

GÖSTA SELLING  
LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION  
IN SWEDEN FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES  
AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS.

Sweden probably has the oldest legislation in the world as regards ancient monuments. Such monuments were placed under the protection of the law in 1666. As early as 1630 King Gustav II Adolf had created a post as General Director of Antiquities. It was to record and collect runic inscriptions and other ancient stones and objects. Some of these inscriptions and stones are reproduced in our earliest histories, such as Erik Dahlberg's great pictorial work on Sweden of the end of the 17th century. Though the law formally protected ruins and various prehistoric antiquities, it was actually for a long time impossible to prevent their destruction. Distances in Sweden are great, the staff were few in number and communications were for a long time poor. Attempts were made, with the aid of the parish ministers, to compile lists of the ancient monuments, but these lists were very incomplete. Many ancient monuments and historic buildings were destroyed in earlier times, especially during the period of railway construction a century ago.

It was not until the present century that the organization became more efficient. In 1917 the government office in charge of public building construction, the National Board of Building and Planning, was re-organized. It then acquired, amongst other things, a department of cultural history, to supervise the management of historically valuable buildings belonging to the State, the restoration with the Centrale Office of National Antiquities.

The Centrale Office was re-organized on more efficient lines in 1925 and has since then been the central government authority for the preservation of antiquities and cultural monuments in Sweden. Its work is divided into two departments, one for the prehistoric monuments and the other for the historic buildings, churches, castles, ruins, etc. dating from the Middle Ages and later.

Sweden is an extensive country and in order to enable it to keep pace some extent with developments, the Central Office has as its representatives, on the one hand, interested laymen (numbering at present about 350) and, on the other hand, a Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments in each county (Swedish counties are approximately equivalent to Italian provinces). The Inspector is an expert — an archaeologist or art historian — and is also, as a rule, the director of the county museum. Some large towns, like Stockholm, have their own museums with an Inspector of Ancient Monuments as director. The General Director works in close collaboration with all these antiquarians and officials. At his request they carry out investigations, supervise restorations and give their opinions on town plans, road schemes, etc. which affect historic urban environments and ancient monuments.

The present law on ancient monuments was passed in 1942. Under this law, fixed monuments must not be altered, displaced, damaged or removed. The term "fixed monuments" covers, all prehistoric burial grounds and monuments, all ruins of churches, castles, fortifications and so on and old bridges and signposts. In accordance with the law, an area large enough to enable the monument to be properly preserved must also be allocated. If any person wishes to investigate or remove a monument, however, the Director General may give permission for it, but the cost of the work must be borne by the owner of the ground or by the person who requests the permission. In order that it may be known where the legally protected monuments are to be found, they are marked on the so-called economic map of the whole country (scale 1:10.000), which has been in process of publication since 1938. The Central Office is carrying out the inventory work and passing the information to the Swedish Ordinance Survey Department. So far, about 405.000 archaeological sites and ancient monuments have been recorded and when, in about 20 years, the whole country has been covered, it is expected that the figure will be over 500.000.

Thanks to the law on ancient monuments, the Central Office is in continuous contact with road-builders, town-planners and other developers, such as the constructors of power stations etc. A motorway or a town plan can often be altered so that the ancient monuments can remain *in situ*. Attempts are then made to surround them with a certain free space, a park or the like. Our great problem is always to get to know about current plans at an early stage, so that they can be altered and notable ancient monument, a fine part of a town or an old building can be saved. We now often receive satisfactory co-operation from the technical people. The road-builders in particular should receive hearty commendation. They have abandoned the usage of building roads on straight lines and are even attempting, as regards motorways, to adapt them flexibly to the landscape and to the built-up areas. In town-planning, on the other hand, there has been a noticeable tendency in recent years towards high-density building, including buildings on a scale which is difficult to fit into the natural landscape and to harmonize with the earlier buildings.

Though it is possible to save a number of historical monuments, in most cases permission is given to remove them. Such removal is always associated with scientific investigation under the direction of the Central Office. The most comprehensive investigations are made in connection with the building of motorways and the development of new communities in central and southern Sweden. Another large sphere of work is in the river valleys of Norrland which are flooded during the construction of hydraulic power stations. Every summer the Central Office has investigations in progress at about a hundred different sites. These investigations are often very extensive and costly. In order to shorten the working period and get as much as possible done, we have used aerial photography on a large scale and in archaeological excavations we have not made drawings of the features revealed but recorded them by vertical photography from specially designed, tall masts.

As I mentioned before, the ruins of old churches, castles and other buildings are regarded as ancient monuments and are consequently protected by the law. Buildings belonging to the State are managed by a separate government depart-

ment, The National Board of Building and Planning, and the oldest and most valuable of these buildings are included in a special list of historic buildings owned by the State. In the preservation of these buildings the National Board of Building and Planning has to consult the General Director. Approximately the same rules apply to the ancient churches and their fittings.

Legal protection for old and valuable buildings in private possession is not so complete. Under the town-planning and building regulations the local authorities have the duty of protecting historically valuable buildings *as far as possible* and of seeing to it that they are not destroyed or damaged without very good reasons. The restrictions in the regulations mean that they are only applied where there is special interest in the matter and this is unfortunately not very often the case.

A new law for the protection of historic buildings was passed in 1960. Under this law a building in private possession which is particularly noteworthy can be registered by the Director General. On account of the restrictive wording of the law only a few buildings can be protected and above all there is no possibility of legally protecting a street, a square or any other environment containing old buildings, of varying value individually but valuable as a whole. This is our greatest problem just now and the most difficult to solve. Everywhere in Sweden old towns are undergoing intensive reconstruction and renewal. This is, on the whole, advantageous and necessary but many classical urban sites are being destroyed unnecessarily. We have recently obtained an amendment to the building laws to enable a municipality to secure by compulsory purchase sites of cultural and historical value for reconstruction, i.e. not only an isolated building but the whole facade of a street or square or even the whole block. This amendment is so recent that we do not yet know what effect it will have. One pre-requisite condition is, of course, that the municipality is willing to invest the necessary money, both for the actual compulsory purchase and for the subsequent restoration, which is now always very expensive. The Activity which many Swedish towns are displaying in the preservation of their cultural monuments may perhaps give us hope.

In Stockholm it has long been the general opinion that "Gamla Stan", the medieval part of the city, should be reconstructed and preserved. As early as the 1930s a special company was formed to carry out such a reconstruction and received financial support through low-interest loans from the City Council and the State. Its work was interrupted by the war and could not be resumed until now. The City Council has now appointed a committee to investigate how the work of reconstruction can be organized on a large scale and thereby be intensified. We are, of course, aware that this will require very large subventions from both the City Council and the state.

In Visby, which has a medieval town centre within its wellpreserved walls, the authorities are thinking of following Stockholm's example. Here also a committee is working on the practical and financial solution of the reconstruction problem. The town walls and the many ruined churches in Visby are protected by the law on ancient monuments. They are cared for by the Central Office, which receives grants for their maintenance from the State and the Town Council but mostly from private donors.

In Ystad the Town Council has bought and restored the majority of the

houses in the town centre that are of value from the point of view of cultural history. The costs which cannot be met by borrowing are covered by grants from the State and private foundations. The buildings have not only been restored as dwellings but also as playrooms for children, premises for youth clubs and homes for old people.

With that remark I mean to touch on a question that is always equally topical. How are the old buildings to be used without being spoiled? Many of them are too large and too uncomfortable to be used as dwellings today. In Sweden only a few can be opened to the public as museums (for example, Stockloster). A couple of old mansions in Stockholm have become embassies, for example, the one designed in the 1640s by a Dutch architect, into which the Dutch Embassy is to move. A few manor houses, where the landed properties have been developed for housing estates, have been converted into premises for official entertainments, conferences, etc., as you can see in the exhibition.

Whoever works on the preservation of cultural monuments is bound to recognize that appropriate laws and a good organization are necessary but that they will only be effective if they are received with interest and used skilfully by the different owners, whether these owners are public authorities or private persons.

GÖSTA SELLING  
ORGANISATION LÉGALE ET ADMINISTRATIVE  
POUR LA PROTECTION DES SITES ARCHÉOLOGIQUES ET DES  
MONUMENTS, EN SUÈDE.  
RÉSUMÉ.

*La Suède a probablement la plus ancienne législation du monde en ce qui concerne les anciens monuments. Le Roi Gustave-Adolphe II, en 1630, créa une charge de « Directeur Général des Antiquités », afin de rassembler les inscriptions runiques et d'autres anciens objets.*

*Les vieux monuments furent placés sous la protection de la loi en 1666, mais c'est seulement au siècle actuel, après 1925, que l'Office central des Antiquités Nationales devint réellement efficace, en ce qui concerne la préservation en Suède des Antiquités et des Monuments culturels, c'est-à-dire des monuments préhistoriques et des églises, des châteaux, des ruines etc. du Moyen-Age à nos jours.*

*L'Office central a aussi ses représentants à travers tout le pays, d'un côté les non spécialistes (laymen) — environ 350 —, d'un autre côté les Inspecteurs régionaux des anciens Monuments dans chaque comté (ou « län », ce qui correspond à peu près à l'étendue d'une province en Italie).*

*La loi actuelle sur les vieux monuments a été promulguée en 1942. Conformément à cette loi, les « fixed monuments », c'est-à-dire les cimetières préhistoriques, les ruines d'églises, les châteaux, les fortifications et les vieux ponts etc... ne peuvent être altérés, déplacés, endommagés ou supprimés sans une autorisation spéciale du Directeur Général.*

*Tous ces monuments sont en cours d'être indiqués sur le plan officiel, dit « plan économique » du pays. En tout, les sites et les monuments excèdent 500.000.*

*Une nouvelle loi pour la protection des constructions historiques de propriété privée a été promulguée en 1960 mais pour des raisons dues à des problèmes économiques, seuls quelques édifices peuvent être protégés de cette façon et il n'est d'ailleurs pas possible de protéger une partie de la ville comme un ensemble.*

*Cependant, dans beaucoup de vieilles villes, les autorités municipales s'intéressent à la préservation de vieux quartiers, par exemple: à Stockholm « la vieille ville », à Visby, Ystad, Arboga etc...*