**Sweden in South Africa**

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Sweden in South Africa

A Necessary Background

Until the beginning of the 1960s, Southern Africa was in Sweden largely synonymous with South Africa (including South West Africa/Namibia), one of the very few non-European territories with which Sweden over the centuries developed close and diverse links. It was around the struggle for democracy and human rights in South Africa and Namibia that the Swedish solidarity movement for Southern Africa was formed. While Swedish historical relations with the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique were virtually nonexistent and later connections to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) primarily were limited to the activities of the Church of Sweden Mission, Swedes had since the establishment of a Cape settlement by the Dutch East India Company in 1652 played an important part in South Africa's cultural, social and economic history. This also influenced the Swedish South Africa debate.

It falls outside this study to discuss the early relations between Sweden and South Africa. As they are incomparably broader and deeper than the connections between Sweden and the other countries in the study-forming a distinctly more complex background to the involvement on the side of the nationalist movement-they do, however, merit a slight deviation.

In his pioneering study on Scandinavians and South Africa, the US historian Alan Winquist concluded that "in many respects, at least prior to 1900, Scandinavians were the fifth (after the British, Dutch, German and French) most significant European group in South Africa. [...] What amazed the researcher is

1 The early history of Sweden's secondbiggest town and chief seaport, Gothenburg (in Swedish Gteborg), is closely linked to Holland and to the Dutch East India Company. The construction of the port was directed by the Dutch and the first Gothenburg City Council in the 1620s consisted of not less than ten Dutch one Scot and only seven Swedes. Against this background, it is not surprising that many Swedes-particularly from the south-western parts of the country-were recruited by the company, eventually ending up in the Cape. The first Swede at the settlement was the soldier Elias Ciers, who arrived in December 1653 and died there in 1660 (Berg op. cit, pp. 32-33).

2 This is largely an under-researched subject. The most comprehensive study to date is Alan H. Winquist's Scandinavians & South Africa: Their Impact on the Cultural, Social and Economic Development of Pre-1902 South Africa, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town and Rotterdam, 1978. This comprehensive presentationby a US historian of Swedish descent is an abridged version of his doctoral dissertation with the same title, leading up to 1948 ('The Impact of Scandinavians on the Cultural, Social and Economic Development of Pre-1948 South Africa', New York University, New York, 1976; below referenced as Winquist Ph.D.). See also Eero Kuparinen: An African Alternative: Nordic Migration to South Africa 1815-
that there is hardly an occupation or historical event where some significant Scandinavian contribution is not evident. In the case of Sweden, there was a small, but steady emigration to South Africa from the mid-17th century and several prominent Afrikaner (or Boer) families—such as, for example, Trichardt and Stockenström—were founded by Swedes. The emigration from Sweden (and the other Nordic countries) peaked in the period 1890-1910. At the end of the period, the estimated number of South Africans born in the Nordic countries was between 4,000 and 5,000, in more or less equal proportions coming from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, with a smaller group of mainly Swedish-speakers from Finland.

This period also witnessed the increasing conflict between British and Afrikaner interests, culminating in the Second South African Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. There was an active Swedish and Nordic involvement on both sides. In Sweden—where the conflict was well documented through military observers and war correspondents—opinion was divided, "although a large number of the common people viewed the Afrikaners as a brave and God-fearing folk, worthy of the highest respect and admiration". There was also direct assistance. A volunteer Scandinavian Corps and Ambulance Unit consisting of 113 men and 4 women was organized in Sweden and in the other Nordic countries. Dispatched to fight on the Boer side, it participated in the siege of Mafeking and in the battle of Magersfontein, where 27 Scandinavians were killed and many more captured on 11 December 1899.

The permanent Swedish emigrants were over the centuries assimilated into either the Afrikaner or the British European population group and their links with the motherland soon faded away. This was also the case with the scores of Swedish sailors, adventurers, artisans, navvies etc., who after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 and gold at the Witwatersrand in 1886 were lured to South Africa by economic opportunities not easily encountered in Sweden. More lasting imprints on the bilateral relationship were instead made by natural scientists, explorers, missionaries and businessmen. Some of the

1 Winquist op. cit., pp. 2 and 10.

2 The Afrikaner hero Louis Trichardt was of Swedish descent, his grandfather, Carl-Gustav TrAdgArdh (original Swedish spelling), emigrating from the southern Swedish town of Angelhohn in the service of the Dutch East India Company in 1742. In 1835, Louis Trichardt was the first voortrekker to break away from the British administration in the Cape Colony.

3 The founder of the South African Stockenström (still spelt with Swedish unlaut) family was Anders Stockenström, who emigrated from the mid-western town of Filipstad also through the Dutch East India Company—in the MO7s. Making his Cape career in the British administration, Stockenström was appointed
landdrost of Graff-Reinet in 1803. His son, Andries Stockenström, was in 1815 also appointed to this position. Like his father, he was heavily involved in the border wars between the British and the Xhosas.

4 Winquist op. cit., p. 77.
5 Ibid., p. 4. The Swedish Social Democrats strongly supported the Boers against the British.

More than any other category, it was naturalists who made South Africa known in Sweden. The long series of Swedish scientific expeditions to the region dates back to the mid-17th century, when Nils Matson Kidping, an employee of the Dutch East India Company, collected animal and plant specimens for the University of Uppsala. His main account in Swedish-Description of a Travel through Asia, Africa and Many Other Heathen Countriesl-"became a veritable bestseller and was printed time and again during the following centuries".2

Another early, notable Swedish explorer employed by the Chamber of Seventeen was the colourful Olof Bergh from Gothenburg, the progenitor of the prominent South African Afrikaner Berg family. Between the 1670s and the 1720s, Bergh served for longer periods in the Cape and managed-in addition to his geographical explorations-to be imprisoned on Robben Island, marry a daughter of Batavian slaves and become the owner of the famous Groot Constantia estate outside Cape Town in 1716.3

It was, however, through Carl Linnaeus, the famous 18th century botanist and originator of the modern scientific classification of plants and animals, that the Cape became a concentration area for natural scientists from Sweden. As professor of medicine and botany at the University of Uppsala, Linnaeus sent several of his pupils to South Africa. Outstanding were Anders Sparrman and Carl Peter Thunberg, who travelled extensively in the Cape in the 1770s and recorded their findings in publications which not only influenced academic circles in Sweden, but also played a major international role.4 Thunberg has been called 'the father of Cape botany'. A similar pioneering role in South African ornithology and zoology was played in the mid-19th century by Johan August Wahlberg, who-sponsored by the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, -travelled in Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal in the 1840s and in South West Africa and Bechuanaland in the 1850s.5 At the same time, the Swedish explorer and ornithologist Charles John Andersson began his travels and ad

Kibping: Beskrifring omen Resa genom Asia, Africa och Mfnga Andra Hedna Liinder.
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ventures in South West Africa, attracting a considerable number of Swedes to this little known part of Southern Africa. South Africa also occupies a special place in Swedish missionary history. The official Swedish Mission Board was founded in 1874 and two years later the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) sent its first missionary to South Africa, Reverend Otto Witt. He landed in Durban to work in the same area in Zululand where the Norwegian Missionary Society had been active since 1849. In 1878, CSM bought a farm at Rorke's Drift on the Natal side of the Buffalo river, founding the first mission station there. It was called Oscarsberg in honour of the Swedish King Oscar II. The choice of name reflected the close ties between the church and the state in Sweden. During the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, the mission was the scene of the famous battle of Rorke's Drift and laid in ruins. Rebuilt after the war, Oscarsberg became the centre of CSM's activities in Zululand, housing the Lutheran Theological College.

The Church of Sweden Mission in South Africa had a sluggish start, but gained momentum in the 1890s when twenty-two missionaries were employed in Natal and Zululand. Permission to carry out missionary work in Zululand had been granted by the Zulu King Dinizulu in 1882. The following year, CSM founded the Ekutuleni mission station. Other stations were opened at Dundee, Appelsbosch, Emtulwa, Ceza and later-in Doornfontein, Jabavu and other places outside Johannesburg. The earlier Swedish missionaries exhibited a strong sense of paternalism towards the Zulus, but over the years CSM embarked on a course allowing the indigenous people to take up leadership positions, at the same time as a policy of unification of the Lutheran communities in Natal and Zululand was pursued. The early example of Joseph Zulu—the cousin of the Zulu King Cetshwayo; ordained in the Uppsala Cathedral in 1901—has been mentioned. The policies of Africanization and unification culminated in the 1960s. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa—Southwest
period 1850-67. He was not only an explorer and a first rate ornithologist, but had also economic, colonialistic and political ambitions. In 1857, he was appointed superintendent of the Walvis Bay Mining Company; in 1858, he founded the town of Omaruru (which became the residence of a number of Swedes) and in 1864, he was proclaimed Supreme Chief of the Damara (i.e. the Herero) in the war against the Nama. Andersson, who died on the Namibian-Angolan border in 1867, published a series of books, such as Lake Ngani: Explorations and Discoveries during Four Years' Wanderings in the Wilds of South Western Africa (1856), The Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration and Adventure (1861) and Notes of Travel in South Africa (1875).

2 Most important was Axel Wilhelm Eriksson, who also came from Vanersborg. Influenced by Andersson's exploits, he arrived in SouthWest Africa in 1866. He soon became an influential trader, based in Omaruru, specializing in long distance trade between southern Angola and the Cape. Until his death in Grootfontein in 1901, Eriksson opened up and mapped the trade routes in the western parts of Southern Africa. He was also an important landowner in Transvaal and a prominent ornithologist, donating a unique collection of Namibian birds to the museum in his native Vanersborg.

3 The college was later moved to Umpumnlo.

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Region was set up in 1961 with Helge Foss6us of CSM as the first bishop. He was succeeded by an African, Paulus B. Mhlungu, in the late 1960s. Several Swedish free churches also embarked upon early missionary work in South Africa. The Holiness Union started in Natal in 1891, the Free Baptist Union in Natal in 1892 and the Alliance Mission in Natal and Transvaal at the beginning of the 20th century. Around 1960, there were some 150 Swedish missionaries in South Africa, of whom almost 60 represented CSM.1

Finally, Swedish immigrants started commercial enterprises in South Africa. Combining private business careers with promotional activities on behalf of Sweden, some of them—such as Jacob Letterstedt2—exercised considerable influence with regard to the early regular trade relations between South Africa and Sweden.

A number of major South African enterprises were founded by Swedes. This is, for example, the case with South African Breweries, created in 1956 through a merger of various breweries in which Ohlsson's Cape Breweries founded by Anders Ohlsson4 in the late 1880s—was the most important. It is also the case with the Lion Match Company, resulting from an amalgamation with the Rosebank Match Company founded by the Swede Karl Lithman in Cape Town in 1887, and with Irving & Johnson—South Africa's largest fishing company—set up in 1910 by the Scottish immigrant George Irvin and the Swede Charles Johnson.

Some of the more successful businessmen represented Swedish-and Norwegian5-consular interests in South Africa and later returned to Sweden. Many maintained strong links with their home country and were instrumental

1Wohlin (ed.) op. cit., Appendix and Winquist op. cit., pp. 146-147.
Letterstedt was Sweden's "earliest nineteenth century emigrant success story in South Africa" (Winquist op. cit., p. 82). Born Jacob Lallerstedt outside Norrköping, he emigrated to the Cape in 1820, soon becoming one of the wealthiest and most influential citizens. He founded several businesses, among them Mariëdal Brewery in Newlands and one of South Africa's first commercial banks, the Cape of Good Hope Bank. In 1841, Letterstedt was appointed Swedish-Norwegian consul in Cape Town and in 1857 Swedish-Norwegian consul general to South Africa. In these positions, he maintained close contacts with Sweden and encouraged Nordic businessmen, scientists and explorers to come to South Africa. Through a huge endowment, the Letterstedt Society for Industry, Science and Art was set up in 1875. Still active in the Nordic countries, it has published Nordisk Tidsskrift ('Nordic Review) since 1878 and supports inter-Nordic scientific activities.

Winquist op. cit., pp. 81-90 and Winquist Ph.D., pp. 442-451. 40 hisson, who emigrated to South Africa from Malmb in southern Sweden in the early 1860s, was initially in partnership with Axel Eriksson in South West Africa and later with Jacob Letterstedt in the Cape. He was one of the wealthiest persons in South Africa, probably becoming the most influential Scandinavian in the whole country at the end of the 19th century. In 1882, he was appointed consul for Sweden and Norway and in 1884 he entered Cape politics, elected to the legislative assembly for Cape Town, a seat he held until 1893.

Sweden and Norway were joined in a union between 1814 and 1905. Foreign policy-induding consular services-was conducted by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. From the 1880s, there were increasing Norwegian demands for an independent Norwegian foreign service, which, however, were refused by Sweden. This led the Norwegian parliament to unilaterally establish Norway's own consular services and, eventually, to the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union in 1905.

Sweden's involvement in South Africa during the first half of the 20th century was primarily economic. The Swedish manufacturing companies Alfa Laval2 and Electrolux3 started production there before the Second World War, ASEA,4 Atlas Copco,5 Fagersta 6 and Sandvik 7 immediately after the war and Avestas and SKF9 at the beginning of the 1960s. 10 The value of Sweden's exports to South Africa steadily increased between 1920 and 1948, except for 1930-32 and during...
the Second World War. In 1948, South Africa's share of Swedish total exports peaked at 2.3%. In that year, the country occupied third position among Sweden's non-European trading partners, behind the United States and Argentina. However, from the peak in 1948 South Africa's share of Swedish exports decreased continuously throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, only representing 1.0% and 0.9% in 1960 and 1970, respectively.

1 In Swedish, RederiAB Transatlantic
2 Alfa Laval was established in South Africa in 1920, producing cream separators, milking machines etc. at Mobeni outside Durban.
3 Electrolux started its South African operations in 1926, with vacuum cleaners and refrigerators as main products. It set up a factory at Alberton near Johannesburg in 1951.
4 ASEA began making deliveries to South Africa as early as in 1911. In 1947, Asea Electric South Africa was established and two years later it inaugurated a cable factory in Pretoria, also producing transformers and isolators. With important sales to ISCOR, South Africa's first and largest steel works, ASEA was in the 1960s and the 1970s the leading Swedish company in South Africa.
5 Atlas Copco, producing compressed air equipment for the mining industry, was established in South Africa as Dellos & Atlas Copco in 1946. It was the second largest Swedish company in South Africa behind ASEA.
6 Fagersta (Fagersta Steels) established itself on the South African market in 1948, producing steel drills for the mines.
7 Sandvik, specializing in cemented carbide and special steels, was also established in 1948.
8 Avesta Ironworks set up its South African subsidiary, Transalloys, in 1962.
9 The ball bearing manufacturer SKF (Svenaka Kullagerfabriken) established a South African subsidiary as early as in 1914 and set up a production plant at Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape in 1963.
11Winquist Ph.D. p. 484.

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Although Swedish imports from South Africa throughout the period remained below 1% of the total, Sweden was from a South African point of view an important market, particularly for agricultural products. In 1948 when the Nationalist Party came to power - Sweden was the second largest buyer of South African fruit behind Great Britain. Of significance for the upcoming boycott debate was that Sweden at the time was the largest consumer of South African
apples, the second largest of pears and grapes and the fourth largest of oranges in the world.1

Friendly Relations and Dissenting Voices

Sweden has not had as close and continuous relations with any other non-European area outside North America2 as with South Africa from the mid-17th until the mid-20th century, that is, over three centuries. Through a network of contacts established by sailors, emigrants, internationally renowned scientists and explorers, priests, doctors and teachers in the various missions, adventurers and an increasing number of businessmen, South Africa was at the beginning of the 20th century relatively familiar to broad segments of Swedish society.3 It is against this background not surprising that people in both Sweden and South Africa until the 1950s were reading sympathetic newspaper accounts of each other, that diplomatic relations were friendly and directed towards the promotion of mutual commercial and cultural links and that a broad interchange developed between the two. It was not uncommon that Swedes who could afford the trip visited South Africa as tourists or for health reasons. For example, suffering from arthritis, Albert Engstrom, the popular author, artist and member of the Swedish Academy, was in 1936 invited to spend a couple of months in the country as a guest of the Transatlantic Shipping Company.4

Rarely-if ever-were any voices raised against the fact that the overwhelming majority of the South African population was excluded from the basic democratic right to vote. On the contrary, even people who in the Swedish debate spoke out in favour of the disadvantaged and defended positions on the left of the political spectrum often praised South Africa. As an example, in the book Negroland, the prominent author Artur Lundkvist5-who under the

1 Ibid., p. 501.
2 Between 1840 and 1900, not less than 850,000 Swedes emigrated to North America. As a comparison, at the turn of the century the total Swedish population stood at 5.1 million.
3 The close contacts between Sweden and South Africa left imprints on the Swedish language. For example, a non-armed conscript is in Swedish known as a mala], a direct transmission of the fact that the so-called Cape Malays—in common with other non-whites—were not allowed to carry arms while doing South African military service.
4 Engström’s impressions were published in 1937 in the book Med Kaaparen till Afrik,
whites only constitute one fifth of the population! However, South Africa tries purposefully to increase the white population, primarily by inducing immigration. But the desired doubling of the number of whites would require the establishment of new industries and the investment of new capital on an enormous scale. This means:

Capitalists, welcome to South Africa!1

Important contacts were maintained in the 1950s between the Afrikaansspeaking white population group in South Africa and Sweden in the cultural field. In their quest for a distinct identity, the Boers had, significantly, after the defeat by the British in the Anglo-Boer War turned to the 'Germanic' Scandinavians to develop an Afrikaner folklore as a cultural complement to their secretive political organization around the Afrikaner Broederbond.2 As a result, many Afrikaner folk songs were based on Swedish melodies.3 One generation later, the situation was completely reversed. White Afrikaner folk dancing groups and choirs no longer visited Sweden for ideas and inspiration. Instead, Swedish musical groups took up black South African traditional hymns and freedom songs, performing in the African languages and impressing South African visitors.4 The direct cultural interchange with the South Africa of the majority started in 1959, when several members of the visiting musical group The Golden City Dixies sought and were granted political asylum in Sweden. It was a small, but significant, indication of both the image of Sweden held by the non-white majority and of a new Swedish attitude towards South Africa.5

From being close and friendly towards white South Africa, the Swedish opinion started to change during the 1950s. What provoked the change was, of course, the extreme Afrikaner nationalism of Prime Minister Daniel Malan's Nationalist Party and the passing of a series of draconian apartheid laws in 1948, bringing to mind the recent horrors of Nazi-Germany. In quick succession, the apartheid regime passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949,1 the Immorality Amendment Act, 2 the Population Registration Act, 3 the Suppression of Communism Act4 and the Group Areas Act 5 in 1950, the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act6 in 1952 and the Separate Amenities Act7 the Bantu Education Act and the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act9 in 1953.

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2 The Afrikaner Broederbond, a highly influential, exclusively Afrikaner secret society, was formed in 1918 to secure and maintain Afrikaner control in important areas of government, culture, finance and industry.
3 Such as 'Boemfaderalla'. See Winquist Ph.D., p. 521.
4 Cf. interview with Walter Sisulu, Johannesburg, 15 September 1995.
5 Cf. interview with Rolof 'Pik' Botha, Cape Town, 12 September 1995. As a curiosity, it could be mentioned that Billy Modise of ANC and Rupiah Banda of UNIP of Zambia in the early 1960s appeared as Billy and Bands among university students in Lund.
This battery of discriminatory and oppressive racist laws against the nonfranchised majority was strongly repudiated by influential Swedish opinion makers, such as Ivar Harrie, chief editor of Sweden's largest evening paper, the liberal Expressen, and Herbert Tingsten, chief editor of the largest morning paper, the likewise liberal Dagens Nyheter. Harrie travelled widely in South Africa in 1949 and published a series of feature stories between March and May of the same year, describing "the great fear of miscegenation" by the white population in "a country without faith in the future".10 His abhorrence of apartheid and the degrading living conditions of the blacks-exemplified by the Zulu rickshaw 'boys' in Durbanli-were, however, not matched by any deeper appreciation of the non-white majority. Presenting it as "South Africa's great spectre", Harrie warned against "idealization of any of the non-European groups". According to him

1 The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act imposed a ban on marriages between whites and members of other races, nullifying mixed marriages by South Africans abroad.

2 The Immorality Amendment Act extended the 1927 Immorality Act, making all sexual relations between white and other races illegal.

3 The Population Registration Act entered the South African population on a central register, classifying it as white, native or coloured. The coloureds were subdivided into different groups, including Indian, Griqua, Cape Malay and Chinese.

4 According to the Suppression of Communism Act practically any person or organization hostile to the government's policy could be defined as Communist and be banned. There was no right of appeal.

5 The Group Areas Act gave the government powers to segregate the entire country by allocating separate areas to the different population groups ("The paramountcy of the white man and of Western civilization in South Africa must be ensured"...). To implement the policy, the Act provided for forced removals and resettlement.

6 Following the introduction of the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act, black males over the age of 16 were required to carry a passbook and present it to the police on demand. Apart from personal details, the book contained information on employment, poll tax and influx control.

7 The Separate Amenities Act separated whites and non-whites in public places and on trains, buses etc. It also stipulated that public amenities could be of different quality.

8 The Bantu Education Act set down rules governing black education, making an inferior curriculum compulsory. The Minister for Native Affairs could close black schools not adhering to the curriculum.

9 The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act made strikes by black workers illegal. 10 Ivar Harrie- 'Landet utan framtidstro?' ('The country without faith in the future?') in Expressen, 7 April 1949.

11 Ivar Harrie 'Chocken i Durban' ('The shock in Durban') in Expressen, llMay1949. Harrie was, in his own words, "shocked" by the conditions of the Zulu rickshaw runners. One of the first Zuludrawn rickshaw fleets in Durban was
started by the Swede Charles Johnson, the founder of Irving & Johnson, towards the end of the 1890s.

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the Cape coloureds are without doubt careless and lack ambition. The natives are primitive and the hindus thrifty and generally unscrupulous. In none of the groups is there anything at all that corresponds to the cultural ambitions and results of the negroes in the USA.1

Harrie continued to write critically about developments in South Africa throughout the 1950s. It was, however, his colleague at Dagens Nyheter, professor Herbert Tingsten,2 who qualitatively changed the debate by not only presenting a penetrating indictment of white supremacy, but also introducing the antiapartheid opposition, including the Communist Party of South Africa and the African National Congress. Tingsten visited South Africa at the end of 1953, that is, after the passing of the major apartheid laws and the year following the Defiance Campaign launched by ANC and the South African Indian Congress. In his memoirs, he later wrote that the visit developed into "an emotional involvement which sometimes grew into nausea and exasperation, being one of my strongest experiences during [my] time at Dagens Nyheter".3 Between December 1953 and February 1954, Tingsten published not less than twenty major feature articles in Dagens Nyheter, which in 1954 appeared as a book. It was translated into English in 1955 as The Problem of South Africa.

Tingsten's writings had a remarkable reception in Sweden and would over the following years be read and quoted as an authoritative statement on apartheid in particular and South Africa in general. According to the Swedish media researcher Lars-Ake Engblom, "Tingsten, more than anybody else, called the attention of the Swedes to the apartheid system. [His] articles [...] had an enormous impact at a time when there was no television and no active radio journalism was [...] carried out".4 They constitute an important turning point for the Swedish perception of South Africa and a reference point for the broader anti-apartheid opinion, covering the socialist left as well as the non-socialist centre. It was upon these forces that the organized solidarity movement with South Africa was built at the beginning of the 1960s.

The Problem of South Africa was also read in South Africa, where it impressed black students and made them aware of distant Sweden. For example, according to the Namibian Charles Kauraisa, later Chairman of SWANU's External Council, it was discussed by the Cape Peninsula Students' Union and contributed to his choice of Sweden when he in 1960 was forced into exile.5

Tingsten's overall impression of South Africa was

1 Ivar Haflié: 'Sydafrikas stora sp6ke' ('South Africa's great spectre') in Expressen, 5 April 1949. 2 Tingsten was professor of international affairs at the Stockholm School of Economics between 1935 and 1946, when he joined Dagens Nyheter.
even darker than I had imagined in advance. Everywhere are the traces of fear, suppression and brutality. I do not think that I have ever before seen so many unnecessary conflicts, so much meaningless pain. The five or six peoples thrown together here live in a family hell of gigantic proportions. But it is the whites who rule and they who carry the responsibility.1

Tingsten was, thus, far from Lundkvist's faith in the civilizing and cultural mission of the whites. On the contrary:

"White" [in South Africa] is only a new word to express the oft-repeated belief in the superiority of one's own race. One is persuaded of no great positive achievement, no contribution to human progress-such as one finds in the national illusions of other countries-but the permanence and the expansion of one's own power. [...] Liberalism is the evil, as it is for Fascists, Nazis and Communists. [...] Nowhere so much as in South Africa have I met prejudice as a way of life. It is compact, aggressive [and] accepted even where it is logically impossible. Nowhere have I found prejudice fortified by such strong walls of self-confidence, ignorance and aversion to discussion. It is the same whether you meet educated or uneducated people. [...] This refers first and foremost to the attitude of the whites in regard to the suppressed black groups of the population. [...] The really fantastic thing is that these people know nothing about the racial groups, the characteristics of which they describe with great emphasis and unanimity. They can't speak a native dialect. They have never seen the slums where the black people live-except possibly a kraal in the distance during a motoring journey. They have never had a talk with an educated Negro, Indian or Coloured. [...] Their ideas and opinions are clichés which they have been taught and which they have accepted in their youth. They never question them, any more than you scrutinize small change or bus tickets.2

As professor in political science, Tingsten, naturally, analyzed the ideology of apartheid and the various political forces in South Africa. What he found in the liberal camp made him quite disappointed:

Certain representatives of the liberal line draw near to Nationalist ideas when it comes to the ultimate aim. The professors of SABRA (South African Bureau of Racial Affairs)3 in Stellenbosch talk about total territorial separation between the races, total apartheid, [and] liberal professors in Witwatersrand and Pietermaritzburg speak of the partitioning of South Africa into federal states based on different racial groups.4

1 Tingsten op. cit., pp. 30-31.
2 ibid., pp. 30-31, 22,51 and 52-53.
3 The South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA) was established by the Broederbond in 1947 to hammer out a broad policy framework for the Afrikaner nationalist movement.

4 Tingsten op. cit., p. 113. As late as in the mid-1960s, conservative circles in Sweden advocated territorial separation between the races as a 'solution' to the South African question. See Svensk Tidrift, No 2, 1964 and No 9, 1965.

For Tingsten, the solution did not lie in separation, but in racial equality. He found the newly formed Liberal Party—with intellectual leaders such as Alan Paton and Leo Marquard-attractive, although he was not too optimistic concerning its possibilities of becoming a viable political alternative. Tingsten was a staunch and outspoken anti-Communist. Against that background, it is interesting that he not only wrote positively about the Communist Party of South Africa, but saw it as a liberal force: "The Communist Party", he wrote, has been banned, but it worked more or less as a liberal organization [...] [It] used to be the only [political structure] which welcomed members from all racial groups, forming trade unions among the natives and demanding total equality. A Communist in South Africa is often, according to the general usage of the word, a liberal. Many people, therefore, are inclined to regard liberals as Communists. That is an important consideration, especially when it comes to giving an idea of the oppressed racial groups.

Tingsten also described ANC in a positive light, presenting it as "an organization which unites the great majority of the more educated [Africans], with strong support from the black industrial population". Although he did not mention it in his articles or in the book, during the visit Tingsten met Dr. A.B. Xuma, ANC's President-General between 1940 and 1949, together with the Swedish missionary Gunnar Helander in Xuma's house in Sophiatown outside Johannesburg. This and other contacts with black South African politicians gave him "the definite impression that the will to compromise is still strong, but that resentment increases daily through the measures of the government". However, as early as in 1953 Tingsten foresaw that continued intransigence by the apartheid regime would bring the oppressed population groups together:

The white population no longer follows the watchword of 'divide and rule'. The whites believe themselves to be strong enough to carry out a programme of total and overall suppression. The result is that the oppressed begin to unite and a common front against white rule appears for the first time as a possibility in South African politics.

1 The Liberal Party was formed in June 1953. Though intended to be multiracial, it advocated a qualified franchise (dropped in 1960). Its initial appeal to blacks was therefore limited.

2 The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was formed in 1921. It was outlawed through the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. The Central Executive Committee then decided to disband. Most members, however, remained
active within the trade union movement, and in 1953 the party was reorganized underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP).

3 Tingsten op. cit., p. 116.
4 Ibid., p. 119.
5 Probably for reasons of security, Tingsten only said that he had "contacts with leaders of [ANC and the People's Convention]" (Ibid., p. 125).
6 Interview with Gunnar Helander, VasterAs, 12 February 1996.
7 Tingsten op. cit., p. 125.
8 Ibid.

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Finally, just as Tingsten's anti-Communism in the South African context did not restrain him from a positive opinion of the Communist Party, during the visit he also shelved his well known anti-clericalism as a result of favourable impressions of missionary work. The Swedish missionaries, he concluded, "though not politically active, [...] constitute the largest liberal group in South Africa".1 Tingsten visited a number of CSM stations in Johannesburg, Natal and Zululand, summarizing his opinion thus:

[F]rom the point of view of democratic humanism (Christian or not), an overwhelmingly great aim has been and is being achieved. [...] Between the oppressed peoples and the master race, which now in the name of white and Christian civilization carries out oppression, stand a few thousand missionaries as barriers and mediators. Their work has no limit in this land, divided and tortured by prejudice, hate, bitterness, poverty and sickness. They have staked their cause on faith and goodness in an environment which is so difficult that living sympathy turns into perpetual pain. [...] Whichever way the future may show, these men and women can feel sure that they have fulfilled a mission in South Africa.2

In his memoirs, Tingsten acknowledges the effect the encounter with the CSM missionaries had upon him and his wife: "After the travels in South Africa [...] we were converted from a quite common disbelief—not to say a common contempt among radical intellectuals—towards missionaries, to appreciation, admiration and, in a number of cases, affection".3 It later led the Tingstens to address religious groups in Sweden on the subject of apartheid South Africa, which in turn had a major impact on the Swedish opinion.4

One of Tingsten's hosts in South Africa was the CSM missionary Gunnar Helander. Ordained as a priest, Helander volunteered for the Church of Sweden Mission and started to work in Natal/Zululand in 1938. He became close to Chief Luthuli and through him came into contact with ANC? Helander was the first Swede to actively raise his voice against apartheid, writing in local South African newspapers such as The Natal Mercury and sending articles to Swedish

1 Ibid., p. 137.
2 Ibid., pp. 141-142.
4 Tingsten (1964), p. 146 and interview with Gunnar Helander, VasterAs, 12 February 1996. With a strong reputation as an anti-clerical, Tingsten's reactions to the missionary work was a positive surprise to his CSM hosts. Helander has, for
example, described how Tingsten after attending a service in a Lutheran church in Johannesburg contributed one thousand Swedish Kronor to the collection. He noted, "[It was] not a bad collection. I wrote in the collection book: 'Contribution from Swedish heathen: 1,000 Kr." (Gunnar Helander: Bestinda Artiklar Helanders Bf at ('Definite Articles: Helander's Best'), Wennbergs Bokhandel AB, Vfstergs, 1995, p. 23.)

As a Methodist church leader, Luthuli had in 1938 attended the International Missionary Conference in Tambaram, India. He was elected chairman of the Natal Missionary Conference by his white colleagues-among them Helander-in 1941. Luthuli and Helander served as board members of the Institute of Race Relations in Natal. Chief Luthuli became a member of the ANC provincial executive in Natal in the mid-1940s and was elected President-General of ANC in 1952. Through Christian Social Democratic members of the Swedish parliament, Helander campaigned at the end of the 1950s for the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Luthuli, an effort which was crowned with success in 1961.

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Missionary, writer and activist, Gunnar Helander of CSM with Ruben Mkize at the Lutheran Zulu Church in Jabavu (Johannesburg), South Africa, 1955. (Courtesy of Gunnar Helander)

newspapers as early as in 1941, that is, during the Second World War. His first attempts to publicly criticize racism in South Africa were, however, not successful. The Swedish newspapers "did not believe that an ally of Britain which was fighting against Nazi-Germany could be racist [and] my articles were sent back".1 Nevertheless, Helander eventually managed to have one article published in a smaller newspaper. It was noticed by the Church of Sweden and the CSM mission director "warned me that I was spoiling the cause of the mission if I angered the South African authorities. I should shut up!"2 Helander did not. Instead, he started to express his opinions through a series of novels, the first of which-Zulu Meets the White Man-appeared in Swedish in 1949. Newspapers in Sweden then gradually began to accept his often very outspoken-and witty-articles, and in the 1950s he became a regular contributor to the Gothenburg-based liberal morning paper Gbteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning. Tingsten's interest in South Africa was partly a consequence of Helander's articles.3 They also attracted the attention of the South African government. When Helander after a visit in Sweden in 1957 applied for a return visa, it was refused. He subsequently remained in Sweden, serving as a vicar in Karlskoga and later as dean of V Asterds cathedral.1

1 Interview with Gunnar Helander, Viisteris, 12 February 1996.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

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visa, it was refused. He subsequently remained in Sweden, serving as a vicar in Karlskoga and later as dean of VAsterds cathedral.1 A prolific writer and an indefatigable activist, Helander would during his first years in Sweden fight an often lonely battle to create broader awareness of the situation in South Africa. He constantly wrote in various national and local
newspapers and was in great demand as a lecturer: "People phoned me from everywhere, asking me to come and speak about apartheid. Folk high schools, university clubs, churches and so on. Social Democratic and Liberal organizations asked me to come and speak. I gave a tremendous lot of speeches, sometimes two a day".2 This provoked strong reactions by the South African legation in Stockholm, which in collusion with Swedish extreme right organizations and through methods far from falling within the established diplomatic protocol mounted a veritable persecution campaign against him. It distributed stencilled hand-outs to the people in Helander's congregation in Karlskoga, accusing the vicar of being a Communist agent employed by the Soviet Union to undermine the Christian civilization in South Africa.3 After being refused by all the national papers, the legation had letters in the same vein published in the extreme local newspaper Nordvistora Skdnes Tidningar in southern Sweden.4 They were signed by an organization calling itself the Swedish-South African Association,5 with links to extreme right circles, stating that

the day is perhaps not so distant when the Swedish public will see the consequences of defaming and spreading false propaganda against a friendly disposed nation. If the government of South Africa gets tired of these perpetual calumnies and terminates its trade relations with Sweden, what shall we then do with the goods worth 147 million Kronor that South Africa buys from us each year? No, while there is still time, let us stop malevolent persons from damaging Sweden's reputation among the South African people.6

The legation in Stockholm—where the young 'Pik' Botha as Third Secretary worked with information and press matters—recorded Helander's lectures and sent a tape to the Foreign Ministry in Pretoria, which in turn convoked resident Swedish businessmen to listen to it, asking them to use their influence to stop

1 Helander was not allowed to re-enter South Africa until 1991, 35 years after he had left for a holiday in Sweden.
2 Interview with Gunnar Helander, Viistergs, 12 February 1996.
3 Interview with Gunnar Helander, Vestergs, 12 February 1996 “They tried to make life difficult for me, but I sent the papers to the [Swedish] Ministry for Foreign Affairs and they spoke to the South African government. The ministry gave them a good telling off and they stopped it. I do not think that anybody believed them in Karlskoga, but they did their best”.
4 Nordvistora Shines Tidningar, 31 December 1958 and 1 January 1959. This was the newspaper quoted by South Africa's Foreign Minister Eric Louw in his attack on Sweden (and Norway) in the UN General Assembly regarding the treatment of the Sami population in October 1960.
5 In Swedish, Svenrsk-Sydafrikanaka Fbrein gen (SSAF). 6Nyhetema, 11 May 1959.

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the criticism. 1 This initially met some sympathy even at the level of the Swedish diplomatic representation. In mid-1959, the outgoing Swedish envoy Alexis Aminoff gave a farewell speech to Scandinavian businessmen in Johannesburg in
which he said that he had told Prime Minister Verwoerd that the Swedish people did not understand the South African situation and that the critics should not be taken seriously. Not surprisingly, Tingsten and his colleagues in the Swedish press corps fumed and several papers demanded the dismissal of Aminoff.2 The Social Democratic Aftonbladet headlined an article ‘Swedish minister makes a stupid statement’.3 Soon thereafter—probably encouraged by the attitude of the representative of the Swedish government—some forty Swedish businessmen got together in Johannesburg to set up a Swedish Public Relations Association in South Africa.

Towards the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s, the South African government was almost pathologically preoccupied with the attitude of the Swedish press in general and Helander in particular. In public speeches4 and through diplomatic channels, the Pretoria regime repeatedly denounced the two, conveying an image of the innocent not fathoming why the historically close and friendly relations with Sweden all of a sudden were being questioned. For example, when Aminoff’s successor as Swedish envoy to South Africa, Eyvind Bratt, in January 1960 had his first conversation with the South African Foreign Minister Eric Louw, it was dedicated entirely to this question. Louw stated that the Swedish press coverage of South Africa was the most spiteful in the world, accusing Reverend Helander of that state of affairs.5 According to Louw, the individual consumers in South Africa had been so offended by the attitude of the Swedish press that they no longer wanted to buy Swedish products.6 At the same time, the South African newspapers started to regularly publish negative articles about Sweden. In February 1960, for example, the newspaper Die Burger strongly turned against the Swedish press in an article entitled 'Venom in Sweden toward South Africa'.7

The South African government eventually gave up the attempts to silence or counter the critical press voices in Sweden. The issue was discussed in the

1 Kyrkans Presstjinst (The Press Service of the Church of Sweden): ‘De sydafrikinska angreppen på kyrkoherde Helander’ (‘The South African attacks on vicar Helander’) [no date].
2 Serving as Sweden's envoy to South Africa from 1954 to 1959, Aminoff then became ambassador to Portugal. He stayed in Lisbon from 1959 to 1963, i.e. at the time when the liberation war in Angola started.
3 Aftonbladet, 17 September 1959.
4 In October 1960, South Africa's Foreign Minister stated in the UN General Assembly that "the press of [Sweden and Norway], particularly Sweden, has with one or two exceptions been carrying on a vindictive and malicious campaign against [South Africa], I should say that the press campaign carried on there is one of the worst of any country in the world".
5 Louw also said that the South African government could prove that Helander had been a member of a Nazi party and that he had been "an often seen guest at the night-dubs in Johannesburg”.
6 Letter by Eyvind Bratt to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Cape Town, 20 January 1960 (MFA).
7 Die Burger, 10 February 1960.
South African House of Assembly in June 1965, where Dr. Moolman, a member of the opposition United Party, asked the Minister of Information Waring "why his [ministry] does nothing in regard to the Scandinavian countries? Surely, they are one of our countries of origin [and] should be close to us". In his reply, Waring said that Scandinavia has not become a priority and I will tell [...] the reason why. We know the atmosphere in Scandinavia. [It] is such that we say: Why should we open up [information] offices where the possibility of success is small? [...] Quite frankly, our attitude is that [...] we do not consider it advantageous from our point of view to establish an office in the Scandinavian countries.1

In the 1950s, Herbert Tingsten, Gunnar Helander and a few other intellectuals2 forcefully broke the silence surrounding South Africa in Sweden, effectively contributing to the development and the broadening of an anti-apartheid opinion in the student and youth movements? That they represented liberal and church interests largely explains why the opinion from the very beginning was broadly anchored in the political centre. In addition, Tingsten and, above all, Helander4 presented ANC in a positive light, contributing to a generally accepted view that it was ANC that represented the black majority and constituted an alternative in South Africa. It is in this context significant that neither Tingsten nor Helander depicted ANC as dominated or controlled by the South African Communist Party.5 In Sweden, ANC's alliance with the Communist Party did not narrow popular support, which was, on the contrary, broaden by the leadership under Chief Luthuli to include important liberal and church constituencies. That ANC from December 1961 embarked upon armed sabotage only marginally affected this situation.

The strong reactions by the South African government and press against influential opinion makers such as Tingsten and Helander contributed to the development of the Swedish anti-apartheid opinion,6 due to the non-conven1 Republic of South Africa: 'House of Assembly Debates (Hansard)', Government Printer, 1-4 June 1965, pp. 7229 and 7237.

2 Such as Olof G. Tandberg.

3 Helander often addressed the Swedish youth. For example, in January 1957 he lectured at a SUL course on racial conflicts in the world (Svenska Dagbiadet, 22 January 1957).

4 In March 1960, Helander stated that "a moderate, bloodless and really democratic development in South Africa requires that the reformist and democratic African National Congress (which to the blacks in South Africa more or less is what the Social Democratic labour movement and the reformist trade unions have been to the Swedish workers) [...] maintains its strong position among the blacks" (Ordro-Kuiren, 30 March 1960).

5 Helander later stated: "Of course, I disapprove of Communism, but I had known many Communists in South Africa and they were not Stalinists. They were like the Swedish Communists. You could have them in furnished rooms, but I could
not possibly vote for them" (interview with Gunnar Helander, VisterAs, 12 February 1996).

6 Cf. Charles Kauraisa: "Unfortunately for South Africa, the South African legation was extremely vocal in Stockholm. They were reacting forcefully in defence of the apartheid system. It forced the debate in Sweden, in which intellectuals and writers took a leading role" (interview with Charles Kauraisa, Windhoek, 20 March 1995).

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International methods used—particularly against Helander—and through the attacks on Swedish society in general. Publicizing the Swedish viewpoints, the public statements made against Sweden by representatives of the Pretoria regime and the anti-Swedish articles in the South African newspapers had the opposite effect of bringing the South African opposition closer to Sweden.

Nevertheless, the early Swedish anti-apartheid voices encountered resistance in milieus that in the late 1950s did not find any reason to criticize the situation. This was first and foremost the case with Swedish business interests in South Africa, but also with conservative representatives of the Swedish foreign service and the churches. Raising his voice from the largely secluded ecclesiastical world, Helander was, for example, criticized by his CSM colleagues and—above all—by some of the Swedish free churches active in South Africa.

In South Africa, Helander never held back his anti-racist views or his criticism of missionary paternalism towards the African population.1 It caused him a rebuke by the CSM director at the beginning of the 1940s. Forced to remain in Sweden from 1957, Helander was in a position to openly denounce the apartheid system and its constituent parts, among them the Dutch Reformed Church, by him characterized as the 'Much Deformed Church'.2 Helander's anti-apartheid activism was, however, not looked upon with entirely positive eyes by the CSM missionaries in South Africa. In a confidential letter to the mission director in Uppsala, Helge Foss6us—later in the year consecrated bishop—worriedly wrote in March 1958 that

the hounding of South Africa in Sweden is about to crush our work out here. [...] What Helander has to say about the racial relations [...] is correct. It is just that he does not help the situation through his activities. He makes it worse. [...] [H]is attacks against the Dutch Reformed Church have appeared as dismally unreliable and it is perhaps mostly the diatribes against this church and the boer people which have hurt [the South Africans] so deeply. One would therefore like to calm him down a bit—if possible?3

At about the same, Lars Vitus, a medical doctor working for the Swedish Alliance Mission in South Africa, turned against the Swedish press and Helander. In widely published statements, he said that the newspapers in Sweden had presented a wrong picture of the situation and that credit should be given to the South African government for the money spent on black education. He particularly criticized Helander and gave as his opinion that "we missionaries feel that we do not want to sit as judges over the policy conducted
1 Helander: "You can have pets and treat them very well. Like you do with dogs. But, you do not want a dog to vote" (interview with Gunnar Helander, VÄsterds, 12 February 1996).


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by the [South African] government regarding the racial question". The debate within and between the Swedish missions would continue well into the 1960s. It inter alia concerned the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, teaching that citizens must be obedient to their secular rulers as they represent the will of God. Primarily in the Church of Sweden Mission this stand was, however, to change due to the Africanization of the Lutheran church in South Africa and to the impossibility of remaining impartial-a position shared with the other major churches in South Africa-after the Sharpeville massacre in March and the banning of ANC and PAC in April 1960.

1 Morgonladet, 9 April 1958. Helander replied in the same newspaper the following day. Cf. also the editorial 'Missionärerna och Sydafrika' ('The Missionaries and South Africa') in Dagens Nyheter, 10 April 1958.