

The processional of power

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In different ways, some of the world's most colorful leaders last week were coping with the central dilemmas of their trade: once having gained power, how to hold on to it—and how to yield it gracefully. Sweden's Olof Palme, in a poor showing at the polls, managed to hang on to it; Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, after a remarkably long run of 25 years in full control, took the first steps toward relinquishing it; and Malaysia's Tunku Abdul Rahman did the hardest thing of all: he gave it up of his own accord.

Together Again

For all their sophistication, Swedes seem to prefer politicians with a down-home touch. Tage Erlander, a big, shambling, avuncular sort, who retired as Prime Minister in 1969 after 23 years on the job, was perfectly typecast. But Erlander's hand-picked successor—Olof Palme, 43, a sophisticated aristocrat—was a far cry from that grass-roots stereotype. "Palme doesn't even look like a Swede," says one of his friends. "He's not tall, not blond. He's smart and he shows it. Will this go down with the Swedes? Will they take this international character, not the provincial Swedish politician of the old type?"

In parliamentary elections last week, voters took Palme—but with some reservations. Gathering 46% of the total vote and 166 seats, Palme's Social Democrats lost their absolute majority in the 350-seat Riksdag.* What is more, they will be forced to rely for support on the Communist Party, whose vote spurted from a post-Czechoslovakia low of 3% in 1968 elections to 4.9% this time out. With 17 seats, the Communists hold the balance of power.

Troubles Ahead. These have been exceedingly lean times lately for European socialist parties. The French and Italian parties are in bad shape. Social Democratic governments have fallen in Norway and Denmark, as has the Labor government in Britain. Though Sweden's Social Democrats are rounding out nearly four decades in power—a political survival record unequalled in the Western world—the election signaled difficulties ahead.

The reasons for the Social Democrats' loss of strength were plain enough. Sweden's brand of state-supervised capitalism has given the country Europe's highest per capita Gross National Product in 1968 (\$3,230 v. \$4,305 in the U.S.), shortest factory hours (35.4 per week) and highest retirement pensions (two-thirds of peak earnings). Despite those pluses, the country has a ringingly familiar list of social complaints.

Inflation has sent the cost of living soaring by nearly 5% since January. Beefsteak sells for \$2 a pound, eggs 90¢ a dozen, cigarettes \$1 a pack, and whisky \$11 a fifth. Waiting lists for housing are years long. Taxes are sky-high and inching still higher; an across-the-board sales tax covering everything from food to services will rise by a third to a dizzying 16.5% next January. The once pristine countryside is being polluted, jobs are disappearing because of mechanization and there is a growing law-and-order problem.

Eclectic Medley. In his first year as Prime Minister, Palme made an instant name for himself on the international circuit. But his standing on the home front needed bolstering, and he knew that. During the campaign, Palme left his housing-development bungalow before 8 a.m. (in egalitarian Sweden, Prime Ministers do not have an official residence), and zipped through the rush-hour traffic in his Volkswagen minibus without a police escort. Usually he headed for a factory or a construction project, where he would converse with the workers

while a tape recorder in the bus ran through an eclectic medley of theme songs: the Internationale, We Shall Overcome, a Cuban freedom song, an Israeli chant and The Ballad of Joe Hill, which commemorates a Swedish-born Wobbly executed in Utah in 1915 for murdering a grocer.

The Communists, whose program is always tailored to the special concerns of affluent Swedish society (one year, they campaigned for two homes per family), bore down hard on Palme's efforts to link Sweden with the Common Market. But it was the Center Party that carved out the largest hunk of opposition votes. Hammering away at the issues of inflation and law-and-order, they polled 20% of the total. Two other centrist and conservative parties account for the balance.

Though Palme will plainly need Communist cooperation for his programs, he rejects the notion of a formal coalition. During the election, he was rough on his Communist opponents. "They'll stick a knife in your back," he warned during a speech to Stockholm construction workers, many of them Communists. "We will not govern with Communist support. If they want to overturn a labor government, var sa goda—let them help themselves." Despite his words, the Communists are expected to work with Palme's Social Democrats. The alternative, after all, is a far more conservative government.

Sweden's Social Democrats have ruled with Communist help before—from 1957 until 1968, when they won an absolute parliamentary majority. The fact remains, however, that Palme and his party will now be compelled to operate far more carefully than in the past two years. The Communists are expected to fight him on the Common Market grounds, the conservative opposition on domestic issues, since they blame him and his party for the country's internal ills. Asked whether his government's authority had been weakened somewhat by the voting, Palme replied: "Very little. Very little." But a little, nonetheless.

YUGOSLAVIA

Collectivizing the Presidency

Despite Yugoslavia's surprisingly free intellectual climate, one subject has long remained taboo: public speculation about the retirement of President Josip Broz Tito, 78. Last week Tito broke the taboo. During a routine speech to party officials in Zagreb, Tito suddenly, perhaps impulsively, said: "I have been in this post quite long enough, and I would like to have more possibilities to work on some other project. I am taking the initiative in this matter myself, because if someone else did it, it would look as if he wanted to get rid of me."

Though his health remains good, Tito proposed the creation of a collective presidency consisting of representatives of Yugoslavia's six republics and of the major national labor and political organizations (as well as Tito). He set no date for his retirement and conceded that his plan was only a "draft and certainly will undergo great changes." Nonetheless, regional leaders are expected to meet in Belgrade in early October to draw up detailed plans.

Transitional Fears. Many Yugoslavs are concerned about what may happen in their country after Tito's departure. His magnetic leadership has held together a confederation of dissimilar peoples who speak three different languages and are sharply divided by ancient regional animosities and modern rivalries for government development funds. Fearful that the country will dissolve into regional bickering after his death, Tito is seeking to reduce Yugoslavia's centrifugal tendencies and provide for a smooth transition.

He has already experimented with a collective leadership in party matters. Last year he set up a 15-man Executive Bureau of the Communist Party, made up of party leaders from different regions. The bureau has been plagued by sectional rivalries but it has at least forced regional party leaders to look at problems on a national basis.

Autobiography. Tito hopes that the collective presidency will relieve him of administrative burdens and give him time for other duties. One of them is tidying up Yugoslavia's foreign relations. He has agreed to exchange ambassadors with the Vatican, and probably will visit the Pope next year. Having begun to patch up his long quarrel with Albania, he hopes to encourage greater cooperation among the Balkan countries.

He also wants time to finish his autobiography, which will tell the still undisclosed details of his momentous break with Moscow. One of the episodes will describe how Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Laurentiev arrived at Tito's villa near Zagreb in March 1948 to deliver the letter from Stalin that denounced Tito and ended with the warning: "We think Trotsky's political career is sufficiently instructive." Stalin thought that his threat would bring Tito to his knees. Though shaken, Tito remained upright. His German shepherd reacted more dramatically. The dog lunged at the Soviet ambassador and bit him.

MALAYSIA

New Man on a Troubled Scene

In the wake of the bloody communal clashes between Malays and Chinese that shook Malaysia more than 16 months ago, the nation, in a quiet way, has become one of the most troubled in a troubled part of the world. A highly praised land-development scheme has fallen a year behind schedule. Parliamentary democracy, suspended after the riots, is not scheduled to be restored for another five months, if then. Perhaps worst of all, racial antagonisms still run so high that skilled Chinese, often treated like second-class citizens, have begun to take flight, worsening the shortage of trained administrators in government agencies.

Grim as the situation may be, Tunku Abdul Rahman, 67, the first and only Prime Minister the country has known, decided recently that tempers had cooled sufficiently for him to step down, as he had long been meaning to do. Thus last week he handed in his resignation to the newly installed Paramount Ruler, or King, Abdul Halim—who also happens to be his nephew. Replacing the Tunku as Prime Minister was his longtime political protégé, Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak.

Racial Harmony. Razak, 48, will need all the realism and cold-eyed pragmatism for which he is noted if he is to restore racial harmony. The Tunku managed to keep peace by skillfully applying a relatively simple formula. The predominantly rural Malays were guaranteed political dominance as compensation for Chinese economic primacy. This balance was shattered when the Chinese made significant inroads into the Malays' political strength in the 1969 parliamentary elections. Soon afterward, Malay mobs burned vehicles, houses and shops in predominantly Chinese areas of tense Kuala Lumpur; unofficial estimates put the death toll at more than 1,000.

The Tunku, who was so shaken that he broke down and wept during a political speech, blamed Chinese Maoists for the riots. While Chinese Communists did constitute a real problem until 1960, when they were finally rooted out after a twelve-year campaign, the racial disharmony was strictly homegrown. Until the riots started, Malaysia enjoyed a

prosperous economy based on tin, rubber and palm oil. But the wealth was not spread equitably. Like the Tunku, many Malays have a leisurely lifestyle, a world apart from that of the bustling, aggressive Chinese. Consequently, the Chinese, and to a lesser extent Indians, outpaced the Malays in per capita income.

The bitterness between the two major groups is deeprooted. Complained a Chinese businessman: "The Malays have got to learn to work too. We pay a machinist his salary one day and the next day he doesn't show up for work. Then the government won't let us sack him." A leading Malay politician had a different story: "With the Chinese, every form of business, from hawking fruits to multimillion-dollar construction work, is monopolized by them. Not even the crumbs are left to others."

To correct what they describe as "problems of racial economic imbalance," the Tunku and Razak have been stacking the cards in favor of the Malays. According to Razak's closest adviser, Tan Sri Ghanzali Shaft, the new government hopes to lure 20% of the Malays into commerce with tax breaks for new enterprises and other incentives.

The cards are stacked in other ways too. The National Operations Council (N.O.C.), determined to stifle any opposition, amended the nation's Sedition Act, forbidding any debate in public on a set of "sensitive issues." Among the issues are the special privileges enjoyed by the state sultans and kings and the economic concessions granted Malays. The imbalance extends to Razak's new Cabinet—13 Malays against four Chinese and two Indians.

Forbidding Figure. Though Razak is known as an able administrator, some wonder whether he can supply the leadership that will be needed to keep the country together. He has difficulty winning personal loyalty because of his stern manner and lack of charm. Even Razak's pressagent indirectly acknowledges, in an official biography, his boss's prickly personality: "Behind this seemingly cold exterior, the seldom smiling face and forbidding appearance, beats a human heart full of love and sympathy for his people."

Full heart or no, should Razak fail to keep Chinese and Malays from each other's throats when parliamentary rule is restored, the country may be in desperate trouble. The 37,500-man military already holds key positions on every level of government and strongly influences the watchdog N.O.C. Should new trouble erupt, it might only be a matter of time before a Nasser steps forth from among the ranks of Malaysia's British-trained officers and takes the country into his own hands.

* The popularly elected lower chamber of the Riksdag previously had 233 seats, but was expanded this year when Sweden changed from a two-chamber parliament to a unicameral one.

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