

Stieg Larsson predicted rise of the Swedish right



Derek Scally
in Stockholm

Bestselling author anticipated the rise of the right seen in yesterday's election

When Tobias Hübinette started an early incarnation of *Expo* magazine in 1995, neither he nor his early backer, Swedish journalist and activist Stieg Larsson, could have imagined yesterday's general election outcome in Sweden.

Early results last night indicated the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) will be the country's third-largest party with over 13 per cent of the vote. That record result more than doubles its last showing from 2010 and could hand it the balance of power between Sweden's left and right in the new Riksdag parliament.

Larsson, best known as author of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the first of the *Millennium* trilogy, sounded precisely this alarm shortly before his sudden death in November 2004, aged just 50.

A decade on, over coffee in Stockholm, Hübinette (43) shows no sense of satisfaction that his friend's warning has come true.

"This would have been our nightmare back in the 1990s," says Hübinette, now an academi-

ic and a researcher at Stockholm's Migration Centre.

"The SD has gone through an amazing development and it's wrong to say it's a fascist party now, it's much more than that."

Founded in 1988, the Sweden Democrats polled just 1.2 per cent in the 2002 election and, after large-scale defections, the mainstream media suggested its days were numbered.

Larsson argued the opposite, saying the departure of the skinheads would allow the SD to re-brand itself.

In the August 2004 edition *Expo* magazine, fictionalised as *Millennium* in his thrillers, Larsson wrote: "To achieve political success, the Sweden Democrats need to acquire support from voters who were dissatisfied with the political establishment, but did not consider themselves to be Nazis or 'nationalists'."

Their growing support comes after repositioning themselves as the self-appointed guardian of the old Swedish social model, Nordic social market capitalism combining a strong welfare state and official nationalism.

The model shaped the post-war Swedish identity but is in flux for many Swedes with three factors – Sweden's 1990s financial crisis and its aftermath, globalisation and economic-led immigration – transforming a once homogeneous and isolated country beyond recognition.

Simpler, whiter Sweden

The SD has co-opted strands of socialism, nationalism and even feminism to promise a return to a simpler, whiter Sweden. It hopes a promise to revive the social model of old will eventually make the party as popular with voters as the model once was.



Voting in Stockholm during the Swedish general elections yesterday. Polls have shown the Social Democrats poised to return to power after eight years of centre-right rule.

PHOTOGRAPH: JONAS EKSTROMER/AP/IT

"With a stronger voice, it is highly likely the other parties will be unable to ignore the SD to the same level they have to do date," Hübinette says.

He set up an early version of *Expo* almost two decades ago, then just a photocopied newsletter, to document Sweden's neo-Nazi scene and their campaign of threats. Larsson, who had been observing extremism in Sweden since the 1970s, encouraged him with his work.

"He felt it would flourish into

a magazine. Slowly others joined, he joined as well and it became a real magazine," s Hübinette recalls.

Today, several incarnations later, *Expo* is more than just a campaigning anti-racist magazine, it operates a foundation that offers information, lectures and training in all topics surrounding political extremism.

The organisation faced many existential threats over the years. During Hübinette's 2½ years at *Expo*, neo-Nazi groups it had exposed issued death threats against staff. When their printing plant was vandalised, Swedish newspapers published 800,000 copies in solidarity.

During those early years, Hübinette spent hours in Larsson's extensive private archive

of the far-right, listening to the older journalist pass on the information he had collected.

Lingering over coffee near Stockholm's state library, where he is about to deliver a lecture on the far right, Hübinette suggests Larsson saw in



Tobias Hübinette: "This would have been our nightmare back in the 1990s"

him a successor, with the same skill at gathering information about the neo-Nazi scene.

This dogged trait, he added, fed into the lead character of Lisbeth Salander in Larsson's trilogy.

"Some people say the lead character is based partly on me," he says. "I am not claiming that she is just me, I can see a lot of other people in the character too, but I smiled a lot when I read the book."

With an amenable personality – and no discernible tattoos or piercings – Hübinette seems a long way from Larsson's borderline Asperger's cyberpunk Hübinette's colourful past though would impress even the world-weary Salander.

Irish at Uppsala
South Korean-born but adopted to Sweden, he studied Irish at Uppsala University. As a student anarchist, he was involved in the Antifascist Action (AFA) group and an Irish republican support group in Sweden.

Today he is a controversial

and divisive figure in Swedish debates – not unlike the fictional Lisbeth Salander.

The thrillers were coloured by the Cold War and its aftermath and the sense something new was coming, suggests Hübinette, but the author died too soon to learn what was coming.

So what is coming for Sweden? Hübinette says the country remains some way behind Denmark and Norway, where far-right parties and their populism are both cornerstones of the political landscape and public debate. However, the struggle by Sweden to retool its identity for the 21st century leaves it vulnerable to a similar fate, he suggests.

"The Nazi ideology is no history in Europe," he adds. "There are still strains of it in our present."

Social Democrats return to power

DEREK SCALLY

Sweden's Social Democrats appear headed back to power after eight years in opposition following a collapse in support for outgoing prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's centre-right alliance.

Early results suggested that a new centre-left coalition may be a minority administration after a surge in support for the far-right Sweden Democrats.

Poll toppers
Mr Reinfeldt's centre-right Moderates slumped almost eight points to just 22 per cent while the Social Democrat and its leader Stefan Löfven topped the poll in early dawn with 31 per cent, a record low for the party that once dominated Swedish politics.



Swedish PM Fredrik Reinfeldt: Moderate party slips eight points

Its marginal rise in support was cancelled out by marginal Green losses. Early results left the Red-Green coalition with just 38 per cent, requiring another partner such as the reformed communist Left Party, which reached 5.7 per cent in exit polls.

Shock winner
The shock winner in yesterday's election is the far-right Sweden Democrats which saw its support rise from 13 per cent to over 13 per cent.

As Sweden's third-largest party, it could hold the balance of power in the new Riksdag parliament.

Meanwhile the Feminist Initiative appears to have fallen short of entering parliament. "We want solid endorsement on Saturday evening by singer Pharrell Williams at a Stockholm concert.

Advertisement

Powered by **moneycorp** exchange experts

THE IRISH TIMES
International money transfer service

Make an exchange for the better

Save money with The Irish Times International Money Transfer Service, provided by Moneycorp, the exchange experts.

Maureen Dowd Opinion

NFL commissioner is acting more like Nixon than like his sacrificing father

When Roger Goodell was growing up here, he had the best possible example of moral leadership. His father, a moderate New York Republican appointed by governor Nelson Rockefeller to Bobby Kennedy's Senate seat after the assassination, risked his career to come out against the Vietnam War.

"We should not be engaged in a land war 10,000 miles away," he wrote to Rockefeller. Elected by Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon never blanching at putting his political viability ahead of the lives of kids on the battlefield, but Charles Goodell would not do that. In September 1969, the senator tried to force the president to withdraw all the troops faster by introducing a Bill, S-3000, withholding money. He could have waited until after his election in the following year, thus garnering Nixon's support, but he was that rare creature that seems to have vanished from the Washington landscape: a profile in courage.

Moral stance
His moral stance brought down the immoral Furies: Nixon, Agnew and Kissinger, who suggested Goodell was treasonous. As his five sons, including Roger (II), watched in dismay, the vengeful Nixon White House schemed against Goodell's re-election and, at 44, his political career was kaput.

The two legacies from his dad, Bryan Curtis wrote in Grantland last year, could hold be "a measure of his dad's idealism, his contrarianism, his stubbornness. And I bet we'd

What did he think happened? The man was dragging out an unconscious woman like a sack of mulch

covered up until the public found his hand.

The commissioner, who has been a sanctimonious judge for eight years, suddenly got lenient. His claim that it was "ambiguous about what actually happened" in the Atlantic City casino elevator between Ray Rice and his then-fiancee, Janay Palmer, during the Valentine's Day massacre was risible to start with. What did he think happened? The man was dragging out an unconscious woman like a sack of mulch.

Goodell's credibility took another hit on Thursday, when Don Van Natta Jr wrote on ESPN.com that four sources close to Rice had said the player had admitted to the commissioner during a disciplinary meeting on June 16th that he had hit his girlfriend in the face and knocked

her out. Rice probably assumed the commissioner had seen the video. Yet Goodell only suspended him for two games, two less than if he'd been caught taking Adderall.

It has been suggested that the NFL will give players purple gear next month in honour of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. But they may as well just wear green. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the greed league even asked entertainers to pay for the privilege of playing the Super Bowl halftime show.

Goodell was hired by the owners to be a grow-the-pie guy, which means shielding the throw-the-punch guy. Since he became commissioner in 2006, the league's 32 gridiron fiefdoms have increased in value by \$10.9 billion, according to Forbes. Goodell himself is now more than \$44 million.

Fewer sales
Owners shrug off moral turpitude because when they pay a lot of money for a player, they don't want him sitting out games, even if he's been accused of a crime, because every game they lose means less merchandise and fewer ticket sales. So, as the NFL continues its perp walk – on Friday, one of its best running backs, the Minnesota Vikings star Adrian Peterson, was indicted on charges of abusing his four-year-old son in Texas – Goodell looks the other way.

They think they can get away with anything now, even with women being almost 50 per cent of their fan base. Maybe they can. Twenty million people tuned in to watch the Ravens play Thursday night – even without the irony of a precorred Rihanna show kicking things off – and the papers were filled with sicken pictures of women proudly wearing Rice's No 27 jersey.

The last sports commissioner who didn't kowtow to owners may have been Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who banned Shoeless Joe and the Black Sox players from baseball for life even though they were acquitted in 1921 and went out with the jury to eat to celebrate. "Regardless of the verdict of juries," Landis said, "baseball is competent to protect itself against the game." If only – New York Times Service

German eurosceptics surge in local elections

DEREK SCALLY

Germany's eurosceptic Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is becoming a force to be reckoned with in support in two eastern state elections yesterday, scarcely a year after it was established.

After a strong result in the European elections, and in Saxony two weeks ago, the AfD is now represented in three eastern states. The party scored 10 per cent in the central state of Thuringia, according to exit polls, and 12 per cent in Brandenburg, surrounding Berlin.

"We are delighted that citizens have voted for political renewal," said Prof. Bernd Lucke, saying the results put "wind in our sails" to move beyond being a euro crisis protest party. "We want solid budgets, orderly immigration, family-friendly policies of social market economy and economic sense."

Earlier this month Prof Lucke, addressing the issue of crime in Brandenburg on the Polish border, said that "even people who don't want the GDR back say interior security was better in the east than in the west."

Yesterday's results indicate the AfD picking up support from across the political spectrum. The post-communist Left Party lost more than 8 per cent, while in Thuringia the Social Democrats (SPD) dropped more than 6 per cent, finishing with a record low of just 12.4 per cent.

The AfD is not a party right-wing, said CDU's Armin Laschet, a deputy CDU leader. "We won support while the SPD and Left lost votes."

The party mopped up support from the liberal Free Democratic Party. After being dumped out of the Bundestag last year, the one-time Merkel coalition partner remains in freefall after failing to make it into either state parliaments yesterday.

THE IRISH TIMES Ireland's leading newspaper, published by The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in the UK and is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland for conduct of business rules. All quotes herein are solely those of Customers of Moneycorp, who were interviewed in June 2014. As a token of thanks for their contribution, each customer was offered a gift certificate.

www.irishtimes.com/moneytransfer

Calling time on football league's controversial grow-the-pie guy



Maureen Dowd Opinion

NFL commissioner is acting more like Nixon than like his sacrificing father

When Roger Goodell was growing up here, he had the best possible example of moral leadership. His father, a moderate New York Republican appointed by governor Nelson Rockefeller to Bobby Kennedy's Senate seat after the assassination, risked his career to come out against the Vietnam War.

"We should not be engaged in a land war 10,000 miles away," he wrote to Rockefeller. Elected by Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon never blanching at putting his political viability ahead of the lives of kids on the battlefield, but Charles Goodell would not do that. In September 1969, the senator tried to force the president to withdraw all the troops faster by introducing a Bill, S-3000, withholding money. He could have waited until after his election in the following year, thus garnering Nixon's support, but he was that rare creature that seems to have vanished from the Washington landscape: a profile in courage.

Moral stance
His moral stance brought down the immoral Furies: Nixon, Agnew and Kissinger, who suggested Goodell was treasonous. As his five sons, including Roger (II), watched in dismay, the vengeful Nixon White House schemed against Goodell's re-election and, at 44, his political career was kaput.

The two legacies from his dad, Bryan Curtis wrote in Grantland last year, could hold be "a measure of his dad's idealism, his contrarianism, his stubbornness. And I bet we'd

also find a kind of defense mechanism that develops when you see your dad destroyed on a public stage. An instinct that makes you think, I won't let that happen to me."

Now the NFL commissioner, he told *The Times* George Vescey in 2010 that it "was a valuable lesson to me." But what was the lesson? Goodell is acting more like Nixon, the man who covered up crimes, than his father, who sacrificed his career to save lives. As ESPN's Keith Olbermann summed it up, "Mr Goodell is an enabler of men who beat women," and he must resign.

Goodell likes to present himself as a law-and-order sheriff bent on integrity, whose motto is "Protect the shield." But that doesn't seem to include protecting the victims of violence or American civilians who see the Washington team's name as a slur. As with concussions, the league

her out. Rice probably assumed the commissioner had seen the video. Yet Goodell only suspended him for two games, two less than if he'd been caught taking Adderall.

It has been suggested that the NFL will give players purple gear next month in honour of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. But they may as well just wear green. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the greed league even asked entertainers to pay for the privilege of playing the Super Bowl halftime show.

Goodell was hired by the owners to be a grow-the-pie guy, which means shielding the throw-the-punch guy. Since he became commissioner in 2006, the league's 32 gridiron fiefdoms have increased in value by \$10.9 billion, according to Forbes. Goodell himself is now more than \$44 million.

Fewer sales
Owners shrug off moral turpitude because when they pay a lot of money for a player, they don't want him sitting out games, even if he's been accused of a crime, because every game they lose means less merchandise and fewer ticket sales. So, as the NFL continues its perp walk – on Friday, one of its best running backs, the Minnesota Vikings star Adrian Peterson, was indicted on charges of abusing his four-year-old son in Texas – Goodell looks the other way.

They think they can get away with anything now, even with women being almost 50 per cent of their fan base. Maybe they can. Twenty million people tuned in to watch the Ravens play Thursday night – even without the irony of a precorred Rihanna show kicking things off – and the papers were filled with sicken pictures of women proudly wearing Rice's No 27 jersey.

The last sports commissioner who didn't kowtow to owners may have been Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who banned Shoeless Joe and the Black Sox players from baseball for life even though they were acquitted in 1921 and went out with the jury to eat to celebrate. "Regardless of the verdict of juries," Landis said, "baseball is competent to protect itself against the game." If only – New York Times Service