

NOTES FOR SPEECH

by

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before the

SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY

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President Melvin, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The President of the United States, who is himself a member of the Swedish Colonial Society, has asked me to extend to his fellow-members, on this the Society's thirty-sixth anniversary, his best-wishes for its continued success and influence; and to say in his behalf how appropriate it is that the Society should be celebrating today the three hundredth anniversary of the establishment by Governor Johan Printz of sovereignty in Pennsylvania and of the first law court, the first church and the first school - the three free institutions which today we are in so large a measure defending.

America is a land of many races. A common ideal has drawn these races, over the centuries, to our shores. They were leaving the restraints of a civilization which they had outgrown to discover a civilization that they could freely create after their own longing. Into the web of the new country's strength went the differences of many nations - the sober English with their law of the common man, the Irish who would learn to live at peace under a government which was a part of them; Italians, with a sense of the richness of the earth; Germans, Greeks, Russians; the hardy Scandinavians; and earliest among them the Swedes.

In 1626 a trading company, sponsored by King Gustavus Adolphus, had been formed; and in 1638 two little Swedish ships, the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Grip, sailed up the Delaware River, and the territory of New Sweden was founded. The land was rich and fruitful, as too were the settlers. One of them wrote that his cow had two calves, his ewe two lambs, and his wife twins - all in one night! And William Penn, reporting on "The Present State

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of His Majesty's Isles and Territories in America", in 1687, had this to say: "I must needs commend the Swedes respect to Authority, and Kind behaviour to the English; they do not degenerate from the old Friendship between both Kingdoms. As they are People proper and strong of Body, so they have fine Children, and almost every house full; rare to find one of them without three or four Boys, and as many Girls; some six, seven and eight Sons; And I must do them that right, I see few young men more sober and laborious."

Henry Goddard Leach has spoken of the Swedish levnadslust - the "joy of life," expressing "the poise, the joyousness, the smiling intelligence, the rhythm of Swedish personality and living". In Pennsylvania, and later in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, with their simple habits of hard work and orderly living, and their Lutheran or Protestant religion, they were soon integrated into the new country. They found the country good, and they wrote home about it. "And I can tell you", one of them wrote to a friend, "that here we do not live frugally, but one has eggs and pancakes and canned fish and fresh fish, and fruit of all kinds, so it is different from you who have to sit and suck herring bones."

The Swedes loved the independence of the new land: "One thing I like about this country", one of the new immigrants wrote in 1903, "is that you do not have to be always taking off your hat to people. In Sweden you take off your hat to everybody you meet, and if you enter a store you take off your hat to the clerk. Another thing that makes me like this country is that you can share in the government."

Out of Sweden, which today numbers but 6,000,000 inhabitants, more than 1,000,000 came to America in the years following 1850 - skilled tradesmen, laborers, farmers, carpenters, painters, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, watchmakers, gardeners. They were patient, steadfast persistent. They supported Lincoln in 1860, and again in 1864. They furnished outstanding officers to the Union army in the Civil War. General Ernst Mattais Peter von Vegesack, eager to serve under General McClellan, gave up his commission and enlisted as a private, serving at Yorktown and Williamsburg. Following the battle of Hanover Court House he became a major on McClellan's staff; and, after Gaines Mill, where he covered General Porter's retreat, a colonel of the Twentieth New York. At Antietam he stormed Frederick Center, after it had been twice taken and lost. He held up the regimental banner when it had fallen, and led the charge in person. The next morning Lee's army broke up and moved south.

Another Swedish hero of the Civil War was Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, who was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1842, and joined the army at 19. He made a daring raid at Fredericksburg and with one company held the town against a large force of Confederate cavalry. His leg was amputated because of a bullet wound in a minor engagement preceding the battle of Gettysburg and he was retired. But he would not remain out of the fight. He was chosen to command a picked column of 500 cavalymen to lead a hazardous expedition to liberate prisoners at Libby Prison and Belle Isle. Before the raid, in which he was killed, he wrote his father, Admiral John H. Dahlgren: . . . "There is a grand raid to be made and I am to have a very important command . . . I may be captured or I may be tumbled over, but it is an undertaking that if I were not in, I should be ashamed to show my face again . . ."

And then there is the glorious story of the Monitor, the Yankee "Cheesebox on a raft."

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John Ericsson was born in Sweden in 1803. In 1826 experts in London rejected his first invention, the caloric engine, based on the principle of expansion of gases under heat, on the ground that they saw no reason why it worked! He developed and perfected the screw propeller; and in 1837 launched a small ship, equipped with two independently acting propellers, which made successful trips on the Thames. Yet the Lords of Admiralty declared that it was impossible for his boat to steer, as the power was in the stern.

Ericsson went to America and became a citizen in 1848. He built a 600 ton iron frigate with a heavy gun and range finder for the Government, raced the Great Western, the finest boat afloat, and beat her. At the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853, Ericsson returned to some earlier plans for a turret warship. At that time a ship's guns were fired only from broadside, which made it necessary for the ship to carry a great many, and consequently for these to be light. Ericsson made a model of a revolving steel gun turret, sent it to Napoleon III, but got it back with the Emperor's compliments.

When the Civil War broke out Ericsson wrote to Lincoln on August 29, 1861, offering "to construct a vessel for the destruction of the Rebel fleet at Norfolk and for scouring the Southern rivers and inlets of all craft protected by Rebel batteries. . . . In making this offer," he added, "I seek no private advantage or emolument of any kind. Attachment to the Union alone impels me to offer my services at this fearful crisis, my life if need be, in the great cause which Providence has called you to defend."

Within 100 days the Monitor was built. The Confederates had raised the United States frigate Merrimac from Norfolk harbor, and fitted her with an iron ram and iron plates. The new armored monster shot and rammed the Congress and the Cumberland, and drove the Minnesota aground, all wooden ships,

Secretary of War Stanton was panic-stricken. He urged obstruction of the harbors by local authorities. "The Merrimac", he said "will change the entire character of the war; she will destroy seriatim every naval vessel; she will lay all the cities on the seaboard under contribution . . . I have no doubt that the monster is this minute on her way to Washington and not unlikely we shall have a shell or a cannon-ball from one of her guns in the White House before we leave this room."

But the Monitor had reached Hampton Roads. Though condemned by all the older naval officers she had the enthusiastic support of Captain Scott, and, what was more, of Mr. Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy. On March 9, 1862, the little Monitor forced the ironclad "monster" back into Norfolk, and the relief in Washington was immense . . . The Swedish Minister, Count Piper, was bursting with pride. For had not the son of a Swede invented the now world-famous Monitor? "At one stroke" - as the London Times said - she had "revolutionized naval warfare . . . rendered all then-existing navies obsolete." Many years later Admiral Stephen B. Luce wrote of her: "The Monitor was the crystallization of forty centuries of thought on attack and defense, and exhibited in a singular manner the old Norse element of the American Navy; Ericsson (Swedish) built her; Dahlgren (Swedish) armed her; and Worden (Swedish) fought her. How the ancient skalds would have struck their wild harps on hearing such names in heroic verse! How they would have written them in immortal runes!"

Lincoln had been assassinated, and the tragedy found a deep response in Swedish hearts across the ocean. "Why should the death of a man thousands of miles away," wrote Axel Johan Ugglä in his diary, in Hallefors, Sweden, "lie so heavily on my heart and soul? . . . I feel that I not only knew him

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but that he was my friend. His simple greatness, earnestness, his sincerity and warm human understanding have made him dear . . . One day when men are ready to be honest he will be looked upon as the great American and one of the great men of all lands and all times . . ."

We in America tend to think sometimes that we alone have led the world in the formulation of democratic institutions. But democracy, like all human institutions, is a growing and changing organism, that tends to atrophy if ever it becomes static. In some of the smaller countries of Europe social experiments, largely unknown to us, have now for several years achieved practical results. I refer particularly to the great Swedish co-operative associations which have been used so successfully to resist the growth of monopolies, to keep prices down, and to enlist the interest of the people themselves in movements that so obviously affect their daily lives. The Swedes before the war had established a new relationship between the government and individual enterprise, particularly in the field of electric utilities, in which not only the central government, but local communities were given the relation of partnership with private interests. Thus the problem of regulation was seen in terms of joint association of interests, a problem that so often in America was thought of as necessarily involving irreconcilable antagonisms.

This approach seems to me more creative, even more practical, than the older conception of government as the policeman of private initiative. The Government must learn to serve business, as well as to regulate it; and both should combine to render service to the public as a whole rather than

continue the fruitless and often highly theoretic and therefore unreal struggle as to which is to control. As we approach post war problems we should do well to consider what the Swedish experiment in these fields may contribute to our efforts towards their solution.

Today - for many years - there has been no such thing as a Swedish population in America. The Swedes are a very part of the American frame, their strength is the very strength of our bone and sinew. And as I mention the Swedish names of a few of the heroes of this war, think of them as Americans only, with the proud memory of their Scandinavian backgrounds, remembering how much we owe to Sweden: -

Captain Frank F. Bostrom, of San Antonio, Texas, won the Distinguished Flying Cross for taking a B-17 Flying Fortress 1500 miles from Australia to the Philippines to get General Douglas McArthur - "1500 miles", as the citation reads, "of enemy controlled air, over open seas and through storm areas . . ." Captain Bostrom was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, a year ago, for participating (I quote) "with great personal skill and cool daring, in a bombing mission which resulted in heavy damage to installations in enemy hands at Nichols Field, Philippine Islands."

Staff Sergeant Donald T. Ostlund, of Dewey, Illinois, was decorated with the Air Medal last November for his courage and determination, in a bombing mission against two enemy transports escorted by two destroyers, moving toward Buna, New Guinea. In the face of intense anti-aircraft fire and interception by three zeros, he strafed a destroyer and a transport,

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helped to repel attack of the fighters during three successful bombing runs, on the first of which his airplane was severely damaged and the rear gunner killed.

Lieutenant (J.G.) Frank E. Christofferson of the Navy comes from White Bear Lake, Minnesota. He is 24 years old. He has had three awards for gallantry in action - the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the Silver Star Medal. Let me quote the first citation about his action against enemy Japanese in the battle of Midway on June 6, 1942: "With utter disregard for his own personal safety, Lieutenant Christofferson took part in persistent bombing and strafing attacks against fleeing enemy forces in the face of tremendous anti-aircraft fire."

We know today the threat of the Nazi shadow hanging over the Country of Sweden. She has not, like her sister countries, been overrun and trampled to earth by the bloated international bully. And yet she is not free; nor can she be ever free until that terrible shadow of invasion is lifted from her cities and from her fields. So that her future, as the future of all free men everywhere, depends upon the ultimate crushing of Germany, upon the final certain victory of the allied free nations fighting for their common end.