

# **Gunnar Kautsky**

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Gunnar was born in Turku, Finland, on January 27, 1921, as the son of Fritz and Cecilia Kautsky. Although Fritz Kautsky was an Austrian, he was a well-recognized ore geologist in Scandinavia and held also a research position at Åbo Akademi University in Turku from 1920 to 1921. Fritz Kautsky and his family soon returned, however, to Austria where Gunnar grew up and took his first geology degree at the University of Vienna. The name Kautsky was also well known far beyond the geological communities in Europe at that time. Karl Kautsky, an uncle of Fritz, was also Austrian although born in Prague, and lived most of his life in Berlin and London. Karl Kautsky was a legendary socialist in the early part of the 20th century, but with such an independent profile relative to other Marxists that he was criticised and condemned by Lenin as the “renegade” Kautsky - something that would also influence Gunnar when travelling in Eastern Europe half a century later. For most people in Europe, and particularly those of Gunnar's generation, the early 1940's was a dangerous and terrible part of history. When Austria joined Germany in World War two, Gunnar was enrolled in the army but was severely injured in a traffic accident before arriving at the front. Gunnar almost died from this accident, but contradictory enough, Gunnar's life was probably saved due to this accident because he otherwise could have disappeared on the battlefields of Stalingrad, Kursk or Berlin. Gunnar's personality had thus formed with a colourful background, where ore geology and an international environment was part of the family tradition, but also under many extraordinary conditions in a turbulent period of the history of Europe. But with this background, I believe that Gunnar was particularly suited for surviving in a tough working climate and to become the foremost international ambassador of ore geologists and eventually president of IAGOD. We can distinguish at least five important profiles of Gunnar:

## **1) The survivor**

Gunnar's fighting spirit and talent to tackle difficult situations were tested for the first time when he struggled to recover from his serious accident. Although he survived, his body remained badly damaged for the rest of his life. It is more than amazing that he was able to carry out fieldwork at all in mountainous regions in his future life, but Gunnar was an excellent field geologist for many decades. His survival instinct was tested at many other occasions, both in his professional and private life, not least when his wife Dora passed away in the 1970's and his second wife Stina followed in the 1990's. Only a real survivor can manage to find a new companion under such conditions, but Gunnar did find her, this time in Luxemburg.

## **2) The field geologist and scientist**

After being confronted with fieldwork in the thrust nappe complexes in the Austrian Alps, Gunnar rapidly understood the importance of structural and stratigraphic relationships in orogenic mountain belts. When Gunnar came to Sweden in 1945, his Alpine experience was very valuable because the Boliden mining company wanted Gunnar to produce a stratigraphic and tectonic map for the Sulitelma-Salojaure region, just north of the Arctic Circle, to enhance exploration for massive sulphide ores in the Swedish Caledonides. The Sulitelma-Salojaure region was one of the most unexplored and remote terrains of the Swedish-Norwegian mountain region and was mapped during five months in 1945-1947 by the then 24-26 year old Gunnar, who had only recently recovered from his severe accident. Although Törnebohm had proposed nappe tectonics for the Scandinavian Caledonides as early as 1896, this had still not become generally accepted among Scandinavian scientists in the 1940's so the arrival of Gunnar to Sweden was a vitalizing factor for a process that paved the way for establishing a plate tectonic concept for the Caledonides in the 1970's.

Based on his investigations, he presented his first scientific publication in 1946 and defended his Licentiate thesis in 1947 and his PhD thesis in 1953, both in Stockholm. I developed a personal relationship with both the Sulitelma-Salojaure region and Gunnar's thesis on the area during the period 1980 to 1985, when Ebbe Zachrisson, Mike Stephens and myself, all then working for Gunnar at the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU), remapped the region. Our working conditions were very different from those experienced by Gunnar forty years earlier; besides having more time to our disposal, we also had student assistants, access to air transport, aerial photographs, topographic maps and last but not least Gunnar's publications (and those of Oscar Kulling) on the area. Although we were in this way able to improve many details in the geological map (Sundblad, 1986), the basic principles of a thrust nappe complex in the area remained unchanged. This had been understood by Gunnar after only one summer in Sweden, something I am still deeply impressed about. Gunnar's understanding of geodynamic processes was also addressed in Precambrian ore-bearing regions, particularly the Skellefte district in northern Sweden (e.g. Kautsky, 1957), where his interpretations of the stratigraphy took into consideration the facies concept, which was something new in Swedish Precambrian geology.

## **3) The ore geologist**

Gunnar was well acquainted with ore deposits and their geological nature from his father's investigations in Austria and Sweden. This, combined with his experience from regional mapping, made Gunnar realize the importance of combining prospecting for individual ore deposits with stratigraphic and tectonic interpretations. He was thus the natural choice for the Boliden company, when they wanted the geological framework for the Sulitelma-Salojaure region to be carried out in a modern way (see above). His scientific contributions on the geology of the Skellefte district were also important for a better understanding of the ore-forming environment in this important ore district. When Gunnar became head of the ore division at SGU, this experience was important when Gunnar guided new generations of

geologists into the techniques and philosophy of exploration. Not restricting himself to the building up competence in geology and ore genesis, Gunnar also improved models for Quaternary geology in ore prospecting and initiated integrated geological, geophysical and geochemical prospecting programmes.

#### **4) The organizer and international bridge builder**

Gunnar had an unusual sense for scientific communication beyond national borders and language limits. In spite of not being Swedish, he became a central person at the Geological Survey of Sweden from 1953 to 1987, being the head of the ore division from 1959 to 1974, and later head of the bedrock section from 1974 to 1978. Gunnar's inspiring leadership at SGU and his sense for selecting and tying key persons (particularly Ebbe Zachrisson and David Gee) to his organization was also important for the groundbreaking scientific process of creating a plate tectonic understanding of the Caledonian orogeny and its associated ore deposits. In 1992, Gunnar received the title of Professor in recognition of his scientific contributions and creative leadership. He was also chairman of the Swedish National Committee for Geology and a very well appreciated member of the Nordic geoscience community. As such he was elected member of the Academy of Science of Finland in 1986 and the Royal Academy of Science of Norway in 1991. He was the natural leader for the inter-Nordic Nordkalott (1980-1986) and Mid-Norden (1989-1996) projects. In a wider global perspective, Gunnar was a member in the Commission for the Geological Map of the World (CGMW) and the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP). Gunnar was also Vice President in the International Union for Geological Sciences (IUGS). IAGOD became the perfect and ultimate platform for Gunnar, where all his skill in geological understanding and international communication was needed to bridge the political and cultural boundaries that hampered scientific communication between ore geologists in various parts of the world during the 1980's. Gunnar was Vice-president, President and Past-President of IAGOD and was the head of the organizing committee for the 7<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial IAGOD Symposium in Luleå, Sweden in 1986.



Gunnar was a natural 'man in the centre' in many ways, and on many occasions. In this picture from 1986, Gunnar is surrounded by Mike Stephens, Ebbe Zachrisson and Krister Sundblad. All had the privilege to work for Gunnar when his Ph.D. area was remapped and when the 7<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial IAGOD Symposium was organized in Sweden.

What is not seen from such a summary of formal positions was the active role Gunnar played in establishing real communication links with key persons in the geoscientific communities of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, China and many other countries where the official representatives for each country were not always the most important. Many of these contacts had been established when Gunnar was the leader of a Swedish delegation visiting Moscow and the Caucasus in the 1960's. Gunnar's network of contacts in the east and west grew gradually during the following years at numerous conferences and meetings. While many of Gunnar's Soviet colleagues treated him with the highest respect due to his professional and personal qualities, the Soviet authorities were constantly suspicious of a person who carried the name Kautsky, and Gunnar had to use a Swedish diplomatic passport when travelling to Eastern Europe. When the international symposium "Gold 99 Trondheim" was organized in 1999, the now 78 year-old Gunnar participated in all activities, including the field tours. He was a living legend for the foreign participants, not the least the many Ukrainians that participated in the meeting.

## **5) The person**

In spite of Gunnar's long formal list of merits, he will probably be remembered in particular for his strong personality, his engagement for geology and for his unconventional and unbureaucratic approach. All of us who had the privilege to work together with him saw him not only as the natural head of the group, but also as a close friend of an older generation, like a father. He had a warm and positive attitude to all members in the staff and was eager to provide optimal working conditions. Thanks to Gunnar, I was introduced to many pleasant persons and groups when I was still a young student; the Bor meeting in present-day Serbia in 1979 and the family of Tvalchredlidze in Tbilisi in 1987 are two very precious memories for me. It was always a real pleasure to share hotel rooms on field trips with Gunnar, because that was a guarantee for a long and entertaining evening with numerous interesting memories and viewpoints. The strong personality of Gunnar and his constant good mood, which continued also in recent years, made us often forget that he was, after all, not so young anymore. So when his life suddenly ended, we were all shocked and surprised at how this could happen to someone who had been so active until the last moment. Gunnar died in a taxi shortly after returning from a visit to the Azores, on his way back to the airport for a visit to Luxemburg. I believe that there are many of us who would prefer to pass away as Gunnar did - on his way from something good, and on his way to something even better.

## **Selected references**

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