

– Hello, everyone. Thanks again for joining me. Can I do some housekeeping, first of all? Tonight, or tonight here in Britain, is the second of three talks I'm doing on the Baltic countries, and I'm going to talk about Sweden this evening. Next Tuesday, Tuesday, I'm going to talk about Finland. And I'm talking next Tuesday because on Monday I'm going to do a talk which is called Queen Elizabeth II: A Reflection. So I'm going to talk about the Queen's death and the consequences of that next Monday. But next Tuesday I will do Finland. So today it's Sweden. I hope that's clear to everyone as there has been some sort of confusion around, not least with me, but my diary is now up to date. I think I know what I'm doing. Now, I called this talk originally, From Northern Super to the Land of Abba, and it was the story and is the story of Sweden from the 17th century to the 21st century. And as I began to write the talk and think about it, another title popped into my head, which may be better. From War to Welfare. So I'll leave you to judge whether the title Northern Superpower to the Land of Abba or From War to Welfare fits my talk best. You can judge. But you can gather from both those titles that the history of Sweden from 1600 to the 21st century is a story in two parts. A story, first of all, of war and politics and power. And secondly, a talk about neutrality and social democracy. And then there's a strange P.S. to the story which I hadn't contemplated when I agreed earlier this year to do this talk, because on Sunday there was a general election in Sweden. And although the full results won't be announced until tomorrow, the the main outlines are clear, and it's... Well, it's quite disturbing really, both in Swedish and indeed in European terms, and I'll talk about that when I get to the end bit of the story in due course.

But I want to begin with the story of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden who got himself involved in the Thirty Years' War. The Thirty Years' War ravaged Northern Europe including parts of Scandinavia from 1618 to 1648, 30 years. Britain was not involved in that war really at all, and it perhaps doesn't surprise you because during that period, we are engaged, first of all, in civil strife and then in civil war in Britain. And so we are outside of that. So for example, when I was being taught history at school, I never heard about the Thirty Years' War until I took A-level history and it was part of European history, and it became as a bit of a shock really to a teenage boy interest in history. And it was estimated that in those 30 years, four to 8 million Europeans died, not just in battle, of course, but through famine and through, well, through destruction of villages and towns. The war began as many wars do with an insignificant event really that took place in Prague. Ferdinand II had become king of Bohemia, of which Prague was the capital. Ferdinand was a member of the House of Habsburg who ruled in Spain and ruled in Austria, thus including the Holy Roman Empire, which meant they ruled in Germany. So he was a

powerful man and he was Catholic in a country that was Bohemia that was largely Protestant. And an event happened, which we know in history as the Defenestrations of Prague. Defenestrations simply meaning, people being thrown out of a window. Remember your Latin. Some of you did Latin fenestra. For those of you did French, finetre, a window. And I wanted just to read this. It's a simple little thing from a book called the "History of Sweden." A very thin book, but a useful one for me to be able to quote precisely what happened. And it's on my blog if you wish to read it. The Thirty Years' War began with the famous Defenestration of Prague. In 1618, Calvinist rebels, Protestants. Calvinist rebels who were against Ferdinand, the king, and Catholic domination, literally tossed two Catholic members of the council out of the castle window at Prague. And many of you will have been to Prague and heard the story, I'm sure. It was a 70-foot drop, but they survived, rather smelly, I have to say, 'cause they landed in a dung-hill. 70 foot, they land in a dung-hill and survived. You could tell that story, it's silly. It's true, but silly. But out of silly little things like that does a chain reaction take place, and the whole of Northern Europe ends up in war. Obviously to begin with, the war was a religious war, Catholic against Protestant. And as you all know, I'm sure, Germany today is divided between a Protestant North in Prussia and a Catholic South, think Bavaria. So Germany... Remember, it wasn't a united country. It's part of the Holy Roman Empire and consist of all these 300 odd different little statelets in Germany. Germany is very divided politically, and that is the cause of the war. The Catholics couldn't let the Protestants win, the Protestants couldn't let the Catholics win. By 1630, sort of halfway through the war, if you like, Sweden becomes involved. Now, why should Sweden become involved? Well, let's find an answer to that question. In 1630, it looked as if Catholicism was at the very least solidifying its hold on many of the German states. This alarm Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and many other Swedes. So much Swedish trade was done in the German states, and they certainly didn't want to trade with Catholic Germany. That would make it very difficult. They wanted to trade with Protestant Germany. On top of this, Poland was already Catholic. There had been a counter reformation in Poland, and Protestantism had, well, not extinguished, but very much reduced. It's a Catholic country. If Sweden did not act, the Catholic powers might end up controlling much of central Europe. They would then be in the position to vote militarily, and more importantly, economically isolate Sweden. Gustavus Adolphus took to war. And as such, he was an extraordinary able commander, developing new tactics for war. Some of which were exported to England during the Civil War here 10 years later because there were many people who served... A lot of Scots, for example, served in Gustavus Adolphus' army and they came back with those ideas, which were largely called during the English Civil War, Swedish Drill. Now, Gustavus Adolphus was an extremely able commander. He was also an extremely successful commander. So successful and famous did he become across Europe that he was a hero of Napoleon Bonaparte.

So what did he do? Well, he did a number of things. First of all, he reduced the armour that people wore. Why? Because it was pretty useless anyhow against modern guns. Let me just read you from another book, which I put on my blog and said, and I do believe is a wonderful history book, called "A Warrior Dynasty." And it's the story of Sweden between 1611 and 1721, the part that I'm starting talking about. And in this book, the author who is himself Swedish... This book is, I have to say, I'm using an English translation. This book, we read the following. Gustavus Adolphus himself did not wear armour because it was hurtful to a wound he'd received earlier in the war. His example was followed by his musketeers who used only a pot helmet. Many infantry soldiers were beginning to question the usefulness of armour. Because there's more effective firearms were developed, they more serious wounds than the medical personnel at the time were used to handling. In other words, if a bullet went into your armour, the armour would explode and you would have the shrapnel from the armour inside you. And as medical and surgical skills were not good enough to save you, so you simply didn't wear the armour, then you simply had a bullet in you which might, please, God, be able to be withdrawn. But if it's got the armour that's exploded all over you, then there's little hope. So they gave up using armour. The reduction of weight also made the infantryman, the Swedish infantryman, more mobile. Most pike men and heavy calvary continued to wear body protection. Well, that's one thing that he did, and that gave flexibility a movement, and that was a real plus to war in the early 17th century. But he did more than that because he developed a way of using artillery. Rather like in the First World War, the generals had to work out how to use infantry and tanks together, he began to work out how you could use light artillery, that you could move quickly along with infantry. And the tactics that he developed were to prove invaluable in the Thirty Years' War and gave him, and therefore Protestant Northern and Central Europe, a hold on this war. He had a major victory in 1631, the Battle of Breitenfeld. But in 1632, he himself was killed in the Battle of Lutzen, L-U-T-Z-E-N.

Now, you could say that his career in the Thirty Years' War was briefed, yes, but it changed the dynamics of the war. In fact, the end part of the war was no longer Catholic versus Protestant, but Catholic Bourbon France versus Catholic Habsburg Spain and Germany. So it's a strange war, which if you are interested, there's lots of books on the Thirty Years' War. It's very complex because there's all sorts of different groupings that are going on. So we need to sort of short circuit that and say what was the outcome? Well, the outcome in the end was the Peace of Westphalia signed in 1648. And in that Peace of Westphalia of 1648, we read this. Generally speaking, it benefited both Sweden, which gained riches and territory. Territory on the mainland of Europe and France, which became the predominant power in Europe. Indeed France is to remain the dominant power in Europe basically until Napoleons beat at Waterloo in 1815. Sweden is developing not only militarily, but it's developing in other ways as

well. Gustavus Adolphus introduced parish registration of the population. In other words, everybody had to be registered in a parish. England had done this in the 16th century under Elizabeth I, and it had a twofold effect in Sweden. It enabled the administration to know who to tax and where they were. And secondly, it knew where people were to conscript them into the army. And that the registration of births and marriages and deaths in England didn't have that purpose or effect because there were other systems in place in England. But in Sweden it gave not only details of births, deaths, and marriages, but it also gave detailed information that allowed the central government to tax and allowed the central government to issue conscription papers to young men to fight in the Swedish army. Gustavus Adolphus became a byword for a Protestant hero in Europe. At his death, he was succeeded by three kings who... Oh sorry, two kings and one queen. Sorry, my picture went for a moment. One queen and two kings. They're not important. I'll give you their names and I'll say a brief word about the queen. He was succeeded by his daughter, Queen Christina, and then she was succeeded by Charles X and Charles XI. Now, in the story of the rise of Sweden to a superpower status, it's his fourth successor. Gustavus' fourth successor, Charles XII of Sweden, who is important. So the two kings of Sweden who propelled Sweden to the front rank of European nations are firstly, Gustavus Adolphus, and then Charles XII. But I've mentioned Queen Christina, and I need to say something about her because she is a quite extraordinary woman. Some of you may have seen a rather old film now about Queen Christina. One historian has said that she was an enlightened ruler long before the enlightenment. When we think of enlightened female rulers, we think of Maria Theresa of Austria and Catherine the Great of Russia. Christina was those. But Christina had two problems in the age of the 18th... In the age of the 17th century. She ruled Sweden between 1632 and 1654. So just over 20 years. But her problems were, first of all, in her court, her masculine dress, her masculine mannerisms and suggestions of lesbianism, absolutely, of course, abhorrent to 17th century Protestants. Well, they would've been to 17th century Catholics as well, in honesty. That was a problem for her. She never married. Whether she was or was not lesbian is of course one of those questions that cannot be definitively answered because unless somebody was in the room, how do you know? But if you want my... If you want my opinion, then I think she was. Today, we wouldn't care. Then, they did care. For one thing, it meant there wouldn't be a successor. The second problem she had, Sweden, like other parts of Northern Europe, had become very Protestant. There was a small Catholic minority, tolerated but not tolerated if they were to assume political power. Christina rather like Catholic ritual. She didn't declare herself Catholic, she remained Protestant, but there was a suspicion she was Catholic. In 1654, she abdicated. So that's it. She had managed to scroll away a lot of money from Sweden, I have to say, in mainland Europe. And off she went to Rome. And in Rome she converted to Catholicism. So this most Protestant of countries produces extraordinary queen. Sometimes history is strange and odd. Christina

is interesting because of her lifestyle, both in terms of her very marked masculinity. And secondly, in terms of her move from Protestantism to Calvinism. She doesn't, in that sense, matter over much in our history of Sweden. Yes, she was enlightened. Yes, there were improvements in her rank. That's all true. But in a sense, that was happening anyhow. You can read about Christina if you are interested in a biography, but don't necessarily read it in order to understand Swedish history. To understand Swedish history., we fast forwarded to the reign of Charles XII. But there are Americans listening to me speaking who are saying, "Hang on a minute, isn't William going too fast?" "Isn't there other stories before we get to Charles XII at the beginning of the 18th century?" "Aren't there around that 17th century stories?" And, of course, you are right. One of the strange parts of the story of Sweden is in the 17th century, it dabbled, I think that's probably the best word, It dabbled in imperialism. The big imperial countries, Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England. But Sweden also dabbled in the Caribbean, in Africa, but most significantly in what is to become the United States of America. By the middle of the 17th century, 1650, Swedes wanted to extend their actual presence in North America, and that is the same what becomes United States part of North America. They wanted to do so because they didn't want to be... They didn't want to be enthralled to the French, the Dutch, and the English. And what they were after was A, tobacco and B, furs. The Europeans were always interested in North American fur trade. So the Swedes decided that they would establish themselves a colony, and they landed in Delaware and established a base at what they named after the queen, Fort Christina. It is the town of Wilmington in Delaware today. And if there are Americans listening to me tonight who live in Wilmington or have lived there or near there, they might like to add something to the story. When we say the Swedes settled there, that's not quite true. It was mainly Finns because Finland, Finland was part of Sweden. It didn't become Russian until 1809. That's another story. I'll tell the story of Finland next Tuesday, and that's a fascinating story. But I'm going to concentrate on modern Finland, but I'll do a little introduction. But suffice it to say that the Finns went.

So why did the Finns go and not the Swedes? Well, basically because the Finns were poorer, and it's the old canard that if you go to America, the riches are there to be taken, and so Finns go. However, some of you may be saying, if you are American, "But hang on, that's not entirely true, is it William? Because there are Swedish Americans, and there are Swedish American groups and Swedish American museums. There are thought to be 4 million or so American citizens who have Swedish ancestry and regard themselves self-identified as Swedish Americans. But these are not the ones who arrived in the 17th century under the Swedish Empire, but these are Swedes who arrived between 1885 and 1915, those 30 years or so. That's Swedes who left because of poverty in Europe. The same story as applies to many immigrants into America at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

And so today, you find large numbers of Swedish Americans proportionately in places other than Delaware because the influx in 1885 to 1915 settled elsewhere in America. But it's an interesting story and I'm hoping some... Might there even be a Swedish American listening. That would be fantastic, but I'd rather suspect not. So we moved to Charles XII, and Charles XII is a really, really important king in European as well as in Swedish history. He reigned towards the end of the 17th century, right the way through until his death in 1718. He was crowned in 1697 when he was only 18 years of age. So he reigned between 1697 and 1718. He thus died a young man. Now the problem of... Well, we we're thinking about monarchy a lot at the moment here in Britain. One of the problems of a hereditary monarchy is you can land up with an idiot or you can land up with a child or a young man. And Charles XII was a young man, inexperienced at 18. And so the enemies of Sweden gathered. The Kingdom of Saxony in Northern Germany, because Sweden had lands on that side of the Baltic, and Saxony had its eyes on it. Russia, who had its eyes on Finland. And Denmark and Norway, they were combined in a union at the time. Denmark and Norway... Just an insert here, Norway was part of Denmark. They were in union from the Late Middle Ages right through to the Napoleonic Wars. After the Napoleonic Wars, Norway is in union with Sweden. It only breaks away in 1905. If you want to know the dates of Finland and Norway, Norway... Oh, sorry, Norway breaks away in 1905 and has been a free and independent nation state only from 1905. The story of Finland is, it only managed to break away at the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917. So although Finland and Norway are ancient cultures, their history as nation states in the modern world last only, begins only from 1905 in Norway's case, in 1917 in Finland's case. So when Charles XII of Sweden comes to throne, he finds himself opposed by Saxony, by Russia, and by the Danish-Norwegian Union. And he's forced to go to war. And like Gustavus Adolphus before him, Charles XII has an enormous sort of amount of skills, if you like, in going to war. He's won a very important battle in 1700 at Narva. Narva is the place in Estonia, the town which is Estonian today, which is separated from Russia today and then only by a relatively narrow river, a river you can see across very easily. At 1700, he won the Battle of Narva, forcing Peter the Great to sue for peace. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. If only Charles XII had negotiated a peace with Peter, the world arguably, just about arguably, could be a different place today. He didn't. He's 24. By this time, he's a young man in a hurry and he wants to make his mark. Again, an argument against monarchy, the young men can cause problems. Old men can cause problems too, but there is a problem with young men, particularly in earlier ages when their autocracy can lead to war. And he decides to continue. By 1706, he's defeated all the enemies. For the Russia, under Tsar Peter the Great remains in the field. Denmark, Norway, out of the equation. Saxon, out of the equation. Russia. Holy mother, Russia, this huge expensive territory, huge expanse of population remains. The population size was astronomical in comparison to Sweden. 10 times larger, maybe more. The figures were always slightly dodgy at this

period. If Charles had made a mistake by not negotiating a peace with Peter, in 1700 after Narva, he makes a further mistake now. He decides to invade Russia itself. He faces the same problems that will face Napoleon and will face Hitler. The distances are vast, the Russians retreat, and enter into what we would today call guerilla warfare. The winters are atrocious, and the supply lines, enormously long. No one in their right mind should have thought it was easy to take Russia. In a sense, Charles XII is the first modern military commander to attempt it. Napoleon never learned from it, and Hitler never learned from Charles or Napoleon. The campaign ended in complete failure. Charles XII's invading army going eastwards towards Moscow goes offered a tangent southwards to Ukraine where there are opponents of Peter, and biggest opponent of all, the Ottoman Empire. Not very far away from Southern Europe then. So Charles XII faces an army, a Russian army, at a place called Poltava in Ukraine. Now this particular battle is really important. Why? Well, because by this time, Peter has learned about the Swedish tactics. He's learned about the Swedish army. He has put huge efforts into the modernization of the Russian army. That's the first point. The second point, he's fighting on home territory. No problem about supplies. And thirdly, his army is twice the size of Charles XII's army. Charles XII's army by the time of the Battle of Poltava is, well, in truth, it's gotten a pretty bad state. In fact, Charles XII himself had earlier being wounded, during the battle, he can't command, and he's on a stretcher in the rear. It's all sounds destined for failure. And failure it is. Failure of a major kind. Charles is defeated. He manages to escape to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. And he's there, well, partly as a guest and partly as a prisoner, to be honest, in a possible prisoner exchange with Peter the Great. In the end, he manages to leave and he returns back. After four years, he returns back. October, 1710, he returns back 1714. It is a grim homecoming. He finds Norway at war with Sweden. And in 1718, at the age of 36, he's killed in the war with Norway. Stories differ. Some stories say he was shot by a Norwegian sharp shooter, others say he was poisoned by members of his own court. They'd had enough of him. They'd had enough of war. Why had they had enough of war? Well, two straightforward reasons. They were running out of manpower and they were running out of cash to fight a war. And so Sweden's moment in the sun comes to an end. The war itself is referred to as a Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia. And the Great Northern War ended with the Defeater Sweden, leaving Russia as the new dominant power in Northern Europe, in the Baltic, and a new major force in European politics, a position of which Russia, in a sense, has never lost. The power of Peter the Great in crushing Sweden is the sort of power Putin dreams of. And I will come back to Putin and Sweden towards the end of the talk. But the point at this moment is that this great moment in history when a small people... In 1600, Sweden only had a population of about 725,000. It's a tiny, and yet Sweden... And when it fought wars, it gained mercenaries, it had Finns and Germans, all sorts of things, but it couldn't sustain it because it didn't have the income to sustain it. There was no way long term

that a Swedish superpower in Northern Europe would ever be possible. If you are a Scandinavian historian who's prepared to drop your national prejudices, then you could see that a Scandinavian Empire, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland would've been a power to reckon with. But what is interesting is that cultural differences between Norwegians, between Swedes, and between Finns and Danes, is massive. Even though Swedes, Norwegians and Danes can understand each other's languages, it is still a big division. I was on an international conference at the Nordic adult education centre in Sweden, in Gothenburg, quite a while ago now, and I met a colleague adult educator who was a Sami, those we call Laps, and he came from Norway. And I picked up sort of jokes, but they had a sort of edge to the jokes during the conference. I was the only non-Scandinavian there. And the jokes were always at the expense of the Swedes. And I asked this Norwegian lap. I said, "Have I got this right?" And he said, "Oh, yes." He said, "We don't really like the Swedes." So I asked why. And the modern answer is because they were Nazi sympathisers in the Second World War. And I will come to that in a moment. So after the death of Charles XII in 1721, Swedish power declines. But it's interesting, isn't it? Power, we have a phrase for it now. We call things soft power. Soft power. And sticking with the monarchy, that's something that we say in Britain about the monarchy. It's soft power. Come back to that as well. But I want to tell a little bit of an odd story. Charles XIV of Sweden who ruled between 1818 and 1844 was a Frenchman, one of Napoleon's Marshalls, Marshal Bernadotte. He had been nominated as the crown prince of Sweden when there wasn't one, and Charles XIII was not likely to have one. And they decided they didn't want a Scandinavian king or a German king, all of which would divide Sweden. They would take someone else, and they took Bernadotte. And Bernadotte as crown prince was forced to fight Napoleon when Napoleon sees Swedish Pomerania on the mainland of Europe, and it's the House of Bernadotte which still rule in Sweden today. It's a strange irony of history, if you like, or a strange oddity or quirk of history. The British royal family is German, the Swedish royal family is French, the Norwegian royal family are Danes. It's quite an... Oh, and the Greek royal family, no longer on the throne of course, are also German. It's a strange story, is our monikers. That is a very strange story and I just wanted to slot that in. We come to another Bernadotte before I finish. So, end of that particular scene. Curtains closed, and curtains reopen where Sweden has no strong power in terms of the military power of Gustavus Adolphus or Charles XII, but begins to learn about, to use that modern phrase again, soft power. And one of the key components of Swedishness of Swedish soft power was its commitment to neutrality. Well, you couldn't get a more opposite than the warfare of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII to a policy of neutrality. The policy of neutrality began after the Napoleonic Wars and after Sweden's involvement. As a result of the wars, Sweden lost a third of its territory. Most notably it lost Finland to Russia. It did gain Norway. The policy of neutrality established roughly, let's say roughly, after Waterloo in 1815. The policy of neutrality saw Sweden



through the rest of the 19th century and pretty well the whole... Well, really, the whole of the 20th century. Up until June this year.

Now this is one of the great pillars of modern Swedishness, neutrality. The neutrality principle ended in 1995 as a principle when Sweden joined the European Union. Then in this year, in June, as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as you all know, Sweden was invited by NATO along with Finland to join NATO, and both are in the process now of joining NATO indeed. If anything was to happen to Finland or Sweden at the hands of Russia, NATO would now intervene, no question. I've written my notes here and I wrote, "Sweden's membership of NATO spells out as clearly as anything how Putin has changed the geopolitics of Europe. We're in a new Cold War. We're in a war where Russia has, to all intents and purposes, no European allies. Okay, there's Belarus. Okay. You might want to argue about Hungary, but Hungary is a member of NATO and the EU. Putin is isolated and even neutral countries like Finland and Sweden have joined. Why? Because of fear of Russia. Because fear of what Putin might do. He might invade both Finland and Sweden. Okay, you say that's not like it. Well, Finland was Russian until 1917. Next week's talk, where Swedish neutrality was questionable was during the two World Wars of the 20th century. During the First World War, there were three groups in Sweden. A group that was pro-German, a group that was pro-British and French, and a group that was pro-neutral. The pro-German lobby, which was much of the Swedish establishment finally abandoned any sense of being pro-Germany in 1916 because Sweden was suffering badly from famine, from opposing views to those of the establishment in favour of Germany, and they have got no tangible advantages in sucking up to Germany. And a conservative cabinet, pro-German, was replaced by a more liberal government in 1916, and Sweden kept itself out of the war. When we come to the Second World War, all Sweden's neighbours became partysy Nazi public states, Denmark, Norway, Finland. Sweden was never attacked by Germany because Germany turned its attention in June '41 to Russia. But that didn't mean if Hitler had taken Moscow and defeated Russia, he wouldn't have turned on Sweden. Today, many Scandinavians believed that Sweden's neutrality was actually not entirely neutral. It was quite pro-Nazi. Now, before you throw your hands up in horror, we should recall that the neutrality of the United States was seriously compromised by FDR when he entered into negotiations with Churchill's cabinet to supply Britain with war material long before America was bombed into the war in December '41. And without that American support, it's questionable whether Britain could have survived. Neutrality is a funny, funny issue. I'm not going to go any further than that because it's a big, big topic, but I just put in your mind that neutrality isn't a simple concept. It usually means something like, it's not a true neutrality, people swing in a different direction. Finland certainly supported Germany in a variety of practical ways, food, ammunitions, weapons, and medicine during the time it was fighting in Finland against Russia. That doesn't sound much different an FDR support of Britain. But there's one example that

stands out and I will share this. "Operation Barbarossa, Hitler's invasion of Russia. Operation Barbarossa, the German plan to invade Soviet Union in the summer of 1914," I read. "The Germans asked the Swedes to allow German armed forces to be transported by crane through Sweden from Norway to Finland. There was huge controversy in Sweden surrounding what the government should do, and the political debates around the issue became known as the midsummer crisis. This was the first point in the war where the Swedish government itself, as opposed to simply the people, were asked to reject its foreign policy of neutrality. The four party coalition of ruled Sweden was in disagreement with the Conservative and Agrarian Parties. The Swedish foreign office and the king all wanted to grant Germany permission. In opposition, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party wanted to adhere to their foreign policy of neutrality. In the end, permission was granted to Germany. Not neutral. Not neutral. However, that is not the entire story of World War II, as many of you know. Why isn't it the entire story? Because there were many individual Swedes who did their utmost to welcome refugees from occupied lands, not least Jewish refugees. To start with, approximately 70,000 Finnish children were evacuated and placed with families in Sweden as Germany swept into Finland. There were refugees from Norway, and nearly all of Denmark's Jewish population was able to escape Sweden in fishing boats in a coordinated effort between ordinary Danes and ordinary Swedes. Then there is the story of two Swedish diplomats, the most famous of whom is Raoul Wallenberg. Wallenberg was a diplomat humanitarian. He saved thousands of Jews in German occupied Hungary where he was the Swedish ambassador. The numbers are staggering of how many. Thousands. The numbers are different. The official Israeli number is something like four and a half thousand, but it is said that there may have been more than that. He was captured by the Russians in Budapest when they, inverted commas, "liberated Budapest in 1945." He was accused of espionage and disappeared in Lubyanka prison of the KGB in Moscow, and he hasn't been seen since. What happened to him? We don't know. He was a very brave man. The second was Count Folke Bernadotte, a member of the royal family. Together, it is said that Wallenberg and Bernadotte, between them, may have saved as many as 10,000 European Jews. Bernadotte negotiated a release of 31,000 prisoners from Nazi concentration camps. And on one occasion, 450 Jews from one camp alone. The irony of Count Bernadotte is that after the war, he was appointed by the United Nations as the mediator in the 1947-48 Arab-Israeli conflict, but was killed in 1948 by a paramilitary Zionist group. War is a dreadful things wherever therefore and whoever fights them. Now, if neutrality for which Sweden was known was seriously compromised by its recent coming accession to NATO, so is the other pillar of Swedishness, social democracy. And always conscious that time defeats me on these occasions, I choose to read this. I mean, no apologies for reading it 'cause it is accurate and it saves me dribbling onto you and it gives you the details specifically.

What is Swedish social democracy? "One of the most famous elements of

Swedish society is its social security system. Sweden had some form of social welfare since the late 1700s. This was rudimentary and generally involved the very poor. It was often administered by clergy. With the advent of the industrial revolution, the pace of social change grew. Along with it, a need for a safety net in 21st century for those in need in the 19th and 20th century. Sweden was one of the first nations who grant medical leave and insurance. And though it was very basic, it was light-years ahead of almost every other Western country." Light-years ahead of Britain, I might say. In the '60s and '70s, Scandinavian social welfare programmes and the involvement of the government and their administration gave rise to the phrase, the third way, defined as a middleway between what was seen in Scandinavia as the unrestrained capitalism of the United States and the communism of the Soviet Union. The third way was a trade off. In return for seemingly ever increasing taxes, the Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes provided a level of medical care and employment insurance not seen anywhere else in the world. In most cases, education, including most colleges and universities was free and of a very high standard. Britain moved after World War II towards that model under the labour government of Clement Attlee, but under a document that had been commissioned by Churchill's wartime government, the Beveridge Report. And we've come light-years away from that in Britain in 2022. But in historical terms, it looked as though Britain might move in that direction. We didn't move in that direction, and that's another story for another day. But Sweden remained committed to it, until now. Until now. Last Sunday, there was a general election in Sweden, and the far-right... And when I say far-right, in Swedish terms, I mean fascist far-right, a neo-fascist far-right, has gained a great number of votes. The votes have been counted in terms of, basically, those who voted in Sweden, so votes are counted, they're now counting today those votes of Swedes who live elsewhere but have the vote. The far-right party objects to immigration policies and blames the high level of taxation on immigrants. This is a story across Europe. Now, Lunde writes in his book, right at the end, although he talks about 1611 and 1721, he writes at the end in different ways. But I'm going to read you this because I think it's important. "The huge and sudden influx of foreigners has led to the rise of more conservative and even extreme right wing parties in Sweden, as elsewhere in Europe. There rise is also due to the formation of gangs within the refugee community, which rose both for protection and criminal activity. In 2021 and 2022, Sweden has seen a marked increasing gun violence in some of its major cities, especially Stockholm and Malmo." Today, The Times of London reported this, under the heading, Party with Neo-Nazi Roots Set to Enter Swedish Government. I'll read you extracts from this report in Today's Times. "Sweden's right-wing bloc..." There's coalition governments in Sweden, think Israel, and there's a left-wing bloc and a right-wing bloc. The left-wing bloc is being in power committed to social democracy, the right-wing bloc looks as though it's going to take power by the end of the week. "Sweden's right-wing bloc likely to take power to Sunday's election amid a surge support

for a party with neo-Nazi roots that is likely to demand a strong say in the new government. The election has voted Jimmy Atkisson, the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats." Names are always confusing in politics. "The Sweden Democrats, who has claimed Muslim immigration to be our biggest foreign threat since the Second World War," who are, just remember, that Sweden wasn't in the Second World War. Into the role... He's been thrust into the role of kingmaker in a country known for its tolerance and liberal traditions. Atkisson who has transformed his party from a gang of neo-Nazis and white supremacists into a slick vote-winning machine tweeted that the party had a fantastic election. Crime and immigration overruled energy and the economy as important factors in the election. "Despite rising inflation..." "Despite rising inflation, they're focused on immigration issues and crime." That's what's going happen to Sweden, and what next? There's a far-right group in Norway, and let's simply not go to the issue in Germany. I want to finish on a more positive note. It's contemporary given by historians that individuals don't change history. I think that... I've never agreed with that. I think individuals do make a change. And an individual doesn't have to be born in a country like America, large with a large population, to make a difference. People can make differences from small countries. And I want to pinpoint two people whom I think, two Swedes, who I think have made a big impact in my lifetime. One, a long time ago, and one at the present. The first is Dag Hammarskjold who was the second Secretary General of the United Nations from 1953 until 1961 when he was killed in a plane crash whilst going to the Congo to try and negotiate a ceasefire. He revolutionised the organisation of the United Nations, he made it far more efficient, and he presided over the first United Nations peacekeeping force in Egypt and in the Congo. We're so familiar now with United Nations peacekeeping forces. He intervened personally as a diplomat in order to lessen tension across the world. He was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The only person, so on. JFK said of Hammarskjold he was the greatest statesman of our century. So the greatest statesman of our century, in the 20th century, according to... With Americans listening, I'm not sure, but I would say the outstanding United States president of the second half of the century, JFK could say, over Sweden, he was the greatest statesman of our century. I think he probably was. And if you were doing a university course, that would be your essay this week. Do you agree or disagree? Was Kennedy right or wrong? And then we come up to the present day and we come to this extraordinary young woman, Greta Thunberg, the environmental activist who began at the age 15, campaigning alone on Fridays outside the Swedish Parliament, calling for greater action on climate change. She was joined by other school children and they set up a organisation called Fridays for Future. By 2018, she was addressing the United Nations Climate Change conference. She's been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, 2020, 2021. I think she is extraordinary and I don't think she will give up. But she once said, "I have learned you are never too small to make a difference." I think that applies to countries and to individuals. I

have learned you are never too small to make a difference. And maybe that's the essence of my talk today. Almost one could say such a sentence could be read in a sermon. I have learned you are never too small to make a difference. Thank you for listening. I'm sure there's lots and lots of comments and criticisms and all the rest of the things we get. Let's have a look.

## Q & A and Comments

Oh that... Jennifer, it's always nice to have somebody make a nice comment when I start. Thank you for that.

Michael says... Oh, well, I think you must have posted this very... Oh, just gone half past five.

Q: "You are talking about the social Democrats of the far-right. How do you view this phenomenon?"

A: With dread and with fear, because we have a terrible lurch in Europe to populism, and worse, to a far-right neo-fascism on a level. You know all about that in the States as well. This is a problem of modern democracies, which I've talked on Lockdown about reform. And I know I'm not talking about the Queen today.

Oh. thank you, Shelly. From War to Welfare. That was my alternative title. Martin. Yes, hi. Oh, yes, I do know your brother. Of course I do. Oh, hello, Martin, yes. Sorry, you caught me. Yes, no, no, no, no. Of course I know your brother. Martin writes, "I was in Sweden between 1998 and 2001. I'm listening to your talk with lots of interest. Could you let me know how you can reach me?" My email is on my blog. If you go to my blog, on the home page, it gives emails and ways of contact. That's the best way.

Q: "Who murdered Olof Palme?"

A: We don't know. Let's... I don't want to go down that line. I wanted to give this picture of, a general picture of Sweden. I'm not going to talk about the Jews in Sweden. That's going to be covered by Trudy who knows all about that.

Susan says, "There is also a Christiana City in Delaware with a hospital named Christiana. There you are.

Marshall says... Oh, hello Marshall. I've just replied to you on email during my tea break this afternoon. "Christiana is in an area near Wilmington, Delaware, which I assumed is named for it." Yes, it is. Yes, it is. All those names in Delaware. And the Delaware is the genuine Swedish immigration, or more than that, Swedish colonisation of the 17th century. The big Swedish populations elsewhere are the

result of that late 19th, early 20th century escape from poverty. Yes. No, please repeat.

Q: "Were there Protestants in the Northern Catholics in the south of Germany?"

A: Yes, they were. That's exactly it. If you think of Prussia, which is the basis of modern Germany, the story is this. It's a most remarkable story. The Hohenzollern family who became kings of Prussia and subsequently emperors of Germany were, in the 16th century, the commander of Teutonic Knights. Teutonic Knights based in places like Königsberg as a barrier against Russia. They were a Catholic order of Teutonic Knights. The head of the order, Hohenzollern, converted to Protestantism and he wrote to Luther and said, "What do I do?" And Luther said, "Well, just make yourself a king instead." So it's Luther's fault that we had an Imperial Germany.

Q: "Was (indistinct) part of Sweden?"

A: Yes, yes, all of those areas were part of this. That whole area of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Northern Germany were always... Friedrich Holstein's another area on the Danish-German border were always switching around. If you want to go mad, then try and work out the history of that and be prepared to give a talk. It really is absolutely mind blowing. I won't do it because I think it's just too complicated. After all, it was said of Friedrich Holstein question between Denmark and Germany that a British politician had forgotten and the other person knew had gone mad and the third person was dead, and so it is true of all that area. It drives you mad.

Q: "So Sweden was just as neutral as Switzerland?"

A: Well, that is a very interesting question, Marian. Take away your exclamation marks, put in a question mark, and everyone can write me 5,000 words. Sweden was just as neutral Switzerland comment. Hang on, Carol and Antony have said something here. Carol wrote, "According to my Danish Swedish neighbour, it's the new immigration from Islamic countries that swung the boat to the right." Anthony replies, "Maybe because it took him more immigrants than any other Scandinavian country." I think both those questions are correct. It is the fear of Islam, or let's put it properly, it is the fear of extremist Islam that ordinary Europeans might hold and has been utilised by the extreme right to politicise the issue and attack the very fundamentals of the state. We... Yeah, it's a problem right across Europe.

Jonathan. Oh, hello, Jonathan. Jonathan says, "Raoul Wallenberg saved the father, the present prime minister of Israel. Wallenberg himself had lived in Haifa, Israel before the war." Excellent, thank you. Jonathan writes, "In Antony Beevor's book, 'The Fall of Berlin' in '45, he makes special mention of Northland Division of Scandinavia

Nazi volunteers." That's true. There were... There were Finns, Swedes and Norwegians that fought for the Nazis in the Waffen-SS. It's not a good story.

No, I didn't mention Gustavus III. I'm sorry, Harry, I can't mention everybody in an hour. In fact, this was quite task, but I thought it was worth doing because I think it puts a number of things in perspective. I wanted to do...

Myra says... I'm sorry, Mara, I'm not going to pronounce this properly. "The story of Hillel Storch, a Jew who via Kersten Himmler's managed to save hundreds. The book is called "Kersten's memoirs." Sorry.

Q: Mara says, "What about the far-right boots emerging in USA?"

A: I said, it's all western democracies. America isn't isolated from this by any means, and Britain is certainly not isolated from this. We have populist government in Britain. That's not saying it's neo-fascist. We have a populist government in Britain and America had a populist government under Trump, and those populist governments attract people, which is what is happening with the far-right bloc in Sweden, attracting people from the far-right. Because it's a coalition government, it means that there are, in American and British terms, the right-wing bloc would include the Conservative Party in Britain and the non-Trump part of the Republican Party. But it also attracts people on this awful Nazi group in Sweden. It's an issue about coalitions, of course. Absolutely. Thank you.

"Bernadotte was murdered by the terrorist Yitzhak Shamir who became the most right-wing prime minister in Israel." I bet I pronounced that wrong. I really apologise. My pronunciation of anything outside of English is appalling. I'm like Churchill who... Well, Churchill did it on purpose, I do it through ignorance. But Churchill always getting all these, particularly French places, wrong. I just get things wrong because I don't know. Oh, now, well done, James. That's a really important point.

Q: "How did the scientific revolution in Sweden and others happen in the 18th century in the fundamentally religious Lutheran society?"

A: Because Lutheranism wasn't intolerant. In fact, most of the scientific research in the 17th and 18th century, including here in England, was undertaken by Protestants. It was Catholicism that was more nervous of it. No, but you do touch on something important, which I haven't had an opportunity. If you think of other issues with Sweden, you can think of the Swedish film industry in the 20th century, you can think of the establishment of the Nobel Prize. Interestingly, the Nobel Prize for Peace is awarded in Oslo. I think I'm right insane, and not in Stockholm.

Vivian, "There was a Swedish film called 'The Emigrants' at the beginning of the 1970s. It starred Max von Sydow and Liv Ullmann and was about a family who immigrated in Minnesota in the 1850s. I believe a new version was made in 2021." And you are absolutely right 'cause Minnesota was one of the American states in which the influx of Swedes in 1885–1915 came to. And Minnesota still has... All you Americans listening will be able to say precisely, but I've read that that's where there are significant Swedish populations.

Q: "Is Sweden urban or rural?"

A: Oh, Shelly, Sweden has a rural, all the Scandinavian countries are overwhelmingly rural, but they have major urban centres. The majority of the population live in urban centres, but the majority of the land mass is rural and urban.

Q: "Do you think there would be an anti-immigrant sentiment if the immigrants were Christian?"

A: Possibly not, but I think it's not a question of Christianity, I think it's more a question is if the immigrants were white. If the immigrants were white. That's the problem. And I don't know whether that's your surname or blog name.

Edinger says, "Oslo was previously Christiana." Absolutely right, it was.

Lawrence writes, "Greta Thunberg and her many followers who brought about move away from gas, which has led to the current fuel crisis. Move away from carbon waiting for fully. Putin's not the only culprit." I would disagree, but many of you will agree with that. These are not easy questions. There's a danger that we kick the ball further down the road. I said I think to some of you last week, I was in Norway and I stood by a lake, which I couldn't have done 15 years ago. I stood by the lake, take a photograph of glacier. 15 years ago, the glacier was there and not the lake. It is. And somebody from Canada, thank you very much, wrote to me and said, "You can see exactly the same thing in the Rockies now." That people used to visit... Glacier that people used to visit on a tourist trip, you no longer visit 'cause there's nothing to see. It's depressing.

Q: "Why Switz are really neutral?"

A: Well, that is a very open question indeed. That's another... Maybe we can talk about Switzerland. Switz, I hope there's no Swiss listening, but Switzerland is a really strange place, I think. To start with, it has many different ethnicities in Switzerland, in European terms. It is a really quite odd country. Last time I was in Switzerland, I was quite unnerved to see general election posters,



which were decidedly fascist in the open street. You simply wouldn't see that in Britain.

Oh, thanks for people being nice. Ralph, what have you asked? "Swedish contribution sites are notable. In addition to chemistry, Nobel, phenomenal discoveries in immunology such as discovery of interferon by Lindenmann, the Karolinska Institute, one of the leaders in the field." Yes, and it's where I finished the talk itself with Greta Thunberg about you can make a difference however small, and a country like Sweden has made a difference. We shouldn't allow World War II to overshadow and we should remember the people that were given sanctuary by individual Swedes, and we should remember individual Swedes who did their utmost to help Jews in Europe. I'm worried because of the political change this week, and I'm worried about the conflict in Europe between Western Europe, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia. We live in changing and dangerous times.

I think I better finish at that point, had I not. I think I've come to an end. On Monday, I'm giving a talk called Queen Elizabeth II Reflections. There are not going to be any questions or discussion. It's simply me reflecting. You can disagree at home, you can agree at home. On Tuesday, we're back to our normal format of an hour from William on Finland, and 20 minutes, half an hour, of everyone telling William he's wrong. So I look forward to that next week Monday and Tuesday, both at half past five. See everyone then. Bye for now. Bye-bye.