Bohman was elected party leader. Gunnar Hedlund – the farmer who became a Doctor of Law and head of the Center Party – had earlier planned to retire. But the risk of a change in leadership was great, opinion polls showing that 20% of the Center Party voters attached their vote to Hedlund. Since no "natural" successor had questioned Hedlund's position, he had to lead the party once more. This seventy-year-old man of good humour, well known for his reassuring statements and surprising moves, was something of a favourite with the public. The People's Party, on the other hand, had a change in leadership, replacing Sven Wedén, a manufacturer of tongs, with a university man, Gunnar Helén. He had taken a good rest for some years as a County Governor. Among other things, he had forbidden the local people to sit on the steps of the County Governor's House. Helén, always prepared for anything, entered the battle without hesitation and from the start was in the headlines, owing to telling his young Liberals off. The election campaign of the Liberals lacked the earlier playful touch.

The Erlander era had been long. The Social Democratic Party, with Tage Erlander at the head, had – in 1968 – won one of the greatest victories in its history. After suffering a heavy loss in the election in 1966 with only 42% of the total vote, which gave rise to expectations of a change in power on the part of the opposition, the party advanced to more than 50% in 1968. In this situation a change in leadership was no longer a matter of

course. However, Tage Erlander, while still victorious, preferred to resign in favour of Olof Palme, who was unanimously elected leader at the party congress in 1969. In his address to the congress the new leader created the expression "listen to the Movement", which became the motto of the Labour Movement in this election.

In the period following the local election in 1966 the Swedish Communist Party changed its name and became The Left Party – the Communists (VpK). Owing to a heavy loss in the election in 1968 and because of personal conflicts within the party, it has clearly been hard for the party leader G. H. Hermansson – formerly called "Red Herman" – to keep the rump intact and to prevent it from falling to pieces. He had to cope with the old dimension: industrial Communists – rural Communists, and the ideological dimension: pro-Chinese, pro-Moscow and the Nationalists. The colour of the party had shifted step by step from red to pink, documented by the acceptance of parliamentarism. In disintegration the young rebels (VuF) left the party. A new party called the Communistic Society – Marxists-Leninists (KFML) was formed and it took part in the election in 1970 supported by the student organization Clarté. The Christian Democratic League, founded in 1964, had only attained representation at the communal level. It continued the struggle for a definite breakthrough in Swedish politics, however, and at the prospect of the election a youth organization (KDU) was formed.

The coalition movements in the bourgeois parties at the center, which had achieved organized forms in earlier elections in the middle sixties, had now come to an end. A year before the election a fraction called the Progressive Party made an effort to revive these tendencies but it vanished long before the election day.

4. The Messages in the Campaign

The messages the parties tried to bring to the fore were mainly variations on the following basic themes:

- the increasing tendencies to a profound regional imbalance
- the inflation in an expanding economy
- the gradual constitutional revision
- the far-reaching structural changes in organization and division
- the increasing politicization of the public consciousness
- the general ideological stress on equality.

Concrete themes in the discussion of the structural problems were: the growth of the metropolitan areas, the labour market policy and the policy for the distribution of industry, the State as entrepreneur, the problem of Norrland (northern regions) and the general problem of pollution. From the point of view of a continuing structural transformation the problems connected with Sweden's entrance into the Common Market were, of course, debated.

To counteract the regional imbalances great efforts have been made to find new economic-political means and instruments to complement the old policy of full employment. Some of the proposed measures have been put into practice. But in relation to the activities of the parties the development has generally been too rapid to allow of control. The partisan debate seems to have got stiff on questions like general versus selective means. In the debate on the inflation in an expanding economy the opposition focused on: the rise in prices, the high level of the rate of interest, the restrictions on credits, the effects of the inflation on wages and prices, the outflow of currency, the deficit in the balance of trade, the insufficient growth of GNP and the constant increase in the share of the public sector. In the spring the Minister of Finance presented a new system of taxation, consisting of individual taxation and raised indirect taxes. To the amazement of the Government it was passed with little controversy. Generally, the formation of the battle lines was: The Opposition reiterated that the problems were caused by the policy (or

lack of policy) of the Government. The Government Party maintained that the difficulties were due to international phenomena beyond their control.

During the post-war period the government question has been revived from different starting-points in time of crisis. Throughout the elections the argument has been: the Government is old and done for – the Government has held power too long. In the election in 1968 the central theme was the possibility of a change of Government. In 1970, the debate on the possibility of a change in Government centered on the effect of the introduced barrier on the presence or absence of the Communist Party in the Riksdag. If Vpk succeeded in surmounting the 4% barrier and securing 14 seats, then the probability of a continued Labour Government was considered high. In many quarters there was some speculation about Social Democrats voting for Communists to prevent a bourgeois government. The following themes were debated: co-operation between the bourgeois parties, the lack of a bourgeois platform at the election, the dependence of the Liberals and the Center Party in relation to the Conservatives, references to the actions of bourgeois governments in Norway and Denmark, the dependence of the Government Party on Vpk and speculations on other types of coalitions.

The introduction outlined the administrative and divisional changes at the regional and communal levels. Corresponding to these structural changes there has been a continuous process of centralization throughout the organizational structure of society, e.g. the trade-union movement and the farmers' co-operatives have brought about "big units". The distance between the members and the decision-makers has gradually increased. These conditions have stimulated a widespread debate on the fundamentals of democracy. Among the problems discussed were: centralization versus decentralization, industrial democracy, associations among tenants (town communities), introduction of district councils, alienation, frustration, etc.

The question of Sweden's entrance into the Common Market has also symbolized the risks of losing close control over the development of society. Great changes in the news distribution, which is becoming more and more rapid and obtrusive, in combination with an increasing level of knowledge, develop the consciousness of the public. It is often said that the direction of the socialization process moves from the old generation to the young. There is much to show that this traditional conception requires modification. In the search for information the young generation, claiming the right to protest, vehemently attacks the inequities of society. In the late sixties there are tendencies indicating a similar participation of the old generation. The public consciousness has focused on the following themes: the general problem of pollution, foreign aid, official recognition of revolutionary governments, the justification of illegal strikes and criticism of society in general terms.

The party messages were frequently couched in terms of equality during the sixties. A study of the election in 1968 showed that all the parties talked about equality.² Also in this election "equality", interpreted differently, served to legitimize solutions in quite different fields. The dimensions of equality in the debate were: urban areas-rural areas, employed-unemployed, male-female, young-old, healthy-unhealthy, low salaried-high salaried.

In making a survey of the broad undercurrents there is reason to call attention to the fact that defence was not actually among the themes debated. This is also true of the housing policy, formerly one of the most controversial questions. It was among the subjects in the debate on local democracy, but, contrary to the general rule, it was never a battleground for overbids among the parties.

However, the campaign became dominated by the sudden emergence of insignificant questions of only momentary interest. The party in power tried to give the campaign an ideological setting. The presentation of its election manifesto was made in Adalen.³ But the mass media emphasized the following petty questions:

It started with the *housewives' campaign* – an organized disapproval of a detail in the

taxdraft, which was said to be unfavourable to the housewives. After that the Government was accused by the Conservative leader of intending to turn people into cogs in a socialist society by means of *indoctrination* at school. Then followed the so-called *distrust campaign* – an advertising drive, directed by a great number of private employers in southern Sweden, who were dissatisfied with the restraints on credits. Gösta Bohman appeared on the stage with his book "Domestic Foreign Policy", which contended that the *Government was playing a double game*, showing a Janus-face. The debate on price-wage inflation was intensified and the Government Party had to freeze prices. However, the interest of the Left or the Right – the Prime Minister answered that it would mean a choice between loan amounting to millions and a *reduction in the rate of interest*. It was then the turn of *violence in Sweden*, the need for protection, TV-supervision and an increased police force. The following incident can be taken as indicative of the now *vulgarized atmosphere* of the campaign: When asked which of two alternatives he preferred – co-operation with the Left or the Right, the Prime Minister answered that it would mean a choice between *plague and cholera*. Then we had the *quarrel between Hedlund and Palme*. In the end the discussion centered around the *techniques of propaganda* in general and the contents of *Joe Hill's songs* in particular.

5. What Did the Opinion Polls Show?

As usual, opinion polls of various kinds stimulated the speculations on the outcome. In August the year before the election, the Social Democrats still had a strong position (see Table I). The relative strengths of the parties were 54.5 % for the socialist bloc

Table I. Party Division of the Vote in Per Cent. Opinion Poll Made by SIFO Institute

| Year and publishing month | Conservative Party | People's Party | Christ. Democr. League | Center Party | Social Democr. Party | Communist Party | Marxists-Leninists | Total per cent |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1969 Aug | 13.0 | 13.5 | 0.5 | 18.5 | 52.5 | 2.0 | – | 100 % |
| 1970 Aug | 10.5 | 17.5 | 1.5 | 19.0 | 48.5 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 100 % |
| Sept | 11.5 | 17.0 | 2.6 | 18.9 | 45.5 | 3.7 | 0.8 | 100 % |

consisting of S and Vpk and 45.5 % for bourgeois parties, KDS included. One month before the election the difference had shrunk. The prospects of Vpk surmounting the barrier were still obscure and the position of the Social Democrats deteriorated. An SIFO report published two days before the election showed that the blocs were now equal in strength (50 %-50 %). In the debate on TV two days before the election the party leaders played a waiting game. The government question was open and the Communist Party was close to the 4 %-barrier. 86 % of those interviewed expressed the intention of voting.

6. The Results of the Elections

The historical election of the seventies was over – the first election to the unicameral Riksdag and three elections at the same time. The final result, delayed by the many postal votes, is shown in Table II.

The Conservatives continued their decline, and lost more than one sixth of their share in 1968. Already in 1968 the Center Party placed itself at the head of the bourgeois opposition. With an increase of another 20 % in the election its position as the leading op-

Table II. Turnout and Party Division of the Vote in the Swedish Elections 1968 and 1970

| Election | Turnout | Conser- vative Party | People's Party | Christ. Democr. League | Center Party | Social Democr. Party | Commu- nist Party | Marxists- Leni- nists | Total per cent |
|--------------|---------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1968 Riksdag | 89.3 | 13.9 | 15.0 | 1.5 | 16.5 | 50.1 | 3.0 | - | 100 % |
| 1970 Riksdag | 88.2 | 11.5 | 16.2 | 1.8 | 19.9 | 45.4 | 4.8 | 0.4 | 100 % |
| Change | -1.1 | -2.4 | +1.2 | +0.3 | +3.4 | -4.7 | +1.8 | +0.4 | - |

position party cannot be questioned. The advance of the Center Party in the sixties is one of the most prominent features in Swedish political life considering that in the fifties it was still mainly a rural party. Its penetration into the cities began in the 1966 election, when so-called committees of central areas were formed. These committees are now established organizations with members belonging to the entrepreneurs, the officials and the workers. This transformation was furthered by co-operation with the People's Party, a typically urban party – the so-called "Co-operation at the Center".

The Social Democrats suffered a heavy loss, about $\frac{1}{10}$ of their total vote. The heaviest losses occurred in the metropolitan areas – particularly Gothenburg – and in the county of Norrbotten. In Gothenburg as well as in the ore-fields in the north there had been unrest resulting in illegal strikes during the winter 1969/70. In this context it can be mentioned that the two Communist Parties, Vpk and KFML, were the most successful in these areas. The final distribution of seats among the parties in the new Riksdag appears from Table III. Eighty-three of its members were elected for the first time and 267 had held seats in the old Riksdag.

Table III. Party Division of Seats in the Swedish Riksdag 1970

| | Conser- vative Party | People's Party | Christ. Democr. League | Center Party | Social Democr. Party | Commu- nist Party | Marxists- Leninists | Total |
|------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Total Members | 41 | 58 | - | 71 | 163 | 17 | - | 350 |
| Women | 4 | 4 | - | 7 | 27 | 3 | - | 45 |
| | Bourgeois Parties | | | 170 | Socialist Parties | | | 180 |

It is difficult to give the above type of account of the election results at the local levels. Comparisons with 1966 are likely to cause confusion due to the changes of: the constituencies; the number of representatives; and the divisional structure. Regarding the outcome, it can be pointed out that the Social Democrats were more successful at this level than at the national level, the difference being 0.5 %. The Communists sustained a corresponding loss.⁴

A comparison of the results in 1966 and 1970 shows an increase in the number of communes with a Social Democratic majority attended by a corresponding decline in the number of those with a bourgeois majority. Such a change would have taken place in any case, owing to the fusion of communal bloc-units with new communes. However, the

recovery since 1966 resulted in a net gain by about ten communes. The above-mentioned hypothesis that regular Social Democrats voted Communist for tactical reasons in certain areas in the national election is confirmed by a detailed study of the local results.

It would be interesting to know exactly to what extent the voters split their ballot. In that way it would be possible to estimate the consequences this new election system may involve. Furthermore, this would enable us to find an indicator of the rationality of voting behaviour. Here, only certain preliminary observations can be made. A certain difference between the results of the election to the County Communal Council as compared with the national election has been pointed out above. As regards the relation between the communal elections and the other two elections, there are divergences. However, they are of a different trend in the various communes.

If the election participation over a long period of time is considered, it appears that since 1950 participation in local elections has generally been 5 % lower than in national elections. The common election day had the result that the participation in the local elections rose to the same level as in the national election, which influenced the distribution of votes. It was this very effect that the advocates of the "Communal Connection" aspired to.

7. Campaign Resources

In the last few years the capacity of the parties to mobilize personal and economic resources has attracted great interest in Sweden. The debate has centered on two factors in particular: the changing situation resulting from structural transformations of various kinds, and conjectures about financial support from business and trade unions.

Support for the parties from the State amounting to 60,000 kr/seat was introduced in 1965. There were no restrictions on its use. Even before 1966 the State had undertaken to bear the costs of the ballots at the elections to the Riksdag and the County Communal Councils. The communal elections were included in 1966. Between 1969-70 several County Communal Councils and nearly all communes also gave financial support to the parties. The former support, ranging from 2000 to 8000 kr/seat, is generally used by the organizations at the county level. The latter is mainly spent at the communal level. This support varies from 200 to 500 kr/seat in sparsely populated areas and usually from 2000 to 5000 kr/seat in large towns.

The economic and personal resources of the parties were one of the objects of a comprehensive study of the campaign in the communal elections of 1966.⁵ The campaign costs of the local party organizations were, on an average, 2 kr/household in sparsely populated areas and 5 kr/household in large towns. Quite obviously, the financial support introduced at different levels means a tremendous strengthening of resources in a system where all the elections take place on one and the same day. This support is more significant at the communal level than at any other level. This fact has been confirmed by interviews with the local party leaders.⁶ The purpose of the communal support was to strengthen the activity of the parties at the local level and to increase the information on communal matters to the citizens. It is a plausible assumption that the support reduces the contended risks of the negative effects of a simultaneous election day: that communal matters would drown in national policy questions.

A very important question is: What is the effect of such an inflow of money into the campaign? Even though the data from this election have not been processed yet, it can definitely be stated that there has been:

- a decrease in the number of households canvassed;
- a decrease in the distribution of election material via party members in favour of postal distribution;

- an increase in the amount of printed material with local communal contents; and
- a heavy increase in the costs of partisan advertisement.

From 1966 to 1970, the change in the volume of advertising in the regional and local press amounted to slightly more than 30 %. The partisan nature of the daily press can be conducive to the stimulation of the communal election temperature by means of commentaries, reports and critical examination of the party messages. Investigations show a strong decrease in editorials and press debate about local communal matters in all dailies. Political reports and news about the same matters have, however, increased in the regional and local press but decreased in the national newspapers.⁷

In an interview conducted after the 1970 election, 50-60 % of the local election leaders stated that they had had the impression that communal matters had a different position now compared with earlier, and that they also played a different role in the campaign. 50 % of the leaders in densely populated communes and 75 % of those in sparsely populated ones were of the opinion that local communal matters played a less salient role now compared with 1966.

Summary

The purpose of this survey has been to convey something of the transformation that Swedish political life is undergoing at the present time. The revision of the constitution is not yet entirely completed, but the first election to the unicameral Riksdag in connection with a new election system has been held. The Social Democrats are still in office, but now in a minority position. For the first time the Communists are represented in the Committees in the Riksdag with the exception of the most important ones. In all the Committees the Socialists are in the majority. The negotiations about the leadership posts at the regional and the communal level have taken place in a comparatively rigorous climate. The Center Party has taken the number of posts corresponding to the successes of the Party in the election, even if this has been at the expense of the People's Party. The co-operation that developed between these parties in the sixties seems more or less to have come to an end. The aim of the People's Party had been the creation of a party at the center comparable in size with that of the Social Democrats. However, these aspirations resulted in a transformation of the Peasants' Party into the general welfare party (the Center Party), which today has a leading position in the bourgeois opposition.

Table IV. The Change in Per Cent between the Election Result and the Opinion Poll Made by SIFO Institute

| The Change between the Election and | Conservative Party | People's Party | Christ. Democr. League | Center Party | Social Democr. Party | Communist Party | Marxists-Leninists |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Jan. 1971 | -2.5 | -0.2 | -0.2 | +3.6 | -1.9 | +0.7 | +0.1 |

The tendencies in the sympathies of the electorate described above, up to and including the election, have strengthened (see Table IV). Thus the Conservative Party and the Social Democrats continue to decline, whereas the Center Party advances strongly. The leader of the Center Party (who has now announced his intention of retiring) maintains his popularity. The new Prime Minister has not succeeded in keeping the widespread confidence with which he was received on his accession. In August-September 47 % of

all those asked said that they had "great confidence" in Palme, whereas in January 1971 the corresponding figure was 29 %. For Social Democratic voters the figures were 79 % and 56 %, respectively.

At the time of writing, the country is being paralysed by large-scale strikes and lock-outs in a great number of branches, which involve higher officials in public service, transport and education. The debate on equality is carried further and, for the first time in Swedish politics, the hunger-strike is being used as a means of political pressure. A whole village in the interior of Norrland has tried to obtain employment by this means. Swedish politics today contain many new elements. Stability and industrial peace are no longer self-evident and immovable monoliths.

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NOTES

¹ Owing to the use of a system with many ballots for one party and the fact that representatives can be elected in several constituencies, the number of deputies became excessively great in some communes. In many cases the number was more than twice as great as the number of permanent members. This legal loophole has caused many communes various troubles.

² Westerståhl, Jörgen: *Valrörelsen 1968 i Sveriges Radio*. In stencil, April 1969.

³ In 1931 the military killed five workers at a demonstration in connection with a strike in Adalen.

⁴ Gustafsson, Göran: Valen till riksdag, landsting och primärkommuner den 20 sept. 1970, *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* nr. 4, 1970, p. 345.

⁵ *Den kommunala självstyrelsen* 2, Stockholm, 1971, p. 101.

⁶ Unpublished data from an investigation into the election campaign in 1970. (Harry Forsell, University of Umeå.)

⁷ Strömberg, Lars: *Kommunala frågor i dagspressen inför 1970 års val*. In stencil 1971. Gothenburg.