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E N G E L B R E K T E N G E L B R E K T S S O N

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An Address delivered by Attorney Carl Hjalmar Lundquist, Assistant Corporation Counsel of the City of Chicago, at a meeting of Singers at Svithiod Singing Club, 624 Wrightwood Ave., Chicago, Ill., March 26th, 1954

Fellow Singers:

I understand that you singers have that great song ENGELBREKT on your repertoire to sing at the Concert of the American Union of Swedish Singers next June, and your Director Knute Hansen has asked me to give you some idea of the importance of this man ENGELBREKT in Swedish history, our forefathers history, in order that you may know the real meaning of the "New Day" mentioned in the song; what the peasants of "Dalom", or Dalarne and ENGELBREKT did in order to bring about this "New Day"; and what happened at the City of Vadstena, where ENGELBREKT met with the king's Councilmen and treated them rather roughly.

I shall, therefore, speak to you tonight about a man, who, in spite of grievous and intolerable hardships, under which the common Swedish people had groaned for endless generations, rose to become one of the truly great and renowned heroes of the Swedish people; and the fascinating glamour of whose gallant character and epoch-making achievements and acts of courage will always stir the imagination and love of his countrymen.

That man is ENGELBREKT ENGELBREKTSSON.

I take it that many of you are familiar with what I am going to say but others, who are born here, may have only a hazy conception of the historical facts I will bring to your attention, in the hope that they will inspire you to understand the mighty spirit that filled the soul of ENGELBREKT and made him the great hero he was.

In our day, when man wants life, liberty and an automobile to pursue happiness, he seldom takes time to reflect upon the great deeds of his forebears that have made our pursuit of happiness at all possible.

At the outset, therefore, I would like to have you bear in mind that the events I am going to speak to you about tonight happened in Sweden before America was discovered by Columbus in 1492, and more than three hundred years before the American Revolution, when men similar to ENGELBREKT were confronted with the same problems as ENGELBREKT and met them in very much the same manner.

"Give me Liberty or give me Death" said Patrick Henry, and Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson spoke out in similar language before the American Revolution, and George Washington was the sword of the Revolution.

Democracy wasn't invented by the United States as many believe.

Democratic processes were old in Sweden before ENGELBREKT'S TIME; and under a system of orderly and representative government its rulers had, throughout the ages been strongly influenced by popular self-determination, a strict observance of justice, and a scrupulous respect for law, as well as the moral quality and inalienable rights of the individual.

The peasants of Sweden, who numbered about 85% of the population, had, until ENGELBREKT'S TIME, nothing to say about the political control of, or running the government.

They were not, however, pawns of the state. They were never reduced to serfdom, as the people, in the same status of life, were in most other European states. They have always been free and independent citizens.

The ruling classes had for ages been those belonging to the Three Estates: The Nobility, the Clergy and the Burghers of the large cities, and they were in control of the government for centuries.

The country has, however, never been ruled despotically, although some of its kings, particularly in the 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th centuries arrogated to themselves powers resembling imperial dictatorships.

The courts of Sweden were never tampered with, nor were they ever deprived of their independence and their power to apply existing law, nor was the Parliament or Riksdag ever abolished, or the right of local self-government ever infringed or reduced to subjugation.

In olden days Sweden was split up in petty states, corresponding to the now existing provinces, or "Landskap", which were ruled by feudal chieftains, until finally King Ingjald founded the kingdom of Sweden proper about the year 700 A.D.

Then followed the Viking Period from 800 to 1050 A.D., during which time the Russian Empire was founded in the 9th century by three Vikings from Roslagen in Sweden, the three brothers: Rurik, Sineus and Truvor. The descendants of Rurik retained the throne of Russia until the end of the 16th century.

The period following the year 1050 was marked by long and severe internal and tumultuous conflicts, chiefly between Christianity and Paganism.

There remained in the breasts of the people an intense craving for a definite beneficient national order, and finally a semblance of such order was established by Regent Birger Jarl, who founded the Capital of Sweden, Stockholm 700 years ago and died in 1266.

After his time there came a prolonged period of unstable external and internal impotence for the kingdom of Sweden.

The shipping of the Vikings fell off into decay and became outdistanced by the ships of the Hanseatic League.

In 1350 King Magnus Eriksson, the first of the kings of the Scandinavian Union abolished all forms of serfdom, wherever it existed in Sweden, and the common law he promulgated became the first common law of the whole country.

During his regency the great nobles of the Union became more wealthy and powerful while the condition of the peasants grew worse from heavy taxation caused by external and internal conflicts.

During the 13th century the three Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Norway and Denmark, had come in closer contact with each other, and the influential nobles of those countries intermarried.

They needed each others help against a powerful Germany as well as against the powerful Hanseatic League and the rulers of Meklenburg and Holstein.

In 1361 the City of Visby, on the Island of Gottland, one of the Hanseatic League cities, was conquered by the Danes, and its great era as Baltic trade center came to an end.

In 1364 the Magnus Eriksson dynasty was overthrown by German Pretenders under Albreckt of Meklenburg, and Sweden and Norway, which had been united in 1319 were faced with the threat of subjugation by Germany.

In 1387 Margareta of Denmark was recognized as the ruler of Sweden and Denmark, and in 1388 also of Norway.

In 1396 she made her nephew, the 7-year old Erik of Pommern King of the Union, but she continued to rule the three countries.

A confederated union of the three Scandinavian countries into a single monarchy was officially effected under Margareta at a meeting of the great nobles of the countries in the City of Kalmar on July 20, 1397, and the "Union of Kalmar", as it was called, was created, and lasted until 1523.

During the reigns of terror of these foreign monarchs there was a continuous struggle against the overt and insufferable efforts of Denmark to retain the preponderance in the North.

King Erik spent most of his time in Denmark. He seldom visited Sweden and Norway, and in these countries his magistrates and bailiffs, mostly foreigners, were allowed to run riot, to plague and torment the peasants and tax them way beyond their ability to pay.

The worst one of these magistrates was the Dane Jösse Eriksson, who governed the provinces of Westmanland and Dalarne.

Sweden's peasantry throughout the land was threatened with the loss of its property and liberty by these external enemies.

In the hidden valleys around the Lake Siljan and along the river Dalälfven, among the mountains, there lived a hardy and liberty-loving people, who had always preserved their love of country and maintained the fortitude, morals and simple manners of their forefathers better than others.

They now emerged out of their forests and obscurity to the rescue and salvation of the Swedish people.

At that time there lived in Norberget, Dalarne, a highlander, a freeholder by the name of Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson.

He was a short, strong and stout man, magnanimous and daring, versed in military affairs, brave, resolute and eloquent, and a true Swedish heart beat within his breast.

To him the people turned in their trouble and distress.

He espoused their cause, went to Denmark, and there in Copenhagen, presented the grievances and complaints of his people to King Erik, who in turn referred the matter to the Swedish Council for consideration.

The Council verified the truth of ENGELBREKT'S representations, and with their certificate as a basis of an appeal to the king in his possession ENGELBREKT appeared for the second time before the king.

King Erik then became angry and shouted:

> "You're always complaining. Go away and don't let me see you again!"

To which ENGELBREKT replied:

> "I am surely likely to see you again."

When ENGELBREKT reported back to his people, they decided to take matters into their own hands, and at Tuna, in the fall of 1433, they chose him as their leader, and under ENGELBREKT'S vigorous and dashing command the aroused peasants marched to Västerås, where Magistrate Jösse Eriksson resided in the castle.

Twice they visited Västerås; twice emissaries of Eriksson's prevailed upon them to return, promising that the wrongs would be corrected.

When they finally found out that the promises were not sincere, they went back the third time, at midsummertime in 1434, with a firm determination not to go back to their homes before the unscrupulous band of foreigners, then destroying the dikes of freedom, had been bodily driven out of the country.

Now, the social revolution against foreign oppression and the War of Independence started.

The troops from Dalarne under ENGELBREKT first stormed and destroyed the Crown Castle at Borganäs on Dalälfven, near Hedemora.

Without appreciable resistance they then marched to Västerås, and from there to Uppsala, where ENGELBREKT spoke to the people assembled, and took upon himself to remit one third of all taxes.

Communications were sent to all parts of the country, summoning the people to rise in arms.

Erik Puke headed the insurrection in Finland and advanced troops into Norrland, and other friends and adherents carried on successfully all over the country.

Troops from Södermanland conquered Gripsholms Castle, and from all parts armed peasant troops swarmed around ENGELBREKT, and he finally had armies of peasants amounting to 50,000 men under his command in various parts of the country.

After he had signed a truce with the king's representatives in Stockholm, he advanced his army by forced marches through Södermanland into Östergötland.

The song "ENGELBREKT", which you are now rehearsing, dramatically emphasizes ENGELBREKT'S arrival in Vadstena, on the beautiful shores of Lake Vettern, with his armed peasants from "Dalom", 1,000 strong.

Here he found the King's Council assembled for consultation.

It was here on an early morning, just at the break of day, at the first show of approaching sunrise that ENGELBREKT proclaimed: <u>"Dagen är Ny!" This is a new day!</u>, when he surprised the Councilmen.

To begin with he showed these gentlemen, representing the Crown, proper respect and spoke in courteous language, while outside the chambers there was a clatter of arms by the peasants.

He reminded them that since the days of Magnus Eriksson the Country had been ruled not by the king but by foreign tyrants, who had no respect for law and Swedish traditions and who assessed burdensome taxes upon the people far beyond their ability to pay.

He told them that he and his followers were no rebels or insurgents in any sense of the words, but simply honest citizens, who wished to defend Sweden's independence in order that the country be delivered from the present unendurable bondage and slavery.

He exhorted them to consider the distress of the common people and to join him to rid the country of foreign domination and misrule, and ended up by demanding that they renounce their allegiance to the king.

When the Councilmen refused ENGELBREKT grabbed several young noblemen and the bishop of Linkoping by the collar and threatened to deliver them and others to the enraged peasantry.

The peasants outside were at that time shooting arrows at the building and were in no mood to stand for resistance.

The Councilmen then became humble and relented. They immediately signed the letter of renunciation of their allegiance to the king which ENGELBREKT drafted.

ENGELBREKT then advanced with his troops and swept Östergötland and Södermanland clear of all foreigners, and the people of Varmland also destroyed all strongholds of foreigners in that province.

ENGELBREKT continued his victorious march through the provinces of Västergötland and Halland and signed a truce with Skåne.

Now most of the country was in his power; only Stockholm and a few castles remained in the hands of the king.

The entire war of independence had been won in less than four

months, and the immense peasant troops had marched through the country in such orderly manner that they had suffered no serious loss.

ENGELBREKT had sent his troops back to their respective homes, when King Erik arrived at Stockholm with his troops in the fall of the year.

ENGELBREKT then immediately summoned his people to arms again, and in a short while pitched camp around the Capital. A truce was soon arranged, and the king was allowed to depart without attack.

Shortly after this national revolt of the peasants against the Union king and against Danish-German influence in Sweden, ENGELBREKT summoned the First Swedish Parliament to the old city of Arboga, where it was held under the leadership of ENGELBREKT, the hero of the fight for liberty and acting national administrator.

This Riksdag was called by him to decide on Swedish independence and was held in January 1435.

The Swedish Riksdag had theretofore consisted of the Three Estates: The Nobility, the Clergy and the Burghers.

To this Arboga Riksdag ENGELBREKT summoned also representatives of the peasants.

The peasants who numbered about 85% of the population of Sweden had heretofore had no representation in the government.

Another Riksdag was held in Arboga in January 1436, at which they renounced their allegiance to the king, and Karl Knutsson and ENGELBREKT WERE SELECTED as regents. Karl remained in Stockholm and ENGELBREKT continued his march through the country, conquering the remainder of the king's magistrates.

Here I might say that the Riksdag of 1435, divided into the Four Estates, with equal rights: The Nobles, the Clergy, the Burghers and

the Peasants, continued unchanged until 1866, when the old legislature was replaced by one of two chambers, the First with 150 members and the Second with 230 members, and which very much resembles the American Senate and House of Representatives.

In 1935 the Swedish Parliament or Riksdag celebrated the quintennial of its foundation under ENGELBREKT in 1435.

In 1448 Sweden withdrew from the Union of Kalmar, and in 1471 the Danish king's attempt to reincorporate Sweden in a Nordic Union failed after a crushing defeat.

With difficult problems still to solve in spite of his important conquests, and with his plans unfinished ENGELBREKT was attacked by a severe illness and retired to his castle in Orebro.

While in Orebro he was summoned to Stockholm, and in spite of his illness he sailed out on Lake Hjälmaren with his wife in the evening of April 27th, 1436. They landed at Engelbrekt's isle, and here he was murdered by Måns Bengtsson.

In conclusion I wish to say that ENGELBREKT'S murder prevented him from organizing the Swedish State in its modern form.

That remained for Gustavus Vasa to do in 1521, after the dreadful carnage called Stockholm Blood-Bath in 1520, when nearly all of the prominent members of the Swedish nobility were beheaded by the Danes under King Christian II while assembled for that king's coronation.

ENGELBREKT'S participation in public life in Sweden was short-lived only from 1434 to 1436, but in less than three years he succeeded in rousing the peasants by his pursuasive eloquence, his courageous energy and brilliant organizing ability.

He inspired in all classes of the people a sincere love of country.

He broke the power of foreign malignant autocracy and authority and crushed the power of the Nobles and the Clergy.

He restored to the people of Sweden their liberty and independence, which had been suppressed by the Danes.

He gave the farmers and peasants of his country the right to participate in the affairs of the nation, and brought reasonable prosperity to the free-hold farmers and peasants, and from his time you can really speak of a Swedish Nation.