



NOTES

Sweden's time bomb

Francis Castles writes from Stockholm: As in 1973, Swedish voters have been unable to arrive at any clearcut decision about whether they wish to be ruled by the so-called 'bourgeois' parties (conservative, centre and liberal) or by the socialist bloc (social democrats and communists). Six years ago the result was a tie. The Swedes, having learned the dangers of even numbers in politics, reduced the number of parliamentary seats by one. This time someone must win, but the morning after the election no one knows who that may be. Only 20,000 votes separate the parties, with a large number of postal votes yet to be counted. We may not know until next week whether the social democrats will return to office after three years in the wilderness, or whether some form of 'bourgeois' government will emerge.

Although the overall result is indecisive, the election has led to one dramatic change: the Centre Party, whose steady growth in the sixties and early seventies created the basis for overturning the social democratic hegemony in 1976, has lost its status as the largest 'bourgeois' faction to the Moderates (Sweden's oddly named conservatives). The Centre also lost votes to the left, with the Social Democrats returning to their 1973 strength – about 43.6 per cent of the vote.

The Social Democrats played the campaign in the most defensive manner possible, trying to ensure that their marginal voters were not scared away. Their basic appeal was to the idea of *Folkshmmet* (The People's Home) – the caring, social welfare society which they had built up and only they could be entrusted to preserve. Their major thrust against the 'bourgeois' parties was to point to the manifest disunity which had led to the fall of the three party coalition and was unlikely to provide the strong

government Sweden needed in the coming economic crisis.

The biggest uncertainty of all is next March's referendum on the energy question. The lines of conflict on nuclear energy depart radically from those which normally characterise Swedish politics. The Centre Party and the communists oppose the nuclear option and the Liberals, Social Democrats and Moderates support it. The large central organisations – white-collar and blue-collar union federations and the employers – are united in favour of nuclear energy, which they see as the only basis for the continuance of an affluent industrial society. But the membership of the pro-nuclear parties and unions are much more divided on the issue than their respective leaderships, and it is by no means impossible that the referendum will result in a decisive 'no'. That would mean that the Centre Party, decisively rejected in this election, was the only substantial party that had provided leadership in accord with the people's views on what is clearly the most heartfelt issue in contemporary Swedish politics. This time bomb will tick away for the next six months and, irrespective of the parliamentary balance which emerges from this week's count, no one will be quite certain whether they have won or lost until next March.

Here we go again

Duncan Campbell writes: The start of this year's major political trial at the Old Bailey, of six anarchists accused of conspiracy to rob, takes place in a markedly different atmosphere from that prevalent when the affair began. Fifteen months ago, the present defendants were being presented in terms of the highest hysteria that the Anti-Terrorist Squad could mount, accused of conspiracy to cause explosions. During last week's pre-trial hearings, with the

conspiracy to cause explosions already forgotten, five of the six were on bail and were able to sit, quietly and unguarded, through the hearing. Last year they were permanently handcuffed, under armed guard once they left their maximum security cells, and hurtled from prison to court at almost suicidal speed while marksmen patrolled the rooftops.

The remaining charges include substantive allegations of possession of unauthorised or stolen firearms, and conspiracy charges allegedly connecting a set of defendants to a set of robberies.

The prosecution have taken several steps back from promises of even-handedness in the disgraceful rigmarole of jury vetting. Originally, prosecutor Michael Worsley had carelessly offered to make available to the defence all the police information used to vet the jury – involving checks on criminal records, Special Branch files and collators' files at local police stations. While he made this promise to the open court, however, the staff of the Director of Public Prosecutions adeptly amended it, in the written undertaking given to defence lawyers, so that it promised only a criminal records check and a *general indication* of anything else that might be found. Out of 92 potential jurors, with 20 or so having criminal records, the police have made *no* 'general indications' that the Special Branch or local collators have files on any of them. This is wholly implausible.

In the meantime, the judge has decided in a pre-trial direction, that juries aren't random anyway so vetting doesn't matter. He has also said that it is permissible for the defence to have legal aid to assist it in discovering reasons for challenging jurors, but he surrounded this judgment with enough constraints to make it impossible for the defence to proceed with checks. The verdict of the potential jurors on the whole affair will be interesting.