

MISSIONARY CO-OPERATION IN SWEDEN

By JAKOB E. LUNDAHL

DURING 1901 and 1907 two conferences of Swedish missionaries were held in Stockholm, both of which in a considerable degree stimulated missionary interest in Sweden. At the latter a unanimous desire for a similar conference in three or five years' time was expressed, the scope of the second conference being enlarged so as to make it not only a conference of missionaries but also one of mission organizations—a general Swedish mission conference.

At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 Sweden was represented by eighteen official delegates and twenty-seven other members. The impression made by this conference was overpowering. The Swedish delegates returned home with the question: How shall we impart to our country some of the blessings which the Edinburgh Conference has given us? As a result of this the desire for a general Swedish missionary conference was quickened.

After consultation with the secretaries of the more important Swedish missions, and with prayer for God's guidance and blessing, Dr Karl Fries, the representative of Sweden on the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, sent an invitation in March 1911 to all Swedish missions to send delegates to a committee which should prepare for a general conference in Stockholm in the autumn of 1912, the programme to include missions to non-Christian peoples only. The hope was expressed that the conference would result in the establishment in the whole of Sweden, and for future years, of a more serious interest in

foreign missions than had hitherto existed and a far greater readiness to support the same. This invitation met with general approval and when the conference met, September 11th-15th, 1912, twelve Swedish missions were represented by more than 300 official delegates.

From this conference the present co-operation of Swedish missions originated, resulting in the formation of the Arbetskomité (Working Committee) of the General Swedish Missionary Conference which is the executive of the General Conference and has exercised an exceedingly important influence on Swedish missionary life. The constitution of the committee is based on the same fundamental principles as those of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh.

The following missionary organizations are represented in the Arbetskomité by one delegate each: Evangeliska Fosterlands Stiftelsen (Evangelical National Missionary Society), Föreningen för Israelsmission (Society for Missions to the Jews), Helgelseförbundet (Holiness Union), Kvinnliga Missions Arbetare (Women Mission Workers), Svenska Alliansmissionen (Swedish Alliance Mission), Svenska Baptistmissionen (Swedish Baptist Mission), Svenska Jerusalemsföreningen (Swedish Jerusalem Society), Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse (Church of Sweden Mission Board), Svenska Metodistkyrkans Mission (Swedish Methodist Church Mission), Svenska Missionen i Kina (Swedish Mission to China), Svenska Missionsförbundet (Swedish Missionary Society), Svenska Mongolmissionen (Swedish Mission to Mongols) and Örebro Missionsförening (Örebro Missionary Society). These missionary organizations pay an annual contribution to the Committee in proportion to their own income.

In connexion with the Arbetskomité, sub-committees were appointed to deal with the following subjects: the Press; the Study of Missions at Educational Institutions; Courses in Mission Study; Missionaries' Hospital Training and the Men's Missionary Movement. A couple of years later an additional committee was added for the promotion of mission

interest among women, called the Women's Committee. The sub-committees work partly independently,¹ partly in conjunction with the Arbetskomité, all decisions of a more important character, however, require the approval of the Arbetskomité.

The Arbetskomité or its sub-committees have accomplished considerable work for the promotion of Swedish mission life during recent years, though the great war had a paralyzing effect on this as well as on much else of a promising nature. The spirit of unity and accord and the sense of community which through its activities has been created between the Swedish missionary organizations is the chief accomplishment of the Committee.

One of the first tasks which the Committee took upon itself was to compile a general table of Swedish mission statistics on the plan of those drawn up for international use. Such a table is now published every autumn in the *Svensk Missionstidskrift*. This journal is edited by Professor A. Kolmodin in Upsala. It likewise derived its origin from the Mission Conference of 1912.

The activities of the Arbetskomité during the past years may be divided under the following heads :

GENERAL MISSION COURSES. In the autumn of 1913, with the co-operation of the different mission organizations, a series of lectures was arranged in twenty different places in the kingdom, nine lectures being given in each place. Everywhere these lectures were largely attended. A year later a great course in mission study was planned to take place in Enköping, a town in central Sweden, but on account of the world war it had to be cancelled. In the autumn of 1916, however, a largely attended mission course took place in Stockholm when a survey was given of the progress of mission history throughout the ages and a survey of the

¹ The Committee for Missionaries' Hospital Training as well as that of the Men's Missionary Movement have ceased to act. This year the Committee for Mission Study at Educational Institutions and the Committee for Courses in Mission Study have been fused and named the Committee for Mission Study, the reason for this fusion being that the work of both committees in many essential respects was identical.

present situation in Swedish mission fields. During the past year joint mission courses, which had for some time been suspended, were arranged with great success. Rich treasures of missionary knowledge, experience and tested enthusiasm are in this manner being made fruitful in the whole country of Sweden.

MISSION PROPAGANDA THROUGH NEWSPAPERS. Through its Press Committee the Arbetskomité has already contributed to periodicals and newspapers no less than two to three hundred articles on missions—an entirely new subject in the Swedish press. It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of thousands of Swedish people have in this way been given a knowledge of missions which they would never have acquired in any other way. The press in general, and especially the more important provincial papers, have shown great interest and a readiness to further the publication of these articles. The Committee has succeeded in making annual contracts with a number of papers as to fixed payments for articles as well as mission news. By this means its work has become largely self-supporting. Several of the principal Stockholm papers have accepted articles. As a direct result of the activity of the Committee a general change of front has taken place in the relation of the Swedish press to missions. Rarely if ever are scornful attacks, which, a few years ago were no unusual occurrence, to be found in the newspapers of the capital or in those of the provinces.

PUBLICATIONS. The Arbetskomité, though its organization does not allow of its issuing publications, has both directly and indirectly caused a great deal of mission literature to be produced. The Committee has itself issued a wall-map showing religions and missions with an explanatory survey, and also for the first time this year the *Swedish Missions Year Book*, which is for Sweden parallel in some degree to the *Foreign Missions Year Book* of North America. It is edited by G. W. Lindeberg, D.D., recently appointed lecturer on the science of missions at the University of Lund.

A series of smaller publications have also been planned dealing with the more important features of modern missions, with special regard to social conditions. These are primarily intended for teachers and school libraries. The indirect influence, moreover, which the Arbetskomité has exercised on mission societies and Christian publishers towards the production of good mission literature has been powerful and fruitful.

MISSION LIBRARIES. One of the earliest tasks of the Arbetskomité was the collection of literature written, compiled and published by Swedish missionaries in the languages of the mission fields. This literature is now collected in a special department of the library of Upsala University. A fairly complete collection of Swedish mission literature has been brought together in a central lending library for the whole kingdom. The library is housed in the premises of the Y.M.C.A. at Stockholm and is run by the officials of that association. Several circulating libraries have also been formed in connexion with the central library. An arrangement has also been made for lending missionary literature from collections in the possession of the separate missions. Through the initiative of the Committee a complete catalogue of the Student Mission Library at Upsala has been printed and distributed to mission societies and young people's Christian associations throughout the country. This library contains the best collection of mission literature in Sweden.

MISSIONARY INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS. As early as at the Mission Conference of 1912 a strong demand was made for a Chair of the Science of Missions at one of the Swedish universities. Although this has not yet been founded, a step towards it has been taken, inasmuch as a lecturer in the science of missions was appointed a few years ago at the University of Lund. Lectures in the science of missions have also frequently been given at the University of Upsala. It is to be hoped that the wish for a Chair of Missions may soon be fulfilled, although the present economic depression

has made the prospects somewhat darker than they previously were.

One of the first acts of the Arbetskomité was to lodge an application with the Government that Christian missions might be introduced as a subject of instruction in all state schools. This wish has been realized to some extent, inasmuch as that in the curriculum of the primary public schools, fixed a couple of years ago, the study of missions appears as a subject in connexion with the teaching of the Christian faith. In order that the very limited time allotted for this subject may be utilized to the utmost, the Arbetskomité has come to the assistance of the teachers. Action has been taken in the organizing of suitable lectures and courses for teachers, and in the distribution of suitable literature. A series of missionary lectures for teachers (male and female) was held in Stockholm during the spring term of 1917-18. Each lecture was followed by a debate. A course of the same kind was held during the autumn term in 1920, in connexion with which an extensive exhibition and sale of missionary literature was arranged. The chief inspector of the primary public schools in Stockholm was present at most of the lectures and has since in an official communication expressed his hearty approval. Similar courses for teachers were given during 1921 in Upsala, Västerås, Gothenburg, Kalmar, Karlskrona and Växjö, and in the spring of 1922 in Nyköping, Linköping and Jönköping. In Västerås no less than 200 teachers attended—a remarkable figure for Sweden. The lecturers have been partly academic teachers, partly mission leaders and missionaries from different organizations. Courses of this kind are of great use, not only in making clear the importance of mission work to many who previously were indifferent but also by showing how valuable missionary material is in giving depth to the instruction of Scripture.

The courses last referred to have not, it is true, been directly arranged by the Arbetskomité, but their origin is essentially due to the activities of that body. Considerable efforts have also been made by it to produce and distribute

suitable literature as a help for teachers. It has succeeded in getting several chapters dealing with missions into the latest reading book of the primary public schools. Several new books intended to further missionary teaching in schools are shortly to be issued. In the pedagogical library in Stockholm a special section has been set apart for missionary literature. The Arbetskomité has recently sent a communication to the presidents of the school councils and primary public school boards all over the kingdom, pointing out the importance of instruction in foreign mission work and at the same time announcing the courses for teachers which are planned for the immediate future. A comprehensive list of missionary literature is enclosed.

GENERAL CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS FOR MISSION LEADERS. At the Mission Conference of 1912 it was decided that a further conference should be held in three or four years' time. Conditions resulting from the world war have, however, prevented the realization of this plan. In place of this a meeting of missionary leaders was held in Stockholm in 1916 at which Swedish missionary organizations were represented by about 100 official delegates as well as by missionaries on furlough at the time. From this meeting the well-known resolution proclaiming the supernationality of missions was sent out to members of the Continuation Committee. Four years later, in September 1920, another general Swedish Mission Conference was held of the same character as that of 1912. The three chief subjects which came under discussion at this conference may be said to express the thoughts which then animated the Swedish mission community. These subjects were : The future development of missions in view of the international situation and the situation in the non-Christian world ; the need for greater unity and co-operation between mission organizations ; and the need for greater spiritual power in the work of missions and for broader outlook with regard to present-day problems.

Comparing the conference of 1912 with that of 1920 a deepening of understanding within the Swedish mission

community in regard to what in reality constitutes the fundamental principles and purpose of missions is apparent. The conviction was brought home that the work of missions is a spiritual one and that each different branch of activity must needs have as its ultimate end to win humanity for Jesus Christ. All undertakings that have any other aim must be considered superfluous.

At the conference in 1920 it was decided that there should be at least two sessions of the secretaries and leading men of the mission organizations each year for the discussion of mission problems. Already three such sessions have been held. This arrangement has proved to be of great practical benefit. The last session of this kind was held in February 1922 in connexion with Dr A. L. Warnshuis's visit to Stockholm.

COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION OF MISSIONARIES. For some time past the Arbetskomité has had on its programme an endeavour to do something for the education of missionaries during their furlough. This plan could not be carried out until last summer, when a general Swedish complementary course for missionaries was arranged at Holsby Brunn in the province of Småland from August 16th-31st. Between one and two hundred Swedish missionaries and missionary candidates belonging to nine Swedish mission organizations attended the course. Among the subjects treated were: Bible study, Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism, the religions of China, missionary methods, the dynamic of the world's missions, the present critical position of the world's missions, missions to Moslems, phonetics, etc. The lectures were given by three university professors and two university lecturers as well as by mission leaders and missionaries. Intellectually, and also spiritually, the course was exceedingly profitable and undeniably forms an important milestone in the development of Swedish missions. A similar course will probably be held in 1923.

THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE. This Committee has been powerful from the start. The members are appointed by

the Arbetskomité and each represents an organization. Among the items on its programme may be mentioned: lectures, debating meetings, social evenings, missionary meetings in different parts of the country—all for women—special meetings for women teachers, for trained nurses, for girl students, for women missionary candidates, and the like. In the training of women missionaries the Committee has rendered great services. Once or twice every year the Committee issues a small pamphlet as a greeting to Swedish women missionaries at home and abroad. At Christmas time each year the Committee provides a Christmas party in Stockholm for as many children of missionaries as can be present. But besides this the Women's Committee has on its programme plans for securing a larger sphere for the influence of women in the councils and administrative bodies of the different mission organizations. This Committee being rich in initiative, can look back upon a very successful career.

One of the fundamental conditions for success in international co-operation is that the national co-operation in the different countries should be active and strong. Indeed, we venture to assert that national co-operation is the foundation on which international co-operation must be built. Swedish missions have succeeded in making some headway in this respect. Possibly this may be due to a considerable degree to the fact that in Sweden co-operation from the beginning has not been allowed in any way or in any respect to interfere with the administration and right of decision of the separate organizations, nor to approach questions of a confessional nature or of church government. These are the same principles which were so clearly emphasized at the session of the International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk last October. Each representative in the Arbetskomité is responsible to his own executive and organization, and only in so far as co-operation can serve all organizations in common has it a purpose to fulfil.

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