

'The tears welled up unbidden in our eyes...'

The Soviet Union

'Sweden has been the world's most Russophobic country ever since Russia crushed Sweden's empire by military means. For several hundred years, the campaign against Russia has been the main propaganda weapon of Swedish calls for armament. This was used previously against Tsarism and even more intensively since 1917; against Bolshevism.'

This is taken from *Folkkalendern* [The People's Calendar] 1937 (p. 88). However, a slightly different picture emerges from the archives.

The fact that the politically radical astronomer Hjalmar Branting took the opportunity to meet Russian nihilists when he travelled to Dorpat and Pulkova in 1878 can be viewed as an early example of contact with Russia. More-

over, his first article in 1882, which was published in an exile Baltic newspaper, dealt with Swedish-Russian contacts. When the labour movement was formed, more links came into being, and they took firm shape when the prominent figures of the movement met at international congresses and conferences. After the unsuccessful uprising in Russia in 1905, contact between Sweden and Russia increased as many Russian refugees sought asylum in Sweden. As a result, our country also came to play a significant part in the struggle against Russian Tsardom.

Before the October Revolution

Documentation dealing with this partly illegal operation can be found in a number of archives at Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek ARAB [the Labour Movement Archives and Library], which is evident from the bibliography to Hans Björkegren's book *Ryska posten* [Russian Post].¹ This book discusses the role of the Nordic countries as the 'red base region' for the Revolution between the attempted uprising of 1905 and the October Revolution of 1917. In this book it is possible to find, among other things, a description of the Russian Social Democrats' congress in Stockholm, where many of the people who were to become the leaders of Soviet Russia met at Folkets hus [the People's House] for a few weeks in the spring of 1906. Lenin and Stalin were there, together with around 150 delegates and guests. Hinke Bergegren, Axel Holmström and other 'young Socialists' were in charge of the teller service

A number of Swedish communists chose, in the beginning of the 1920s, to emigrate to the Soviet Karelia. The picture shows the Karelian Communist Youth Association's congress in 1924.

during the congress. They received praise for their services, partly from the Russians, but also from party chairman Hjalmar Branting. Branting himself gave the welcome speech, but at the same time he took the opportunity to meet Plechanov, 'the father of Russian Marxism', in private.

During this time, Hinke Bergegren gave shelter to a large number of refugees at his villa, Agneberg, just south of Stockholm. However, other individuals and organisations whose archives can be found at ARAB were also involved in a variety of ways in supporting the Russian labour movement. They include Charles Lindley, a delegate of Transportarbetareförbundet [the Transport Workers' Union] and Gustav Möller, the man who was to become the Minister for Health and Social Affairs. With the links of the Social Democratic Youth Association (SSU) to what was known as the Zimmerwald movement, the contacts of the party left were brought nearer to the Russian Bolsheviks, while the party maintained its ties with the Russian Mensheviks.

After the February Revolution of 1917, both of these Russian groups had representatives stationed in Stockholm. These people took part in the attempts to reunite the Socialist International (the Stockholm conference) and form a new, leftwing international (the Zimmerwald movement). In Stockholm, these people also distributed information sheets, which are kept at ARAB.

The Swedish Anarchists were another group that maintained links with the East. As late as December 1918 C.J. Björklund visited 'the great hero of his youth', Peter Kropotkin, in Dmitrov. He asked him at the time what he thought of the Bolshevik revolution.

'The Russian Revolution is of enormous significance,' said Kropotkin. 'Time will tell how great its effect has been, and what it will mean to the people of Russia.' The trade embargo and intervention had, in his opinion, damaged the progressive forces, strengthened the government and obstructed development towards greater freedom. This had promoted the Bolshevik dictatorship.²

Kropotkin was also one of the many refugees who passed through Stockholm on his way home to Russia after the Russian February Revolution of 1917. He was interviewed in the Stockholm press at that time.

Picture of the Soviet Union

Sweden and the Soviet Union maintained contact throughout the entire existence of the union. ARAB has extensive documents relating to this contact. The archives of the communist organisations are stored here, as well as the messages of the Rosta news agency. Among the archives creators are Fredrik Ström, the first consul of the Soviet

Union,³ Georg Branting, who for a time was the lawyer for the Soviet legation, and Nils Lindh and Per-Emil Brusewitz, both of whom worked for periods at the Swedish legation in the Soviet Union. There are also personal archives from top Social Democrat politicians such as Hjalmar Branting, Olof Palme, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal and others. These archives contain documents on more formal inter-government relations, as well as personal experiences of the Soviet Union. The fonds of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden contains a separate series of documents on other countries, with the documentation on the Soviet Union being the most extensive. It consists mainly of information and background material but also includes transcripts of radio transmissions from the Soviet Union between 1952 and 1954.

The fascinating Ryska bilder [Russian pictures] collection of photographs must also be mentioned⁴, as well as photographs from the picture archives of *Ny Dag* [New Day] and other newspapers, photographs from a few other archives and Russian posters in the poster collection.

Depending on one's political place of residence, the archives reveal the communist community's view of a leading country, a country of the future, as well as the rest of the labour movement's more sceptical 'wait-and-see' or hostile attitude.

Between 1917 and 1990, the Soviet Union and its communism posed a challenge to the West. Travelling there was to touch something divine, an adventure, a provocation or a trip to hell, depending on your political convictions. Remaining neutral was more or less impossible. Every contact with that country was viewed with suspicion, and whatever visitors saw had to be corrected so as to fit in with a correct political view of the world.

The following overview will mainly illustrate impressions from travel or visits to the Soviet Union. These may be reports, diary-like notes, letters or manuscripts. Some of these have been published, while others are more or less hidden away in a variety of archives.

The promised land

When the Social Democratic Left Party joined the Communist International in 1919⁵ it became part of a world party or, as it was expressed in a leaflet from the 1930s:

The communist movement is a band of comrades encircling the whole world. There are communist parties in more than 70 countries. They have one basic programme, one will, one leadership.⁶

In Swedish Communist archives and those close to the

communist movement, there is a quantity of documentation dealing with the relationship and contacts with the Soviet Union. For example, almost 1,000 sets of minutes from party executives are available from the Comintern period (1919-1943) alone. Beside the parties themselves, there were also women's movements, youth movements and children's movements, as well as various front organisations that maintained very close contact with the Soviet Union.

Party minutes deal with visits by delegations and study

Russia but instead Russia ended up helping us. ...The boys started off by demolishing the cowshed so as to rebuild it in the Swedish way. We expected to be able to do this ourselves, then because not one of us had any idea about building, we ended up having to get a joinery factory to do the work for us. This would have cost three to four thousand roubles and here we were without a single kopeck... Then we applied for loans, and we probably would have got one, too. But then one of our members, a farmer from Edebo, went up to Gylling and said that it was all the same whether we got the money or not, because we were not farmers and we would be unable to cope. That was true ... then we all scattered. Only Svanson is still down there, I think (in Petrozavodsk: my comment). I have worked at a number of workshops since the commune and I now work up here in the north in a big quarry and I am earning good money, but my family is still in Petrozavodsk.⁷

Children of one of the early emigrants, Knut Lindblom, have also handed over a manuscript of a biography, along with a number of photographs connected with the family's stay in Soviet Karelia between 1923 and 1931.

Another group of Russo-Swedes that involved the Swedish communists was the group of ethnic Swedes from Gammelsvenskby in Ukraine, who 'returned' to Sweden in 1929, or – as the communists put it – were tempted 'through bribes and golden promises'. The whole thing was intended by the Swedish bourgeoisie as a patriotic attempt to save fellow Swedes from Soviet communism but their encounter with the everyday life of a Swedish farm labourer proved to be somewhat different from what they had expected. After just a few months, something of a political bombshell was dropped when, initially, three families contacted the Soviet legation and asked to go back. They travelled to Stockholm where they were given shelter by the Communist Party in anticipation of their return.

Brothers Voldemar and Johan Utas spoke at a meeting at Auditorium on 2 December 1930:

Pastor Hoas promised that we would be given land when we got here, but we became farm labourers for a wage on which we cannot live. Pastor Hoas has deceived and cheated us, persuading us to leave the Soviet Union, where we had homes and land. The taxes there were not terrible. The State helped us when our crops failed. The children in Gammelsvenskby were fed in the children's kitchen. We have seen that much of the farming population does not have

In 1929 some families of ethnic Swedes moved from Gammelsvenskby in the Ukraine to Sweden. But, greatly disappointed, they returned to the Soviet Union after only a few months. Photo: Axel Malmström

visits, as well as representation at the various International events. Attempting to derive benefit from the existence of the Soviet Union was important. For example, the party executive decided that a friendship league should be started, and who would be the editor of its journal.

Among the more spicy decisions was the appointment of a Kommité för ordnande av frågor om svenska lantarbetares emigration till Sovjetryssland [Committee for the settlement of issues relating to the emigration of Swedish farm workers to Soviet Russia] in 1921. How things went for emigrants, primarily to Soviet Karelia, is still a hot topic of Swedish political debate, and a review of various series of correspondence would probably make things clearer. Nils Flyg's personal papers, for example, contain a letter from a colonist, dated Pulonga, 2 April 1926, with a fairly detailed description of the situation at this early Swedish emigrant colony:

I do not know whether you have found out how things went with our commune, this was a tragicomic story which has given me many a good laugh. We came here with a view to helping

*any land and lives in poor housing, and that things are a lot worse than they were for farmers in the Soviet Union.*⁸

Over the next few years, 300 of the 880 people from Gammelsvenskby were to return to the Ukraine, a fact that the Swedish communists were not slow to exploit in their propaganda.

From the mid-1920s, the Communist Internationals organised extensive study courses held at party colleges (Vestern and the Lenin School) in the Soviet Union. An insight into what was studied on these courses can be gained from the personal papers of Arvid Vretling. Vretling was one of the first students and his notebooks from various lectures still exist.

In the 1920s the communists organised themselves into 'nuclei' [driftceller, DC] and some of the documentation preserved is from the nucleus called DC 8, at the Russian Chamber of Commerce. Here, it is possible to gain a view of how things could be when Swedish communists worked for the Soviet state.

*A letter has been received from the comrades who do the cleaning of the Trade Delegation offices. In this it is stated that comrade Alexandrov, during a lesson with the Russian Circle, is said to have insulted them because the lunchroom, where the lesson was to be held, had not been cleaned. Since, unquestionably, nothing had been said to the cleaners about the fact that the lesson was to take place that day in the lunchroom, which under normal conditions is not used until around 12 o'clock, remarks from comrade A such as 'it will be a great pleasure for me to report to Guchinski how the cleaning is done', and 'they should not believe that they are allowed to do their work in any way they like just because they are Communists' must be regarded as highly inappropriate particularly as non-Communists were also part of the Circle. On these grounds, DC hereby resolves to lodge a protest against comrade Alexandrov and to demand that he take back his insults to the said comrades in front of the Russian Circle.*⁹

A few weeks later, Alexandrov was called to DC 8 to explain himself:

A decision was made to discuss the Alexandrov case first, because he is present only for this specific reason, to explain his behaviour in respect of our nucleus members who deal with the cleaning. The undersigned reported briefly on the visit to the Russian nucleus, whereupon

Alexandrov rebutted the accusations of uncomradely behaviour. In his opinion he had not offended and he did not wish to apologise. He explained that 'if he had known that the cleaners were unaware of the time the Russian Circle was to meet, he would have not said what he did'.

*After a discussion lasting almost an hour, at times becoming fairly heated, the meeting decided to content itself with the explanation put forward by comrade Alex. No proposal was put forward, and so it was decided that the discussion would constitute a response to the issue.*¹⁰

Grigori Alexandrov [sic] is mentioned in ARAB's register of biographies. According to a note there, he was executed by firing squad in Moscow in November 1937, convicted of espionage on behalf of Sweden. The name G. Alexandrov also appears in a document at Georg Brantings' law firm relating to espionage between 1920 and 1929.

Another event which may be worth mentioning is when Signe Sillén, a member of DC 8, was going to travel to Russia in the spring of 1926, she almost did not get her party membership book:

*Comrade Valhjalt then brought up the matter of comrade Signe Sillén's departure to Russia and stated that as she had not made her payments to the nucleus, she should be ordered to do so before her departure. She would otherwise be refused access to her membership book or a recommendation.*¹¹

Signe Sillén resolved her payment problem, probably received both her party membership book and her recommendation, and was able to travel to Moscow with her honour intact.

Communist marketing and criticism

Persuading people to travel to the Soviet Union so as to then be able to tell others of their positive impressions upon their return home has been an important part of the marketing of the communists. These efforts can be said to have started in earnest with the study visit by the newspaper *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* and Stockholms kommunistiska arbetarekommun (the Communist Party organisation in Stockholm) that took place between 16 and 26 July 1925. This 'delegation of workers' consisted of almost 300 people, mainly workers, of whom a third were elected by local trade unions. The inspiration for this appears to have come in part from a British trade union delegation's trip which took place six months previously,

and the view of the Communist International that a united international trade union front had to be created in order to protect the Soviet Union. The importance of this trip is reflected in extensive meetings and discussions in the press.

In the summer, this manifested itself in two long accounts, 'Till Österland' [To the East] and 'Rysslandsresan' [Russian Journey], in *Signalen* [The Signal], the newspaper for railway workers. They could very well be viewed as expressions of two different experiences or, perhaps, two official views of what delegates did during their trip:

*Our train is slowing down. We can hear music – the sound of the International. We are just passing the border and are being greeted in this poignant way by an orchestra on the embankment. The tears welled up unbidden in everyone's eyes and in mine too. We have met a people with whom we felt a sense of solidarity. These were our comrades in a foreign land.*¹²

*I was woken by music; there were Russian soldiers playing the International, according to one person many people were so moved that the tears ran down their faces. I did not see this ... I believe I should have seen it, as the tears flowed so copiously. But of course we were surprised to be greeted like national heroes.*¹³

In the communist and related press, travel reports from delegation visits and study visits are diligently reproduced. The message is simple and predictable: things over there are good – they are progressing, and the people are happy. In his doctoral thesis *Kommunism på svenska?* [Communism in Swedish?], Jörgen Hermansson writes that the view of the Swedish Communist Party (SKP) as a party entirely on the ideological lead of Stalin and Moscow far into the future is reinforced rather than muted in the event of a confrontation with the source material.

In the book by communist Per-Olov Zennström, *Z:s bekännelser* [Z's Confessions], however, an event is mentioned which may be an early¹⁴ attempt by the communists to dim the Soviet picture. Sixten Rogeby, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and, between 1949 and 1950, the Moscow correspondent of the party agency *Ny Dag* [New Day], wrote a travelogue entitled *Efterkrigsår i Sovjet* [Post-war Years in the Soviet Union]. Plans were afoot for the SKP to publish this book, but according to Zennström, it was turned down on political grounds as it was considered to have too negative an attitude towards the Soviet Union. A manuscript commencing with the lines 'Russian trains do not hurry to any particular extent' did not meet

with any rejoicing within the Communist party in the early 1950s. The manuscript is available in its original format and as galley proof in Sixten Rogeby's¹⁵ personal archive and the notes made by the political proof-readers may in themselves be worth a look.

Only in the 1960s can a more critical assessment be discerned in the reports of communist delegations. When, for example, a delegation travelled to study corporate democracy in 1966, a more questioning attitude can be seen to have become accepted:

*Much has been written about the lack of true popular influence in the Soviet Union. This is certainly well founded. Shortcomings in planning and too much administration undoubtedly impede activities both inside and outside the factory gates.*¹⁶

Reports from internal Communist party conferences, study visits and international correspondence can be found in the fonds of the Left Party – Communists (VPK) as separate series. Otherwise, this type of documentation may appear as appendices to minutes in the various archives of the communist movement. Travel agencies linked with the communist movement have also arranged trips to the Soviet Union. Aktiebolaget Folkturist [People's Tourism Limited] (1961-1973) is an independent archives creator, but travel has also appeared under other names such as Komores, whose documentation can be found in the fonds of *Kommunistisk ungdom* [Communist Youth].

An in-depth study of various personal archives serves to illustrate the relationship between Swedish communists and the Soviet Union. Plenty of people who followed Swedish communism are represented in the personal archives at ARAB. Many of these archives creators also have their own personal experience of the Soviet Union and have also written memoirs and travel books: Carl Lindhagen,¹⁷ Kata Dahlström, Zeth Höglund, Fredrik Ström, Karl Kilbom and Ture Nerman to mention but a few. In his personal papers, Ture Nerman has also left an extensive collection of documentation dealing with relations between Sweden and the Soviet Union during the post-war period.

Solidarity with impediments

Swedish social democracy found its relationship with the Soviet Union complicated. At the Bern Conference held in 1919, the standpoint of international social democracy was established:

It will not be possible to carry out the progressive reshaping of society demanded by Socialism, nor can it be upheld if it is not rooted firmly in

*the free principles fought for and further developed by democracy.*¹⁸

However, within social democracy there has always been a tendency that has promoted a more conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union. At the Bern Conference this was expressed through a caveat:

*We emphatically dissociate ourselves from all stigmatisation of the conditions in the Russian Soviet Republic, as we do not have a sufficient basis on which to make judgement. We can know only one thing with certainty; that the heinous fabrication of lies by means of which the telegram agency of the Central Powers and that of the Entente attempted to outdo one another during the War, now continues undiminished against the Russian Soviet Republic.*¹⁹

The contrast between these two outlooks has also existed within Swedish social democracy. On 4 June 1928, registrar Per Emil Brusewitz lectured before Stockholms socialistiska studentklubb [Stockholm Socialist Student Club] on the subject of 'Den svenska socialdemokratin och sovjetväldet' [Swedish Social Democracy and Soviet Dominion]. This lecture was copied, and at the top of each copy are underlined the words 'Får endast meddelas medlem av det socialdemokratiska partiet' [May be communicated only to members of the Social Democratic Party].

Per Emil Brusewitz was not just anyone, but one of the people in the social democratic movement who knew the most about the Soviet Union. At the time of the Russian Revolutions, he was working for the consulate general in Moscow and Petrograd. He also travelled relatively freely throughout the country on a number of occasions in the 1920s. He described his impressions from these trips in detail in books such as *Det Röda Zarriket* [The Red Tsarist Empire], *Bakom Rysslands järnridå* [Behind Russia's Iron Curtain] and *Världsrevolutionens vapensmedja* [The Armourer's Workshop of World Revolution].

Brusewitz's address seems to indicate a conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union. To him, there is solidarity between the communists and the social democrats with regard to their political objectives. The splitting up of the labour movement is something that benefits only the political opponents of the movement and something he regards as 'a terrible tragedy'. Brusewitz maintains that our Western type of democracy would have been impossible to implement in a society with a cultural level as low as that at which Russia found itself in 1917. He also reckons that there are opportunities for socialist development in 'the new Russia':

*In the long run we will never be able to conceal the advance of Soviet power. We will merely become disabused over and over again. ... There are more and more viable companies. Anyone who has seen the red engineers and the red directors at work has seen how they work night and day to ensure that their companies progress and match up to the trust the workers have shown in them by electing them as their leaders. It is clear that the ambition of comradeship is not an empty concept but a driving force fully equal to the individual desire for gain.*²⁰

Per Emil Brusewitz's views on the Soviet Union were not uncontroversial nor did they remain unchallenged. Positive opinions of the Soviet Union could be used by the communists. On the other hand, exaggeratedly describing the country in pessimistic terms risked striking against the movement's own socialist ambitions.

Per Emil Brusewitz's papers consist of more than 70 volumes. One of the things it contains is an extensive collection of Russian brochures. A limited inventory is available. A clear contrast to Brusewitz can be seen in archives left by social democratic refugees such as Paul Olberg, Kurt Heinig, Johannes Mihkelson and Bruno Kalnins, to name but a few.

Social Democratic women go East

In the spring of 1934, a group of Social Democratic women travelled to the Soviet Union on a 14-day study trip. This trip made a big splash in *Morgonbris*, the newspaper of Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbundet SSKF [Social Democratic Women's Association]. There were 34 female and 5 male participants on this trip and their experiences were discussed in around 150 articles. Almost all the travellers also lectured on their impressions.

In *Morgonbris*, the Russian ambassador, Madame Kollontay, welcomed the participants. The intention was to visit workers' clubs, nursery schools, factory kitchens and collective dining halls, social institutions such as hospitals, maternity homes, marriage bureaux, reformatories for children, and so on. This trip was preceded by a conflict within the executive committee of the women's association, where Annie Wallentheim considered it psychologically unwise because:

... getting our members, primarily poor working class women, to start such travelling ... Experiences from earlier trips of social democ-

*ratic organisations to the Soviet Union has demonstrated that unpleasant consequences cannot be ruled out.*²¹

Annie Wallentheim was afraid that the communists could exploit the impressions of the travellers. Kaj Andersson, editor of *Morgonbris*, was upset about Wallentheim's criticism 'which is always adverse'. However, the editor had assured herself of the support of the party on the issue. She had also decided to establish a press committee in order to check that reports from the trip had the requisite 'reliability', or, as it was put in a circular: '... reliability will be guaranteed by means of a press commissariat included within the travelling group.'²²

Kaj Andersson wrote the official account of the journey, and here it is pointed out that the Morgonbris initiative of arranging a study visit to Leningrad and Moscow met with criticism from many sides but that the fears had not materialised. Rather, participants appreciated Swedish progress even more when they returned home: '... after our visit to the Soviet Union, we understood that the communists do not have all that much to fall back on. The experiment of Soviet Russia is not for us.'²³

In another interview in the archive of Hulda Flood, Kaj Andersson also wrote that:

*We made another interesting observation in our capacity as tour guides. Our group was, in its way, quite heterogeneous. On the one hand, we had working class wives and leaders of social democratic organisations, many with practical experience of poor relief work and child welfare work; and on the other we had radical authors and journalists from the bourgeois camp. The enthusiasm of the latter rose with every day that passed, while our representatives cooled more and more...*²⁴

Hulda Flood's personal papers and that of the Social Democratic Women's Association are available. ARAB's collections also include a recorded interview with Kaj Andersson, who gave her assessment of the trip half a century later.

Fears that trips could be exploited by the communists may, perhaps, be illustrated by one arranged by Sovjetunionens vänner [Friends of the Soviet Union] that took place the year after the *Morgonbris* trip. Two female social democrats took part: Hilma Petterson from Collijns confectionery factory and Astrid Hedberg from Marabou chocolate factory. This trip made a big splash in the association's newspaper *Sovjetnytt* [Soviet News] in a series of articles under the heading 'En socialdemokratisk kvinna ser på'

[A social democratic woman looks on].

Hilma Petterson's travel book appeared in three versions – as diaries, as fair copies in her personal papers and also in instalments printed in the newspaper *Sovjetnytt*. One gets the impression that Hilma Petterson wrote exactly what she saw in her diary:

The first impression we had of Russia was not favourable. Ugly houses, factories and workshops. Everything seemed ramshackle, grey and dismal... There were lots of beggars in Russia – men, women and children... The trams in Leningrad are big, ungainly and very ugly ... The building was very ugly and shabby with a very dirty yard. One half of the factory was old, the other was slightly newer. The premises were very drab and a horrid air was everywhere.

*Both men and women got the same wages ... In a department with weft winding machines, and where there were just male workers, there was a female foreman. I thought that was plucky ... it was a pleasure to see the energy and enthusiasm with which the Russian women took part in all meetings and how easily they were able to make a statement or give lectures. It was as if, when you pressed a button, the words flowed out of them.*²⁵

The Swedish trade unions and the Soviet Union

The establishment of the Communist International with its express aim of splitting the trade union movement was looked upon with disapproval by the social democrat-oriented Swedish trade union movement. Therefore, over the first decades, visits to the Soviet Union by trade union delegations could be viewed as a result of the relative strengths of the communists and the social democrats within various trade unions. For example, the fonder of Gruvarbetareförbundet [Mineworkers' Union] contains documentation on its close relationship with its Russian sister organisation in the 1920s.²⁶ The communists had dominated the union throughout the 1920s, and in 1927 an agreement was entered into on mutual aid between the Swedish and the Soviet mineworkers' unions. When the wording of the agreement became known, it triggered a bitter dispute within the union, and also against Landsorganisationen LO [Swedish Trade Union Confederation]. This dispute ended with the agreement being withdrawn and members of communist trade unions expelled.

LO's negative view of the Russian trade union movement was crystal clear and was put into words in two separate reports in 1928 only, by Ivar Vennerström and Paul Olberg.²⁷

After the Second World War, the Swedish trade union movement at various levels held an organised exchange with colleagues in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1950s, the contacts seemed to be extra-diligent and the LO made a formal visit to the Soviet Union in April 1955, while a delegation from the Russian TUC made a return visit to Sweden some three months later. Fabriksarbetareförbundet [Factory Workers' Union] exchanged delegations in the same year. The reports from these trade union visits kept a lower general political profile than various party political visits. On the other hand, there were a few more down-to-earth comparisons in these. Charles Winroth and Sven Larsson wrote a report after the study visit by the Pappers- Skogs- och Flottnings-, och Träindustriarbetareförbunden [Paper, Forestry and Log Rafting Union, and Wood Industry Workers' Union] which took place in October 1955:

The industry is impressive on account of its large units, but it is often run down and does not have particularly large amounts of modern equipment. The work of women on the labour

market is astonishingly widespread. Women were often company managers and even more often it was possible to meet female engineers, even in heavy industry. All the doctors and managers at the sanatoria we visited were female.

Furthermore, there were female road workers and railway workers, female tram drivers, and so on. It was clear that women were completely equal to men in the Soviet Union: the tenet of equal pay for equal work was established in principle. In exchange, women appeared to have to work far too hard in our view – which could also be seen from the way they looked.²⁸

Trade union reports are generally available as appendices to the minutes of the respective unions or elsewhere in the archives. Some of these reports are also available in printed form.²⁹

Exchange of friendship and culture

Förbundet Sverige – Sovjetunionen [Sweden – Soviet Union Federation], Svenska fredskommittén [Swedish Peace Committee], Demokratisk ungdom [Democratic Youth] and Sveriges kvinnors vänsterförbund [Swedish Left Women's Association] (Swedish Section of the Women's International Democratic Federation) are organisations which left their documents to ARAB and worked to promote friendly relations with the Soviet Union. They also had ties with the communist movement to varying extents.

In the 1950s, Demokratisk ungdom DU, operated in practice as the Communist Youth Organisation and was affiliated to Demokratisk ungdoms världsfederation DUV [Democratic Youth World Federation]. DUV arranged so called world youth festivals. In 1957, a festival was held in Moscow, and extensive correspondence is held in the DU fonds. Other material, such as photographs and a feature film, can be found in the fonds of Sveriges kommunistiska ungdomsförbund SKU [Swedish Communist Youth Federation] (1921).

From the 1950s, a number of Baltic crossings, peace meetings and conferences were arranged together with the Soviet Union and the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. Documentation on these events is primarily available from the Swedish section archives of the World Peace Council and the Swedish Peace Committee. Even the Swedish Left Women's Association can be said to have had similar links through its connection with the KDV (Kvinnornas Demokratiska Världsförbund [Women's Democratic Peace Party]).

The Sweden-Soviet Union Friendship League organised many study trips to the Soviet Union. Here some beret-topped travellers study the city crowds in Moscow in 1954.

people, took shape and became a bridge of understanding where we walked hand in hand towards a vast destination far, far away – eternal peace. The Flood had receded, people and animals wandered from Mount Ararat towards Yerivan, the eternal city of health.³⁰

Politics is largely conspicuous by its absence from his travelogue and Åke Claesson seems to have been more interested in food and entertainment:

Caviar, salmon, sturgeon, poultry, fruit, ice cream, gateaux, vodka, white wine, red wine, sweet wine, champagne, red and white, cognac, talking and singing. We drank all the wines without considering what food we were having with them. My neighbour on my right, accompanist Alexander Yerechin, even mixed cognac with sweet wine and then showed us how vodka should really be enjoyed; you gargle first, then you swallow. He showed us how to do this twice. It is at its absolute best in the mornings, an excellent gargle. Disinfects better than any injection.³

Jazz singer Sonja Sjöbäck, who was part of the artists' delegation for 1955, called herself a 'political idiot', but in spite of this she reflected on what she saw:

Artists are like a privileged class. A trumpeter like Eddi Rossner, with a 40-man orchestra, earns 2,000 roubles a day for himself, while his guitarist gets 700. If one compares this with workers' wages of 700–1,500 a month, these can hardly be called fair shares... I cannot understand how a worker with a family can manage on 700 a month, what with the high prices in the Soviet Union – a pair of shoes costs 3–400 roubles, an orange costs 5 roubles, a pair of nylon stockings costs 32 roubles, and so on... And yet for artists and the people surrounding them, most things are free.³²

The Soviet Union no longer exists and it might be thought that it should be easier to remain objective and restrained. Yet it is still almost unthinkable that one can remain neutral. The word itself is still loaded and will perhaps remain so until the spectre of communism has ceased to walk the countries of Europe and the world.

Women directors, equal pay and general equality were often mentioned facts in the Soviet-travellers reports home. Picture of a female Russian athlete from Hilma Petterssons papers.

The Sweden – Soviet Union Federation was formed in 1935 under the name of Sällskapet för främjande av kulturella och ekonomiska förbindelser mellan Sverige och Sovjetunionen [the Society for the Promotion of Cultural and Economic Links between Sweden and the Soviet Union]. It ran an extensive cultural exchange programme in co-operation with VOKS, the Soviet state cultural organisation. There was also co-operation with the Soviet Union's Friendship Leagues Association and its sister organisation Föreningen Sovjetunionen – Sverige, which was formed in 1958. The archive consists of association documents dating from 1958 to 1987, but also includes a 'collection of cuttings' which are older. In this collection of cuttings it is possible to follow delegation visits to the Soviet Union in the 1950s made by lecturers, authors, artistes and trade union representatives.

The delegation of artists in 1954 was able to experience theatrical performances in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Yerivan and had many opportunities to talk to colleagues. At the drama school at Vachtángov Theatre, they also had the opportunity to attend the entrance examinations. Actor Åke Claesson has left an extensive manuscript telling us of his impressions. He is obviously lyrical about what he saw and experienced:

In my sleep I heard the tapping of the tape, which ran like a bridge of rhythm from people to

1. Ryska flyktingars kommitté [Russian Refugees Committee], Undersökningskommissionen Alfred Kruse [Alfred Kruse Committee of Enquiry] (Opinionsledningen), Karl Kilbom, Fredrik Ström, Hjalmar Branting, Otto Grimlund.
2. C.J. Björklund: *Anarkist och agitator* [Anarchist and Agitator]. Stockholm 1969, p 227. Björklund's papers are kept at ARAB.
3. Fredrik Ström's papers are stored mainly at the University Library in Gothenburg.
4. See presentation by Maria Bosdotter in *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek* [Information from the Labour Movement Archives and Library] issue 26-27, 1983, pp 26-33.
5. Party archives at ARAB linked with the Communist International:
Sveriges socialdemokratiska vänsterparti 1917-1921,
Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1921-1924 [Sweden's Communist Party Section of the Communist International 1921-1924],
Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1924-1929,
Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna (VPK).
6. VPK Leaflet B 04:2.
7. Nils and Elsa Flyg, Correspondence 3:1.
8. *Ny Dag* 12 March 1930.
9. Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1924-1929, nucleus DC8's archives vol. 1, meeting 19 October 1926.
10. See note 9, 16 November 1926.
11. See note 9, 29 March 1926.
12. Newspaper *Signalen*, issue 32, 1925.
13. Ibid, issue 42, 1925.

14. Per-Olov Zennström: *Z:s bekännelser*. Lund 1976
15. Sixten Rogeby papers, volume 15.
16. Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna [Left Communists Party] F 7B: 1
17. Carl Lindhagen's papers are for the most part kept at the archives of the City of Stockholm.
18. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti SAP [the Social Democratic Party of Sweden], Verksamheten 1919, pp 21 ff. Documentation on the Berne Conference can also be found in the personal papers of Hjalmar Branting. Documentation has also been published by Gerhard A. Ritter
19. Ibid.
20. Brusewitz papers, volume 8.
21. Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbundet [the Social Democratic Women's Association] A 2:4.
22. Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbundet B 2:2.23. *Morgonbris*, June 1934.
24. Hulda Flood papers, volume 1.25. Hilma Pettersson's papers, quotation from diaries from the Soviet trip.26. There is also a banner bearing both Russian and Swedish text: 'To the Swedish mineworkers, from the mineworkers of the USSR'.27. Ivar Vennerström: Den ryska fackföreningsrörelsen [the Russian Trade Union Movement] (LO Skriftserie, 20); Paul Olberg: Sovjet-Rysslands internationella fackföreningspolitik [Soviet Russia's International Trade Union Policy] Stockholm 1928 (LO Skriftserie, 21).
28. Charles Winroth's papers, volume 1.
29. See, among other things, the 'Studieresor till Sovjetunionen' collection.
30. Förbundet Sverige – Sovjetunionen, Volume 7.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.

LIST OF ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

Archives mainly on the Soviet Union

- Per Emil Brusewitz – 75 vol.
 Centrala hjälpkommittén for Leningrads barn [Central Aid Committee for the Children of Leningrad] – 3 volumes
 Förbundet Sverige – Sovjetunionen – 17 volumes
 Nils Lindh – 11 vol.
 Hilma Pettersson – 1 vol.
 Ryska flyktingars kommitté [Russian Refugees Committee] – 1 volume
 Studieresor till Sovjetunionen [Study Visits to the Soviet Union] (collection) – 1 volume

Archives in which the Soviet Union appears to a limited extent

The Soviet Union appears in many archives of organisations and private individuals, such as those of Hinke Bergegren, C.J.

The Russian youth delegation at the Swedish Communist Youth Association's congress in 1950. They flew home from Bromma Airport in Stockholm. Photo: Sallstedts Bildbyrå.

Björklund, Hjalmar Branting, Tage Erlander, Kurt Heinig, Axel Holmström, Bruno Kalnins, Johannes Mikhelson, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, Paul Olberg, Olof Palme, Pierre Schori and the fonds of the Executive of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden.

Special mention should be made of the following:

Aktiebolaget Folkturist [People's Tourism Limited]
Demokratisk ungdom [Democratic Youth]
Nils and Elsa Flyg
Förbundet Sverige – Sovjetunionen [Sweden – Soviet Union Federation]
Georg Brantings advokatbyrå [Georg Branting Solicitors]
Otto Grimlund
Zeth Höglund
Karl Kilbom
Knut Lindblom
Ture Nerman
Sixten Rogeby
Svenska fredskommittén [Swedish Peace Committee]
Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1921-1924 [Swedish Communist Party Section

of the Communist International 1921-1924]
Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1924-1929
Sveriges kommunistiska parti sektion av kommunistiska internationalen 1924-1929: Driftcell 8 [Nucleus DC8]
Sveriges kommunistiska ungdomsförbund [Swedish Communist Youth Association]
Sveriges socialdemokratiska vänsterparti [Swedish Social Democratic Left Party]
Arvid Vretling
Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna [VPK, Left Party - Communists]
Per Olov Zennström

Picture archives in which the Soviet Union is relatively well represented

Per Emil Brusewitz
LO-Tidningen
Morgon-Tidningen
Norrskensflamman
Ny Dag
Ryska bilder [Russian Photographs] (collection of photographs)
Sveriges kommunistiska ungdomsförbund [Swedish Communist Youth Association] (1921)

Poster collection – around 250 posters

LITERATURE

Andræ, Carl Göran: *Revolt eller Reform. Sverige inför revolutionerna i Europa 1917-1918*. Stockholm 1918
Björkegren, Hans: *Ryska posten. De ryska revolutionärerna i Norden 1906-1917*. Stockholm 1985
Björklund, C J: *Anarkist och agitator. Memoarer*. Stockholm 1969
Björlin, Lars: Röd skandinavism i Komintern. SKP:s kris och splittring 1924, in *Arbetarhistoria* no. 69, 1994, pp 18-30
Björlin, Lars: Svensk kommunism. En översikt över 1990-talets forskning, in *Arbetarhistoria* no. 100, 2001, pp 6-17
Eneberg, Kaa: *Tvingade till tystnad. En okänd historia om några svenska familjeöden*. Stockholm 2000
Hirdman, Yvonne: *Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti 1939-1945*. Stockholm 1974
Höglund, Gunhild: *Moskva tur och retur. En dramatisk period i Zeth Höglunds liv*. Stockholm 1960
Josephson, Erland F: *SKP och Komintern 1921-1924*. Uppsala 1976
Kan, Aleksander: *Hjalmar Branting, ryska demokrater och bolsjeviker 1918. Mellan den ryska oktober- och den tyska novemberrevolutionen*. Uppsala 1999
Kennerström, Bernt: *Mellan två internationaler. Socialistiska partiet 1929-1937*. Lund 1974
Kilbom, Karl: *Ur mitt livs äventyr 2. I hemligt uppdrag*. Stockholm 1954
Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek no. 24-25, 1982/1983, Tema: Kommunismen i Sverige
Thing, Morten (ed.): *Guldet fra Moskva. Finansieringen af de nordiske kommunistpartier 1917-1990*. Copenhagen 2001
Zennström, Per Olof: *Z:s bekännelser*. Lund 1976

Lars Gogman is an archivist.

Printed programme from Signe Höijers papers. Signe Höijer was one of the participants in the trip to the Soviet arranged by the Social Democratic Women's Association's newspaper Morgonbris, in 1934.