

# Introducing micro:bian

Mike Spivey  
Hilary Term 2022



Department of  
COMPUTER  
SCIENCE

# In this part

---

- Concurrent processes and messages between them as a way of structuring complex systems that respond to events (L12).
- Managing I/O devices with driver processes that receive interrupts as messages (L13).
- Implementing multiple processes (L14).
- Messages and scheduling (L15).
- Chasing down a bug (L16).

# Why concurrency?

---

- Genuinely parallel machines
- Sharing one machine between several tasks
- Decomposing one task clearly
- Responding to several sources of events

# In this lecture

---

- *Processes*: embedded programs are conveniently structured as a set of independent processes.
- *Messages*: processes can cooperate by exchanging messages in a way that synchronises their behaviour.
- *Shared variables* are best avoided by using messages instead.

# Hearts again

---

```
static int row = 0;

void advance(void) {
    row++;
    if (row == 3) row = 0;
    GPIO_OUT = heart[row];
}
```

- Efficient but inflexible.
- Can't pause inside subroutines or control structures.

# But also primes

---

Use interrupts to overlap printing with the search, but ...

- When the serial buffer is full, wastes time waiting in a loop.
- Disables interrupts to protect the buffer from concurrent modification – hard to get right.

We're ready for to use an operating system:  
enter `micro:bian!`

# Better: a process

---


```
static void heart_task(int arg) {  
    while (1) {  
        show(heart, 70);  
        show(small, 10);  
        show(heart, 10);  
    }  
}
```

```
static void show(int img[], int n) {  
    while (n-- > 0) {  
        for (int p = 0; p < 3; p++) {  
            GPIO_OUT = img[p];  
            timer_delay(5);  
        }  
    }  
}
```

# Another, independent process

---

```
static void prime_task(int arg) {  
    int p = 2, n = 0;  
  
    while (1) {  
        if (prime(p)) {  
            n++;  
            printf("prime(%d) = %d\n", n, p);  
        }  
        p++;  
    }  
}
```



`serial_putc(c);`



# Setting the ball rolling

---

```
void init(void) {  
    SERIAL = start("Serial", serial_task, 0, STACK);  
    TIMER = start("Timer", timer_task, 0, STACK);  
    HEART = start("Heart", heart_task, 0, STACK);  
    PRIME = start("Prime", prime_task, 0, STACK);  
}
```

- a fixed collection of processes created before concurrent execution begins.
- our two processes, plus *device drivers* for the timer (`timer_delay`) and serial port (`serial_putc`); plus an idle task.

# Processes

---

Each a 'main program' in its own right

- It can call subroutines.
- It can pause (or be interrupted) at any point to give others a go.

Implementation

- Processes are interleaved.
- Each has its own stack.

`micro:bian` supports a fixed set of processes.

# Other operating systems

---

- Processes with communication
- Memory management
- Drivers for I/O devices
- File system
- Networking

micro:bian supports processes and messages, and whatever device drivers we write.

No utility programs, shared libraries, GUI, ... either.

# Sending messages

---

```
void prime_task(int arg) {
    int n = 2;
    message m;

    while (1) {
        if (prime(n)) {
            m.int1 = n;
            send(USEPRIME, PRIME, &m);
        }
        n++;
    }
}
```

# Receiving messages

---

```
void summary_task(int arg) {
    int count = 0, limit = arg; message m;

    while (1) {
        receive(PRIME, &m);
        while (m.int1 >= limit) {
            report(count, limit);
            limit += arg;
        }
        count++;
    }
}
```

# Rules for messages

---

Both sender and receiver have a message buffer (16 bytes).

- The sender assembles a message; then
- It is transferred from sender to receiver as an *atomic* action.
- No buffering, no queues of messages!

# Alternatives to messages

---

## Message passing:

- no “shared variables” between processes.
- all communication by messages

## Shared variables with semaphores:

- like the serial output buffer.
- more efficient, but hard to get right.

# Device drivers

Mike Spivey  
Hilary Term 2022



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

Department of  
**COMPUTER  
SCIENCE**



# In this lecture

---

- *Interrupts* can be tamed by turning them into ‘messages from the hardware’.
- *Device drivers* look after hardware devices by serving requests one at a time in a loop.

*(See wiki and Lab 4 for all details – many are omitted here for clarity.)*

# Implementing serial output

---

```
void serial_putc(char ch) {  
    message m;  
    m.int1 = ch;  
    send(SERIAL, PUTC, &m);  
}
```

- request message sent to the SERIAL driver.
- the caller *waits* if the driver is not ready.

# Implementing the driver process

---

```
void serial_task(int arg) {  
    static char txbuf[NBUF];  
    int bufin, bufout, bufcount;  
    message m; char ch;  
  
    serial_setup();  
  
    while (1) {  
        receive(ANY, &m);  
        switch (m.m_type) {  
            ...  
        }  
    }  
}
```

State is local to the driver

A server loop accepts requests

# Setting things up

---

```
void serial_setup(void) {  
    ...  
  
    UART.INTENSET = BIT(UART_INT_TXDRDY);  
    connect(UART_IRQ);  
    enable_irq(UART_IRQ);  
}
```

# Handling PUTC messages

---

```
while (1) {  
    receive(ANY, &m);  
    switch (m.m_type) {  
    case PUTC:  
        ch = m.int1;  
        txbuf[bufin] = ch; ...  
        break;  
        ...  
    }  
}
```

- Buffer variables are local, so no other process can interfere.

# Handling interrupts

---

## Key insight:

*an interrupt is a message from the hardware.*

```
receive(ANY, &m);  
switch (m.m_type) {  
case INTERRUPT:  
    if (UART_TXDRDY) {  
        txidle = 1;  
        UART_TXDRDY = 0;  
    }  
    clear_pending(UART_IRQ);  
    enable_irq(UART_IRQ);  
    break;
```

# Responding to events

---

```
while (1) {  
    receive(ANY, &m);  
    switch (m.m_type) {  
        ...  
    }  
  
    if (txidle && bufcount > 0) {  
        UART.TXD = txbuf[bufout]; ...  
        txidle = 0;  
    }  
}
```

# When the buffer is full

---

Let's replace

```
receive(ANY, &m);
```

with

```
if (bufcount < NBUF)  
    receive(ANY, &m);  
else  
    receive(INTERRUPT, &m);
```

When the buffer is full, we just stop accepting requests until it has emptied a bit.



# Omitted here ...

---

Lab 4 has a more elaborate serial driver

- Supports both output and input with echoing and line editing.
- All UART initialisation details are filled in.
- There's an alternative interface `print_buf` that overcomes the one-message-per-character bottleneck.

# The standard interrupt handler

---

```
void default_handler(void) {  
    int irq = active_irq();  
    int task = os_handler[irq];  
    disable_irq(irq);  
    interrupt(task);  
}
```

# Implementing Processes

Mike Spivey  
Hilary Term 2022



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

Department of  
COMPUTER  
SCIENCE

# Concurrent processes

---

We want multiple processes, each with its own stack. For simplicity,

- A fixed set of processes, created at the start.
- Each process has a fixed amount of stack space.

# Implementing processes

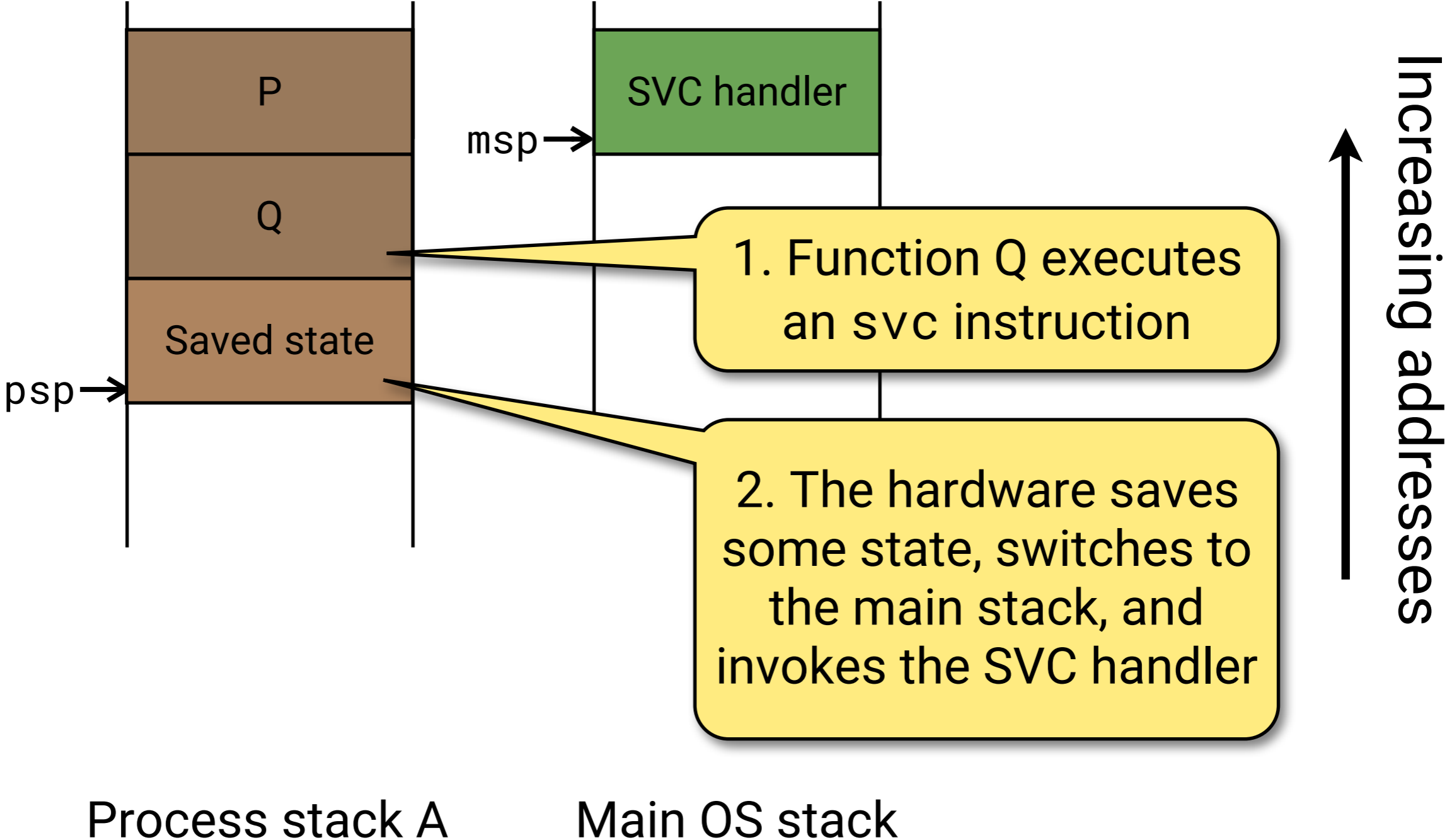
---

The plan:

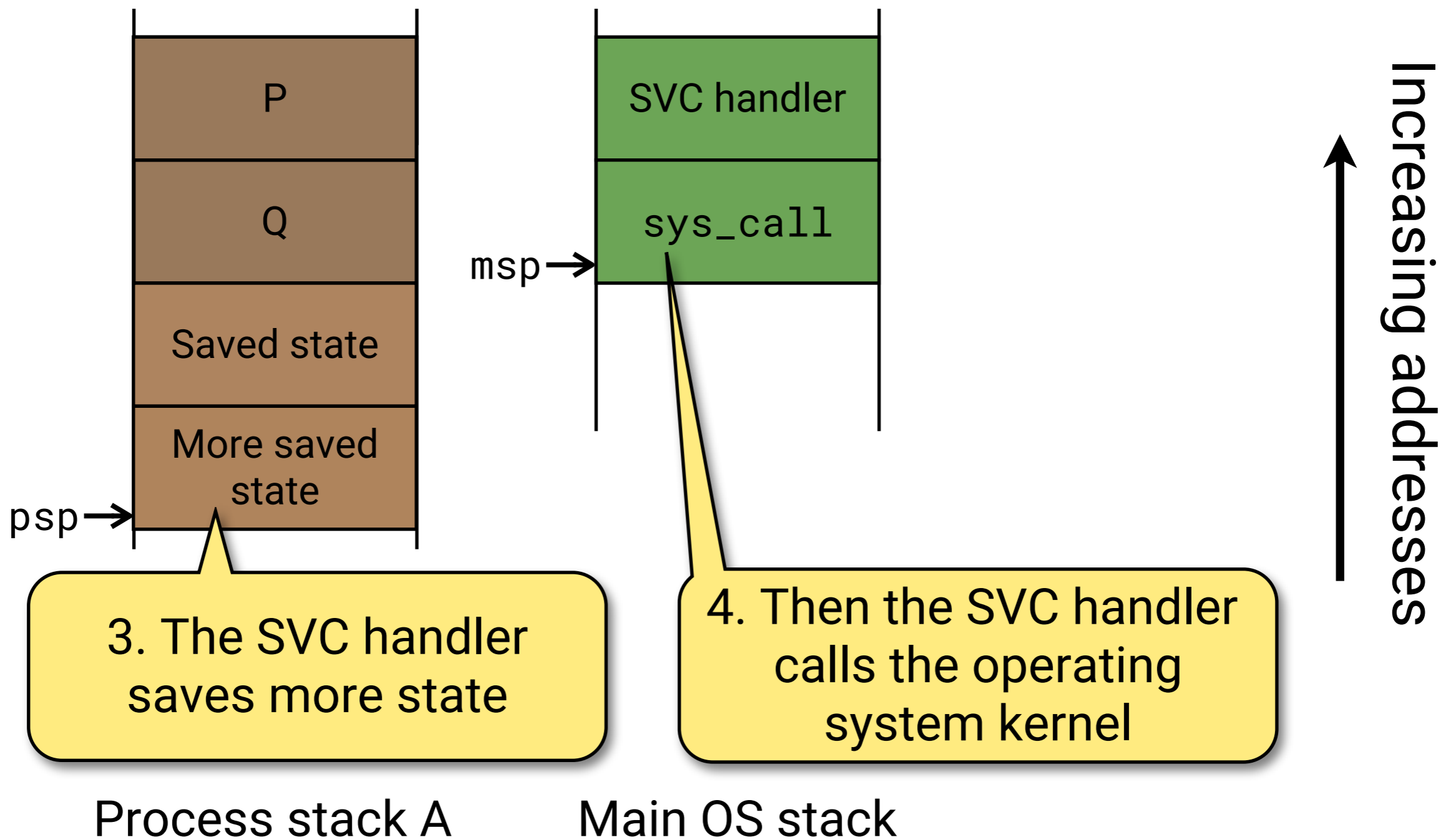
- Enter the OS via a *software interrupt* instruction `svc`.
- Save the entire processor state on the stack
- After choosing a new process, restore its state to continue.

Made easier by a *separate stack* for the operating system.

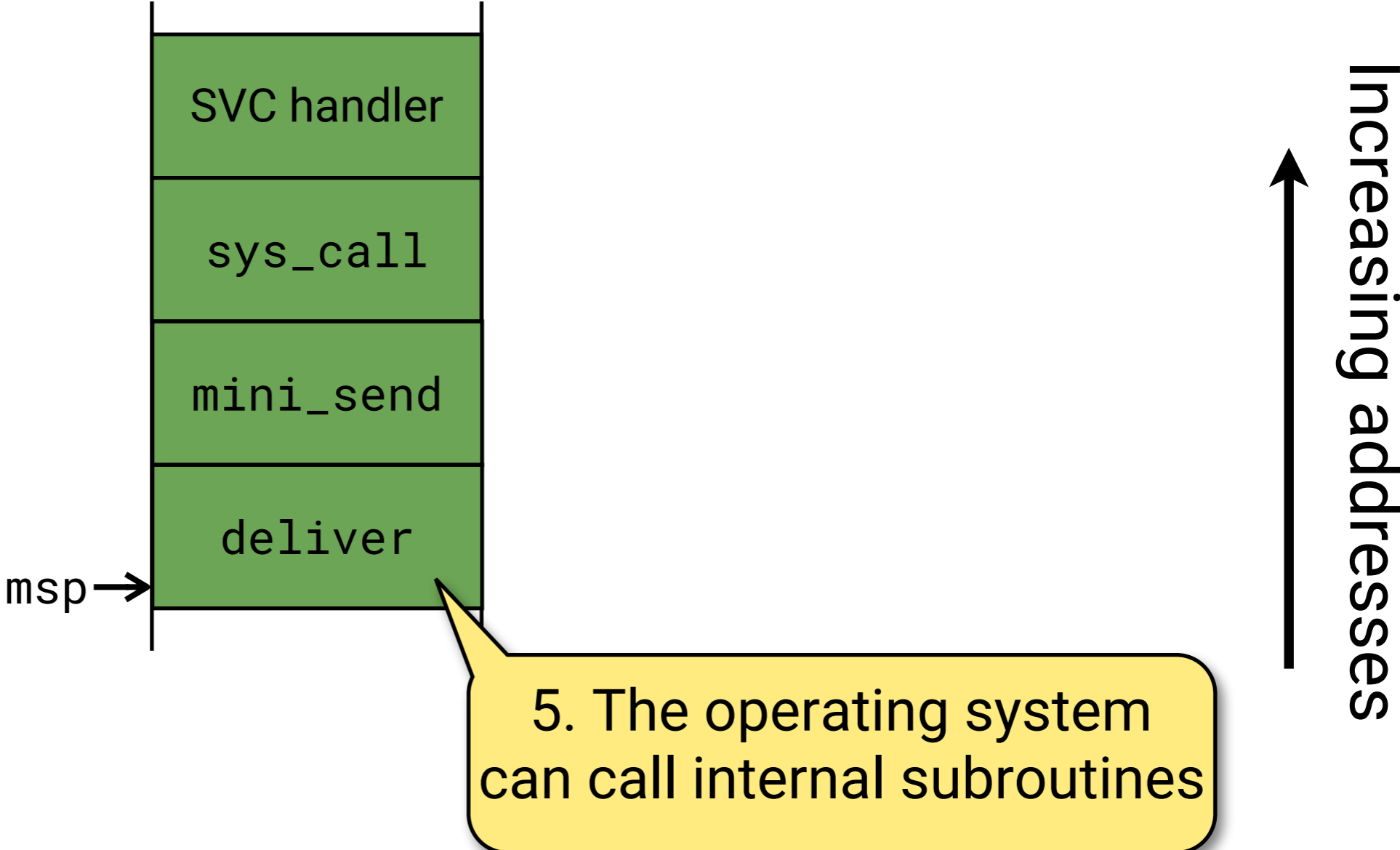
# Context switch – part 1



# Context switch – part 2



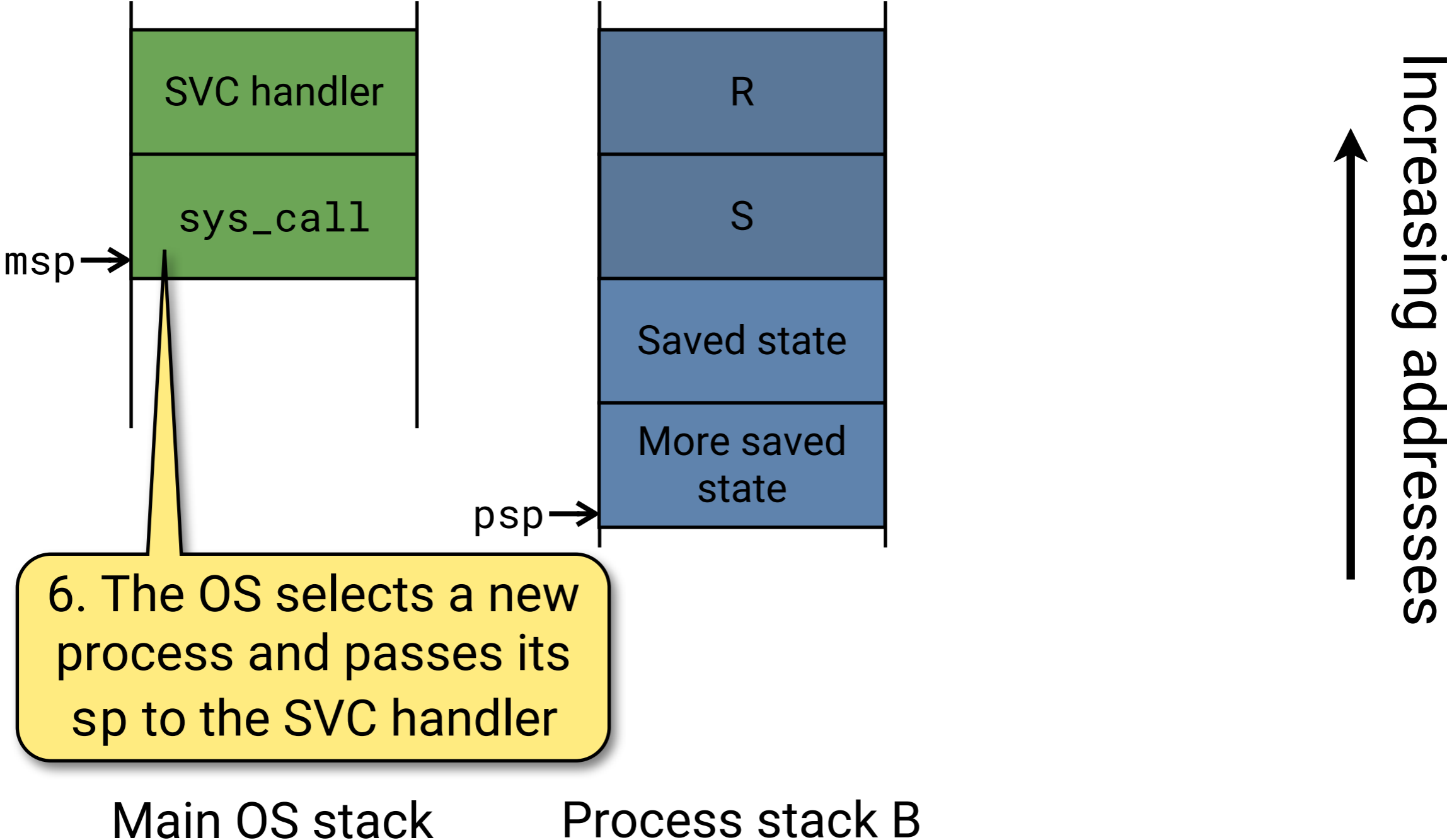
# Context switch – part 3



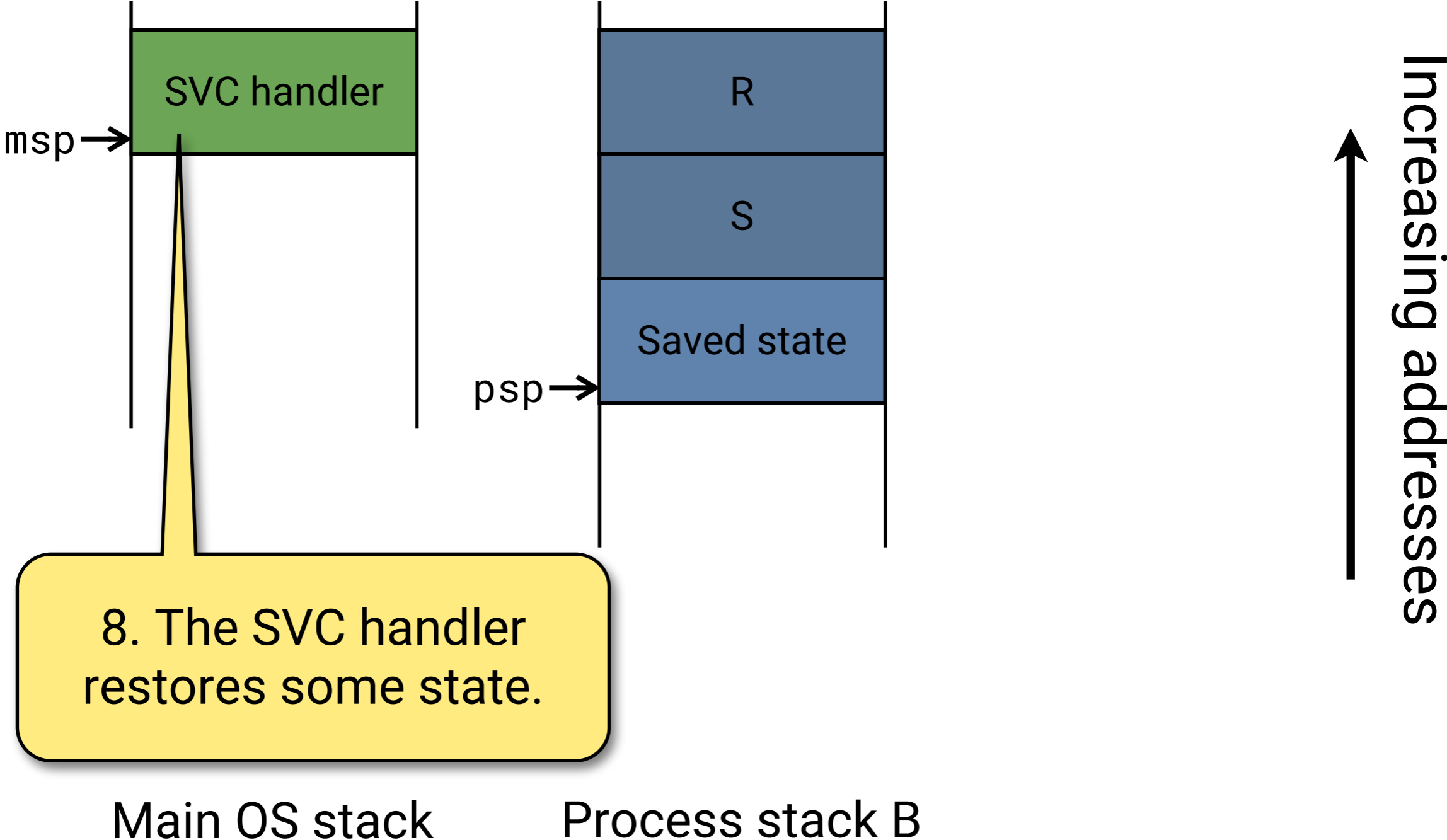
Main OS stack



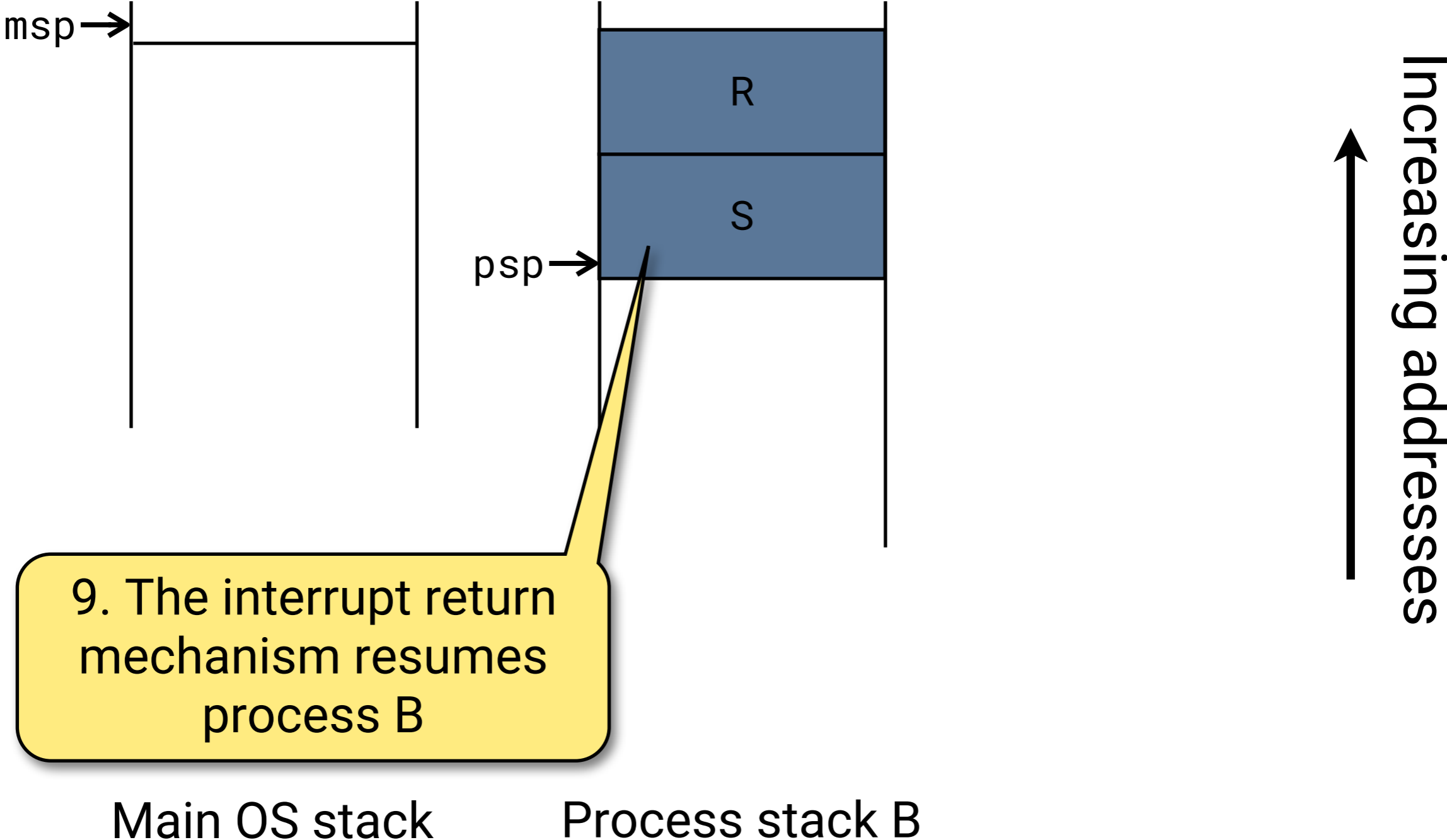
# Context switch – part 4



# Context switch – part 5



# Context switch – part 5



# Implementing the SVC handler

---

svc\_handler:

push {lr}

bl isave @ Complete saving of state

@@ Argument in r0 is sp of old process

bl system\_call @ Perform system call

@@ Result in r0 is sp of new process

bl irestore @ Restore manually saved

state

pop {pc}

# Saving state

---

@@@ isave -- save context for system call

```
.macro isave
```

```
mrs r0, psp
```

@ Get thread stack pointer

```
subs r0, #36
```

```
movs r1, r0
```

```
mov r3, lr
```

@ Preserve magic value

```
0xffffffff
```

```
stm r1!, {r3-r7}
```

@ Save low regs on thread

# Implementing system calls

---

```
/* system_call -- entry from system call traps */
unsigned *system_call(unsigned *psp)
{
    short *pc = (short *) psp[PC_SAVE]; /* Program
counter */

    int op = pc[-1] & 0xff; /* Syscall number from
SVC instruction */
```

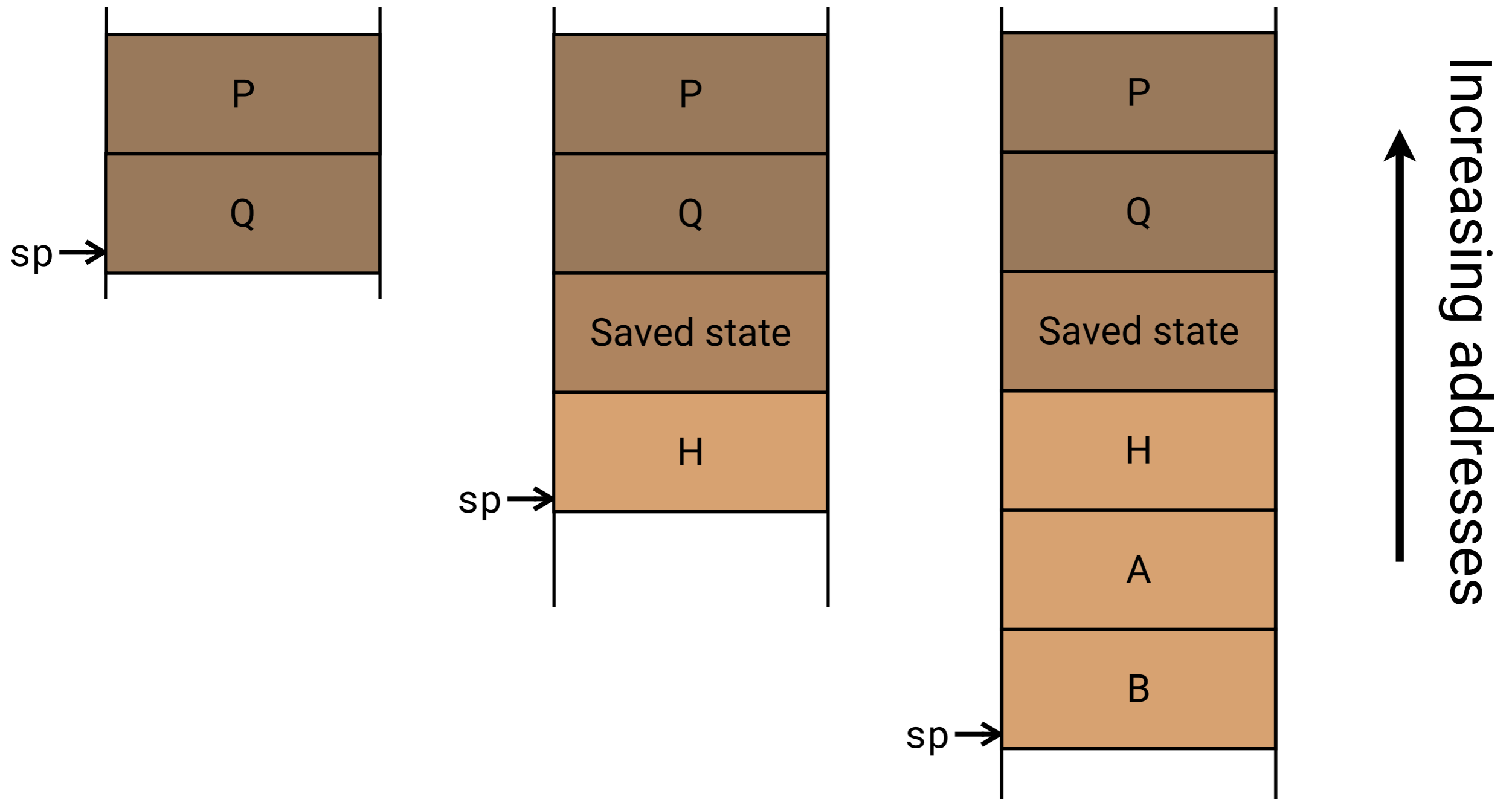
# Starting a process

---

The first time a process runs, it is resumed just as if returning from a system call.

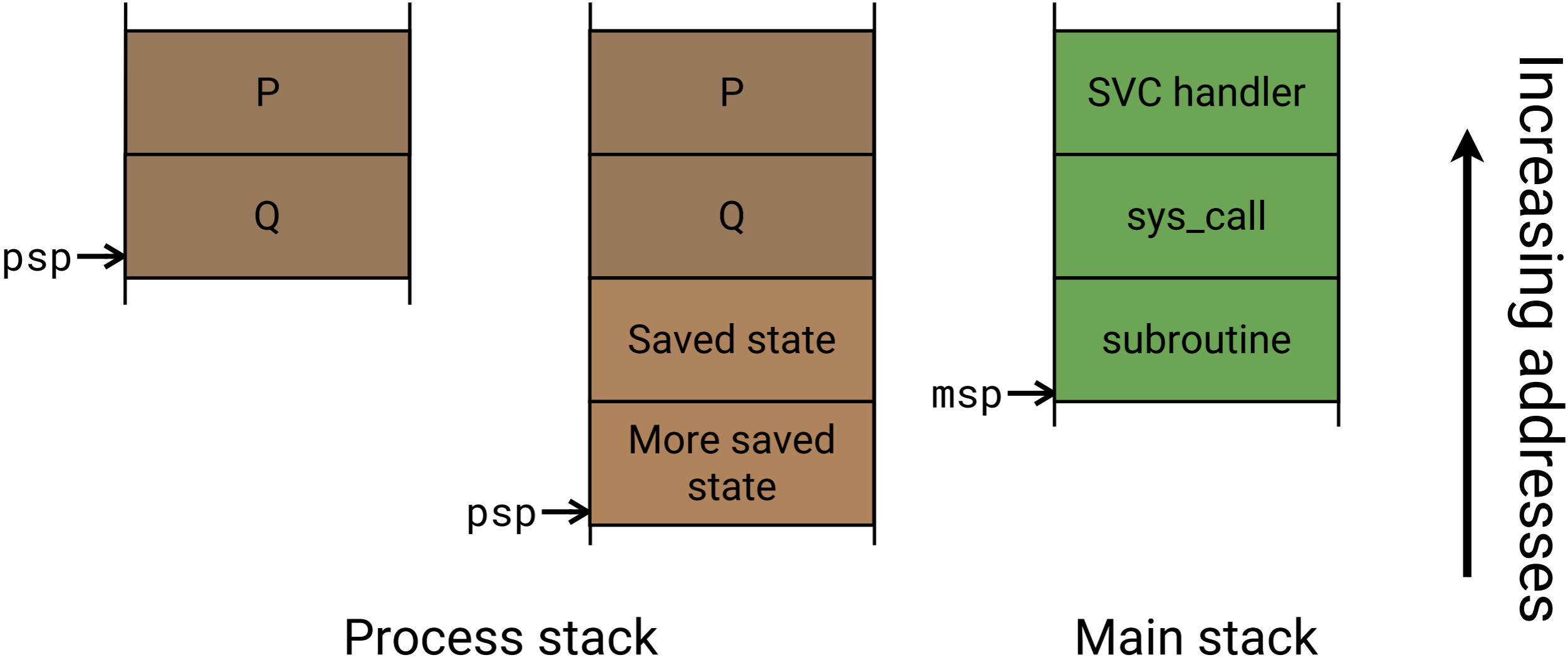
- Set up a fake exception frame so this invokes the process body:
- pc = body  
lr = exit  
r0 = argument

# Interrupt handlers with subroutines

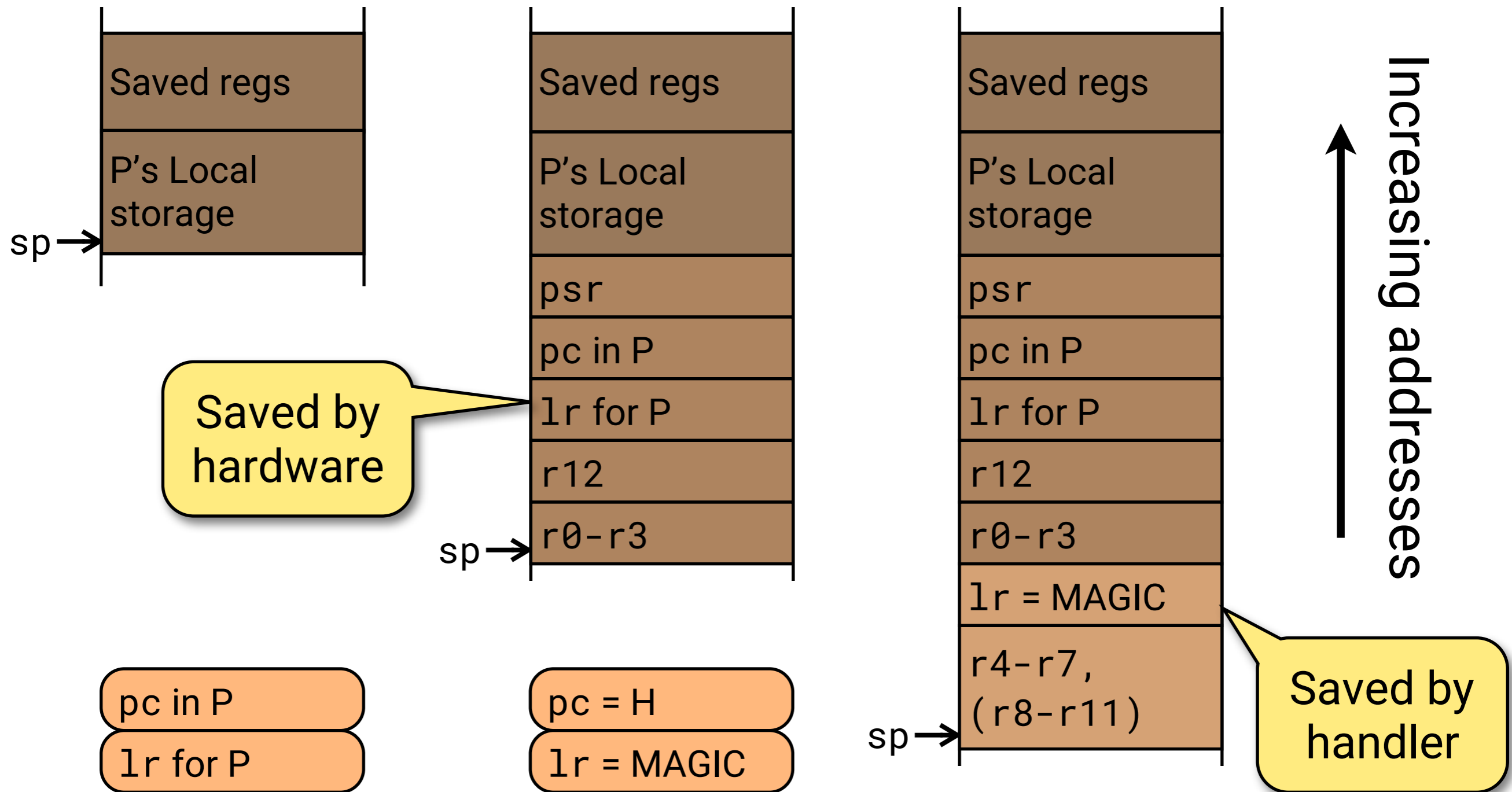




# Context switch – part 1



# Interrupt mechanism



# Scheduling and Messages

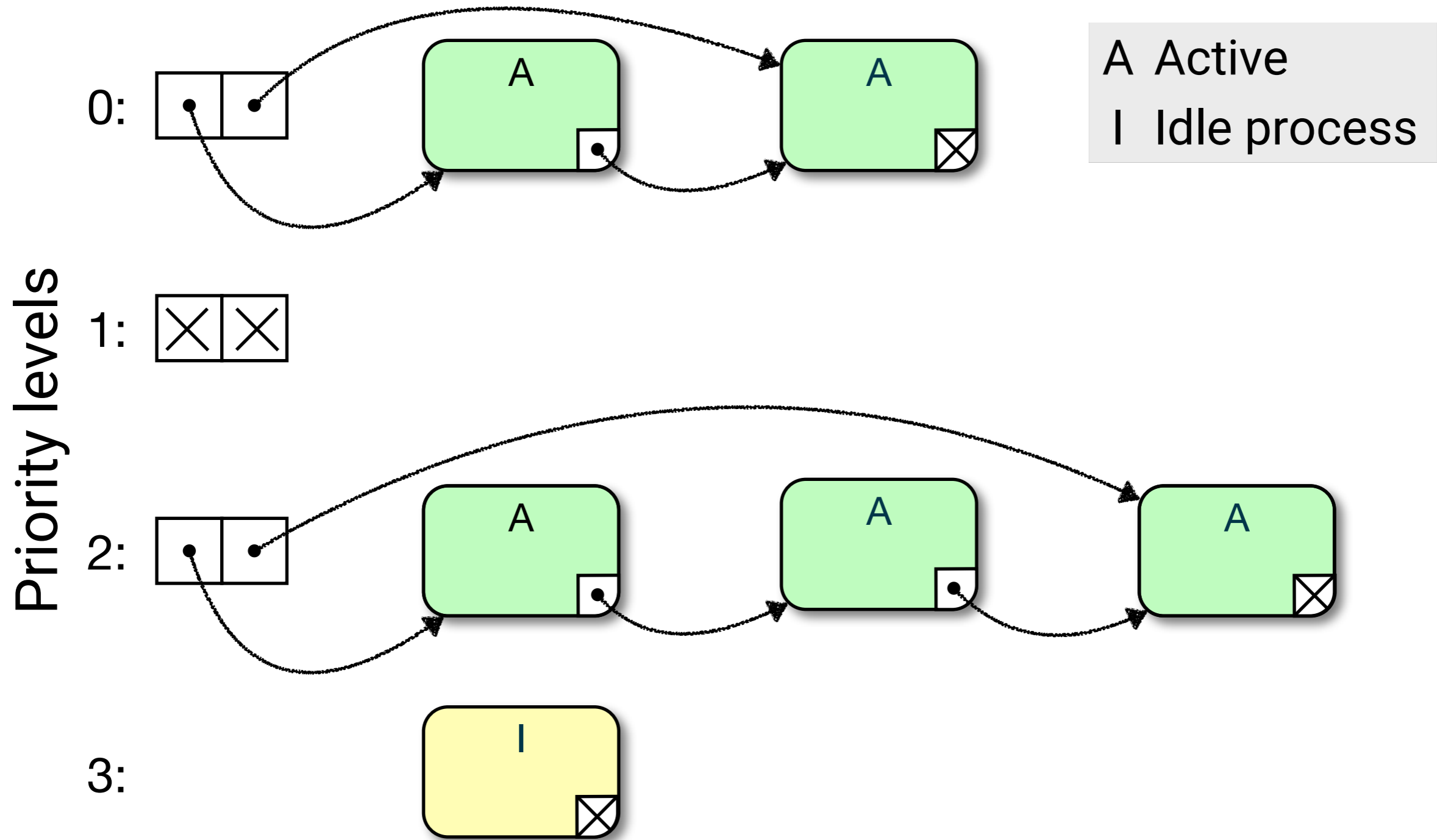
Mike Spivey  
Hilary Term 2022



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

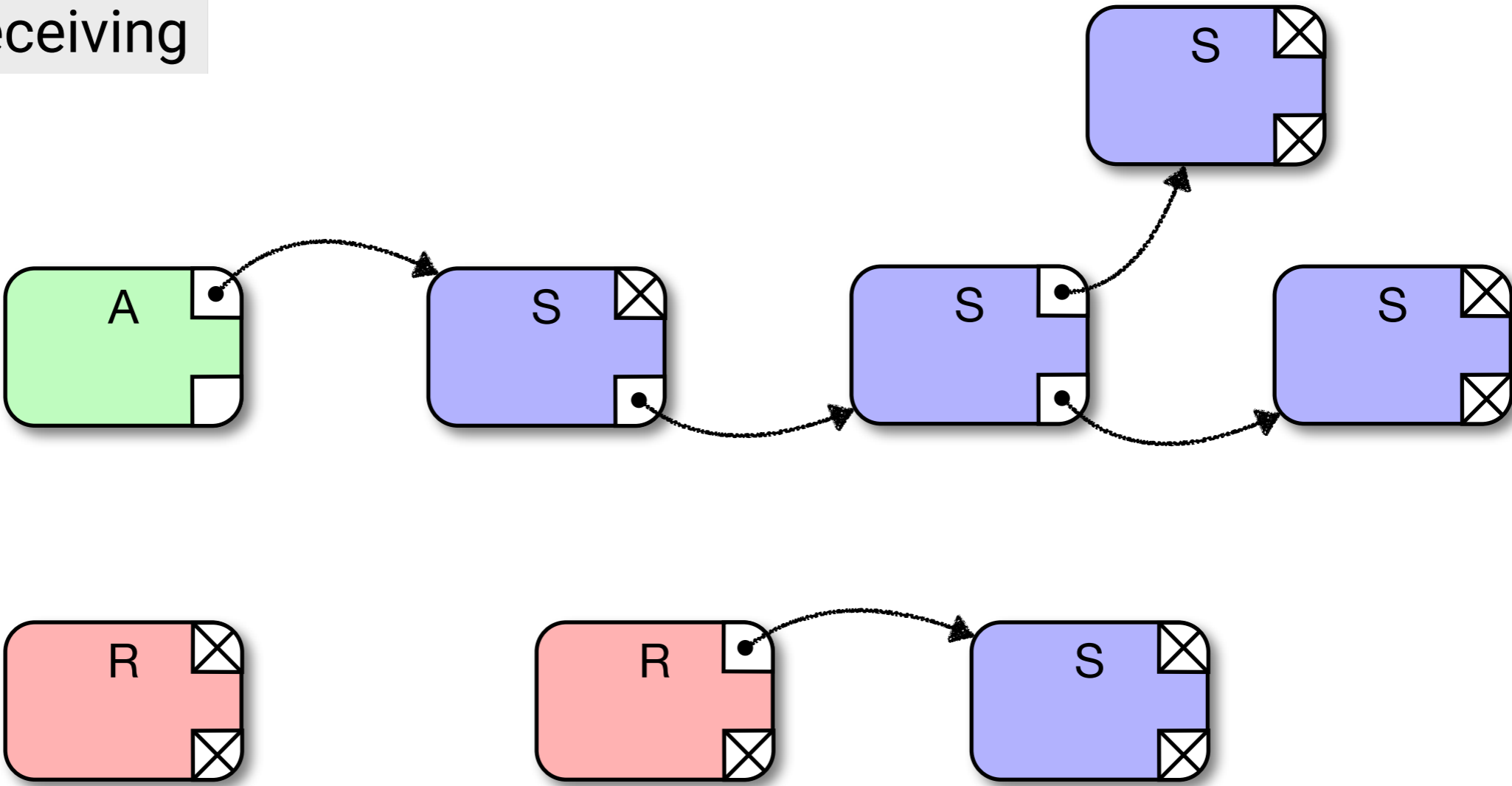
Department of  
COMPUTER  
SCIENCE

# Implementation: ready queues



# Sending queues

A Active  
S Sending  
R Receiving



# When nothing is happening

---

There is an IDLE process that runs this loop:

```
while (1) pause();
```

In many embedded systems, the processor sits here, asleep until an interrupt arrives.

Then there is a brief flurry of activity with processes woken by messages, sending messages that wake others. Then the system is idle again.